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University of Glasgow.

'The Teeth of Poisonous Dragons':

*The Dialogue between Divine Judgement and
Divine Benevolence in The Book of Wisdom.*

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Divinity in
candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Department of Religious Studies.

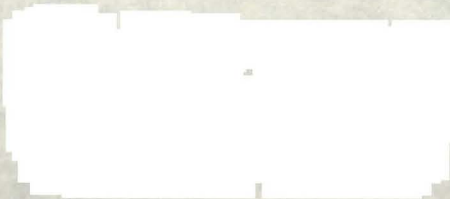
Mary E. C. McGlynn

June 1999

DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by myself, that it is my own composition and that it has not previously been presented for a higher degree. The research was carried out at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Dr. J. M. G. Barclay.

Signed:

A rectangular area of the document has been redacted with a white box, obscuring the signature of the author.

M.E. McGlynn.

Date:

9th June 1999.

ABSTRACT.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the dialogue that exists between the themes of divine judgement and divine benevolence as they are presented in the Book of Wisdom. I hope to demonstrate that these themes provide continuity, coherence, and an integrated reading of the text. The methodology by which I explore these themes is an examination of the literary genres employed by the author, as well as the techniques, structures, vocabulary, and verbal repetitions. I also make comparisons with other contemporary literature where this is significant.

The background to this examination is set out in the Introduction in which I have discussed the issues of the unity of the text, its genre, and possible provenance and dating. I have, further, attempted to present the literary and philosophical world from which the text emerged. The Book of Wisdom falls naturally into four sub-divisions, with a fifth section providing the theodicy which underpins the action and reflection of the other four. In fact, because of the complexity of the structure of the book, three of these units form part of one larger unit. For purposes of clarity, I have retained the five-fold division for the analysis, each of the five divisions forming a chapter of the thesis.

In the first chapter, I have highlighted the section in which the judgement/benevolence themes are focused in a series of questions and answers. In this section, the Mercy Dialogue of 11.15-12.27, I look at the origin of justice and mercy in the creative power of God, and the ways in which retribution is tempered and the merciful principle established. It is also in this section that we encounter God's elected people, and their exclusive status but equally exclusive responsibility. This theodicy, I have used to underpin the other sections of the text.

Chapter 2, I have analysed as a drama, warning those who do not value the moral order grounded in the creation of their imminent judgement and stylised destruction. God's benevolence in the drama, is exercised on the part of the righteous by the gift of immortality. In Chapter 3, I have compared the issues raised by the hymn to wisdom in relation to other praise-poems, and considered the gift of wisdom in the light of her role, knowledge and the educational paradigms by which she mirrors God's mercy. In the antithetical hymn of Chapter 4, I contrast the categories of false worship with their counterfeit paradigms which lead to judgement. The dialogue between judgement and mercy reaches a climax with the adaptation of the events of the Exodus and Passover narratives in Chapter 5. This section, I have cast as a literary labyrinth from which neither Egypt nor Israel can escape. Egypt's choices result in judgement and oblivion because of her idolatry, while, at each crisis point, Israel is granted the life-giving institutions of her faith to enable her to carry out her role. The analysis of this section reveals that Israel is both God's benevolence, as the educator of the nations, and the yardstick of God's judgement.

In my conclusion, I have summarised the principal literary motifs with their theological implications, and suggested some avenues for further study.

ABBREVIATIONS.

Aristotle:	
<i>Meta.</i>	Metaphysica
<i>Bar.</i>	Baruch
B E T L.	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium.
C B Q	Catholic Biblical Quarterly.
<i>En.</i>	Enoch.
H T R	Harvard Theological Review.
<i>Jub.</i>	Jubilees.
J Q R	Jewish Quarterly Review.
J S J	Journal for the Study of Judaism.
J S N T	Journal for the Study of the New Testament.
J S O P	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha.
J S O T	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament.
J T S	Journal of Theological Studies.
I Macc.	
II Macc.	I and II Maccabees.
N T S	New Testament Studies.
Philo:	
<i>Cherub.</i>	De Cherubim.
<i>Her.</i>	Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres sit.
<i>Mos.</i>	De Vita Mosis.
<i>Op.</i>	De Opificio Mundi.
<i>Plant.</i>	De Plantatione.
<i>Spec. Leg.</i>	De Specialibus Legibus.
Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon.
R B	Revue Biblique.
Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles.
Test. Ash.	Testament of Asher.
Test. Gad	Testament of Gad.
Test. Naph.	Testament of Naphtali.
<i>Tob.</i>	Tobit.
Xenophon:	
<i>Mem.</i>	Memorabilia.

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INTRODUCTION

'In short, a device was a mysterious notion, the expression of a correspondence: a poetry that did not sing but was made up of a silent figure and a motto that spoke for it to the eyes - precious in that it was imperceptible, its splendour hidden in the pearls and the diamonds it showed only bead by bead.' Umberto Eco. *The Island of the Day Before* (pp. 346-7).

Wisdom of Solomon, or the Book of Wisdom, is both an ancient and a curiously modern book. No less than the deconstructed literature of the present, post-modern age, it requires immersion in a total thought world, i.e. the world of an Alexandrian Jew at the turn of the first-century C.E. and a facility to be alive to all its allusions and complex interweaving of subject matter. It is also a book which is poetical, rather than poetic, in its composition and structure,¹ but its intention is decisively theological.

The theological concerns of *Wisdom* are centred upon the ultimate destiny of humankind: who will go forward to receive the immortality and glory that was inherent in the creation plan, and who will end life in the absence of glory, betrayed at the last by the wickedness they have espoused in life? As such, the book makes a sharp distinction between the 'righteous' and the 'wicked', and it is the antithetical relationship of these two groups, and God's treatment of them either by condemnation or by the exercise of special mercy, which forms the central theme of the book. This thesis is, therefore,

1. Various attempts have been made to establish whether the text is poetry or prose. See the study by Maries 1908: 251-257, which analyses *Wis.* 1-9 as three poems. Thackeray 1905, attempted to discover if there was Greek metre within the text of *Wisdom*. The most detailed review of this question occurs in Larcher who concluded that the author wished to write a poetic work, in the manner of biblical and Hellenistic poetry but that, while there are passages which may be identified as Hebrew parallelism, neither this pattern nor other rhythms are sustained and some passages must, therefore, be described as rhythmic prose, Larcher 1983: 83-91. The 1998 edition of Harper Collins N.R.S.V. (English translation with Apocrypha) sets *Wisdom* out in verse form. This is, perhaps, as far as we can go on this question.

focused upon this dialogue between judgement and benevolence as the theme which not only pervades all sections of *Wisdom* but holds it together as a coherent work.

This dialogue between justice and mercy includes an evaluation of the important gift of divine wisdom, as the means by which the righteous gain eternal life, set against a review of false worship in which the corrupting influence of idolatry leads to death. Thus, *Wisdom* is, as Reese has correctly noted, part of the literature of persuasion,² and the dialectic it unfolds is both important for Jewish self-identity and the external assessment of the place of Judaism within the wider context of the Graeco-Roman world.

Moreover, the way in which the justice/mercy balance is achieved, sustained and supported throughout the text, by literary structure and techniques, by narratives and dramatic tension, by vocabulary, allusion and omission, contributes to the way in which we understand *Wisdom's* theology. The picture of God and the creation/redemption plan which emerges cannot be divorced from the literary techniques employed, but is embedded in them and revealed as they are exposed. Accordingly, the methodology used to demonstrate this thesis is essentially a literary exploration of the text, i.e. a detailed examination of those techniques and their significance for individual sections and for the work as a whole. Additionally, inasmuch as *Wisdom* is

2. Reese 1990: 229-242. Perhaps we would do better to see it as 'persuasive' rather than in the formal category of persuasion literature, see below note 21.

essentially a work of literature rather than history, its impetus is also literary. Thus, in the uncovering of *Wisdom's* dialectic of judgement and benevolence 'bead by bead' we shall lay the text alongside other works of literature with which our author may have been familiar, or whose contents made claims which, in his eyes Judaism, and Judaism alone, was justified in making.

Before this exploration of the text can take place, however, we need to set in place some background information. Thus far in this introduction, we have presumed upon the unity of the text, an aspect of the work not yet discussed. Similarly, we have presumed upon the place and date of composition and, given the importance of these factors on the style and content of the book, they must also be subject to scrutiny. Further, we have recognised that *Wisdom* contains its own thought-world, and so it becomes necessary to sketch out how that world might look in terms of the literary matrix of the LXX, the influence of Graeco-Roman literature and aesthetics, and the significant emergence of Middle-Platonism and its possibilities for a re-examination of Jewish traditions. Finally, we need to consider the overall genre and structure of *Wisdom* with the implications and the responses inherent in that structure to each of the factors presented above.

1. The Unity of the Text and its Genre.

The majority of scholars are now in agreement that *Wisdom* is a unified work.³ There are a significant number of reasons for this opinion:

 3. Reese 1970: 145, Larcher 1983: 100-103, Gilbert 1986: 90-91, Lindez 1990: 64, Cheon 1997: 12, Grabbe 1997: 25. Even Zimmermann 1966: 132-3 and Horbury 1995: 194, both of whom posit a different origin for *Wisdom* from the other authors listed (see Dating and Provenance below), do not argue with the concept of one author or compiler.

4.

1. There is evidence of concentric structuring within the book,⁴ which would imply a single author working to some kind of pattern or plan. Several scholars have argued for an underlying mathematical design.⁵
2. There are significant repetitions of vocabulary found throughout the work, and the linguistic style would support a single author hypothesis.⁶ Reese's concept of 'flashbacks', i.e. a short repetition of a particular word or group of words which appears in more than one section of the book, is an important contribution to the single author debate. Reese has noted 45 examples throughout the work.⁷
3. A unity of outlook underlies each of the sections and the major themes are present in more than one section of the book.⁸
4. No part of an original Hebrew or Aramaic text has been found.⁹ Scholars who have proposed a Hebrew or Aramaic original of part of the text have not been widely supported.

One of the difficulties associated with any discussion on the unity of the text is that the question has rarely been regarded in its own right, but has been commonly linked to questions of provenance and whether or not there is a Hebrew or Aramaic original behind part of the text. Most recently, this idea

4. Grabbe 1997: 22.

5. Skehan 1945: 1-12 Stich count, Wright 1976a Golden mean ratio in *Wisdom's* structure (see Structure below p. 31).

6. Reese 1970: 1-24.

7. Reese 1970: 124.

8. Gilbert 1986: 90-91.

9. Marx 1921: 57-69. The Aramaic fragment found under the title *Wisdom of Solomon*, current in Spain in the 12th and 13th centuries, proved to be from a very different and unknown work.

of an original document in Aramaic has been revived by Horbury,¹⁰ who has argued convincingly from his work on Jewish epitaphs in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt that some Aramaic continued to be spoken in Egypt well into the Roman period. Nonetheless, it is a far cry from the existence of written Aramaic among the Jews of Egypt, to the existence of an Aramaic original for *Wisdom* for which we have no evidence. Moreover, Horbury's account takes little note of the themes which span the sections of *Wisdom* nor the symmetry with which they are constructed. Although he does not claim more than one author, his division of the book into two sections with widely differing subject matter seems to denote a certain ambivalence on unity.¹¹ What Horbury's work has achieved, however, is to change the shape of the provenance question (see below).

Wisdom's changes of style, and changes of principal subject, continue to cause problems for theories of the unity of the text, with more than one commentator suggesting that the unified work was finally completed by an aging author from a text he had begun in his youth.¹² This is to over-complicate the issue. If, as is the proposal of this thesis, *Wisdom's* theology and thematic unity is expressed in literary form, then the changes of style, metre, and subject have a counterpart in the *Aitia* of Alexandrian

10. Horbury 1995: 194. See also Ruppert 1972: 70-105 & Zimmermann who also gave *Wisdom* an underlying Aramaic text and Syrian provenance. Zimmermann 1966: 1-27, 101-135.

11. Horbury 1995: 196. His thesis at the least requires the existence of a translator, since he acknowledges that *Wisdom* was current 'mainly in Greek'.

12. Wright 1990: 557 and Skehan 1945: 492 n. 2.

literature, a form which also puzzled scholars by the seeming lack of thematic unity, but has lately been shown to have underlying themes and to follow concentric structuring.¹³

The development in Alexandria of the literary form of *aition*, a stylised explanation of the cause of some festival or institution, had two main objectives, to reassure and to inform. Those who travelled from the Greek city states to the centres of the hellenistic kingdoms felt a sense of alienation from their culture,¹⁴ compounded by the different peoples, customs, and cultural perspectives they were encountering in the cities of settlement. The *aitia*, with their geographical, mythological and religious references, thus provided the Greek settlers with their distinct identity and served to educate successive generations into that cultural frame of reference.

The form of an *aition* lay in the questions that it purported to answer. In the *Aetia* of Callimachus, a question is posed to the Charites in fr. 7.19 surrounding three local customs: the cult of Apollo at Anaphe (fr. 7.19-21), and two narratives concerning Heracles, the Lindian farmer (fr. 22-23) and the defeat of the Dryopes and Thiodamas (fr. 24-25). Each story is recounted individually, although they have a common theme in the journey of the Argonauts,¹⁵ and the stories can thus be said to form a cluster around the questions.

13. Harder 1993: 99. Harder notes that while there is no rigid frame, there is ring-composition throughout the books and it is now possible to detect that the structure of Callimachus's *Aetia* is the product of 'careful consideration' (p. 100). The literary form was based upon the concept of $\alpha\iota\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$ as a first cause in philosophy and also, consequently, as a starting point for diaeresis.

14. Bing 1988: 50-58.

15. Harder 1993: 100-103.

If the *Aetia* of Callimachus was answering some central question in addition to the localised questions, there are insufficient data in the fragments to allow us to frame that question.¹⁶ It is also true to say that literary forms have an inherent instability so that new forms and subjects may be created or added. Consequently, we need to note the development of the *aition* during the Latin revival of Alexandrian poetry, in the period of the late Republic and early Empire. At this point the extended form of *aition* as, for example, Virgil's *Aeneid*, appears to be framed around one central question, the founding and destiny of Rome, which may or may not appear in the text as a question but towards which all the questions and explanations tend.¹⁷

Wisdom, similarly, is built around a series of questions. These occur at 5.5, 5.8, 8.5-6, 9.13-17, 11.21, 11.25, 12.12 and 12.20. Some of the questions operate within the text as a pair. We see this at 5.5 where, in the second speech of the wicked, they talk of the righteous man whom they had despised: *How was he numbered among the children of God, and among the saints is his portion?* (πῶς κατελογίσθη ἐν υἱοῖς Θεοῦ, καὶ ἐν ἀγίοις ὁ κλῆρος αὐτοῦ ἐστίν;)¹⁸

This produces, inevitably, a second question at 5.8, regarding the fate of the

16. Harder suggests that a more general question may be shaped around the role of the Muses and the narrator, see Harder 1993: 104. This would seem to be borne out by Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* which, although opening with a narrator, mentions as the first of the Argonauts, Orpheus whose mother was Calliope the Muse (Book 1 lines 23-24). Also, Apollonius begins Books 3 and 4 with an invocation to the Muses.

17. In Book 1 of the *Aeneid*, although there are a series of questions directed to the Muse and related to Aeneas' offence towards Juno (lines 8-11), the real purpose of the poem is contained not in a question but a statement, i.e. in lines 6-7 '*This was the beginning of the Latin race, the Alban fathers and the high walls of Rome*' (genus unde Latinum Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae). Rome's achievements are set in the context of her noble beginnings.

18. All translations throughout this thesis are those of the present author.

wicked themselves, which is a direct consequence of 5.5:

What has pride profited us, what good did riches and false pretences do us?

(τί ὠφέλησεν ἡμᾶς ἡ ὑπερηφανία; καὶ τί πλοῦτος μετὰ ἀλαζονείας συμβέβληται ἡμῖν;)

The questions posed at 12.12 and 12.20-21 are also related questions, as both are concerned with the matter of God's judgement of the nations and Israel and the levels of judgement experienced by each group. God's sovereign right to make such a judgement is expressed in 12.12:

For who shall say, What have you done? Or who shall stand against your judgement? Or who shall accuse you for the nations that perish, which you have made? Or who shall come to stand before you as advocate for

unrighteous men? (τίς γὰρ ἐρεῖ, τί ἐποίησας, ἢ τίς ἀντιστήσεται τῷ κρίματί σου; τίς δὲ ἐγκαλέσει σοι κατὰ ἐθνῶν ἀπολωλότων, ἃ σὺ ἐποίησας; ἢ τίς εἰς κατάστασιν σοι ἐλεύσεται ἔκδικος κατὰ ἀδίκων ἀνθρώπων;)

In 12.20-21 we see that same right being enacted in favour of Israel, but it is set against the backdrop of God's patience with the nations and the extra demands which are placed upon Israel:

If you did punish the enemies of your children and those who were due death with such deliberation, and granting time and place where they may be changed from their wickedness, with how much carefulness (ἀκριβείας) did you judge your own sons, to whose fathers you gave oaths and promises?

The questions at 8.5 and 8.6 pertain to the benefits of living with the assistance of divine wisdom:

If riches are a possession to be desired in life, what is richer than wisdom (τὴ σοφίας πλουσιώτερον) who operates the universe? And if prudence works, who more than she is the artificer of what exists? (τίς αὐτῆς τῶν ὄντων μᾶλλον ἐστὶ τεχνίτης;).

These benefits are being considered from a private point of view. The questions represent humans in their quest for happiness, in search of the Platonic ideal of 'likeness to God'¹⁹ and the secondary issue of whether virtue alone is sufficient for happiness or must virtue imply other benefits?²⁰ It is in our final cluster of questions, at 9.13 and 9.16-17, that the importance of the individual setting out upon a path of virtue is most fully endorsed, for the presence of divine wisdom brings knowledge of God and searches out the things of heaven:

For what man can know the counsels of God, or who will lay to heart what the Lord wills? (τίς γὰρ ἄνθρωπος γνώσεται βουλήν Θεοῦ; ἢ τίς ἐνθυμηθήσεται τί θέλει ὁ Κύριος; 9.13).

9.16-17 repeats the questions of 9.13 but also provides the answer. It is the holy spirit/wisdom who acts as the bridge between humankind and the plans of God for the created order.

19. Plato *Theaetetus* 176B.

20. This is the issue of the τέλος ἀγαθῶν or the end or purpose of goods, which is discussed more fully in Chapter 3 pp.171-176.

Although each of these questions will be discussed again within its own context, by isolating them briefly we are enabled to see them in relation to the central themes of *Wisdom*: i.e. who will face the judgement of God and who will receive mercy? How can we know what is pleasing to God so that individually we may lead lives of virtue and collectively participate in the creation plan? How does one attain the immortality granted to the righteous man in 5.5? Thus, the questions are not random, or merely rhetorical, but express the concerns which *Wisdom* as a whole is attempting to answer.

Further, there is, in *Wisdom*, an unframed question, which is the identity of the righteous, referred to as the children or sons of God (8.21), 'God's people' (19.22), 'the saints' (18.1, 18.5), 'the holy nation' (17.2) 'the holy people' (10.15), and who, in Chapter 10, become the personification of the righteous with their emergence as a nation. At no point does our author clearly identify them as the Jewish nation, but their history, calling, cultural reference points and, in the final section of the book, their institutions, all mark the Jews as the people destined to show what is pleasing to God and to receive the immortal existence which was God's desire for creation.

In considering *Wisdom* as an *aition* formed around our key questions, we are left with two problems. The first of these concerns the other possible genres which have been suggested by the critics. Reese and Winston are both in favour of the *logos protreptikos*, or didactic exhortation,²¹ while

21. Reese 1970: 117-20. Winston 1979: 18-20. The *logos protreptikos* is a Greek rhetorical genre. Reese also sub-divides the smaller units into the rhetorical categories: *aporia*, or problem literature for Chs. 6-10, a *diatribe* for Chs. 1-6, an *apologia* for Chs. 11-15, and a *synkrisis* for Chs. 16-19. Reese's attempt is the most comprehensive, but he is aware of the difficulties of establishing firm genres for *Wisdom*, see Reese 90.

Beauchamp and Gilbert have argued that the genre is an encomium.²² The *logos protreptikos* is a lost genre which has been reconstructed from Aristotle's lost work *Protrepticus*. This form scholarship has been able to recover, though not firmly, from the fact that it is believed to be the basis of Cicero's *Hortensius*.²³ The encomium was also defined by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, and its object was to persuade the listeners into veneration of some quality or person who embodied certain qualities.

It is too simplistic to see these genre definitions as wrong and elements of both of these forms are to be found in *Wisdom*. As Grabbe has stated, 'By focusing on only one or other aspect of the book, one could make a case for a variety of genres within the book'.²⁴

The close links between the form of the encomium and the praise-poem as defined by Callimachus will be explored in Chapter 3 of this study when we come to examine the gift of wisdom and her relationship to kingship.²⁵ Also, Reese describes the genre of one of the smaller sections (6.12-16 + 6.21-10.21) as *aporia*, or problem literature,²⁶ whereas we note the presence of aporetic questions at 9.13-17 as an integral part of the praise-poem.²⁷

22. Beauchamp 1964: 493 and Gilbert 1984: 301-13.

23. See Grabbe 1997: 26.

24. Grabbe 1997: 25.

25. See Chapter 3 of this study pp.184-185 and n.82.

26. Reese 1970: 107.

27. The *Aeneid*, Book 1 lines 8-12 also asks aporetic questions. These type of questions could, in fact, have found a place in a variety of literary forms.

Further, Reese defines 6.17-21 as sorites and the diptychs of Chs. 11-19 as a form of syncrisis, and both of these definitions are workable and enhance our understanding of the text. Nonetheless, it would be somewhat singular to set out to write a *protrepticus*, according to the rules of Greek rhetoric, in which almost the first half of the work is couched in the poetic form of Hebrew parallelism. The looser form of *aition*, on the other hand, with its passages of narrative, its oracles, origins of festivals, its future revelations and its 'travelling' motif,²⁸ allows, even invites, the author to express his total education (*paideia*) in all its varying forms. *Wisdom's* author, as we shall see, is deeply concerned with traditional, Hebrew wisdom, with Isaianic material, and with the narratives of the Exodus, and is not simply emulating forms from another culture but is engaged with the creation of something new from his own cultural perspective.

If, however, we accept the definition of *Wisdom* as an *aition* in which the calling, history, and expectation of Judaism, in addition to its paradigm importance for the created order, is explained, then we also have to note our second problem. That problem is that now we have two extended *aitia*, *Wisdom* and the *Aeneid*, written in approximately the same time frame, representing two distinct nations and expressing a common interest in Alexandrian culture although in widely dissimilar ways, both of which make the claim that the destiny of humankind rests in their view of God and the

28. For the importance of the 'traveller' motif in *aitia* with the attendant ideas of the hostility or kindness of the reception, see George 1974: 26. Note also *Wis.* 19.13-16.

world, their concepts of piety, and their institutions.²⁹ This may be a parallel development, or it may be that one was produced in response to the other and there is a relationship between these two texts which we should explore more carefully. This is one of the questions we will consider in our examination of the literary milieu from which *Wisdom* appeared. For the present, our interest in this possibility is restricted to the matter of dating and provenance, to which we will now turn our attention.

2. Provenance and Dating.

The majority of scholars usually assume that *Wisdom* was written in Alexandria. There are several reasons for this hypothesis:

1. There is a similarity throughout the book to the thought and the expressions used by Philo of Alexandria.³⁰

2. The Exodus story is given prominence in Chs. 11-19. This is not, in itself, conclusive as the Exodus is such a strong tradition for Judaism generally.

However, as Collins notes, the plague cycle of the Egyptians is extended in *Wisdom*, whereas the sins of the Canaanites are only briefly mentioned.³¹

3. *Wis.* 17.17 is thought by some scholars to be an allusion to ἀναχώρησις.

29. The piety of Aeneas is a constant feature of the text, e.g. 1.10, 3. 84-89, 4. 350-362. Also it is his role as a pious man which leads to, and increases, his sufferings.

30. The best account of these similarities of thought is provided by Winston 1979: 59-63

31. Collins 1997: 178.

This term refers to the habit of Egyptian labourers to 'withdraw' to the desert when their tax burden became too heavy.³²

Additional factors would include our author's adaptation of the principles of Middle Platonism, which is assumed to have arisen in Alexandria from the middle of the first century B.C.E. with the work of Eudorus,³³ and the use of Alexandrian literary forms.³⁴ However, we must not attribute too close an Alexandrian association from this, since we cannot measure the ripple of ideas. It is possible that ideas home-grown in Alexandria were speedily developed elsewhere. The literary influence of the Alexandrian, poetic school was fairly pervasive in the Hellenistic age, but reached new heights with the Latin revival. Moreover, one of the components of Middle Platonism was a new interest in Pythagoreanism, and we find Cicero accrediting the revival of Pythagoreanism to a Roman, Publius Nigidius Figulus (98-45 B.C.E.). Figulus would then be a contemporary of Eudorus which would seem to suggest a constant and speedy traffic in ideas between Alexandria and Rome.³⁵

The only other place which has received attention from scholars as the possible provenance of *Wisdom* is Syria. Both Georgi and Zimmermann have suggested this location, but for differing reasons. Georgi favours Syria because of the apocalyptic message of *Wisdom*, Chs. 1-5, and because he feels that apocalyptic movements were more intense in Syria.³⁶ Whilst this is

32. Grabbe 1997: 90.

33. See Dillon 1977: 115.

34. Swete 1914: 268, equates these two points: '(Wisdom) clearly belongs to a period when the Jewish scholars of Alexandria were abreast of the philosophic doctrines and the literary standards of their contemporaries.'

35. Cicero *Ad Fam.* i. 1. 3. Against this, perhaps, is the fact that Cicero does not seem to know of Eudorus.

36. Georgi 1980: 395-396.

undoubtedly true, it does not rule out any apocalyptic activity in the diaspora. Zimmermann's reason seems to be an inability to align the geography and the animal life described in *Wis.* 11.17 with Egypt.³⁷ Although this seems very weak, as the absence of lions and bears in Egypt does not mean that our author could not have known of them, we have to remember that Zimmermann's provenance is secondary to his theory of an Aramaic original for the text, and that this factor necessitated another location where Aramaic was the principal spoken language. Horbury's suggestion, that there was still considerable Aramaic spoken in the Egyptian diaspora as late as Roman Egypt (see pp.4-5 above), reduces the need to find another, less suitable, location for *Wisdom's* origin. In summary, then, although no one piece of evidence is unassailable, the balance of probabilities favours Alexandrian provenance.

A variety of dates has been proposed for *Wisdom*, ranging from the third century B.C.E. to the second century C.E. all of which are listed in Larcher's review of possible datings.³⁸ For the most part, scholars have rejected the more extreme dates. For datings in the early Ptolemaic period, there is a connection with possible persecutions.³⁹ Reputed persecution under Ptolemy Philopater (221-204 B.C.E.) seems to stem largely from the strange and unhistorical account of 3 Maccabees. Philometor (180-145 B.C.E.), if

37. Zimmermann 1966: 131-133.

38. Larcher 1983: 141-146.

39. See Grabbe 1997: 87.

anything, seems to have favoured the Jews, or perhaps he merely exploited them. He permitted the settlement of Onias and his community at Heliopolis (Leontopolis) after Onias' bid for the High-Priesthood in Jerusalem had failed.⁴⁰ Relations may have deteriorated after the death of Philometor in the ensuing power struggle between Physcon (Euergetes 145-116 B.C.E.) and Cleopatra II, where the Jews supported the latter. However, Physcon married the Queen, thereby ending the hostilities.⁴¹ Barclay does note another possible outbreak of violence against the Jews in Alexandria in 88 B.C.E. but states that this is not well-supported by evidence.⁴² Taken altogether, these reports and suspicions show that relations between Jews and non-Jews in Alexandria in the Ptolemaic period were often strained, but there is little evidence of any sustained persecution.

The question of possible persecution arises again in the work of some more recent scholars. On the whole, modern scholarship favours an early Roman dating for *Wisdom*. Winston, following Lindez has listed thirty-five words which do not make their appearance in Greek literature until the first century C.E.,⁴³ although arguments from linguistics are not entirely reliable because they are dependent on the luck of preservation. Collins also comments that the idea in *Wis.* 14.17, that one form of idolatry arose out of the need to

40. Barclay 1996: 35-37.

41. Barclay 1996: 38.

42. Barclay 1996: 40 and n. 62.

43. Winston 1979: 22-23. Winston refers in his bibliography to an earlier edition of Lindez (1969). In the 1990 commentary the analysis of vocabulary occurs on pp.65-68.

flatter a ruler from far-away, suits Roman rather than Ptolemaic rule.⁴⁴

Further, Collins notes that the term κρότησις (*Wis.* 6.3) is used in Greek papyri to refer to the Roman occupation of Egypt.⁴⁵ Finally, Larcher suggests that the creation of a death-pact for the wicked rulers in *Wis.* 1.16 may have been influenced by the suicides of Antony and Cleopatra after Actium (31 B.C.E.).⁴⁶

All of the above are good reasons for dating the book in the early part of the Roman occupation. However, some scholars have argued more specifically for the reign of Caligula.⁴⁷ In 38 C.E. relations between Jews and non-Jews in Alexandria seem to have reached crisis level, with the outbreak of serious rioting against Jews after the visit of Herod Agrippa. As with the early Ptolemaic datings, the keynote of this claim depends heavily upon a reading of the death of the righteous man in *Wis.* Ch. 2 as an indicator of some act of historical persecution against the Jews.

This argument gains embellishment from Philo's accounts of the riots (*In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium*), but is it necessary to read *Wisdom* Ch.2 in this way? Firstly, *Wisdom* is an unusual book, though admittedly not an impossible book in terms of its tenor and tone, to have been produced from a situation of crisis. Cheon's argument, in line with Goodrick, that it was the aftermath of such a situation which produced *Wisdom*, has serious difficulties

44. Collins 1997: 179.

45. This suggestion was originally made by Scarpat 1989: 22.

46. Larcher 1983: 157.

47. Scarpat 1989, Winston 1979 and, most recently, Cheon 1997 have contended strongly for the reign of Caligula as the date of *Wisdom*. Earlier, Goodrick had made a similar suggestion, Goodrick 1913: 15-16.

attached to it.⁴⁸ Were this the case we could expect to see some reflection of the actual events in the telling - an aspect singularly missing from *Wisdom* Ch.2, where there are no riots, lootings, or burnings, but the systematic torture and destruction by a ruling group of a single, righteous man to test the value of his concept of justice (*Wis.*2.12-20). Also, *Wisdom's* acceptance and preservation by Christians depended upon its good standing within Judaism as 'Solomonic prophecy and teaching'.⁴⁹ A dating which occurs post 40 C.E. would make it difficult, chronologically, for *Wisdom* to achieve the standing required to make it important for Jewish readers prior to its acceptance by Christianity. Further, the supposed hatred of our author for the Egyptians, who were not responsible for the maltreatment of Jews during the 38 C.E. rioting,⁵⁰ may be readily explained by their literary situation within the Old Testament, i.e. a position as the traditional enemies of Israel, whose treatment of the nation placed God's plans at risk. No single reason cited above rules out the possibility of a dating in the time of Caligula, but such a dating is difficult to support on the arguments set forth by Cheon and Winston.

Thus, we accept a dating some time in the early Roman period, i.e. the span of about thirty to forty years immediately after Actium. This satisfies the questions of vocabulary and the allusions to Roman occupation and the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty, while also allowing sufficient time for Jewish use and

48. Cheon 1997: 130 n.17 and Goodrick 1913: 16.

49. Horbury 1995: 196.

50. Cheon 1997: 140. Cheon's account of the riot of 38 C.E. indicates that the anti-semitic attitudes and actions were the results of Greek political activity. For the 'hatred' of the Egyptians, see Cheon p.130 where he quotes Winston 1979: 24.

recognition of *Wisdom* for catechetical purposes. Similarly, it sits well with our author's use of Middle Platonism, and it is the development of this philosophical movement that will occupy our next section.

3. The Emergence of Middle Platonism.

Scholars have long been aware that *Wisdom* was influenced by Greek philosophy. The question is, how much was our author so influenced? From this question has come a range of opinion, with Goodrick at one end of the spectrum labelling *Wisdom* as eclectic and knowing only that which was commonplace,⁵¹ and Reese at the other claiming a more profound philosophical knowledge.⁵² The difficulty lies in the fact that, unlike Philo, our author did not write treatises, but wove his philosophy in and out of a literary framework. It is also true to say that Middle Platonism itself was often perceived to be eclectic, but from the first century B.C.E. many philosophical terms and ideas had become common to most schools, and the piecing together of doctrines developed by opposing philosophers had produced a coherent theory.⁵³ The works of philosophers such as Posidonius (135-51[50?] B.C.E.) and Antiochus of Ascalon (130-68 B.C.E.) had resulted in a kind of understanding between Platonism and Stoicism⁵⁴ and Neopythagoreanism, as a component of this form of Platonism, as we have noted, was gaining ground in all serious philosophical circles.

51. Goodrick 1913: 410.

52. Reese 1970: 12-13.

53. Dillon 1977: xiv-xv.

54. Dillon 1977: 118.

What then were the distinctive features of Middle Platonism as Eudorus framed or received them?⁵⁵ Eudorus describes a position,⁵⁶ which he calls Pythagorean, which shows a return to the notion of transcendence, i.e. a unitary causal principle (ἐνιαῖος αἰτία) above the Monad and the Dyad, the two causes. This idea of a supreme one, or God, creates the need for an intermediate realm which is the domain of the Monad acting upon the Dyad, or in other words, the causes of existing things. Thus, the actualisation of created things and their stability is now the province of the Monad, the intermediate figure between God and matter. As Tobin notes, although each Middle Platonist structures the intermediary realm in a distinctive way, its existence is crucial to them all.⁵⁷ Philo's *logos* operates in this intermediate realm as the metaphysical reality through which the universe was ordered and is sustained. In *Wisdom* that intermediate realm belongs to divine wisdom (8.1) who, as we shall see, also equates with the *logos* who brings about the tenth plague in 18.15.

Is this a departure or a continuation of Jewish tradition? It is traditional in that there are as many claims and more made for wisdom as there are

55. Dillon assumes that Eudorus had some Pythagorean pseudepigraphon on which to base his opinion that there was a cause above the Monad and Dyad. See Dillon 1977: 121. Of Eudorus' works we know of one, and have some evidence for others. Of the *Diairesis tou kata Philosophian Logou*, some part of the ethics and physics is summarised in extracts in the *Anthology of Stobaeus* (*Ecl. Stob.* 11.42.7, ed. Wachsmuth) by Arius Didymus, Augustus' court philosopher. Plutarch cites him in his essay *On the Generation of the Soul in Timaeus* (1013B). Simplicius also mentions a commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* in his own work of the same name and states *In Physica* that he wrote on the first principles of the Pythagoreans, 181.10. Achilles uses him as a source for *On the Universe* and Alexander of Aphrodisias mentions him in his commentary *On The Metaphysics* (988a 10-11).

56. A fragment of Eudorus indicating this transcendence occurs as cited above in Simplicius *In Aristotelis de Physica Commentarii* 181.7-30.

57. Tobin 1996: 112.

traditional wisdom writings. Wisdom is aphorism and riddle (Prov. 1.19 and 1.5-6) and may be mined as a precious metal as in Job 28. As a female personification bringing insight, instruction, righteousness, justice and equity (Prov. 1.2-3) she is rivalled by personified Folly whose counsel invites humans to their death (Prov. 9.13-18). She was also the delight of God, somehow originated by God before the creation (Prov. 8.22) and her joy is her relationship to humankind (Prov. 8.31). In Ben Sira she is clearly identified with Torah, though not in any narrow sense (Sir. 39.1-11) and wisdom's residence with Israel at God's command is made actual in this identification with the Law (Sir. 24.8-12).

Each of these aspects of wisdom is equally relevant to the presentation of divine wisdom as it appears in our book. Yet, there is a new element added in the perception of wisdom as the Monad of the intermediate world, i.e. the world soul of Stoic thought. As such, she is a mirror that reflects God's breath, goodness, and purity (7.26) and her actions must be the activity of God in the world. Her ultimate objective is the restoration of God's creation hopes for humankind (2.23), lost as a consequence of humankind's alliance with the devil, i.e. Adam's fall (2.24). It is in the furtherance of these hopes that she teaches, guides, punishes and brings into being each of God's creation 'ideas' in order to extend God's mercy and restoration to humankind.⁵⁸ Thus, wisdom is crucial to the justice/mercy discussion because it is wisdom who gifts

58. For Plato, the Ideas seem to have been numbers, though differentiated from mathematical numbers, being in some way unique. For the source of Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* 1, possibly Antiochus, the Ideas are transcendent entities and can be seen as thoughts in the mind of God. See Dillon 1977: 47-48.

immortality to those who have shown themselves desirous of being 'likened to God', in the Platonic phrase.⁵⁹ Moreover, in re-interpreting his traditions in the light of Middle Platonism, our author is able to present them in terms that are totally rational and easily understood within a common philosophical culture.

4. The Literary World of the Book of Wisdom.

In addition to a common philosophical heritage, the Hellenistic world shared an international forum of learning. Intellectuals moved from city to city depending upon luck and patronage. Fraser records that Rome began to receive the drifting scholars from about 100 B.C.E. and there was a more sustained migration from Alexandria after Actium.⁶⁰ Ethnic background did not debar anyone from this common Hellenistic heritage - only from knowledge of the particular ethnic traditions to which individuals subscribed.

The ethnic traditions for Alexandrian Jewry were contained in the Septuagint which had become authoritative scripture for the Egyptian diaspora, but was virtually unknown and unread outwith the Jewish community. The failure of LXX to make an impact upon the Greek-speaking world, consequently, led to a secondary literature which attempted to interpret it both internally for the Jewish community and externally for the wider Hellenistic world.

It is this tradition of Demetrius the Chronographer, Aristobulus, and

59. See above p. 9 n. 19.

60. Fraser 1972: 794.

the Letter of Aristeas, that *Wisdom* stands.⁶¹ The core of our author's work is based upon the LXX and traditional biblical understanding. His future judgement is taken from the prophetic concept of the 'Day of the Lord' (3.13), and the catastrophe which comes upon the wicked is described in terms which are borrowed from Isaiah 59.17. Although wisdom is portrayed as the world-soul, she is not unrecognisable from the wisdom of the Bible,⁶² and the king she assists is Solomon who has long associations with the sapiential tradition. The review of idolatry also draws upon the conventions of idol polemic, and the final diptychs have as their basis the Exodus/Numbers accounts of the plagues of Egypt, the Exodus of Israel, and the wanderings in the wilderness. Further, Skehan has noted *Wisdom's* interest in the Psalms,⁶³ and Gilbert has demonstrated the importance of Gen. 1-3 as a continuing theme within the text.⁶⁴ We must conclude, then, that if our author is creating something new, he does so around concepts that are rooted in the sacred texts and self-identity of his community.

Yet, even the most original of writers is tied, either positively or negatively, to the literary conventions of his or her times, and for *Wisdom* as for the Latin poets, that entailed embracing the intellectual imperialism of Hellenistic culture. As we shall see in our examination of the text, for our

61. Our author will not, of course, have presumed that he was writing scripture. Also Ben Sira's grandson, writing around 100 B.C.E. speaks of translations of the Law, the Prophets and '*the rest of the books*', thereby implying that the contents of LXX. were more or less agreed. Demetrius wrote a history entitled '*On the Kings of Judaea*' using biblical material as his base. Aristobulus wrote a '*Life of Moses*'.

62. See p. 21 above.

63. Skehan 1948: 384-397.

64. Gilbert 1987: 323-344.

author this alignment was principally one of forms. The apocalyptic drama of Chapters 1-5 owes something to the changes in dramatic forms and emphases which were introduced mainly by Euripides,⁶⁵ while the hymn to wisdom (Chs. 6-10) follows the pattern of a praise-poem as that form was defined by Callimachus. In all probability, the idea for a literary labyrinth, which tests Israel and equips her for her role among the nations, i.e. Chs. 11-19, is also borrowed from Callimachus.

Wisdom's indebtedness to the Alexandrian school of poets is the main connecting line that we may draw between *Wisdom* and the *Aeneid*, as Rome was equally subject to a Hellenistic cultural hegemony. Commentators since Grimm (1860) have often noted expressions of similarity between *Wisdom* and passages of the *Aeneid*,⁶⁶ but the incidences are rare enough to be easily accounted for by immersion in the same literary stream.⁶⁷ Wright goes further and suggests that the same mathematical structure underlies both works, a factor we shall discuss when we turn to the structure of *Wisdom*.⁶⁸ Also, the two texts are radically different in their overall approach to their themes and questions, even though those themes and questions are closely allied. Finally,

65. Conacher 1967: 36-49. Schmitt 1996:29-30 and n. 63 & 64. See also Glover 1904: 164-65 on the importance of Euripides for Virgil.

66. Goodrick 1913: 343, Winston 1979: 267, Larcher 1983: 976, 1015, 1025, Mazzinghi 1995: 171.

67. In *Aeneid* III - The Wanderings, the Trojans suffer plague (lines 138-9, *Wis.* 18.20), hunger (lines 142-4, *Wis.* 16.19), three days of darkness (lines 195-206, *Wis.* 17.2-21) and aerial pollution (lines 225-258, *Wis.* 16.1). These misfortunes, however, are common in journey stories, see Apollonius' return of the Argonauts Book IV. Similarly, there is a parade of future Romans in the *Aeneid*, Book VI lines 753-855. In much the same way *Wisdom* lists the patriarchs who formed the nation and, consequently, became the blueprint for salvation in Chapter 10, but again Apollonius opens with a parade of heroes who search for the Golden fleece, *Argonautica* I. 23-233. Thus, this particular device may be an expected part of such a composition.

68. Wright 1967a: 223-224.

we have no evidence that our author knew Latin. Direct association between these two texts is, consequently, unlikely.

What of indirect association? Virgil's poetry is likely to have travelled quickly to Alexandria for two reasons: Rome's inclination to have her artists affirmed in what had been the cultural capital of the Hellenistic world; and the early Prefecture of Cornelius Gallus, a poet himself, an admirer of all things Alexandrian and a patron of Virgil.⁶⁹ If we are to say that *Wisdom's* concerns for the responsibility and just administration of rulers (Wis. Chs. 1-6) are, in some measure, a response to the Roman annexation of Egypt, may we not also suggest that the existence of such literature, with its pride and its claims of destined rule, may also have prompted a counter-claim in favour of God's chosen people?

In some ways *Wisdom's* author rejects established convention, particularly in his dealings with the parade of heroes (Ch. 10, see also n. 65 above). *Wisdom's* fathers of the nation are unnamed, although identifiable from biblical tradition, and our author is also silent on specific locations, which in Alexandrian poetry are used concretely, to give substance to the narrative and to familiarise readers with the broad area of cultural influence. This may reflect a cultural sensitivity on the part of *Wisdom*, in that specifically Jewish references reduce the value of his more general typology. However, it may also denote a reluctance to claim the patriarchs as heroes in

69. Gallus was the first Prefect appointed by Augustus after Actium. Webster 1964: 305. According to Glover, both Gallus and Virgil were pupils of Parthenius of Nikaia, see Glover 1904: 165.

the accepted sense of that term.⁷⁰ It is the alignment of the patriarchs with wisdom which enables them to become the nation called by God, i.e. they are heroic only in the sense of their fulfillment of the potential of the creation plan. Their goal of immortality is not their inherent due as a result of virtue, but that which wisdom furnishes as an expression of the mercy of God towards those who desire virtue and are responsive to her discipline.

5. The Structure of the Book of Wisdom.

Wisdom is most often divided into three main parts:

- a. The Book of Eschatology (1.1-6.21)
- b. The Book of Wisdom (6.22-10.21)
- c. The Book of History (11.1-19.22).⁷¹

Where scholars disagree is in the beginning and ending of the literary units,⁷² and, as in the case of Reese, where he wishes to define the sections commonly perceived as digressions (11.15-15.19) as a separate book, The Book of Divine Justice and Human Folly.⁷³

In addition to the main divisions, we are also indebted to Reese and Wright for their work on the use of inclusions (where the same or a derivative word opens and closes a section) as the means of marking out each internal

70. Callimachus seems to have expressed a similar reluctance to perceive his heroes in the light of the established rules of epic. See *Aetia* The Prologue lines 3-6.

71. See Kolarcik 1991: 1-28 for a full review of the question of structure to that point.

72. Gilbert 1984: 301-2, for example, closes the Book of Eschatology at 6.11. Fichtner 1938: 7, and Reider 1957: 2, both include Chapter 10 with the second half of *Wisdom*. Wright has two main divisions, with 'Immortality as the Reward for Wisdom', and 'The Nature of Wisdom and Solomon's Quest for Her', forming two sections of the first half, see Wright 1964: 558.

73. Reese 1970: 91.

unit,⁷⁴ and we would have to add Gilbert for his work on concentric parallelism within the units.⁷⁵

By focusing on *Wisdom's* aetiological questions we can confirm that tripartite division. As we noted earlier, *Wisdom's* questions occur in clusters. The first pair of questions, at 5.5 and 5.8, pertain to the final judgement of God for the faithful, righteous man who receives immortality, and for the wicked rulers whose pride and achievements have amounted to nothing. The drama which leads up to this moment, i.e. the decision by the tyrants to exploit the vulnerable and to show their contempt for the laws of justice in the execution of an innocent man, climaxes with the destruction of the wicked in some cataclysmic event (5.17-23). This drama consequently forms one unit. As it opens with direct narration to the rulers (1.1), the further addresses to the rulers related to their duties of impartiality (6.7), piety (6.10), and acquiring wisdom and immortality (6.17-21) are included with this section, although it should be observed that they also form the introduction to the second section on wisdom, who reappears at 6.9.⁷⁶

The second section, the praise-poem, begins properly at 6.12, but retains its links with kingship until 6.25 in order to prepare the way for the entry of the narrator/king at 7.1.⁷⁷ This narrator/king is important because it is his interaction with divine wisdom which prompts the next set of questions

74. Wright 1967b: 165-184, Reese 1970: 123.

75. Gilbert 1970: 301-303.76. Wisdom is active in Chapter 1, and it is presumed from her role as it is described there that she is present throughout the drama. Formally, she does not re-appear until 6.9.

77. We will see throughout that our author weaves each section into the next. It is this technique which is responsible for the disputes over the beginnings and endings of each section.

(8.5, 8.6) in relation to the individual and the *telos* (see p. 9 above). Individual desire for wisdom is an expression of the wish to achieve happiness (εὐδαιμονία) by being as like God as possible, i.e. by striving for and exercising the virtues. Thus, our narrator/king is not simply an ideal ruler but the paradigm of individual man, and his praise of wisdom is as the criterion of knowledge bringing information about humankind's relationship to God and the world around us.

The third set of aetiological questions (9.13-18) also belongs to this section, and exhibits a broadening of the questions and information which are the scope of the individual. From the individual's desire to be like God, Solomon reflects upon God's design for creation and how humankind can know that design. As with the questions relating to the *telos*, the answer is wisdom, who interprets and communicates God's ideas to a collective group, allowing '*the ways of those who lived on earth*' to be reformed in the light of what pleases God (9.18). This collection of individuals is then formed into a specific nation (Ch.10), and the training and testing of the nation is our third literary unit.

The third unit is built around the cluster of questions at 12.12 in respect of God's right to judge the nations, and the contrasting treatment of Israel in the question of 12.20. This section highlights the differing fates allotted to Israel and Egypt in a distinctive re-telling of the events of Israel's wilderness experience and the Egyptian plague cycle. On the basis of current scholarship, this unit is perceived as linear in development, and the two

smaller units at 11.15-12.27 and 13.1-15.19 are understood to be rhetorical digressions because they interrupt the flow of the Israel/Egypt comparisons.

In reality the experience of the nations is circular. Israel enters the wilderness via the Red Sea (10.19) and returns to it again to emerge victorious from the confrontation (19.5). Egypt begins her acts of hostility by the death edict to drown the Hebrew children in the Nile (11.7). This reason is given again to justify the death of the first-born of Egypt and the drowning of Pharaoh's army (18.5). This circularity calls for a re-appraisal of the internal elements of the third unit.

In this thesis it will be argued that God's right to judge the nations, the question of 12.12, and extend mercy towards Israel, the question of 12.20, is presented in the form of a literary labyrinth or maze, i.e. a spiral poem which represents the void of chaos and from which Israel is guided to safety. The two digressions at 11.15-12.27 and 13.1-15.19 are, consequently, not digressions but discoveries made in the context of this literary construct. Moreover, it will be seen that in addition to the formal questions of 12.12 and 12.20, the passage on mercy seems to be answering a series of unspoken questions on the themes of God's nature as the creator, how and to what purpose he judges and punishes his creatures, and what is his motivation in dealing separately with Israel.⁷⁸ It is, thus, a dialogue setting out the boundaries of God's mercy, and will be referred to throughout this work as the

78. Larcher has noted that the force of the οὐ γὰρ at the opening of 11.17, appears as the response to a possible question and our author does seem to be countering imaginary objections throughout this section, see Larcher 1983: 676.

Mercy Dialogue. The long exploration of all forms of idolatry which follows this dialogue, includes an assessment of the illusions and the failure to achieve creation potential of all who practice idol-worship. Idolatry is presented, then, as wisdom's antithesis, a corrupting influence which leads to disillusionment and death.

The successive punishments of Egypt, as a result of their adherence to animal cults, follow directly from this reflection on idolatry. The tests set for the two nations in their symbolic roles as the righteous and the wicked are both divided and divisive. The first of these occurs at 11.4-14, and it is the responses of the two nations to this first test which reveals the nature of God and his relationship to the world (the Mercy Dialogue) and the true state of those who worship stone and wood instead of '*the incommunicable name*' (14.21). In the six tests that follow, Egypt's faithfulness to her animal cults leads to her humiliation, while Israel receives the life-giving institutions of her faith.

From this brief survey, it can be seen that centering our structural analysis upon the aetiological questions does not produce a basic structure in conflict with that worked out by other scholars and other methods. What it does do, however, is to change the function and the emphasis of the internal units, and it is with this revised emphasis that we now offer the following structural analysis of *Wisdom* as a whole, which will provide the basis of our literary analysis.

The Structure of the Book Of Wisdom.

1. The Apocalyptic Drama (1.1-6.21)⁷⁹ - Themes : the immortality offered to the righteous and the future judgement of the wicked.
- a. Prologue (including the exhortation to the rulers to be just - 1.1-1.16).
 - b. The First Speech of the Wicked Rulers (2.1-2.20).
 - c. God's Reversal and Revaluation in the judgement (3.1-4.20).
 - b. The Second Speech of the Wicked Rulers (5.1-13 - questions at 5.5 and 5.8).
 - a. Judgement of the Wicked and Exhortation to Rulers to Acquire Wisdom (5.17-6.11 - 6.12-21 overlaps both the first and second sections).
2. The Praise-Poem to Wisdom (6.12-10.21) - Themes : The Divine Gift of Wisdom. Wisdom enacts God's plans for the paradigm man and the paradigm nation.
- a. Introduction on Kingship and Wisdom (6.12-25).
 - b. Beginning of Solomon's Narrative - Solomon as Paradigm Man (7.1-6).
 - c. Wisdom as the Criterion for Knowledge:
 - i. Relationship to the *Telos Agathon* (7.7-14).
 - ii. Knowledge of the Planetary Systems and the World (7.15-22a).
 - iii. Knowledge of Wisdom as the World Soul or *Logos* (7.22b-8.1).
 - iv. Knowledge of Wisdom as the Virtues (8.2-8, questions at 8.5-6).
 - b. Solomon as Paradigm King (8.9-21).
 - a. The King's Task with Wisdom (Prayer 9.1-18, questions 9.13 and 9.16,17).
 - d. Wisdom's Blueprint for Salvation (10.1-21, overlaps the theme of section three).
3. The Nations enter the Labyrinth (11.1-19.22) - Themes : Israel tested in the wilderness, Egypt in the Plague-cycle. God's mercy and punishment. The void of idolatry. Judgement for Egypt and Israel a New Creation.
- Israel Enters the Wilderness via the Red Sea (10.18-19) Egyptian Army drowned.
 Ist Diptych - Israel and Egypt Divided (11.4-14).
 The Mercy Dialogue (11.15-12.27).
 The Review of False Worship - Wisdom's Antithesis (13.1-15.19).
 6 Diptychs (16.1-19.22):
 The Hunger Diptychs (2, 3#, 4)
 The Death Diptychs (5,6#, 7)
- # Israel's failures and punishments.
- Israel emerges from the Red Sea as a New Creation. Egyptian Army drowned (19.1-5).
 19.6-22 also forms a summary and conclusion.⁸⁰

79. The structure of the first literary unit described is in broad agreement with both the structural analysis and the literary purpose detailed by Schmitt 1996: 12-49.

80. The Mercy Dialogue and the Review of False Worship, in the third of our literary units, have their own internal structures which we shall discuss in relation to those sections.

There is a further aspect to the complex question of *Wisdom's* structure, which we must briefly mention. This is the possible existence of numerical patterns in the text underpinned by theories of proportion, such as the Golden Mean ratio.⁸¹

The idea that *Wisdom* was somehow structured along mathematical lines is not new.⁸² The difficulty with each attempt has been that scholars, in order to preserve the integrity of the patterns, have ended by forcing the verse divisions.⁸³ Similarly, Wright's theory that the Golden Mean ratio operates between the sections of *Wisdom*, based upon Duckworth's work on the *Aeneid*, collapses at several critical points.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, Wright's theory, though not firm, has gained a certain amount of acceptance.⁸⁵

Perhaps what lends weight to Wright's thesis is that it finds support in aesthetic theory as well as other literary works.⁸⁶ Pollitt notes that the most deeply-rooted and abiding feature of ancient Greek thought was the concept that something beautiful could be created only by the mastery of symmetry, i.e. a relationship which expressed the creation of *cosmos* within chaos and so

81. Wright 1967a: 219-232.

82. Maries 1908: 251-257 was concerned with strophic balance, i.e. two lines of strophe and antistrophe in Hebrew poetry which together form one verse. Skehan 1945: 1-12 based his observations on individual lines (stichs).

83. Maries suggested 1.1-3.12 as a poem on immortality, and 3.13-6.11 as a poem on judgement. Verse 3.12, however, does not clearly progress from immortality to judgement. Similarly, Wright divides verse 7.22. The introduction of Ziegler's critical edition of the text in 1962 has not solved the matter of internal divisions in *Wisdom*, as his divisions were challenged by Skehan 1962: 438-439, Beauchamp 1964: 491-526, Reese 1965: 391-399, and Wright 1967b: 165-184.

84. According to Wright 6.22-25, 9.1-13, 13.1-9 all fall outwith the patterns, 1967a: 219-232.

85. See Grabbe 1997: 23. For a critique of Wright's theory see Gilbert 1986: 89.

86. Le Grelle 1949: 132-145 has found evidence of numerical patterning in Virgil's *Georgics*.

87. Pollitt 1974: 15. Symmetry in ancient thought was a proportional relationship, i.e. one part must be commensurate with another, rather than a cheiral relationship as in modern understanding.

mirrored the ordering of the universe.⁸⁷ That our author understood this concept is clear both from his ideal of an ordered universe (11.20) and from the existence of the concentric structuring, upon which all scholars are agreed. The most likely situation is that there is some form of numerical patterning, according to the literary conventions of the time.

Within the structure of *Wisdom* as a whole, the opening drama serves to set out the dangers of the failure to conform to the ethical demands placed upon those who administer justice. It is, consequently, a warning of judgement to come, which hangs over the other reflections of the text. Its positioning in terms of its impact and its relationship to other sections of the book is important, and the picture it presents of the attributes of God ranged against wickedness anticipates the heavenly vindication of the righteous in 5.5. Yet, our author does not view the creation as doomed by the existence of wickedness in the world (1.14-15), but instead understands that God has somehow made provision for the protection of the righteous. This provision is related to the initial creation plan (2.23), in which a good creation is sustained by God's power and expressed in terms of judgement and benevolence. It is, accordingly, not with the apocalypse that we will begin our analysis, but with our author's reflection on God's creation powers and the means and reasons for punishment. The Mercy Dialogue, as we have seen, is specifically Israel's discovery after the first Diptych and is additionally the rationale for the subsequent Diptychs, but in it also, as we will see, are resonances and keys which will increase our understanding of the text as a whole.

1. THE INTERPRETIVE KEY OF 11.15-12.27:
THE MERCY DIALOGUE.

'Fear death by water. I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring'
T.S. Eliot. *The Waste Land I* (lines 55-56).

This section has usually been seen by commentators¹ as one of two important digressions, forming, together with the antithetical Diptychs or *syncrisis*, the second half, and the third literary unit of the Book of Wisdom. The other digression is the extensive critique on all forms of idolatry (13.1-15.18), and both these sections are framed by the first and second Diptychs.

Scholars, however, are expressing increasing dissatisfaction at such clear-cut divisions. Larcher² does not specifically refer to the two sections as digressions in his analysis of *Wisdom's* structure. Reese³ understands the seven Exodus comparisons to be a fitting climax to a book which illustrates '*God's power to give eternal life*', but the use of these particular examples implies that '*salvation is the monopoly of one people*.' For Reese, the purpose of the digression, coming as it does after the first comparison, is to illustrate the principle that God's mercy is extended to all, and to counteract this false view of salvation as a Jewish monopoly. Both Schmitt⁴ and Lindez⁵, although acknowledging the digressions, seem unhappy about the division. Schmitt stresses that the relationship between the punishment of the plague of animals and the animal worship cults of Egypt indicates a much broader polemic against false worship, in which the two independent discussions form a

1. Wright 1990: 558, Schmitt 1986: 101, Lindez 1990: 317, Winston 1979: 224.

2. Larcher 1983: 224.

3. Reese 1970: 393.

4. Schmitt 1986: 101.

5. Lindez 1990: 317.

part. For Lindez, there is a thematic relationship between the manner of God's action towards the Egyptians and Canaanites and the more general criticism of pagan religion, and this thematic link is indicated by the explanatory comments on the worship of beasts at 11.15, the opening of the first digression, and 15.18-19, the closing of the digression on idolatry.

Perhaps the most significant factor in the assessment of these two sections as digressions lies, as Reese noted, in their relationship to the seven comparisons or Diptychs. The first Diptych, on the theme of thirst, occurs at 11.4-14. This is then followed by the passage on God's punishments and mercy (11.15-12.27) and the two chapters on idolatry (13.1-15.19). The other six Diptychs then follow in quick succession (see Structure pp. 26-33 above).⁶ Thus, provided that the Diptychs are understood as a linear progression, the intervening passages must be seen as an interruption to that progression. It must also be evident that such an analysis of the Diptychs focuses interest upon their progression, which has the effect of underplaying the importance of these other two sections in spite of the proportion of the text given over to them.

What then is the proposed new model for understanding the second half of Wisdom? As we noted in our introductory section on structure, the Diptychs follow a circular pattern. However, in proposing that the final unit

6. 16.2-5 Quails v. small beasts.
 16.6-15 Insect stings v. bronze serpent.
 16.16-29 Hail and rain v. Manna
 17.1-18.4 Darkness v. Pillar of fire.
 18.5-25 Death of the first-born v. Moses/Aaron/& covenants.
 19.1-5 Strange death in the Red Sea v. Way through the sea.

be regarded as a literary labyrinth we are not simply responding to the recurrent themes in the Diptychs, but to the circularity which closes around the concepts of mercy, discipline, substance, idolatry, illusion, and punishment in this final part of *Wisdom*. Also, the dialogue cannot really be read separately from the saving action of God in the first Diptych, as it is this '*unhoped for*' (11.8) reply to Israel's danger which occasions the reflection on why and how God acts.

11.7

The reflection, consequently, begins with Israel's entry into the wilderness where wisdom's assistance has brought her. Scarpat⁷ has observed the verbal parallels which exist between the confession of the wicked in Wis. 5.7:

Ἀνομίας ἐνεπλήσθημεν τρίβοις καὶ ἀπωλείας, καὶ διωδεύσαμεν ἔρημους ἀβάτους, τὴν δὲ ὁδὸν Κυρίου οὐκ ἔγνωμεν:

We have surfeited ourselves in tracks of lawlessness and destruction

And found our way through impassable deserts,

But the way of the Lord we have not known

and the comment on Israel at the onset of her wilderness experience in 11.2:

Διώδευσαν ἔρημον ἀοίκητον, καὶ ἐν ἀβάτοις ἔπηξαν σκηνάς:

They found their way through uninhabited deserts, and pitched their tents in impassable ways.

Thus, Israel's position in entering the wilderness was, as the representative of the 'righteous', no different from that of the enemies who surrounded her except

7. Scarpat 1996: 364.

in one particular. Through the intervention of divine wisdom in the lives of individuals Israel had been fashioned as a nation (10.1-13). It is as a consequence of this prior intimacy with wisdom that wisdom now approaches to '*show herself favourable to them in the tracks*', (ἐν ταῖς τρίβοις φαντάζεται αὐτοῖς εὐμενῶς) and to '*come to meet their every thought*' (καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἐπινοίᾳ ὑπαντᾷ αὐτοῖς 6.16). *Wisdom's* purpose is educational and transforming, as is indicated in the *sortes* of 6.17-20 and the title given to her in 1.5, '*the holy spirit of discipline*',⁸ and in the wilderness experience she begins the training of Israel for her special role. When Israel is thirsty, in the first of the Diptychs, she calls upon God (ἐπεκαλέσαντό σε 11.4). The same verb is used in Solomon's prayer (7.7) and it is the spirit of wisdom who comes in response. Although wisdom is not mentioned again in the Diptychs, it is a presumption of the author that she remains with Israel and leads the people through the Red Sea (10.18).

It follows from this that the benefits granted to Israel in the wilderness are not simply benefits for their own sake, but are part of that training. They are also opportunities for Israel and upon two occasions they indicate her failure to grasp her divinely appointed task (16. 6-11, 18.20-22). God's grace in dealing with Israel promotes consideration of the opportunities afforded to

8. In 1.5 wisdom is referred to as the 'holy spirit' of παιδεία. Note that at 11.9 παιδεύομενοι, Israel is disciplined with mercy, and at 12.22 παιδεύων is also applicable to Israel.

Egypt, i.e. the reflection contained in the Diptychs, and the similar opportunities granted to the Canaanites upon Israel's entry into the Promised Land (12.2-7). The question as to why Israel receives preferential treatment is answered in her call to God. The failure of the Egyptians and Canaanites to respond to God draws from our author the conclusion that it is the thoughts of idols and their construction which is the '*corruption of life*' (φθορὰ ζωῆς 14.12).

Thus, when Israel is exposed to the spiral of dangers in the wilderness, there is an acute awareness that, although she also is tested, her punishments are tempered with mercy (11.9). The Mercy Dialogue of 11.15-12.23 is, consequently, not a change of theme but the chief discovery made by Israel as a result of her early experience in the wilderness. It is, moreover, a discovery which is in every respect confirmed by the other Diptychs.

One further point may be helpful before we consider the Mercy Dialogue in detail. The ways in which circles of chaos and the subsequent return to order were expressed poetically followed certain conventions. We may, therefore, look at *Wisdom* in relation to another poem thought to be an extended labyrinth metaphor, namely Callimachus's '*Hymn to Delos*'. To make this comparison is not to claim any direct literary dependence, but merely to discuss some common features and to examine differences of approach in the hope that our passage may emerge with greater clarity.

Callimachus' *Delos* is a multi-layered poem, based upon the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* which provides its traditional foundations in the story of the

birth of Apollo on the island of Delos. Nonetheless, the Callimachean poem is a re-casting of those traditions. Bing⁹ believes *Delos* to have been written in a time of political stability, but this stability is clearly not felt by the poet, who is attempting to find points of anchorage in a mythical world which is unstable and chaotic. Leto, the mother of Apollo, is trying to find somewhere to give birth to her child by Zeus while Hera, Zeus' wife, sets her 'watchers', Ares and Iris, to prevent her.¹⁰ Leto's journey, then, around Greece and the islands and colonies, drawing attention to the specific history and associations in each place, is a maze of geographical names and cultural reference points. Yet, none of these places can afford to offer Leto shelter because of the risk of Hera's anger. At times the images of chaos are so central that the landscape seems to be running away from Leto. In the end, it is the island of Delos who offers her shores as a sanctuary. Risking Hera's anger she becomes the nurse of Apollo,¹¹ creating a particular intimacy and affection between herself and the god. And, finally, Delos' action, rather than bringing about her ruin, restores some sort of order. Apollo is born and Delos, also known as Asteria, is forgiven by Hera because she had once thrown herself from a cliff rather than succumb to Zeus' advances.¹²

One of the themes of *Delos* is purity:

οὐ σύ γ' ἐμείο φίλη τροφὸς οὐδε Κιθαιρῶν ἔσσεται.

9. Bing 1988: 64-67.

10. *Delos* lines 64-67.

11. *Delos* line 6.

12. *Delos* lines 246-248.

εὐαγέων δὲ καὶ εὐαγέεσσι μελοίμην (lines 97-98):

Not you nor Kithairon will be my dear nurse,

being pure, I would be an object of concern to the pure.

It is in order to provide a testing ground for this purity that the labyrinth of chaos and difficulty exists. Thus, Bing is correct in stating that purity is no longer an ideal but is given a functional expression within the poem.¹³ That which is distinguished or drawn out from the labyrinth has been refined.

Nonetheless, Leto's initial difficulties arise from the fragmentation and alliances which are formed by the members of the Olympic pantheon. She could avoid Hera's lands granted by lot;¹⁴ she found she could not avoid Hera's sphere of influence.

How does this relate to, or differ from, the presentation of Israel in the wilderness in *Wisdom*? The representation of the Passover and Exodus narratives in *Wisdom* have a different order and emphasis from the source of the stories in Exodus and Numbers, in fact, an order dictated by the need to relate the blessings of Israel in the wilderness to the plagues of the Egyptians in a comparison or *syncretism*. During the course of Israel's journey, certain events occur in which the circumstances of the wilderness threaten to overwhelm the people: thirst, hunger, rebellion, being without guidance, illness, and the

13. Bing 1988: 113.

14. *Delos* lines 74-75.

natural dangers of storm or sea. Any one of these could bring destruction to the nation and cause God's plans for a 'holy people' (λαὸς ὅσιος 10.15) to be aborted. The ways in which these dangers are met and overcome by the miracles of the wilderness also leans hard upon Israel's cultural reference points of the Red Sea crossing, quails and manna, and the pillar of fire and cloud, but a new element has been added in wisdom's role as preserver/cherisher (διεφύλαξεν 10.1), i.e. the nurse of God's plans.

Each of these points has recognisable parallels with *Delos*, but there are crucial differences also. Hera's influence upon the two watchers means that the natural world acts against Leto and the chaotic elements of the *Delos* story are overcome solely by the purity of the island character. The purity of wisdom is a factor in her discernment of the 'righteous' and in the assistance offered to Israel (7.23), but in our labyrinth wisdom is not left to assume that role alone. As one who is *'privy to the mysteries of God, and a lover of his works'* (8.4) she is part of the plan of God for the training of Israel. Thus, it is not spite or cruelty which creates Israel's chaos but the refining work of God, who is in control of the cosmos and requires it to act in favour of Israel and against her enemies. At the centre of Israel's labyrinth there is no chaos but God, who loves everything he has created (11.24), and is deeply engaged with the moral ordering of the universe (11.20). It is this engagement, expressed in the Mercy Dialogue which provides the rationale for the past experiences of Egypt and Canaan, spoilt by their idolatry. It is the same engagement which underpins the future experiences of Israel as the representative of the righteous. Thus, it can

be seen that this dialogue is not merely central to our understanding of the criteria God uses for punishment or mercy, but it is also a key passage in interpreting the other narratives within *Wisdom*. It is with this in mind that we examine this dialogue in detail.

Themes of the Mercy Dialogue:

The central themes of the Mercy Dialogue stem from the understanding of God as creator with responsibility for the entire created order including, and especially, humankind. As creator, God must uphold the moral order and, therefore, he must judge and punish human sinfulness. In the Dialogue God's power to inflict devastating punishment (11.17-18) is set in contrast to his willingness to extend mercy (11.23-24), and the real punishments he does inflict are seen as cumulative warnings (12.2), i.e. the 'little by little' mercy principle. Not only is God the creator, but he has set in progress a stable creation which will deter wickedness and promote goodness (11.20d), and as an extension of this ordering principle, God's sovereign power is described as the means by which a righteous God disseminates righteousness and protects the innocent (12.15-18). It is in emulation of these concepts of *philanthropia* that Israel is bound to respond as the template nation (12.19-22). This section, then, is an important part of our author's theodicy based around the cluster of theological questions of 11.21, 25; 12.12, 20-21, questions we need to keep in mind not just in the Dialogue itself, but as we deal with each section of *Wisdom*.

1. God as Creator.

As we noted, the idea of God as creator is the idea which undergirds the Mercy Dialogue and the emphasis on that creative role is strongly featured (11.17, 20, 24; 12.9, 12, 15, 16, 18). This, however, is the obverse of the coin, but the reverse is equally significant, for it is the failure of recognition of God as creator which is responsible for the failures of false worship (11.15; 12.2, 4, 9, 15, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27), which results in punishment and, ultimately, final ruin (τὸ τέλος τῆς καταδίκης 12.27). Because of these negative and positive aspects of the same theme, it is necessary to include verses 11.15-16 in this analysis, as the reflection on mercy is so closely tied to considerations of false worship and punishment. Thus, these verses form an introduction to the dialogue.¹⁵

As we have already noted, it is the failure of the Egyptians to recognise God as the creator which prompts the reflection upon punishment and mercy. Their reasoning is faulty (λογισμῶν ἀσυνέτων 11.15) and leads them astray so that their worship is offered to the senseless, to serpents who are without the qualities of rationality possessed by humans (ἄλογα ἔρπετά), and to other animals. The punishment for this failure is the plague of senseless creatures sent against them. The ἀλόγων ζώων (11.15c) is, according to Winston, a technical, philosophical term which expresses a clear distinction between men who have the use of reason, and animals.¹⁶ Verse 16, in which the

15. Winston 1990: 10 sees these two verses as an integral part of the dialogue. Larcher 1983: 120, and Wright 1978: 558 both understand the verses as a separate announcement of the principle, illustrated in the diptychs, that the punishment is peculiarly related to the sin.

16. Winston 1979: 232.

principle which lies behind the diptychs is re-stated,¹⁷ is frequently taken as a development of the laws of talion which are expressed throughout the Pentateuch in such concepts as '*an eye for an eye*'.¹⁸ This same principle is a feature of other apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works, and occurs in Philo,¹⁹ and it will become more important when the Diptychs are analysed in greater detail.²⁰

Verse 17 opens the dialogue proper with a reference to the powers of God as creator (ἡ παντοδύναμός σου χεῖρ), who created the world out of 'formless matter' (ἐξ ἀμόρφου ὕλης). There are several significant points to be borne in mind here, and we need to consider them individually. Firstly, the picture of the all-powerful God, shaping and fashioning the material of the universe into worlds, provides an immediate contrast with the crawling beasts of v.15 and heightens the absurdity of such worship. This contrast gains impact from the use of anthropomorphism by giving a visual quality to both claimants for divine status.²¹ Secondly, the '*hand of God*' is also a term used to describe God's providence in *Wis.* 14.6, where the reference is to Noah who was enabled to escape the flood and protect a further generation because he was steered by God's '*hand*' (τῇ σῆ κυβερνηθεῖσα χεῖρ). However, in *Wis.*

17. *Wis.* 11.5 although 11.16 is closer to the talion principle.

18. *Exod.* 21.23, *Lev.* 24.18, *Deut.* 19.21.

19. *Jub.* 4.31-32, *II Macc.* 4.38, *Test. of Gad* 5.10. Also in Philo *De Vita Mosis* 1.98 where God's choice of the Nile as the recipient of the first plague (i.e. the Nile transformed to blood) is seen as a consequence of various river cults practised by the Egyptians in which the Nile plays a prominent part.

20. See Chapter 5 of this study.

21. Swete 1914: 327, marks the tendency in the LXX to avoid some of the anthropomorphisms in the original Hebrew text. In a late book such as *Wisdom* this use of anthropomorphism can only be deliberate and designed to maximise the contrast stated above.

10.4, again in a reference to Noah, it is wisdom who steers (κυβερνήσασα) the righteous. Not only does this confirm the continued presence of wisdom in the text, even after she is no longer explicitly mentioned, but it also implies that the hand of God in 11.17 is likely to be synonymous with wisdom in her creative role.²²

The third point we need to consider in relation to 11.17 is the problem created by the term 'formless matter' (ἀμόρφου ὕλης). This expression refers to a Greek philosophical concept in which both God and matter are eternal, and is in conflict with the doctrine of creation out of nothing as Judaism and Christianity interpreted the Genesis account.²³ There has been considerable scholarly debate on these two words with many commentators contending for a kind of double creation in Wisdom, in which God first creates the matter and then fashions the world from the matter.²⁴

The dualism implied by the author's use of this concept, however, in no way compromises God's role as creator. God created everything to have its own being (1.14) and the creation was essentially good. God loves everything that is, for how could he have made anything which he hated (11.24)? His engagement with the created order is expressed forcefully in 12.13 where we are told that he 'cares for all' (ὃ μέλει περὶ πάντων). In Isaiah 43.12-21, God asks two things of Israel in return for giving them something to drink in the desert, that they be witnesses (v.12) and that they declare his praise (v.21).

22. *Wisdom* 7.17. See also Gregg 1922: 110.

23. For a fuller discussion see Winston 1979: 38-40.

24. Larcher 1983: 676-681 gives a full account of the arguments for a double creation and the difficulties arising from that position. In fact, this argument stems from an earlier debate related to *Wisdom's* inclusion in the canon and is not relevant to our discussion.

Verse 20 declares that even the wild animals will honour him because he gives water in the desert, and it may be that it is this that our author has in mind as his basis for a concept of universal care. Far from imposing some limitation upon God's might, it is our author's objective to illustrate the full range of God's power. God could have sent terrible beasts among the Egyptians (11.17-18), which would have caused their instant destruction (11.20). God can, in fact, display his strength at will (11.21,12.18), for he can do everything (ὅτι πάντα δύνασαι 11.23), and the whole world is as a grain weighed in the balance (ὡς ῥοπή ἐκ πλαστίγγων) or a tiny dewdrop (ὡς ῥανίς δρόσου ὀρθρινῆ 11.22) before him.²⁵ Nor does anyone have the right to question how he deploys that power, as we see from the questions taken from Job 9.12 and Job 9.19, and the effect of the τίς γὰρ ἐρεῖ, τί ἐποίησας; is to assert the total independence of the one who judges the nations he has made (12.12).²⁶

It is clear from this that the inclusion of *'formless matter'* is not intended to promote any view in which God's power in creation is limited,²⁷ but rather to demonstrate that power. There is some support here for Scarpat's idea that the term παντοδύναμος, used here, and to describe God's word poised to inflict the tenth plague in 18.15, was coined by Wisdom's author

25. The reference here is to Isaiah 40.12-17 with particular emphasis being given to v. 15 Εἰ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ὡς σταγῶν ἀπὸ κάδου, καὶ ὡς ῥοπή ζυγοῦ ἐλογίσθησαν, 'Since all the nations are accounted a drop in a bucket, a grain held in the balance.'

26. See Introduction, for the importance of these questions for the whole of this reflection (pp. 7-10 and 26-33 above).

27. Both Winston and Schmitt stress that creation *ex nihilo* was not formulated as a doctrine in Judaism in Wisdom's time, and that Jewish ideas on creation were much more fluid, as is evidenced by Philo *De Cherub* 35. See Winston 1979: 38-40, and Schmitt 1986: 105-106.

specifically to describe the total potential of God in designing and ordering the cosmos.²⁸

In fact, our author is setting up several contrasts here: the power of God as against the claim that senseless beasts are gods, which is shown to be an absurdity; the reality and enormity of the power of God against unlimited chaos as expressed in Gen.1.2;²⁹ and finally the destructive capability of God's power, i.e. what he could do in judgement, is set against the ways in which God acts in mercy.

In our introduction we noted that the force of the οὐ γὰρ at the opening of 11.17 appears as the response to a possible question,³⁰ and that our author seems to be countering imaginary objections throughout this section. In this instance, the question would seem to relate to the method employed by God to punish the Egyptians - why punish with insects when something more ferocious would serve the purpose better? In reality, the contrasts set up by our author, elaborately stressing God's role as a creator fully in command of both his creation and his own power, are there to serve a deeper purpose. It is in this light that we must examine the alternative punishment, the '*bears*' and '*bold lions*' in v.17, and the spectacle of the newly-created dragon/serpent of v.18.

28. Scarpat 1996: 377.

29. Gen 1.2 LXX ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, '*invisible and unorganised*'.

30. See Introduction, p. 29 n. 77 above.

2. The Hypothetical Instruments of Punishment (11.17-19)

In Philo's *De Vita Mosis* there is a question similar to the imaginary question countered by our author in 11.17-20:

Why did God visit the land with such insignificant creatures and omit to send bears or lions or leopards (παρεῖς ἄρκτους καὶ λέοντας καὶ παρδάλεις) or other kinds of fierce animals? And Philo continues:

*'Why did God not send at least the Egyptian asps, whose bite is deadly?'*³¹

Taken together, the order and form of these questions are sufficiently different to cast doubt on the idea that one is merely a copy of the other, and sufficiently close to indicate that the comparison between the insects and the fierce animals, rather than being a comparison of size or reputed strength, may be a formula which holds symbolic significance.

The idea of bears and lions being used as instruments of judgement occurs frequently in the Old Testament.³² In the LXX,³³ which was the source for both Philo and our author, both animals appear together in 1 Sam. 17.34-36, Lam. 3.10, Hos 13.7-8, Amos 5.19, and in the visions of Dan. 7.5. In Lamentations 3.10, amidst a series of pictures of the inescapable judgement of God and Israel's misery, the image is drawn of God as a she-bear lying in wait or of a lion hiding from its prey, and in the book of Amos there is similar imagery although the expected danger is the 'Day of the Lord'. In Hosea 13,

31. Philo *Mos.* 1.109-110.

32. 2 Kings 2.24, Amos 5.19, Hos 13.7-8, Job 4.10, 10.16, Lam 3.10.

33. M.T. for Prov. 28.15 has paralleled lion with bear. LXX pairs the lion and the wolf.

there is yet another order: panther, leopard, bear, young lions, and finally the wild beasts of the field, will each form part of the judgement against an idolatrous Israel who has forgotten the wilderness experience. Each of the passages we have examined uses the metaphors of lions or bears to portray a scene of expected judgement, but the expected recipient of that punishment is Israel, and the implied or actualised threat gains its validity from a breach of the covenant between Israel and God.

In two of the passages in which bears and lions are linked some form of gradation is also a keynote. In 1 Sam. 17.34-36, David points out to Saul that he has already killed a lion and a she-bear when they stole from the flock, here a metaphor for Israel. David's confidence that he will be able to deal similarly with Israel's next threat, Goliath, stems from the steps he has already taken. Goliath is the 'uncircumcised Philistine', outside of Israel, as the lion and bear are outwith the flock.³⁴

This story, like the others to which we have referred, is a story of Israel's danger, but this time the peril does not come from God angry at the broken covenant, but from forces outside Israel which threaten her existence. The narrative also presents us with intensifying threats to Israel's safety, yet it is not a true sequence, for the figures of the lion and the bear are merely included to anticipate the outcome of David's confrontation with Goliath. It does, however, raise the possibility that Wisdom's sequence of bear, lion, dragon is perceived by our author as an intensifying series with the dragon as the ultimate

34. The presentation of Goliath in these verses is hardly of a man, the emphasis is upon his size and the immense difficulties of penetrating the metal plates of his armour, and he is clearly a representative Dagon figure, almost entirely brass (1Sam 17.4-7).

symbol of God's wrath in some kind of cataclysmic event. As Larcher has noted, apocalyptic literature tended to create terrifying, composite creatures, both to lend texture to, and to symbolize, the abnormality of the conditions.³⁵

Larcher's suggestion is given support by Dan.7.1-12. Dan. 7 depicts a vision in which four strange, composite beasts rise up from the sea. Verses 15-27 of the same passage offer an interpretation of Daniel's vision, in which each of the beasts represents a kingdom and the fourth beast³⁶ will successfully make war on the saints until he is destroyed by the intervention of the Most High, whereupon the saints inherit the kingdom (Dan.7. 22-27).

In examining these passages we now have some criteria in place for assessing divine punishment where God's anger is expressed in terms of animal metaphors. These criteria are undoubtedly not exhaustive, given the sheer range of metaphor used for God's actions within the O.T., but may provide us with a skeletal framework which we can use for analysis. Thus, the animals are wild, capable of killing humans, and are most usually expressed as a formula which includes bears, lions, and leopards, i.e. they are large animals whose reputation for ferocity is well-known. The random order of the listing shows that there was no fixed formula, and it is the effect of accumulation which indicates increasing danger. Where the list is restricted to known animals there is a connection

35. Larcher 1984: 683.

36. i. A lioness with wings of an eagle. ii. A bear on its side. iii. Leopard-like, with bird's wings and four heads. iv. A creature of amazing strength with ten horns and teeth of iron. Daniel's fourth beast is not necessarily a dragon-figure, although it is sometimes seen as such. The columns of fire associated with this story come from the throne of the Ancient of Days (Dan 7.9) and not from the beast.

with Israel and, more specifically, with the covenant. Where, however, the list includes composite, mythical beasts, these act as heralds of an event of apocalyptic magnitude.³⁷

The punishment options for God in his role as creator of the cosmos are, in fact, prescribed by association and by literary convention. The bears and lions he could have sent turn out to have long-standing resonances with Israel, and symbolize God's anger towards Israel for the displacement of the covenant in national life. On the other hand, as creator of the cosmos, he could make new creatures, (the link between κτίσσασα in 11.17 and νεοκτίστους in 11.18 is not accidental), previously unknown (ἀγνώστους 11.18), filled with rage (θυμός),³⁸ breathing out jets of fire (πυρπνόον φυσῶντας ἄσθμα) and blowing noisy smoke (ἡ βρόμους λικμωμένους καπνοῦ),³⁹ while sparks (σπινθήρας 11.18) flash from their eyes. Clearly, these dragons

37. The exception to this is the wonderful description of Leviathan in Job 41, which becomes mythical in terms of size and scale. However Leviathan's function is totally different, coming at the end of a speech in which God's role as creator is stressed and honoured by the diversity of his creatures. Also, Leviathan begins as a crocodile - becoming, in the course of the passage, a figure for the deity. See Crenshaw 1992: 76.

38. Or 'poison', see Gregg 1909: 111.

39. This description of the dragon has generally proved difficult to translate in any satisfying way. See Larcher 1984: 682, and Goodrick 1913: 250. Goodrick claims that βρόμους which is usually translated by some reference to smell, as in 'scents' A.V., should be βρώμους. However, in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, 3.1302, the word βρόμος is used of the roaring of the bulls of Colchis as the column of flame leaves their mouths. λικμάω, winnowing, hence 'blowing away' has also proved difficult. A variant reading occurs in Ms G. λικμωμένους from λικμάω 'the flicking of a serpent's tongue'. Our author could, of course, have been playing with the similarity of sound.

symbolise the apocalyptic option for punishment, their capacity for harm causes instant death, but even the sight of them results in desolation (11.19). The passage goes on to state that without any of these creatures (καὶ χωρὶς δὲ τούτων) the Egyptians might have been blown away (λικμηθέντες) by the 'breath of your [i.e. God's] power' (ὑπὸ πνεύματος δυνάμεώς σου 11.20). The λικμωμένους/λικμηθέντες word-play here shows the intimate connection between God, the dragon, and the apocalyptic desolation, and is further reinforced by the similarity of the phrase 'by the breath of your power' in 11.20 with the 'mighty breath' (πνεῦμα δυνάμεως) that will stand against the wicked and blow them away (ἐκλικμήσει) in the judgement passage of 5.23. In a similar way, the portrayal of the dragon as 'full of rage' (θυμοῦ πλήρεις 11.18) recalls the description of the hailstones (θυμοῦ πλήρεις 5.22) used by God in his judgement.

Wisdom's dragon, then, stands for apocalyptic judgement, but, given the force of the description, we have to ask whether that is the only feature which it signifies? The first point to note is that the dragon has been hellenised.⁴⁰ The emphasis placed upon the danger from its eyes (ἡ δεινὸς ἅπ' ὀμμάτων σπινθήρας ἀστράπτοντας 11.18) recalls Medusa, whose

40. Larcher 1984: 683. Neither Job's Leviathan, nor Daniel's beast have dangerous eyes, although in both cases the eyes are described.

glance could turn to stone, or the basilisk who similarly could kill with its stare, and this is a possible reading of 11.19.⁴¹

Our dragon, of course, like the lions and bears is hypothetical.⁴² What reason could our author have for the introduction of animals, symbolising wrath in the context of the covenant, as with the lions and bears, when the recipient is Egypt who is outwith the covenant? Similarly, what reason is there for the creation of a dragon, signifying an apocalyptic event, where the dragon and the event are, in fact, hypothetical? The answer is, clearly, to correct false views of God.

The differences between the punishments imposed upon Israel and those imposed upon the nations are quite clearly drawn out in *Wisdom*, and have led to misunderstandings.⁴³ The Egyptians thirst in a different manner from the righteous (οὐχ ὅμοια δικαίοις διψήσαντες 11.14). If we assume, for the moment, that Scarpat is correct to read this 'thirst' allegorically,⁴⁴ as in a thirst for God (ἐδίψησέ σοι ἡ ψυχὴ μου Ps.62.1), then we are able to see plainly that the correction experienced by Israel cannot be the same as that imposed upon the nations. Israel's punishments are a

41. Goodrick 1914: 250, Larcher 1984: 683. Most commentators do not favour a reading which ties the dragon specifically to any one classical narrative.

42. The use of the words καπνός (smoke) and σπυθῆρ (sparks) in 11.18 may also hint at an illusory picture of life, as does the Chimera *Aeneid* 7.785. Although both smoke and sparks are, one would imagine, a commonplace in association with dragons, e.g. in Job 41.12 where we are told that Leviathan's breath is 'live coals' (ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ ἄνθρακες), both words appear together in an earlier verse (2.2) where they were employed to symbolise the illusory view held by the wicked.

43. Sweet 1965: 126. Sweet understood *Wisdom* to be Jewish 'propaganda'.

44. Scarpat 1996: 169.

reminder of her position, the punishments experienced by the nations are designed to tell them that the false gods in whom they have trusted cannot protect them against Israel's God. It is a question of appropriateness, a factor which seems to be supported by the emphasis of 16.6 and 16.11, where Israel is punished to remind her of the law, but this idea is also conveyed in the Mercy Dialogue in 12.19-22. Israel has her own responsibilities, to be *'merciful'* and *'hopeful of forgiveness for sins'* (12.19) to *'think of God's goodness'* when they judge others, and to *'look for mercy'* when they themselves are judged (12.22), and, provided that she lives in this light, those who oppose her will be scourged *'a thousand times more'* (ἐν μυριάτητι μαστιγοῖς 12.22). Thus, the rejection of the bears and lions is a reminder to Israel of her covenant status, but it also serves to remind her of her covenant responsibilities, and acts as a corrective against the view that Israel is favoured and her enemies punished as a matter of course. It is possible that what we are seeing here, in an early form, is the idea of Rabbinic Judaism that Israel is the first-born son among the nations⁴⁵ and first, consequently, in God's kingdom as a particular privilege, but there is room in this idea for the inclusion of the *'righteous'* among the other nations.⁴⁶

45. Isa. 19.25, Zeph. 3.9-10, Ex. 4.22 would seem to provide the scriptural background for this. See Marcus 1927: 35.

46. See Marcus 1927: 35. For attitudes to possible Gentile conversion see *Test Naph* 8.3. A similar verse occurs in *Test Ash.* 7.3, although this is generally thought to be a Christian interpolation. The idea of Gentile conversion was by no means universally accepted within Judaism which tended to reflect a variety of attitudes towards Gentiles as is shown by Barclay 1996: 82-216.

If *Wisdom's* bears and lions act as a corrective on one part of the equation, then the dragon exists to correct another, namely the idea that the foolishness of the nations will produce an instant response from God in the form of a cataclysmic event. This may seem to contradict *Wisdom* Chapter 5, where the final destruction of the wicked on the Day of Judgement is depicted, but far from ruling out such a judgement, the Mercy Dialogue may prove its precursor. At no point does our author claim that the Judgement will not take place, he is firmly convinced that it will (4.17-20), and points out that it is for the purpose of reform that the initial punishment is sent, only to be replaced by a more severe condemnation if no reform is forthcoming (12.25-27).⁴⁷ God overlooks the sins of men in the hope of their amendment (11.23), Israel's enemies are given time and place to escape from their wickedness (12.20), even the Canaanites, described in a reference to Gen. 9.25 as being of an '*evil seed*', and whose catalogue of depravities is listed in 12.4-6, were spared because they were men (12.8) and given an opportunity to repent (12.10). God is φιλόψυχος⁴⁸ the '*lover of souls*' (11.26) who wishes to spare all, who takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living (1.13), but who must, ultimately, bring in judgement (5.17-23, 12.26-27, 19.4) because the created order is founded

47. See *Wisdom's* use of characters who were promised vindication on 'The day of the Lord' in the restoration passages of Isa.53-56, as a literary device to give the wicked who face judgement time to repent. Also Schmitt 1996: 47 and Chapter 2 of this study.

48. For the argument over the perjorative use of this word, with the meaning of cowardly, hence '*lover of life*' see Larcher 1984: 697. Reese believes that the word had changed its meaning during the Hellenistic age and also expressed a positive meaning. Arguments over linguistic shading are extremely difficult to resolve. Our author clearly meant it in a positive sense.

upon moral principles (5.20, 11.20, 19.6).⁴⁹

The rejection by God of these possible forms of punishment is thus founded upon his intrinsic nature, his attributes. Righteous himself, he orders everything righteously (Δίκαιος δὲ ὧν δικαίως τὰ πάντα διέπει 12.15) and included in that just order is the impossibility of God condemning those who have not deserved to be condemned. As Lord of all, his power is first expressed as mercy because of his desire to spare his creatures (καὶ τὸ πάντων σε δεσπόζειν, πάντων φείδεσθαι ποιεῖ 12.16), but in the face of defiance that power will be shown as strength (12.17). The text of the mercy dialogue demonstrates this relationship between justice and mercy by two principles: *'Measure, Number and Weight'* and *'Little by Little'*.

3. **Measure, Number, and Weight (11.20d).**

The extent to which *Wisdom* 11.20 d (ἀλλὰ πάντα μέτρῳ καὶ ἀριθμῷ καὶ σταθμῷ διέταξας - *for you have ordered everything by measure, number and weight*) is a reflection of our author's neo-Pythagorean views, has been debated by scholars. This question, however, is more complex than it appears.

As Larcher has commented, there was a renaissance of such views generally, towards the end of the Ptolemaic period and these were especially popular in Egypt.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Larcher sounds a cautionary note. Firstly, it is

49. Kolarcik 1996: 98.

50. Larcher 1969: 218.

extremely difficult to estimate the depth to which such a school of thought penetrated and, secondly, there had been a fusion of Pythagorean and Orphic ideals towards the end of their respective periods of influence, and it is that fused and muddled form which made a reappearance in Ptolemaic and Roman times. What this revival was not, at least not as it was popularly understood, was any affirmation of the metaphysical doctrine of the Pythagorean brotherhood, whereby everything is arranged according to number, and perfect happiness, the εὐδαιμονία of the Soul, is found by contemplating the perfectly ordered numbers of the universe.⁵¹

According to Larcher, there is a considerable body of literature, composed in the late-Ptolemaic or early Roman period, which takes this idea of universal order and applies it in practical situations of life: at court, in the home, in respect of female modesty, in relation to how one should live,⁵² and it is with this diverse literature that certain passages of Wisdom have strongest affinity. Larcher, then, concludes with Goodrick, from whom he quotes: 'We have no difficulty in discovering in Pseudo-Solomon a Hebrew Seneca - to a certain extent even a Cicero - with all their hesitations, their picking and choosing of doctrines but, above all, with their real faith in the government of the world by God's providence, call it σοφία or what you will.'⁵³

51. Ghyka 1949: 91. According to Ghyka, these ideas were contained in the biography of Pythagoras composed by Heraclidus of Pontus, and were recorded in a fragment quoted by Clement of Alexandria. Ghyka does not give a reference and it is possible that he may be referring to Clement of Rome (1 Clem. Ch. 20), where the ordering and harmony of the universe is used as a model for the ordering of the community.

52. Larcher 1969: 219 and n.1 where he provides a list of these tracts and their subject matter which are reproduced in *Fragmenta Philosophorum Graecorum* 3 vols. Mullach ed. Paris 1860-1881.

53. Larcher 1969: 232 and Goodrick 1913: 410.

Is Larcher correct in holding this view? It has to be borne in mind that the phrase in 11.20d, expressing the orderliness of the creation, occurs in a passage in which the whole discussion is underpinned by God's creative potential, as we have seen. Moreover, the dialogue is concerned with the balance between understandings of mercy and the means employed to punish within the locus of a moral universe. In order to grasp this, we need to return for the moment to the Platonic/Pythagorean concept that God's ideas were expressed in the creation as mathematical entities.

In our introduction, we proposed that wisdom, here the almighty hand of God (11.17), acts as the Monad in the intermediate realm between God and the created world. To bring the created world into being and sustain its life the Monad must limit (πέρας) the Unlimited Dyad which would otherwise be infinitely extensible and divisible (formlessness - ἀπείρον).⁵⁴ The mathematical entities/ideas which create form and limit, therefore, are imposing 'correct measures' on the excesses or deficiencies to which the Dyad is liable. As Dillon notes, the process has an ethical aspect since the virtues may be viewed as the correct measures between extremes of excess and deficiency.⁵⁵

The basic concept, that the universe is structured and regulated by numbers, was not unknown in Jewish literature.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, in the context of our dialogue, where wisdom operates this corrective in order to curb an excess

54. Aristotle *Metaphysica* 1 6, 987a29, also Plato's *Statesman* 284E-285B. It is this principle of 'limit' which explains the tables of opposites which were a feature of philosophical discussion.

55. Dillon 1977: 3-5.

56. E.g. Job 28.24-25, Isa. 40.1. For a full list of Jewish and Greek writing which includes this idea see Winston 1979: 234-5.

of wickedness or to promote goodness, i.e. in judgement or mercy, it can only imply the metaphysical doctrine which Larcher assumed was absent.

Furthermore, the standpoint of a morally ordered universe as explained in the Mercy Dialogue, will become crucial for our assessment of the tests to which Israel and Egypt are subjected in the Diptychs and is fully necessary to explain the apocalyptic judgement in Chs. 1-5. In those Chapters, we shall see that wickedness is an allotment or portion (μέρος - *Wis.* 1.16, 2.9, 2.24) of some unspecified whole, a whole which is highlighted in the Mercy Dialogue as '*measure, number, and weight*', i.e. the moral ordering specified in the creation ideas.

It is essential to this particular understanding of God's activities that the created world is good because it is a reflection of God's goodness, and God did not, as Philo stated, grudge a share in his own nature.⁵⁷ Similarly, in *Wisdom*, it has been noted that the creation is good and healthful (1.14), in sharp distinction from some apocalyptic world views in which this world is under the sway of evil and threat of catastrophe.⁵⁸ Philo understands that the world of sense perception was modelled upon the real, intelligible world which is eternal, and that man, modelled upon the image of God must also be eternal.⁵⁹ Again, in *Wisdom*, we find that God created man to be immortal and made him in the image of his own eternal nature (2.23). This is more than just a

57. Philo *De Opificio Mundi* 22.

58. 4 Ezra does not mention any divine plan to create something good, nor does the author make any comment to indicate that he valued it as good. See also Sweet 1965: 118-119.

59. Philo *De Opificio Mundi* 22-25.

restatement of Gen. 1.27, but a claim that man has the eternal properties of God.⁶⁰ Such a claim is outwith the older wisdom tradition, and seems to have lying behind it a blueprint of creation not unlike Philo's intelligible world. Furthermore, this reality of a world-order modelled upon principles of eternity is in tension with the perception that the world is random (2.2) and neutral (2.6).

Also significant for this picture of an ordered universe is the role of the cosmos, which functions as a continuation of the role of creation and part of the drama of salvation, as has been analysed by both Beauchamp and Kolarcik.⁶¹ Kolarcik recognises that for our author creation, exodus, and salvation are all related as signs of God's goodness and also his justice.⁶² As a consequence of this relationship, all three events are expressed in related imagery, i.e imagery in which descriptions of these forces feature.⁶³ Consequently, any images concerning the stability of creation, such as 11.20, have a distinct relationship with the events in other parts of *Wisdom*. Thus, the statement of 11.20d '*but you have ordered everything by measure, number, and weight*' is considerably more than just an isolated comment with reference to other isolated comments about the creation. In *Wisdom*, it provides a continuous thread which joins the major events of the Exodus in history to the expectations of judgement/salvation on the proposed 'Day of the Lord'. The stability of the creation mirrors

60. Sirach. 17.1 '*The Lord created man out of the earth, and turned him into it again.*'

61. Beauchamp 1964: 491-526, Kolarcik 1996: 97-107.

62. Kolarcik 1996: 98.

63. Kolarcik 1996: 98.

God's stability in expressing goodness and *philanthropia*⁶⁴ within the created world: it is this goodness and φιλοανθρωπία (12.19) which will be the model for Israel among the nations, and which prompts the choice of punishment designed to bring the Egyptians to recognition of God (12.2).

4. 'Little by Little' - Instruments of Punishment (12.1-10).

The punishments meted out to the Egyptians in the diptychs, are, as we have seen, rooted in our author's understanding of the nature of God. Not only is this nature expressed in the philosophical, creation concept of *philanthropia*, but he is also δεσπότης φιλοψύχος, the one who owns and loves souls (11.26), because he has placed his '*imperishable spirit*' (τὸ γὰρ ἀφθαρτὸν σου πνεῦμα 12.1) into everything, and so wishes to be forbearing.

It has to be asked, given the difficulties of finding positive usages for φιλόψυχος,⁶⁵ whether our author is deliberately stretching the use of the word not simply for descriptive purposes, but in order to create a new philosophical category. There has been considerable discussion amongst scholars in relation to Wisdom's Platonic sense of the concept of immortality, and much of this

64. See Pelletier 1980: 398-399. Pelletier argues that *philanthropia* in its original sense was a philosophical term, expressing God's love for man as in Plato *Laws* IV 713d. In Hellenistic times it seems to have a more general and banal use which covered camaraderie, family obligations, civic duties etc. *Wisdom's* use in 12.19 may include both.

65. See p. 55 note 48. It has to be said, on this issue, that although Reese's argument that the meaning could have expanded and developed in Hellenistic times is a valid one - to have no attested positive use prior to *Wisdom* remains a problem. The comparable use of φιλόζωος in Xenophon *Mem.* 1.4.7., cited by Winston p.235 is unhelpful as it refers to the creation generally and does not differentiate between men and animals, and the context of 11.26 would seem to be framed by v.23 '*you overlook the sins of men*', and 12.2 '*For this reason you correct those who go astray.*' The reflection on God's love for his creation is not general but very much in a context of offering mercy, which can only be to humans. Positive attestation only occurs in patristic Greek.

discussion has centred around the idea of the pre-existence of souls. It is clear that some form of Platonic dualism is being put forward in 8.19-20, and in 9.15,⁶⁶ and possibly also here at 11.26-12.1.

The implication of 11.26-12.1, without the artificial divide of chapter, is that the imperishable element of God i.e. his eternal spirit, which he has placed into the creation, takes up residence in the soul. To explain this more precisely we have to return to the blueprint as we have understood it from Philo. God created real humans in his image, i.e. a paradigm for humankind with eternal properties.⁶⁷ When translated into the realm of sense-perception those eternal properties remained, together with the flesh and bone which were perishable. In *Wisdom*, we will return to this concept of the paradigms contained in the blueprint in our study of wisdom's task in creating and defining righteousness (see Chap. 3 below). For the moment we need to understand that, just as the creation was the gift and consequence of God's *φιλανθρωπία*, so mercy is the gift and consequence of God as *φιλόψυχος*, who wishes to spare all (*φείδη δὲ πάντων* 11.26), because of that imperishable element which is his own. This not only makes sense of the claim in 2.23 that man was created for immortality, but it attempts to ground the character of mercy, understood by Jews as an attribute of God, upon the first principles attached to the remote Supreme Deity of philosophy.⁶⁸

Having established the ground of mercy, our author goes on to

66. See Reese 1970: 62, Weisengoff 1941: 107, Larcher 1968: 271, and Winston 1979: 25.

67. See Philo *De Opificio Mundi* 25.

68. Goodrick's charge, that the grounds of God's forbearance differ in 11.26 and chap. 12 from the grounds expressed in 11.20 is thus unsubstantiated. Goodrick 1913: 253.

illustrate the method by which mercy is exercised, and its purpose:

'Therefore, those who fall beside the way are reprov'd little by little (κατ' ὀλίγον) and admonished (νουθετεῖς) by making them remember (ὑπομνήσκων) their offences, in order that they would leave their wickedness, that they might trust in you, O Lord.' (12.2).⁶⁹

In *Wisdom*, the first of these punishments has already taken place, and the reflection on God's mercy occurs as a consequence of the discovery of the first Diptych (11.10). Nonetheless it can be seen, in relation to the Mercy Dialogue and 12.2 in particular, that the punishment must be appropriate in all instances. Additionally, it must indicate the creative power of God because it is that fact which is stressed in the dialogue as foundational to any knowledge of God (11.17). It is in the role of creator that the Egyptians must acknowledge God, and, of necessity then, the punishment must also vindicate Israel who recognises God as creator in the gift of the water. Thus, we have moved to a point where Israel's enemies are the enemies of God. In this context we must now return to the transformation of the Nile water to blood, marking the offence of Pharaoh's order to kill the children of the Hebrew slaves (11.7).

In the light of the Mercy Dialogue, we may now examine the didactic purpose of the first Diptych to see if it conforms to the criteria for punishment which have been proposed. *Wisdom* informs us that the Egyptians, as a consequence of the first Diptych, have sensed the hand⁷⁰ or presence of the

69. The Latin text uses two words for νουθετεῖς, 'admones et alloqueris' as does the Syriac. It is possible that some word has been lost with the sense of exhort or encourage. Goodrick 1913: 256.

70. Goodrick 1913: 244. Goodrick's preferred translation is the one which best expresses the sense here.

Lord (ἤσθοντο τοῦ Κυρίου 11.13). Where the same story is recounted in Exodus, there is no such acknowledgement after the plague of the Nile's transformation. However, after the plague of frogs, when Moses and Pharaoh arrange the time to enable Moses to pray for the frogs to leave, Pharaoh makes the admission:

'that you may know, there is no other but the Lord' (ἵνα εἰδῆς ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν Κυρίου Ex. 8.10). Similarly, during the plague of lice, when Egypt's sorcerers were unable to remove the lice they told Pharaoh: *'This is the finger of God'* (δάκτυλος Θεοῦ ἔστι τοῦτο Ex. 8.19). The Exodus narrative bears out *Wisdom's* view in 11.13 that Egypt responded to God, however faintly, as a consequence of the plagues.

Additionally, Israel's response to the problem of thirst in the wilderness was to call upon God (11.4). The abundant water which she then received was 'unhoped for' (ἀνελπίστως 11.8), and the discovery Israel made in this situation of anticipated death was the mercy of a father who admonishes (νουθετέω).⁷¹ Due to our circular structure of these wilderness events, we are outwith the constraints of time, and are permitted to project forwards and backwards. Thus, Israel can look back to the Nile's transformation and see how the ungodly were judged in anger by the severity of their thirst (11.19). Also the Egyptians can look forward and observe how the Israelites respond

71. For the importance of this concept of 'admonition' in both *Wisdom* and *Philo* see Scarpat 1996: 371-372.

in a situation of thirst (11.13). Moreover, in seeing Israel saved from death, they recognise both their own past failures (καὶ στεναγμὸς μνημῶν τῶν παρελθουσῶν 11.12) and the presence of God (11.13).

From this, it can be seen that although the punishments offered to Egypt and Israel were of differing degrees of severity, both were designed to elicit that acknowledgment of God which conforms to the principles laid down in the Mercy Dialogue, i.e. 11.8 conforms to 12.20-21. However, while Egypt responded only partially, Israel was spared from her certain destruction by calling upon God. Both incidents presented opportunity, and in recognising this Larcher is correct to state that the Diptychs are not primarily a literary device⁷² but a theological one.

To reinforce the principle that punishment accrues only by stages, our author turns his attention to the example of the Canaanites who, like the Egyptians, were traditional enemies of Israel, and who, also according to tradition, were displaced by Israel in the Promised Land. In keeping with our understanding from the Mercy Dialogue that Israel's enemies are punished because they are God's enemies, the Canaanites are presented as practising unspeakable acts.

The Canaanites are held to be the object of God's hatred (μισέω 12.4), not as a contradiction of the negatively formed claim in 11.24 that God

72. Larcher 1984: 659.

does not detest anything he has created, but because of their specific practices of works of witchcraft (ἔργα φαρμακειῶν) profane sacrifices (τελετάς ἀνοσίους)⁷³ as slayers of children without one thought of mercy (τέκνων τε φονέας ἀνελεήμονας 12.5), eating the innards of humans at their banquets (καὶ σπλαγχνοφάγων ἀνθρωπίνων σαρκῶν θοίναν) and drinking blood in the midst of their rites (καὶ αἵματος ἐκ μέσου μυσταθείας σου 12.6).⁷⁴ Even parents killed their helpless infants (καὶ ἀυθέντας γονεῖς ψυχῶν ἀβοηθήτων 12.6).⁷⁵

The most bitter accusation against the Canaanites occurs in Deut.18.9-12:

'You shall not learn to do detestable things like these nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through fire, anyone who uses divination, anyone who practices augury, or an enchanter, or a charmer, or anyone who consults a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For anyone that does these things is loathsome to the Lord: and because of these hateful things the Lord your God will destroy them before you.'

73. τελετάς is most often translated sacrifices, although Goodrick notes that τελεταί is used in 1 Kings 15.12 to signify the Canaanite prostitutes who had some role within worship, and were driven from the land.

74. This is an extremely difficult line as the MSS present us with a series of variants, see Swete Vol.II p. 625. The most common reading is usually taken as ἐκ μέσου μύσταις θιάσου. Goodrick thinks the ἐκ μέσου is sound because the phrase 'in the midst' occurs in all the ancient versions, Goodrick 1913: 259 and Larcher 1984: 709; also Winston p. 240 who places the divide before the καὶ αἵματος, as do we, following Reese 1970: 27.

75. The language here may be figurative as in Ezek. 16.20. The excavation of Gezer at the turn of this century offers some support for the idea of sacrifices being placed in the foundations of buildings (Baikie 1923:438), although these findings have been questioned.

There are other passages on this theme: Ex.22.18, Lev. 18.21-27. Similarly, there are many references in the O.T. to sacrifices made for a variety of purposes: e.g. Judges 11.39, where Jephthah's daughter is sacrificed to fulfill a vow, or Psalm 106.37 where sons and daughters are sacrificed to the idols of Canaan.

Clearly, our author, as part of his theodicy, has shown the Canaanites in the worst light possible, but their presentation is also on the basis that they were '*an accursed seed from the beginning*' (σπέρμα γὰρ ἦν κατηραμένον ἀπ' ἀρχῆς 12.11) which is a reference to Gen.9.25-27 where Canaan, the son of Ham, was cursed for the lack of respect shown to Noah. As well as being cursed, it is said of the Canaanites that their wickedness was inbred (καὶ ἐμφυτος ἡ κακία αὐτῶν) and that it was already known, presumably by God, that their thinking could not be changed (καὶ ὅτι οὐ μὴ ἀλλαγῆ ὁ λογισμὸς αὐτῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα 12.10). Yet even in a case of such grave culpability as this, hopeless of producing any result, God still wished to spare them because they were human (ἀλλὰ καὶ τούτων ὡς ἀνθρώπων ἐφείσω 12.8). As a consequence, the Canaanites were inflicted with hornets or wasps (σφήκας) so that their destruction happened only gradually (κατὰ βραχὺ - *little by little* 12.8 and 12.10).

Our author's clever use of προδρόμους, literally the mounted scouts

who preceded the arrival of an army, but figuratively used of the precursor to any event, indicates how much play is being given to the words here. The two passages from the Pentateuch which relate the story of the hornets occur in Ex. 23.28, and Deut. 7.20, and there is also a related passage in Josh.2.9-10 which we must consider.

As recounted in Exodus 23.27-30 the promise of God is given:

'And I will send terror before you, and send shock among the nations upon which you will come, and I will make all your adversaries flee. And I will send hornets before you (τὰς σφηκίας προτέρως σου) and you will cast out the Amorites, and the Evites, and the Canaanites and the Chettites. I will not cast them out in one year, lest the land becomes a desert, and the beasts of the field overrun you. But by a little (κατὰ μικρόν) I will cast them out before you.'

Deuteronomy 7.17-20 takes the same promise, but with a different emphasis. Rather than stressing the fear of the nations, it is Israel's fears which must be calmed and this is achieved by linking the story of the conquest to the Egyptian plagues (Deut. 7.18). On this occasion, the hornets (σφηκίας) are part of the destroying force, which will consume the nations κατὰ μικρόν μικρόν (Deut. 7.22).

From this, we can see that the narrative has changed its shape. In the Exodus account the order of events which will come upon the nations is fear,

waves of shock, hornets, and finally the Israelite host. In the Deut. account, it is Israel who is afraid and who must be reminded of the destruction of Pharaoh's army, and the hornets are sent as God's contribution, as it were, to the battle. If we also consider, at this stage, the story of the salvation of Rahab in Josh.2, we find that it is on account of the 'terror' that Rahab makes her plea to be saved: '*For the fear of you has fallen upon us*' (Josh.2.9)⁷⁶ Thus, in the Exodus narrative the hornets function as a metaphor for the fear which is responsible for bringing Rahab to *Wisdom's* place of repentance (12.10). In Deuteronomy, the hornets are the preliminary destroyers in the manner of the Egyptian plagues, and our author has conflated these two accounts to provide another instance where God deploys the principle of 'little by little' and creates a link between the dialogue and the plague account to follow in the Diptychs.

There are several difficulties here for our author. The parallel he draws implies that the hornets are, like the Diptychs, a vehicle of mercy, which the story of Rahab seems to confirm. However, to focus on the salvation of Rahab is to defeat the argument that God took this action in spite of knowing that the Canaanites would not repent (12.10). It is, of course, possible that Rahab's conversion identifies her immediately with Israel rather than Canaan, which in itself opens possibilities for a redefinition of Israel in other parts of the text,

76. In Josh.24.12, where Joshua recounts what God has done for the nation in the conquest, the hornets symbolise the terror.

but the confusion here is an indication of the struggle faced by Jews claiming the universal *philanthropia* of God against a background of narratives which emphasise Jewish election.⁷⁷ And it is with these sensitivities very much to the fore that our author quotes the questions originally raised in Job 9.12 and 9.19. (12.12), where he reaffirms God's sovereignty, and his use of *κατάστασις* and *ἐκδικος*, both forensic terms, seems to hint at a court-room setting for the judgement of the nations.

The use of *κατὰ βραχὺ* - *little by little* (12.9) and again of *κρίνων δὲ κατὰ βραχὺ* (12.10) acts as an alliterative play with *κράτει βραχίονός* (11.21), setting in contrast the creative might evinced by God with the actions that are held in check by God's patience and mercy. The *κατ' ὀλίγον* of 12.2, with the same meaning as *καταβραχὺ*, is set against the *πρὸς ὀλίγον* of 16.6, and serves to highlight the employment of this same 'little by little' principle against Israel in her first punishment. It also indicates the importance of understanding the Diptychs in the light of Wisdom 12.2. Our author's avoidance of the term *κατὰ μικρόν* of the Exodus and Deuteronomy verses which form the background to Wisdom 12.8-11, has to be assumed to be intentional and based upon the connections he chooses to create between God's might and mercy, as in 11.21 and the anticipation of Israel's failure in 16.6.

There is other word play of significance in this section. The use of

77. Winston notes that the Israelite conquest of Canaan is an issue for Jewish-Hellenistic apologetics: *Jub* 8.8-11, 9.14-15, 10.29-34. See also Philo *Hypothetica* 356, but Philo's struggle is based upon a different aspect of the conquest, namely the right of conquest. Winston 1979: 238.

profane sacrifices - τελετὰς ἀνοσίους (12.4) and the *cursed seed* - σπέρμα γὰρ ἦν κατηραμένον (12.11) brings an echo of the *pure people* - λαὸς ὄσιος and *blameless seed* - σπέρμα ἄμεμπτον who divine wisdom delivers in 10.15 and with whom the Canaanites are placed in antithesis. Also, the Canaanites are charged with consuming the innards of their sacrificial victims (καὶ σπλαγγοφάγων ἀνθρωπίνων σαρκῶν θοίναν 12.5). However, the organs of human beings are also the seat of the emotions and frequently function as a metaphor for strong feeling. In Wisdom 10.5, in a reversal of 12.5, it is against such a strong compassion that divine wisdom guards Abraham when called upon to sacrifice Isaac (καὶ ἐπὶ τέκνου σπλάγγνοις ἰσχυρὸν ἐφυλάξεν 10.5). Abraham's compassion is further contrasted with those who murder children without one thought of mercy (12.5) and the parents who kill their helpless infants (12.6). Finally in a reprise of 11.17, we are told that God could have chosen to punish the Canaanites with beasts, or through the victory of the Israelite army, or with a severe word (ἡ λόγῳ ἀποτόμῳ 12.9). In the explanation of the first Diptych God is likened to an admonishing father in the case of Israel, but where Egypt is concerned he shows himself to be a severe king (ὡς ἀπότομος βασιλεὺς 11.10) the ἀπότομος marking the link between the Canaanites and Egypt. The word of God, one of the choices God declines to unleash upon the Canaanites, will

appear again as a personified warrior with the power to introduce the devastation of the tenth plague upon Egypt (18.15) .

5. The Sovereign Power of God (12.12-18).

This section has been alluded to several times in the course of this discussion. At first glance, it would seem to echo the theme of 11.17 and 11.20-21 in that it places the power of God in contrast to his actions in extending mercy to his creatures. However, the earlier verses were speaking of the power of God in creation, whereas, as Schmitt has noted, this section is founded upon kingly power.⁷⁸

We are told that God is righteous (δίκαιος 12.15) and that this is the basis of his right ordering of 'all things'. As such, it is not fitting for him to condemn anyone unjustly, because the power to act is the founding principle of justice (12.16) and to be *Lord of all* - (τὸ πάντων σε δεσπόζειν) requires that he be *sparing to all* - (πάντων φείδεσθαι ποιῆ). The conditional nature of this double statement is achieved by the dependence of one line upon the other. What this tells us is that God's restraint of power and demonstrations of mercy are the main indicators of the real extent of his power, in that his capability to effect the 'correct measure' by limiting the excess or deficiency in the created cosmos, as noted in 11.20d, is that which signals to us the presence

78. Schmitt 1986: 107.

and power of the creator. Similarly, in 12.18, judging with equity (ἐν ἐπιεικείᾳ) is the sign of mastery even over great power.

In an interesting essay, Weinfeld⁷⁹ considers the concepts of justice and righteousness and their meaning. Weinfeld notes that the whole ideal of social justice in the ancient Near East was expressed in a series of word pairings, of which the most common biblical version is - משפט וצדקה (*justice and righteousness*). These word pairs are often found in poetic passages and, consequently, form the parallels, but in so doing they indicate the intimacy of the connection between these ideas. In Isaiah 11.4 the pairing is formed from righteousness and equity (צדק ומישור). The terms can refer to a character trait of a particular king, as in Ps.72.1-2, but usually they give expression to the idea that the ability to grant justice to the people, and most particularly to the poor, is a gift endowed by God. As such, justice and righteousness are sublime divine ideals, which may be transmitted to earthly kings after their enthronement and their exaltation. The actualising of these characteristics is in the making of decrees and laws.⁸⁰ Thus, it is by assuming that kingly role for God, and his consequent exaltation, that his decrees are accepted and justice and righteousness will come. This is a crucial point for *Wisdom* as it is, as we shall see, part of Israel's mission.

As well as the righteousness/justice, and righteousness/equity

79. Weinfeld 1992: 228-246.

80. Weinfeld 1992: 231.

pairing (the latter we can see in *Wisdom* 12.15-18), there are other qualities associated with word pairs. In Isaiah 16.5, the establishment of the Davidic throne is based upon mercy and truth connected with the demand for justice and righteousness:

And there shall be established a throne with mercy (μετ' ἐλέους θρόνος) and one shall sit upon it with truth (μετὰ ἀληθείας) in the tent of David, judging (κρίνων) and seeking judgements (καὶ ἐκζητῶν κρίμα) and speeding righteousness (καὶ σπεύδων δικαιοσύνην).

Consequently, mercy is not a separate quality from the power of God in Hebrew thought, one which has to be justified by a different set of principles, but it is synonymous with God's power. However, mercy is not normally associated with the God of Greek philosophy, and most especially of Middle Platonism, where God's *philanthropia* extends only to the creation of the world of ideas, and God remains remote from the actual created world.⁸¹

6. The Lesson for Israel (12.19-22).

We now come to the last section of the Mercy Dialogue proper, verses 12.23-27 forming a transitional section on the themes of punishment and the worship of beasts before the next major theme which is the nature and causes of

81. Schmitt's comment on 11.20d is the truly 20th century quote from Einstein, '*God does not play dice*', but for Einstein this symbolised not just the order of the creation but also God's remoteness and the immutability of his laws. It is interesting to compare *Wisdom* with Philo at this point, where God's powers are divided into two: the power that creates the world (ποιητική δύναμις) and the power that rules the world (βασιλική δύναμις) *De Cherubim* 27, *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum* 2.68, *De Abrahamo* 120.

idolatry. These verses are in summary or are anticipative, and therefore contain nothing particularly distinctive in themselves.

The verses of 12.19-22, on the other hand, bring into play several important thoughts which we must consider before concluding. The strong protest of commentators on reaching these verses, that our author has exhausted his God of the cosmos and retreated into Jewish particularism, is only a small part of the whole.⁸² In order to appreciate that whole, we need to return for the moment to the concept of ideal kingship and the presentation of God in his kingly power (12.12-18).

According to Weinfeld,⁸³ the social reforms which are the result of justice and righteousness are rooted in the king's kindness and goodwill towards the people. Within this framework, a good king, i.e. one who issues decrees and statutes as a practical expression of these ideals, thereby provides a 'way' in which his people are enabled to live lives of justice and righteousness. Equally, a good king, as well as providing the way of life by his statutes, must be the guarantor of these ideals by being himself just, and punishing injustice. All this would have been readily understood not simply by Jewish communities but by almost any community in the Hellenistic world. The philosophical and practical issues of ideal kingship were debated in the kingship tracts, now largely lost

82. The list of commentators who have objected to these verses includes Grimm, Farrar, Goodrick, and Gregg: 'Egypt and Canaan are brought upon the scene only to provide object lessons for Israel' Gregg 1909: 121.

83. Weinfeld 1992: 232-235.

apart from those found in Egypt, but sufficient for us to know that this subject was widely discussed.⁸⁴

The provision of a just and merciful society was, thus, the primary obligation of kingship, and that was largely translated into the provision of just laws so that the people were enabled to live just lives. In Hellenistic times particularly, the exercise of these virtues became *τα φιλόανθρωπα*, and for Jews, under Torah, this held specific obligations for kindness in such practical matters as the remission of debts and the payment of fines. Although this concept of philanthropy had become extended in Hellenistic society to include a range of civic or social duties, it also had for the Jewish community a technical meaning rooted in the kindness and mercy of God,⁸⁵ and for the Middle Platonists it meant the goodness of God in creation. Our author is probably employing this word in both senses in 12.19.

Additionally, the lesson which Israel learnt from observing God through his works and actions was that the righteous man must be merciful in judging (12.19, 22), and look for mercy when judged, hopeful that repentance brings forgiveness (12.19). The care and deliberation that God has exercised in showing mercy to Israel's enemies becomes a pointer to the attention that God will pay to those within the covenant (12.21). Though Israel is punished, her enemies will be punished a thousand times more (12.22). This may well be

84. Oswyn Murray 1967: 337-71.

85. Weinfeld 1992: 232 and Pelletier 1980: 402.

because they have become the enemies of God, who have refused to renounce their wickedness in spite of being awarded every opportunity to do so (12.20). Also, we know that God must act as the guarantor of his own statutes and so is bound to uphold the righteous and punish the wicked or his 'way' of Law is a mockery and, by such a token, God cannot be said to be just.

The critical phrases here are '*your children*' in 12.20, and '*your sons*' in 12.21, for if, ultimately, God's mercy is only extended to Israel then the dialogue has merely been an elaborate trick designed to proclaim the superiority of Judaism.⁸⁶

There are two ways forward from this position. The first is Causse's idea that our author was attempting to de-nationalise the Old Testament, a view refuted by Reese.⁸⁷ Reese's counter-claim, that Wisdom is an attempt to '*develop a more transcendent vision of man's destiny*', would be meaningless in the face of a soteriological plan which involves only one nation. By implication then, Reese's transcendent vision must mean a broadening of the definition of Israel, based presumably upon the author's refusal to identify the nation at any point. In addition to our author's refusal to identify Israel formally, there is other slight evidence within the text that the concept of Israel had become more broadly-based: the list of those rescued by divine wisdom in Chapter 10 is not restricted to Jews, and the failure to allude to Rahab's rescue (except perhaps in

86. As many commentators have thought. See Goodrick 1913: 269, and more recently Barclay 1996: 190, who sees a failure to fulfil the 'more integrated cultural vision' suggested by the wisdom Chapters.

87. Reese 1970: 157.

12.10) may be because her fear of God equated her with Israel rather than Canaan, as we noted. This, however, is very scant evidence on which to proceed, particularly when the overwhelming evidence of the text is of a sharply distinct Israel who is limited by her own circumstances and history.

The second way forward from our impasse, and one that suits the circumstances much better, is to see Israel as a template for the other nations, trained by divine wisdom to practice righteousness in emulation of God's righteousness and charged with the responsibility of teaching in turn. This is a view which accords with our author's understanding of Middle Platonism, and in that view the ideal community created by God in the world of ideas has its counter-part in the sense world. The counter-part of God's ideal community should, of course, be created man (2.23) - but the inclination of humankind for evil (1.16) and the corruption of idolatry (14.12) have led many astray (2.21-22). Israel, then, walks alone in her 'way' of decree and statute, while the other nations fail to recognise that God's laws bring life (6.17-20). Should they recognise God in his true role as creator of the universe, and appeal to him as such, they are promised abundant mercy (11.4-7 - 1st Diptych).

Conclusions from the Mercy Dialogue.

It can now be seen that the Mercy Dialogue is central to *Wisdom*. Its primary function is to underpin the experience of Israel in the wilderness, but it also has strong links with other sections of the book. The link with divine

wisdom is established because of the presumption that it is wisdom who leads Israel through the Red Sea (10.18). There are, also, other connections: with the final judgement in Chapter 5 as we have seen, the punishment that God at first rules out for both the Egyptians and the Canaanites in the hope that they will repent; with wisdom in Chapters 6-9 where wisdom brings that knowledge of God and of the virtuous path by which humans become part of the plan of salvation; and with idolatry in Chapters 13-15, where its corrosive effects debar the worshippers from any true understanding of the world or God's purpose for it.

The dialogue itself rests upon God as creator and his love for the creation, which is founded upon moral principles. The discovery of Israel in the first Diptych is that those who call upon the creator of the universe find a father who admonishes. This prompts a reflection upon the opportunities offered to Israel's traditional enemies to make the same response, opportunities which they failed to take because of their lack of reasoning and the corruption of idolatry. This understanding of God as creator is further reinforced by the role of God as an ideal king, issuing life-giving statutes for the benefit of his people, judging with justice and protecting the innocent.

Thus, in the on-going discussion between the ideas of divine benevolence and judgement, the promise is held out for the salvation of all the 'righteous' (11.26), but is this a failed promise in view of Jewish particularism,

with the righteous being defined by membership of a single ethnic group? That this fact creates tension for our author does not admit of doubt, but in presenting Israel as drawn from the chaos, in a state of becoming and learning, the template is revealed, and the potential is relocated in the future that both God and the decrees he granted will gain recognition and bring in a reign of justice and mercy.

Weinfeld has stated that the mission of Israel was social justice,⁸⁸ an idea to which *Wisdom's* author has assented in the opening Chapters on the responsibility of rulers and in 18.4, where the Egyptians are held to be blameworthy because in curtailing Israel they prevented the '*uncorrupt light of the law*' from being given to the world. The extent and scope of that mission, in particular its paradigm aspects for other nations, are central to the mercy/judgement debate. In other words, what the Mercy Dialogue reveals is a persuasive mission on behalf of God as the creator of all life and the definition of all that is truly just. It is, thus, a mission grounded upon the election of Israel, but it is also, in Levenson's words,⁸⁹ a case where 'chosenness serves a larger purpose' and those chosen do not withdraw from the nations but serve as instruments of 'particular witness' to a universal God.

88. Weinfeld 1992: 232.

89. Levenson 1996: 155.

2. THE APOCALYPTIC DRAMA (1.1-6.21).

Faustus. *How comes it then that he is Prince of Devils?*

Mephistophilis. *O, by aspiring pride and insolence,*

For which God threw him from the face of heaven. Marlowe *Doctor Faustus* (Act 1 Scene III lines 67-69).

Having examined the key section of *Wisdom* 11.15 - 12.27, we have discovered that these verses indicate how closely tied are the concepts of divine justice and divine mercy, both of which are attributes of God and founded upon his creative power. What we now have to consider is whether this interplay between these two, intimately-related attributes is sustained in the early chapters of *Wisdom*.

This brings us, however, to a philosophical problem, namely that nothing can be known, if the elements of things are not known.¹ The known element, as a result of our investigation, is that the mercy principle of 'little by little' occurs as a form of warning or admonition (νουθετεία)² indicating a breach of moral law and designed for the purpose of repentance (11.23). Nonetheless, it is clear that this is an incomplete picture, for we do not know how God will act should that warning go unheeded, apart from the hint of more serious retribution in 12.17 and 12.26. This, then, is our unknown element, and an important factor in our analysis. The serious retribution is, at one and the same time, separate from the warning punishments granted by

1. Plato *Theaetetus* 206b 5-11.

2. See *Wisdom* 11.10, 12.2. Also Plato *Sophist* 230a 'τὸ νουθετητικὸς εἶδος τῆς παιδείας'.

God's mercy and necessarily tied to them in order that the warning proves effective. Both the warning punishments and the final judgement, then, have their roots in God's power and the need to uphold the moral law, and the serious retribution of our drama, moreover, provides convincing proof (ἐλέγχος)³ of God's justice and support of the *paideia*. Thus, our author divides the proof contained in the Apocalyptic Drama from the warnings in the Mercy Dialogue, but both are dependent upon the just character of God and his desire to support the moral law.

This proof that the moral order will be supported, is referred to no less than four times in the first ten verses of the drama. In 1.3 we are told that God's power, when examined, convinces the unwise; and in 1.5 that the holy spirit of discipline will reject foolish reasoning (λογιμῶν ἀσυνέτων) and prove, i.e. test, the entrance of unrighteous thoughts. The same unrighteous, foolish thoughts will be responsible for the worship of beasts without reason in the introduction to the Mercy Dialogue at 11.15. In 1.8 personified justice, one of the roles assumed by wisdom, will accuse and bring to the test the one who speaks unrighteous things, and in 1.9 the proof of lawlessness will be overheard by God. Our Apocalyptic Drama, then, with its acute differences from the concepts of the 'little by little' punishments of the Mercy Dialogue is

3. In Plato's *Sophist* 226 b1-230 d5, the division of the διακριτική, 'warning' and 'proof' are both divisions of the *paideia*. See also *Wis.* 12.2 where our author places both warning and conviction together: 'that through a little reproof/convincing (κατ' ὀλίγον ἐλέγχεις) they shall be warned (νουθετεῖς).

bound by the same principle that God is master of the created world, and that the moral code of the *paideia* will be upheld by God's benevolence and by his certain judgement of those who transgress it.

As we have seen, sections within *Wisdom* are not clear-cut, and movement from one section to another is often marked by an interweaving of themes. Nonetheless, most commentators understand 1.1-6.11 or 21 to be a discrete unit⁴ (see Structure above pp. 26-33). The section has been granted many titles, from Reese's 'book of eschatology'⁵ to Seeley's 'recast narrative',⁶ while Schmitt regards the unit as a dramatic presentation. Schmitt, quite persuasively, finds many points of structural and stylistic comparison with Hellenistic tragedy.⁷ For our purposes, we have to bear in mind that the unit is the opening section of *Wisdom*, designed to raise certain questions whose answers must be provided in the rest of the text, and also designed to offer incontrovertible evidence that the moral law will be upheld. The conflict between the wicked, powerful rulers and the poor, righteous man is a dramatic way of presenting a judgement scene in cameo form.

As we noted in the account of *Wisdom's* structure (p.31 above), the unit may be regarded as concentric if we frame God's revaluation of the lowly (3.1-4.20) within the two speeches of the wicked (2.1-2.20, 5.1-13) and place

4. Winston 1979:10, Larcher 1983: 120. Larcher closes the section at 5.23 and opens the second part with the second exhortation to the princes in 6.1-11. Reese 1970: 91 concludes at 6.11 but includes 6.17-20. See also Wright 1978: 558 and Goodrick 1913: 83.

5. Reese 1970: 109-14.

6. Seeley 1990: 55.

7. Schmitt 1996: 12-49.

all within the two exhortations, the first to love justice and the second to seek wisdom (1.1-16, 6.1-21). In fact, *Wisdom's* structure is more complicated than this frame shows because of the process of interweaving, and 6.1-21 is also the introduction to the praise-poem on wisdom. Additionally, 1.1-16 is more than an exhortation, but forms a prologue,⁸ with immediate links to the dramatic presentation of the judgement in that it opens the conflict between those who seek God 'in simplicity of heart' (1.1) and the ungodly (ἀσεβεῖς 1.16), and has a longer-term connection to *Wisdom* in its entirety. It is with this prologue that we shall begin our analysis of the internal sections of the drama.

1. The Prologue (1.1-1.16).

In keeping with the idea that the drama is irrefutable proof of the value of a moral law, we are introduced to God through his attributes at work in the world, which are sometimes personified, as 'wisdom' in 1.4, 'justice' in 1.8 and as 'righteousness' in 1.15. This feature of personification occurs in other sections of the book, most notably the extended personification of wisdom in chapters 7-10, and the description of the word/command of God introducing the tenth plague in 18.15-16. In addition to God's wisdom, the picture is

8. Schmitt 1996: 47.

drawn of his omniscience (1.8,9), his truth (1.7) his omnipotence and goodness in 1.14, which also implies his eternal nature.⁹ Further, 1.8 shows justice as the accuser of wrong-doers, thereby anticipating the scenes to follow, and 1.2 stresses the mercy of God in his accessibility for the trusting. Thus, the opening chapter is an attempt to teach knowledge of God through his activity on behalf of the created order.

Also, because this is a prologue which lays out the entire scene for the reader, this information, about the character of God and the forces ranged upon the side of the righteous, is privileged and is not shared by either the righteous or the unwise.¹⁰ The righteous must discover these attributes by a process of trust and emulation (1.1-2), and the failure of the unwise to discern the range of God's attributes is the root cause of both their crimes and their punishment. God's attributes, then, are fundamental to the story which will unfold and their recognition, in terms of the dramatic presentation, reassures the reader of the inevitability of judgement in the face of such power and such a strong demand for righteous conduct. On a literary level it anticipates the later scenes of Chapters 4 and 5. Significantly, it is also theodicy. As in Job and the Mercy Dialogue, the integrity displayed by the righteous man is a claim upon God in his twin roles as the creator who invested his creatures

9. Marmorstein 1927: 179-180. According to Marmorstein, God's attribute of truth is connected with God's eternity, as only one who is eternal can be relied upon by his creatures. Similarly, God's truth is the basis for reward and punishment, i.e. because God's truth is complete truth, which uncovers all motivation, he must acknowledge the just and punish the wicked. Although this is a developed Rabbinic doctrine, which is attested some time later than *Wisdom*, it is not impossible that speculation on the nature of God's attributes pre-dates Rabbinic formulation and was, to a certain extent, standardised.

10. As in Job, Chapters 1-2, where Job does not know what has been agreed in God's court in respect of his circumstances and the tests to come.

with purpose and meaning (*Wis.* 1.14) and as the God who is characterised by justice and law (1.1-2).¹¹ God's subsequent actions in punishing the wicked and rewarding the just are vindicated by the integrity of conduct displayed by the just man, i.e. the one who searches for his creator 'in simplicity of heart' and 'loves righteousness', and by the appeal to God's design for his creation and his creatures (1.14).

Further, we can anticipate the crimes of the wicked which will bring destruction upon them (1.12). They will put God to the test and mistrust him (1.2), they will nurse crooked thoughts (1.3 σκολιοὶ λογισμοί) and harbour a malicious (κακότεχνος) soul, and their bodies will be subject to sin (1.4). They will be deceitful (1.5), and blasphemous (1.6), their speech will be unrighteous or inappropriate (1.8), and it will not be true (1.11). These are crimes which God must punish because of his nature as righteousness, truth, mercy and wisdom, and because of his promise to uphold the righteous man. Therefore, we are not led to the judgement scenes in the light of doubts about the conduct of the wicked, but in the clear understanding that they have self-confessedly violated the divine plan.¹²

The first chapter contains one other personification, that of the figure of death in 1.12-16. This personification is an important one, as it is death, in his many guises (θάνατος, ἄδης, ἀπώλεια, ὄλεθρος)¹³ who is the enemy

11. See Fisch's treatment of Job as the just man appealing for vindication and the claim this places upon God. Fisch 1990: 30-1.

12. The speeches of the wicked in Chapters 2 and 5 serve this function; see the analysis of speeches below.

13. See Y. Amir's excellent article on personified death which includes its biblical synonyms (1979: 157), also Taylor 1966: 107.

within biblical wisdom¹⁴ and from which the righteous must be offered the mercy of deliverance. In *Wisdom* Chapter 1, we are introduced to this figure of death, who, so we are told, is not part of God's creation, which was made without any 'potion of ruin' (φάρμακον ὀλέθρου) and without any domain for death (1.14). The responsibility for the invitation issued to this figure is laid firmly at the feet of the ἄσεβεῖς, the ungodly, who by their deeds and actions created the possibility for death to have sovereignty over part of creation. It was their 'calling in' (προσεκαλέσαντο 1.16) of this figure which opened up the health and goodness (σωτήριοι 1.14) of creation to the encroachments of death. It was their friendship and pact (συνθήκη 1.16)¹⁵ which allowed death to have a domain among the living, but their choice of wickedness divides them from the righteous, and the pact will, ultimately, consign them to be death's apportionment (μερίς 1.16) in the judgement. This is a Faustian bargain, with the same sinister conclusion.

Thus, it can be seen that the introductory Chapter of *Wisdom* presents all the principle characters of the apocalyptic drama: God in the form of his attributes,¹⁶ the righteous who believe 'in simplicity of heart', the rulers who

14. Isa. 38.18, Ps 114.3, Job 28.22., see also Taylor 1966: 81.

15. Amir points out that this alliance with death is seen, in *Wisdom*, as part of the human condition and, as such, any covenant made by the rulers must be seen as metaphorical, Amir 1979: 166 and n. 44. Another idea, that the pact with death of Isa. 28.15, gained dramatic and political tangibility after the deaths of Anthony and Cleopatra is not impossible given the imaginative power of that story and the projected dating, see Introduction above, also Larcher 1983:157 and 208, and Scarpat 1989: 14-15.

16. Winston 1979: 100. Winston recognises that terms such as 'justice', 'goodness', 'wisdom', 'spirit of the Lord', 'holy spirit', and 'power' are being used synonymously and personified as a divine being who will not stay where sin, particularly deceit, is to be found. Goodrick prefers the variant reading of σοφίας in 1.6 because he believes that wisdom is not hypostasised until chapters 7-9, although he does not explain why that limitation should be imposed, Goodrick 1913: 89.

represent the ungodly in the drama, and who make some kind of accommodation with death, and the figure of death who had no jurisdiction over the created earth until the invitation of the wicked. Further, the attributes of God have made inevitable a judgement upon the wicked for their individual words and deeds of wickedness (1.12) and for making creation accessible to the figure of death which has violated its essential goodness. Similarly, the attributes of God must inevitably uphold the faith and integrity of the righteous, which in the context of this presentation can only mean vindication in the judgement and deliverance from death.

Our identification of the rulers of 1.1 with the ungodly men of 1.16 is based upon two factors: the background allusions to the council of princes in Isaiah 28, into which enquiry will be made (*Wis.* 1.9), and the fact that the qualifications for the righteous, to love justice and search for God in simplicity of heart (1.1) are not represented by those to whom the first Chapter is addressed in such negative terms. Clearly, our author is writing with certain categories of wickedness in mind which he assumes will be evident, or at the least recognisable, to his readership. These categories are traceable from the textual allusions to passages from the LXX, which we must

now consider, and they provide the context of the author's assurance that wickedness will ultimately be judged and righteousness will triumph.

2. The LXX. Setting of the Drama.

We have already discussed the importance of the textual allusions and echoes in *Wisdom*, which are consciously and carefully constructed. This enables the author to use words in such a way that they carry a significant cargo. Moreover, the text of *Wisdom* is multi-layered, and our author can weave several strands from the LXX together at once, thus giving a new setting and interpretation to traditional biblical material.

The texts which form the background to the theme of the judgement day in *Wisdom* 1-5 would seem to be the combined judgement day accounts in Isaiah 14 and Isaiah 28.¹⁷ Also, other texts are woven into this theme, the speech of David in 1 Chron. 29.17-25 which includes a second coronation of Solomon, specifically the messianic Psalms 2¹⁸ and 44[45],¹⁹ a range of passages from 1st and 2nd Isaiah, particularly the restoration passages of Isaiah 52 through to 56,²⁰ and, as we shall see, there are echoes also of Job, Proverbs and Genesis. Whatever weight is lent by their original setting can only be appropriate here if it bears some relation to the judgement. Similarly, the theme of coronation of the king/messiah and the beginning of a reign of

17. See note 15 above.

18. Fichtner 1938: 12.

19. Skehan 1948: 384-97.

20. Winston 1979: 146.

perfect justice indicates that there is a connection between this moment of judgement and the conduct of kings and princes, i.e. it is a judgement of the powerful which is being depicted. The yardstick for their judgement is the ideal king, in this case Solomon, who rules with wisdom and, consequently, justice and compassion.²¹ Thus there is, as in the Diptychs of Chapters 11-19, a blurring of historical and eschatological roles. Solomon, therefore, represents not merely the historical king, but the characteristics of the eschatological and messianic king to come.

In relation to Wisdom 1.1-16 specifically, the first passage from LXX with which we have to deal occurs in I Chron. 29.17-25, where the verbal parallels with the opening address of Wisdom are very close.

I Chron. 29.17 - καὶ ἔγνω, Κύριε, ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐτάζων καρδίας, καὶ δικαιοσύνην ἀγαπᾷς. ἐν ἀπλότητι καρδίας προεθυμήθην τὰ ἅπαντα:

And I know, Lord, that you are he that searches the hearts, and you love righteousness, And I have willingly offered these things in simplicity of heart.

This is to be compared with Wisdom 1.1:

21. Solomon has not yet made an appearance as the narrator of our second unit on wisdom. However, there is a strong association with Solomon expressed in the coronation prayer of David (1 Chron. 29) and the messianic Psalms 2 and 45, both of which serve as background texts to Chapter 1. Several commentators understand a hidden narrator in Chapter 1, see Bligh 1990: 313, who likens the address to the rulers to the literary form of dramatic monologue. See also Clarke 1973: 15, who suggests that the author is speaking to 'everyman', and that we need not concern ourselves with the fiction of the rulers. However, it is important to maintain that fiction because of the responsibility for justice and compassion which is most pointed in the case of the rulers. Solomon is set in contrast to other rulers because of his prayer that he would have 'a heart to hear and to judge the people justly' (1 Kings 3.9).

Ἀγαπήσατε δικαιοσύνην οἱ κρίνοντες τὴν γῆν, φρονήσατε περὶ τοῦ Κυρίου ἐν ἀγαθότητι, καὶ ἐν ἀπλότητι καρδίας ζητήσατε αὐτόν.

Love righteousness, You that are judges of the earth:

Think of the Lord in goodness, and in simplicity of heart seek him.

The incident described by I Chron. 29.17, however, is an attempt by the Chronicler to associate David as well as Solomon with the building of the Temple. The scene is one in which David addresses the congregation of Israel after they have brought the offerings to be used in the Temple construction. This scene, therefore, seems to have little affinity with the story of final judgement in *Wisdom*, apart, perhaps, from the references to Solomon's coronation (29.22) and the honour paid to Solomon by princes and the mighty (29.24). However, there are some characteristics of David's prayer which are interesting in this context. David attributes to God's goodness the wealth which the people have been able to gather (29.14), and he pays tribute to God's greatness and power (29.11). He also identifies himself with the people (29.14,15). His speech, then, is appropriate and gracious, without the hubris which will characterise the wicked rulers.

As Skehan has noted,²² there is also a similarity of wording between *Wisdom's* opening line and two messianic Psalms, Psalms 2 and 44[45].²³ In

22. Skehan 1948: 384.

23. See also Fichtner 1938:12 note 1b.

Psalm 2 the rebellious kings, who gathered their forces against the Lord and his anointed, are similarly referred to as judges of the earth (v.10). In Psalm 44[45] God is being invoked as the coming messiah/bridegroom and it is said of him that he has loved righteousness and hated iniquity (Ἠγάπησας δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἐμίσησας ἀνομίαν v.7). This Psalm also gives a more detailed picture of ideal kingship. In v.6, we are told that God's throne is eternal and his sceptre righteousness, thus indicating a reign which is just and unending. These concepts are placed alongside truth, meekness (v.4) and gracious speech (v.2).²⁴

From this, it can be seen that although the our author does not elaborate on his textual references - they are merely brush-stroke allusions - he does manage to evoke the sense of ideal kingship in his opening verses, and particularly for those of his readers who are familiar with the LXX translation. However, it is worth noting that these background allusions do not presume upon an exclusively Jewish readership, as discussions and encomia on the qualities needed for ideal kingship were commonplace in the Hellenistic world,²⁵ and he goes on to contrast the attitude of trust of a righteous king with the crooked thoughts (1.3) malice (1.4) deceit (1.5) and blasphemy (1.6) of the unwise (ἄφρονας 1.3).

24. Literally '*the grace given to his lips*'.

25. See Reese 1970: 71-87 and also Oswyn Murray 1967: 337-71.

Again, when our author refers to God as a witness to the counsels of the ungodly (ἐν γὰρ διαβουλίαις ἀσεβοῦς 1.9) the phrase echoes the ἐν βουλῇ ἀσεβῶν of Psalm 1 and the compact of kings in Isaiah 28.8, which are respectively eschewed by the righteous and cursed on the day of judgement. Knowledge of the background texts adds to the sense of foreboding but does not create it. The sense of God's all-pervasiveness in *Wisdom*, Chapter 1, hearing all speech (1.8), overseeing conspiracy and seeing the relationship between word and wicked action (1.9), noting every secret word and lie (1.11), together with the threat of death (1.12,13) draws us continuously towards the inevitable moment of justice and retribution. It is important to remember that *Wisdom* is a self-sufficient text in this respect and that its dramatic tension is internally generated by its vocabulary, structure and movement.²⁶

It is also interesting to note that although *Wisdom* 1.8 and 1.9 reflect God's infinite knowledge of affairs, that knowledge is acquired by hearing (1.10), and sin is exposed by speaking even if it is not articulated aloud (1.11). This signals the importance of speech and confession before punishment, which is a feature of *Wisdom* both in the judgement and in the later Diptychs. God is described as οὖς ζηλώσεως (1.10)²⁷ in terms

26. Schmitt 1996: 27, Ruppert 1993: 4, Kolarcik 1991: 111.

27. In describing God as 'the ear of jealousy' (1.10) our author clearly identifies God with personified 'justice' (δικη) in 1.8. See Winston 1979: 105 for an account of the personification of δικη in Greek literature and her role as the listener and reporter of wrongdoing. See also Philo *Somn.* 1.140 where the purest spirits act as the 'eyes and ears of a great king'.

reminiscent of Exodus 20.5. God's jealousy in the Old Testament is usually indicated for two reasons, either on behalf of the chosen people, or for his own honour, and it is this latter sense which is being expressed in *Wisdom* Chapter 1,²⁸ where the failure of the wicked to acknowledge God's attributes amounts in reality to a dismissal of God.

We have already noted that the claim of the just upon God stems from God's positive design in creation (1.14), from his endowment of life with purpose and meaning. To participate in that purpose, against the backdrop of human death, requires the discovery of, and identification with, the attributes of God, which are themselves eternal concepts. To live with the love of δικαιοσύνη is, therefore, to live in the comprehensive world of God's eternal/ideal kingship. It is this which makes δικαιοσύνη immortal (1.15). It is peculiarly the responsibility of those who exercise power judicially and politically,²⁹ and to live without it is to court death.³⁰

The God whom the unrighteous kings refuse to recognise in *Wisdom* Chapters 1 and 2, and in the background passages in Isa. 14 and 28, is the God who comes suddenly, bringing desolation and calamity, i.e. the God who can bring the cosmos into play for the re-establishment of justice against chaos,

28. Gregg 1922: 6.

29. Lindez 1990: 134.

30. The second line of 1.15 in the Latin text (Sixtine Vulgate & Complutensian) reinforces this point. '*But injustice is the very attainment of death - iniustitia autem mortis est adquisitio*'. However, this line occurs in no Greek Mss. For a fuller discussion, see Goodrick 1913: 98.

'especially the ethical chaos of injustice'.³¹ Death they recognise (2.1), and they believe their own deaths will take place (2.3), but it is a death where no oppression of others, or acquisitiveness, will bring the judgement upon them (2.4). Consequently, they may behave as they choose, because they are protected by the agreement they have made with death (*Wis.*1.16), or the similar agreement in Isa. 28.15:

ἐποιήσαμεν διαθήκην μετὰ τοῦ ἄδου, καὶ μετὰ τοῦ θανάτου
συνθήκας.

καταιγὶς φερομένη ἐὰν παρέλθῃ, οὐ μὴ ἔλθῃ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς.

We have made a covenant with Hades and an agreement with death. If the rushing storm should pass, it shall not come upon us.

Thus, although the wicked rulers have to accept the finality of death, they believe themselves protected from the consequences of the decisions they have made in life. It is now important to trace the results of this thinking in the speeches of the wicked in *Wisdom*.

3. The Speeches of the Wicked (2.1-20, 5.4-13).

The two speeches of the wicked in *Wisdom's* apocalypse are highly important as they contain the heart of the argument and develop the 'action' of the narrative.³² They are also structurally significant, forming two choric

31. Kolarcik 1992: 107.

32. Schmitt 1996: 30 for a discussion on the balance between action and speech in Hellenistic drama, and the tendency to favour speech.

episodes around the central revaluation which heralds the coming judgement.³³ These episodes unveil the plot and show its resolution. The speeches are, consequently, a progression from the initial philosophy and plans of the wicked, through their infamy, until they learn to regret their thoughts and actions as they contemplate the judgement.

In order to signal the importance of these speeches, the author has framed each speech in an inclusion, and these inclusions also serve as his comment on the progress of the narrative. In the first speech our author points out that the speech contains the reasonings (λογισάμενοι) of the ungodly, but that these reasonings are incorrect (οὐκ ὀρθῶς 2.1). At the close of the speech he repeats this theme (ταῦτα ἐλογίσαντο, καὶ ἐπλανήθησαν - *such were their reasonings, but they were led astray* 2.21). The second speech is enclosed by ἔσχομέν/ἔσχομεν, in 5.3 and 13 respectively.³⁴ The wicked come to the judgement presuming that they possess a view of the righteous man, which would be endorsed by all:

οὗτος ἦν ὃν ἔσχομέν ποτε εἰς γέλωτα καὶ εἰς παραβολὴν

ὄνειδισμοῦ - *this was he whom we had once in derision and a parable of*

33. Schmitt 1996: 47. Schmitt understands the revaluation of the lowly to be the στάσιμος section of the Tragedy, i.e. a choral interlude in which the chorus remains standing, hence Schmitt's concept of a central meditative block in which the normal order of things is reversed.

34. Ἐσχομεν, being a much more common word, illustrates the difficulties of tracing some of the author's inclusions. The entire second speech is concerned with the assessment of the wicked of their achievements and the illusory nature of their hopes. A concrete evaluation of what they thought they 'had', as opposed to what they actually 'had', is very much in keeping with the tone of their reflections.

reproach (5.3). This is set against what they actually possessed, i.e. they were unable to produce any virtues at the judgement which may have altered the outcome (καὶ ἀρετῆς μὲν σημεῖον οὐδὲν ἔσχομεν δεῖξαι - *and had no sign of virtue to show*). In addition to marking out the speeches with inclusions, our author has made the second speech the counterpart of the first, a point to which we shall return. We should now examine the detail of the claims made by the wicked in the first speech.

3.1. *The First Speech. (2.1-20).*

3.1.i. *The Bargain with Death (2.1-4).*

The first speech opens with the reflection that the life of man is short and sorrowful (2.1). Our birth and survival are random, the achievements of life and death are all forgotten in time (2.2-5). So fragile is our hold on life, that our breath, usually the sign of life, is described as smoke (καπνός 2.2), and thought, the distinguishing feature of mankind, is no more than a moving spark (σπυθὴρ 2.2). Far from being remembered, the feats of men are forgotten and pass away like a cloud or a mist (2.4). Life³⁵ itself is merely a shadow (σκιῶς 2.5), the grave is sealed (2.1, 2.5) and no-one returns from death.

35. MSS. are equally divided between βίος ἡμῶν and καιρὸς ἡμῶν. See Goodrick 1913: 104.

In Seeley's article, '*Narrative, the Righteous Man and the Philosopher*',³⁶ he has noted what he sees as a disparity between the ungodly, who purportedly made a covenant with death in 1.16, and the speech of the wicked, where the despairing tone of the speech seems to rule out the existence of any such covenant. The first point we would have to consider is the linking γὰρ at 2.1, which indicates that those who make the covenant are also those who make the speech. There is a possibility that the so-called covenant of 1.16 is simply a metaphor for wickedness, and that there is no specific covenant to which the wicked might refer in their speech. All the same, this is unlikely. The Death to whom we are introduced in 1.12-16, and with whom the wicked make their pact (συνθήκη) is, as we have observed, a personified character whose existence dominates the opening verses of the speech where all the images of life are transient,³⁷ and the images of death stress its absolute finality. Rather than showing a contrast, as Seeley stated, it is the brooding presence of this character which makes life transient and provides the rationale for the response of the wicked in the remainder of the speech, i.e. because of death we must enjoy what we have of life.

What does the death-pact represent, and who is this figure? Firstly, we have to register at this stage the overriding importance of Genesis, Chapters 1-3 for the interpretation of *Wisdom* as a whole.³⁸ We have already noted

36. Seeley 1990: 60.

37. Kolarcik 1991: 71.

38. Gilbert 1987: 324-344.

that God in *Wisdom* did not create death (1.13) and that he takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living. In Schökel's essay, '*The Vision of Man in Sirach*',³⁹ he observes that in Genesis Chapter 3, the passage where death enters the world as a consequence of sin, the punishment of Adam, which should have been death (Gen. 2.17), is commuted to a perpetual exile of forced labour, pain, and sorrow (Gen.3.18-20). The mortal nature of human beings is, thus, a by-product of Adam's banishment from the garden, but is not, of itself, the punishment for Adam's sin. Adam does not die as he leaves Eden, rather he lives out his days under new terms, having an allotted age which limits the time during which the punishment is applicable. This means that he does not suffer premature death nor die violently and unnaturally. Similarly, when God confronts Cain with his crime against his brother in Gen. 4.9-16, it is unnatural and violent death which Cain fears (4.14-15) and from which he is protected.

Can we assume that this distinction of deaths is also part of the death-agreement in *Wisdom* 1.16, even though the text is not explicit on this point? Firstly, we recall that the background text at Isa. 28.15 records a covenant made with personified death to protect the rulers, not from dying, but from the judgement of God. The rushing wind, which is symbolic of the

39. Schökel 1978: 237.

cataclysm unleashed by God in judgement, is meant to pass them by because of the covenant. However, God warns them that they will be beaten down by the storm, and it will take them (λήμψεται ὑμᾶς 28.18-19) because they have placed their trust in falsehood. Additionally, the death devised by the rulers for the just man in *Wisdom* 2.19-20 is precisely such an unjust violation of natural time and natural death, and also comes in the wake of an unjust exploitation of the socially and politically weak (2.10-11). Thus, the manifestation of this covenant reveals the rulers as those who embrace death-dealing and self-destruction, i.e. they are bound to the deity of death in order to overturn all the values of the *paideia*. They are innate lovers of evil (φίλον ἡγησάμεμοι αὐτὸν ἐτάκησαν 1.16).⁴⁰ Their bargain is made with the deepest cynicism and contempt for the moral order, and because the fact of death will in any case cancel all that was enacted by them in life (2.4-5).

There may be no remedy, then, for the death of man (2.2) but there is, so the wicked think, a possibility of escaping moral judgement by a pact with the figure of Death. This figure, as we have seen, has no place in the created order (1.14) and may only gain influence as a result of invitation. The wicked

40. τήκω L.S. 1968: 1786 has the meaning to 'melt or dissolve' and may also be used as a metaphor for sexual desire, i.e. 'to be consumed with love for'. The wicked are, consequently, presented as those who love evil. See *Doctor Faustus*, Act IV Scene III, where Faustus is able to take risks with his own life, because of the protection of the pact, and to devise cruel deaths for those who oppose him.

belong to the deity of death, i.e. they are Death's portion.

Also, in considering this Death-figure, we have to recognise that he is set in antithesis to the creative God who planned the world as healthful and without death. This principle of well-being was, in fact, assumed as an immortal well-being.

ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ἔκτισε τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπ' ἀφθαρσία,
καὶ εἰκόνα τῆς ἰδίας ιδιότητος ἐποίησεν αὐτόν.

For God created man for immortality

In the image of his own being⁴¹ he fashioned him (Wis 2.23).⁴²

Death, according to our author in 2.24 came as a result of the devil's envy (φθόνῳ δὲ διαβόλου) and he comments that those who are the devil's portion (μερίς) will experience death. With the reappearance of this word (μερίς) we have made a loop and returned to the rulers in 1.16, whose pact has made them death's portion. As Amir has correctly noted,⁴³ in *Wisdom* personified death and the devil designate the same figure.⁴⁴ As a consequence of this discovery, we now have a figure of death/the devil, who is at last allowed to bring destruction and ruin into the creation. He does so through the actions and words of those who have bound themselves to him in return for

41. There are textual variants here: ἰδιότητος - *his proper being* (Winston, Larcher, Gregg, and which has best MSS support) ἀιδιότητος - *everlastingness* (Goodrick, Clarke) makes a better parallel.

42. The reference is to Gen.1.27 where God made man '*according to his own image*' κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτόν.

43. Amir 1979: 166

44. This is also the case where the figure of death takes on mythological dimensions in the New Testament, such as Rev. 20.10-14, and in the third century Talmudic document *Baba Batra* 16a, the sayings of Resh Lakish.

the perceived gain of exploitation and the exercise of power, and the detailed plans of this assault on the moral order are worked out in the remainder of the speech.

3.1.ii. *The Mockery of Justice* (2.5-9).

Having established death as inescapable and menacing, the speakers turn to the present, which alone has significance. Accordingly, they express a view of life which is not concerned with God's justice but is sensual and material. They must enjoy costly luxuries such as wine and perfumed ointments (2.7). Time being an enemy in such a situation, they must exploit the world as in youth when time meant nothing (2.6). Flowers, as symbols of passing time, must be brought for garlands (2.8). They practice sexual licence (2.9).

That the underlying picture here is of a banquet seems fairly clear. There are many examples in ancient writing of such feasts where oil and garlands of flowers were part of the celebration,⁴⁵ as was some hint of mockery at the shortness of life.⁴⁶ If heavily ironic ritual was frequently a part of these banquets, and we remember our background passages related to the judgement in Isaiah 14 and 28, then it would seem that our author is creating here the scenario in which the death-pact of the wicked could have taken

45. See Winston 1979: 118-9.

46. Petronius *Satyricon* 34, where a slave brings in a silver skeleton and places it on the table. Then the host says '*Alas for us poor mortals, all that poor man is is nothing. So shall we all be, after the world below takes us away.*'

place.⁴⁷ Isaiah 28.7 lays stress on the drunkenness of the league of princes, just prior to the pact:

οὔτοι γὰρ οἴνω πεπλημμελημένοι εἰσὶν

ἐπλανήθησαν διὰ τὸ σίκερα:

For these have trespassed because of wine

They have gone astray through strong drink.

Additionally, in Isaiah 14.11, in the address to the fallen king of Babylon,⁴⁸ the other rulers say:

κατέβη εἰς ᾄδου ἢ δόξα σου, ἢ πολλὴ εὐφροσύνη σου:

Your glory has come down to Hades, and your great mirth.

The context for this quotation is the recognition by the other rulers that he, who was the most arrogant of all, prepared by his actions for the opening of the mouth of hell. At *Wisdom's* banquet for the wicked the suggestion is made that the participants leave tokens or symbols of their mirth (σύμβολα τῆς εὐφροσύνης 2.9) in every place. As the context in both Isaiah and *Wisdom* is the judgement, it can be assumed that these tokens of mirth, however they may be culturally interpreted by commentators,⁴⁹ are a similar preparation for hell.

47. This reading of events is, of course, impossible if one takes Kolarcik's view that Chapters 1-5 take place against a court-room background, Kolarcik 1991: 34. There is forensic language in Chapter 1 in support of Kolarcik but, as we have seen, Chapter 2 uses the imagery of a banquet, and Chapter 4.2 athletic imagery. Additionally, the image of the banquet is sustained here.

48. Halperin 1988: 321 and n.81. Rabbinic interpretation saw this ruler as Nebuchadnezzar. However, modern scholarship sees the address as being directed to a combined role of that king and the fallen star-god, Lucifer. It is possible that the arrogance displayed by the rulers implies a personification of Lucifer. Halperin notes that Chapters 12-17 of *Vita Adae* agrees with Christian tradition in applying Isaiah 14.12-15 to the devil. See also Luke 10.18

49. On the possibility that the symbols were rings or tokens given to the caterer as pledges for the cost of eating and drinking, see Goodrick 1913: 108.

If the first speech of the wicked in *Wisdom* is to be significant within a dramatic presentation of the judgement, it must be a representative speech, i.e. one which indicates the full nature of their malevolence. *Wisdom's* speakers are pleasure seekers (2.6), our author regards them as intending to mislead since he dismisses their reasoning (2.1) and warns us to expect their deceit (1.5), and we have already understood that the failure of the wicked to discern God's attributes is what causes them to reject the possibility of an after-life, and is, in fact, tantamount to a rejection of God. We have also seen that behind the banquet of the wicked lies the formidable myth of the death-pact made by the princes in Isaiah 28, and that the 'tokens of mirth' freely left by the participants of that banquet in *Wisdom* is the same mirth (εὐφροσύνη) which in Isaiah 14 will go down to hell with the glory of the fallen king and become part of his corruption (Isaiah 14.11). With a double irony, our author has the revellers proclaim ὅτι αὕτη ἡ μερὶς ἡμῶν - *for this is our portion* (2.9), which they intend as part of their mocking of values. In reality, it will be their fate.

3.1.iii. *The Discourse of the Tyrants on Justice and Injustice* (2.10-20).

Secure in the knowledge that now no unexpected retribution can befall them, the rulers decide upon their reign of exploitation. They plan to oppress (καταδυναστεύειν) the honest poor,⁵⁰ widows and the elderly.⁵¹ In a continuing spirit of mockery, they make fun of the command to love

50. These divisions within the speech have always been acknowledged by scholars, but have assumed more significance in recent analysis. See Schmitt 1996: 29-30, and Lindez 1990: 151-67.

51. The categories singled out for oppression are in the singular, (v. 10) the poor, righteous man, the widow etc.. Modern commentaries make a distinction between the category of the righteous man in v. 10 and the 'δίκαιος' of v. 12, see Larcher 1983: 236-7.

δικαιοσύνη and point out that the law of justice (νομός τῆς δικαιοσύνης) will be determined by their own power (2.11), as they are convinced of the worthlessness of anything which appears as weakness (τὸ γὰρ ἀσθενὲς ἀχρηστον ἐλέγχεται).⁵² Verse 2.11, then, becomes an important admission of the state of mind to which the wicked have progressed, given that the drama is proof (ἐλέγχος) of the value of the moral law, whereas they are convinced that it has no value and, in fact, may be construed as weakness. Thus, they have now abandoned all moral restraint and, in this state of anomie, they plan the judicial murder of a righteous man.

Seeley claims that the motivation is wholly inadequate,⁵³ but he understands the wicked to be hedonists and materialists and the key to the murder to lie in Graeco-Roman philosophical writings of the period, where it is the love of pleasure which leads to the denial of all restraint. Weisengoff⁵⁴ can only make sense of the killing in the context of the wicked as apostate Jews, for whom the just man is a particular target as a reminder of what they would prefer to forget. Other commentators have suggested that the wicked are Epicureans⁵⁵ or Sadduceans.⁵⁶ As we have noted, the wicked are merely

52. Weisengoff 1949: 44. He regards *Wisdom's* categories of the vulnerable as 'wards of God', i.e. those under God's special protection, and lists the texts which support this concept: Ex. 22.24, Deut. 16.14, 24.17-19, 27.19, 28.50, Is. 1.17, 10.2, 47.6, Jer. 7.6, 22.3, Mal. 3.5, Ps. 94.6-7. An overwhelming number of these citations have the formula: stranger, widow, orphan, Deut 28.50 includes the old and the young. For the author of *Wisdom* to use a list other than the formula may be an intentional attempt not to define the vulnerable by Jewish Law and to draw on more widely-held categories.

53. Seeley 1990: 63.

54. Weisengoff 1949: 44.

55. Dupont Sommer 1935: 90-112, see also Weisengoff 1945: 45 and Winston 1979: 114.

56. This idea was held by several scholars, most notably Focke, and was ably refuted by Feldmann 1926: 5-11.

representative (see p.102 above) and their test of the righteous man makes no sense in any other context than the abandonment of moral law according to their statement in 2.11.

Several commentators have noticed the similarity between this test of the righteous man in 2.17-20 and the discourse on justice which takes place in Plato's *Republic* (Book 2.361).⁵⁷ In this discussion Glaucon, the tyrant, insists that the unjust and the just must be stripped of external opinion in order that the test is one of justice alone. Thus, the just man can no longer be supported by reputation or external consensus, for he is presumed unjust and his rival is credited with justice. The just man is then tortured and killed to see if he will hold to the value of justice when all else has been removed.

It is into this context, then, that we place the tyrants' discussion on justice in *Wisdom*. The opening verse in the introduction to that discussion of the character of the righteous or just man (2.12) is a modified quotation from the LXX version of Isaiah 3.10, itself a mistranslation of the Hebrew original.⁵⁸

Ἐνεδρεύσωμεν δὲ τὸν δίκαιον, ὅτι δύσχρηστος ἡμῖν ἐστὶ καὶ ἐναντιοῦται τοῖς ἔργοις ἡμῶν (*Wis.* 2.12):

Let us lie in wait for the righteous,

For his presence is inconvenient for us

And he is against our works.

57. Gregg 1922: 20, Collins 1997: 195. Other commentators who regard the testing of the righteous as a test of justice are Kolarcik 1991: 123, Scarpato 1989: 47, Lindez 1993: 108. Lindez sees 'justice' as the key to the first and third parts of *Wisdom*.

58. The Hebrew of Isaiah 3.10 says, 'Tell the righteous it shall be well with them'; see Winston 1979:119, and Seeley 1990: 64.

The full LXX quotation from Isaiah 3 reads:

οὐαὶ τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτῶν, διότι βεβούλευνται βουλήν πονηράν, καθ' ἑαυτῶν εἰπόντες, δῆσωμεν τὸν δίκαιον, ὅτι δύσχρηστος ἡμῖν ἔστι. τοῖνον τὰ γεννήματα τῶν ἔργων αὐτῶν φάγονται:

Woe to their soul, for they have devised an evil counsel against themselves, saying Let us bind the righteous, for he is inconvenient to us, therefore they shall eat the fruits of their works.

There is a double irony at work here. Into the mouths of those who set no value upon justice, our author places a speech which is the absence of justice and, consequently, defines it. Thus the care of the poor, the widow, and the old, i.e. the categories of the vulnerable, and a true respect for those who live by moral law which cannot be corrupted, gives us a picture of a righteous ruler. This process is reversed when the wicked describe the righteous man, as it is the qualities and characteristics of this man which define their weakness. He is against the things they do, knowing their actions to be wrong when set against the law and moral education (2.12). He claims some knowledge of God, and as part of his self-understanding sees himself as a child⁵⁹ of God (2.13). His existence undermines their cynicism (2.14) and a glimpse of his different lifestyle brings this fact home (2.15). He shuns the company of the wicked in case he is compromised, and believes that good conduct leads to

59. The meaning of παῖς, as child, is dictated by 2.16, where the righteous man claims that God is his father, and 2.18 where the wicked question that specific claim. See Winston 1979: 120, and also Suggs 1957: 26-33. Suggs thinks this passage on the suffering 'child of God' to be a homily based on the Fourth Servant Song of Isaiah 52.13-53.1, reflecting our author's misunderstanding of the alternative terms of παῖς and δοῦλος. It would seem unlikely that he misunderstood the term in this way as he uses 'servant' and 'son of God' as a parallel in 9.5 and in 12.19-20. See Larcher 1983: 245.

happiness, eternal happiness, since God is his father (2.16).

The implication of 2.17 is that the claims of the righteous man have not really been tested by adversity, and that the rulers can devise such a test, which will rebound on themselves according to Isaiah 3.10. The author of *Wisdom* presumes here on a shared knowledge with his audience who, whether they be Jews who understand the allusions or Greeks who do not, know that this is the common currency of the Hellenistic world and other moral tales and plays inform them that tyrants will be overturned in the end.⁶⁰ The phrase ἐν ἐκβάσει αὐτοῦ (*at the end of his life* 2.17) highlights this anticipation.

The test planned by the rulers has three aspects, all equally cynical. Firstly, if the righteous man is God's son, then God will come to his aid and free him from the power of those who hold him (2.18). Presumably, this help would take the form of the catastrophe which would uphold the moral order in creation, a catastrophe the wicked believe will not take place. Secondly, they plan to examine (δοκιμάζειν)⁶¹ him with cruelty and torture to see if he remains righteous under deeply adverse circumstances (2.19). Finally, they hope to put him to death in some shameful fashion in order to see if his words are respected (ἔσται γὰρ αὐτοῦ ἐπισκοπή ἐκ λόγων αὐτοῦ 2.20).⁶²

60. As in Euripides *Electra*, where she finally helps her brother, Orestes, avenge their father, and overturns Aegisthus and Clytemnestra.

61. The same word is used in 1.3 where it is God's power which is being examined and it is found to convince the unwise (ἐλέγχει τοὺς ἀφρονάς). It could be said that the test in 2.19 is also a test of God's power.

62. ἐπισκοπή here has produced a variety of translations, see Goodrick 1913: 116. The sense seems to be that the just man's professions will be tested to adduce their worth in such a situation.

In J.M.Synge's play, *The Playboy of the Western World*, two of his characters discuss the gap that exists between a fine tale and a dirty deed. In *Wisdom's* speech that gap has disappeared, and what is discussed in the discourse of 2.1-20 is assumed to have taken place, i.e. the words have become the action of the drama.⁶³ By the close of this speech the tyrants have perverted all sense of justice in the wrongful execution of a just man. That they have done so with impunity is, in their perception, a final dismissal of the claim of justice on the powerful.

3.2. *The Second Speech of the Wicked (5.4-13).*

3.2.i. *Setting.*

Since we are dealing with the two speeches of the wicked together, something must be said about the intervening passages. Between the two speeches of the wicked lie the two Chapters (3 and 4) which show us the picture from the heavenly angle. Not only is our just man safe in the hand of God (3.1) but other reversals of expectation are imminent. The just man is, in fact, one of the chosen who will '*judge the nations*' (3.3). Moreover, those who have been childless in life, the barren woman and the eunuch, are shown to have '*fruit*' (3.13, 3.15) in the heavenly realm, and even the innocent who

63. Schmitt 1996: 29.

die young have a role which is not understood by those still living (4.15). This section is closely tied to the restoration passages of Isaiah, as we shall see, and acts as a herald of the judgement by indicating that all is not as it seems to the wicked and, in reality, their plans are unravelling.

The death of our righteous man, viewed from a general and then a specific perspective, both opens and closes this central section. Gregg has further noted that the sections devoted to the righteous all have an eschatological element, while those devoted to the wicked *'present a distinct time-sequence.'*⁶⁴ This will prove to be significant when dealing with aspects of theodicy and mercy, as the time-sequence indicates that time has passed in which repentance would have been possible. The placing of what Schmitt refers to as the central block,⁶⁵ i.e. the *στάσιμος* section of the drama, between the two speeches, thus assists the impression of passing time.

Although the second speech does not begin until 5.4, there is a series of problems attached to the placing and interpretation of the preceding verses which also needs to be considered. We have noted before that our author does not show clear divisions between his different sections. His work is so constructed that he creates transitional sections in which he discusses both the former subject and the impending subject together, until one unit is woven

64. Gregg 1922: 10.

65. Schmitt 1996: 39.

into the other.⁶⁶ One such transition occurs from 4.15-20. The subject of 4.7-15 is a return to the earlier theme of the death of the righteous (young) man. As these verses reach their conclusion (4.14) our author observes that people in general had seen the premature death but failed to understand the eschatological implications, i.e. God exercises towards his 'chosen' grace and mercy which cannot be measured or considered by general opinion (3.9, 4.15). This comment serves to remind the reader that the conflict between the righteous man and the wicked tyrants is not yet at an end. Verse 16 re-focuses on the idea of judgement and condemnation and hints at another chapter in that conflict:

Κατακρινεῖ δὲ δίκαιος καμῶν τοῦς ζῶντας ἀσεβεῖς

But the righteous that is dead⁶⁷ shall condemn the ungodly that are living.

This theme has never really been very far away, but by placing it once again centre-stage, our author is able to highlight, as a new theme, the final conflict between the righteous and the wicked in the judgement. This is, therefore, an aside to the reader which anticipates the judgement in 5.17-23. God will laugh scornfully (ἐκγελάσεται 4.18), the wicked will be a permanent outrage (ὕβρις 4.18), cast down and torn apart (ρήξει 4.19), speechless, and laid waste (χερσωθήσονται 4.19). When the account of their sins is drawn up

66. Another such transition is the second address to the kings: kings and judgement (former themes) are the subjects of 6.1-8, v.9 begins with kings but introduces wisdom. 6.10-20 wisdom (new theme) is the subject, and 6.21 is a request that the rulers of the people learn to honour wisdom. Wisdom is then the main theme from 6.22.

67. καμόντες or κεκμηκότες in Homer always refers to the dead (e.g. *Il.* 3.278, *Il.* 23.72) but translates as 'the ones whose sufferings are over', which is also the context here. For its use as 'having completed a task' see Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 3.580. See also Goodrick 1913: 149.

their own actions will convict them, and they face such an accounting with fear (4.20).⁶⁸

3.2.ii. *Recognition (5.1-5).*

Verse 5.1, consequently, begins a new section, where the righteous man reappears to stand (στήσεται) before the wicked in the judgement. The fears of the wicked predicted by our author in 4.20 have now become event (5.2), and an event which will not cease until the mighty wind stands against them (ἀντιστήσεται 5.23), and the storm and flood, from which they believed themselves exempt, carry them away.

Into this setting, then, we must place the second speech, with its shattering self-awareness and emphasis on repentance. Schmitt has commented that if the first speech is characterised by hubris, aggression and blindness, then the second reverses these characteristics showing insight, resignation and regret.⁶⁹ From the moment that the righteous man appears

68. There are immense difficulties with this transitional section. Few commentators agree on its beginning and ending, few agree that it is a transitional section. Winston places it as part of the discussion on early death, (Winston 1979: 137) and restricts the judgement to 5.1-23. Gregg understands this moment to be the death of the wicked with some form of continued consciousness after death, which is distinct from immortality, (Gregg 1922: 41-5). Kolarcik understands this as a fourth diptych on the theme of judgement which anticipates the ultimate judgement in Chapter 5, (Kolarcik 1991: 97). Larcher, thinks that the judgement of 5.1-23 is a punishment after death (Larcher 1983: 346) which finishes at 4.19. Verses 4.20-5.2, thus begin the new section. Also Schmitt 1996: 47 sees the break at 4.19, with 4.20-5.3 as transitional, and the new section beginning at 5.4 with the second speech. Even Amir 1986: 177, sees the second speech in the context of repentance after death. See Ruppert 1993: 11, with whom we agree, that if the wicked have actually been destroyed and rendered speechless (4.19) there is 'no sign of this in 5.4 where they are both alive and speaking'. Also, 4.16 indicates that the judgement will come upon those who are living. As we have seen, this central section gives us the heavenly angle on the events, and as the judgement approaches we are given an aside to that effect, which comes as a surprise to the wicked and fulfills the expectation that the death pact will not protect them from the judgement of God.

69. Schmitt 1996: 29 n. 60.

before them ἐν παρρησίᾳ, in great confidence (5.1), the wicked know that the game is over and that they have been eaten-up by their own wickedness (5.13). The speech is, of course, highly artificial, but it does possess a certain dignity. They were led to this point by their convictions related to the death-pact, now their protector has left them and they face the judgement alone. They, who trusted in the power of a speech to justify their reasonings and actions, realise that they have strayed from the way of truth (ἐπλανήθημεν ἀπὸ ὁδοῦ ἀληθείας 5.6). They, who believed that the law of righteousness could be corrupted by their own powers, now regret that the light of righteousness,⁷⁰ did not shine on them (τὸ τῆς δικαιοσύνης φῶς οὐκ ἔλαμψεν ἡμῖν 5.6). The righteous man, whose conduct they assumed was madness (5.4) is numbered among the children of God (κατελογίσθη ἐν υἱοῖς Θεοῦ 5.5) after all, and it is the wicked who are οἱ ἄφρονες, the foolish.

3.2.iii. *Confession and Self-condemnation (5.6-13).*

Schmitt sees this speech as the katabasis/lysis part of our tragedy,⁷¹ where the plot unravels to the extent that the assumed role obligations of the characters dissolve. Whether or not one accepts Schmitt's assessment, there is

70. See Winston 1979: 147. The term 'light of justice' is also used in Mal 4.2.

71. Schmitt 1996: 47.

an element of tragedy in this second speech. In the honesty of their confession, we see what the wicked might have become and what they have learned through their mistakes, too late, so that suffering is inevitable. The candour of their estimate of their own lives (5.8-13), of the emptiness of those things they had valued in life, shows that they were capable of such a valuation all along. In short, our author shows them to be men, who were created with all the potential for immortality (2.23), but who had courted death by their actions and the words which gave rise to those actions (1.12).

This is an important part of the theodicy of *Wisdom*. Not only must the wicked fully admit to their transgressions and recognise the justice of their fate, but it highlights the fact that God offers mercy only on the ground of mankind's acceptance of the moral law, i.e. 'righteousness'. Since the wicked in *Wisdom* have despised God's righteousness they cannot claim that mercy, and in that knowledge they are restored to their human condition too late to realise its potential.

The author's comment, that the hope of the ungodly is as dust (χνοῦς φερόμενος 5.14) is illustrated by the estimation offered by the wicked of their own lives (5.8-13), which in turn is an adaptation of Job 9.22-8.⁷² The setting of Job 9 is Job's reply to the first speech of Bildad, in which Bildad

72. Larcher 1983: 371. Goodrick and Winston both refer to Proverbs 30.19 which includes the images of both a ship and a vulture, but these images are not developed, see Goodrick 1913: 158, Winston 1979: 147.

has implied that Job's misfortunes must stem from his sins:

'Be sure that God will not spurn the blameless man

Nor will he accept the gift of the ungodly.' (Job 8.20)

Job's experience, however, is of someone who understood himself to be 'just', and this makes him unable to reach the same conclusion. Although he accepts God's right to judge (9.2-3, 15-16), he cannot make sense of his personal experience, unless it should be that the blameless and the wicked are, in fact, being treated alike (9.22).

9.23 *for the worthless die, but the righteous are laughed to scorn.*

9.24 *for they are delivered into the hands of the unrighteous man, he covers the faces of the judges, and if it be not he, who is it?*

9.25 *But my life is swifter than a post, [my days] have fled away and they did not know it.*

9.26 *Or again is there a trace of the path of ships (ἢ καὶ ἐστὶ ναυσὶν ἵχνος ὁδοῦ ;) or is there one of an eagle seeking its prey (ἢ ἀετοῦ πετομένου ζητούντος βοράν;)*

9.27 *And if I should say, I will forget to speak, I will bow down my face and groan:*

9.28 *I quake in all my limbs, for I know that you will not leave me alone as guiltless (ἀθῶόν).*

Job's comment is in the context of the speed at which his life had passed. Commentators have suggested that the ships to which he refers are reed-built skiffs which have a light wooden keel,⁷³ and therefore no wake, and which travel at speed over the surface of the water. Similarly, the image of the eagle or vulture falling on its prey is also one of speed.

In *Wisdom* 5.8-13, although the same images are applied, it is the values of the rich, their pride and wealth, which pass away like a shadow (5.9). The emphasis is, consequently, not on the speed of movement but on movement itself. The metaphor of Job is redirected so that the stress no longer lies on speed and lightness, but on the physical action, the exchange of energy, and the event. In Job, we cannot trace the ship or the eagle because it passes so quickly. In *Wisdom*, we cannot trace these events because this exchange of energy, for all its effort and strain, leaves no impression.

So in *Wisdom*, as in Job, the ship still passes without leaving any trace, but in *Wisdom* we are searching for the sign of the bow-wave created by the keel slicing through the billowing water (κυμαινόμενον ὕδωρ 5.10). In both texts the bird still circles overhead, but in *Wisdom* we look for a sign in the air of the beating wings which have pushed against it, or strain for the sound of the air forced downward:

73. Gregg 1922: 47.

(πληγῆ δὲ ταρσῶν μαστιζόμενον πνεῦμα κοῦφον καὶ σχιζόμενον βία ροίζου - *as the light air being beaten by the flat of an outstretched wing, and torn apart with the noise and movement of them* 5.11)⁷⁴ The third image, that of the arrow or javelin cutting a section through the air, and the air joining itself together again (ἀνελύθη⁷⁵ 5.12) so that the path of the arrow is hidden, does not appear in Job.

The crucial difference in the ways in which these same metaphors have been employed is as follows. In Job we do not look for any traces of movement because the speed of movement means that they will not be found. In *Wisdom* the wicked search in despair for signs of events they know to have taken place. They who left 'tokens' (2.9) of their presence in every place, now hope to find some visible impression of their existence, but find that they have nothing to show which has currency (5.13).

The pictorial or scientific realism employed by our author here has a deeper, ironic purpose. The comparisons he sets up, all introduced and highlighted by ὡς are, in fact, highly artificial. He begins with the ephemeral, the shadow and the message (5.9), and moves to the concrete (5.10,11,12).

Ships, birds and javelins have a real and distinct presence: the ship has a

74. Larcher 1983: 375. Larcher suggests a theory of relaxation and compression. Other commentators seem more concerned with the purpose of the metaphor, i.e. to establish the vacuous nature of the lives of the wicked. Gregg notes the absence of any reaction on the part of the medium in which this agitation takes place, Gregg 1922: 48. Both Gregg and Winston 1979: 147 note the similarities between the action of the flying bird in *Wisdom* and in Virgil's *Georgics* I.406-409.

75. The problem with the text here is that ἀνελύθη, dissolved or resolved, is passive, whilst the sense requires an active verb. Larcher suggests ἀνάλευσεν, Larcher 1983:375. Goodrick thinks our author uses the passive illegitimately to give a semi-abstract sense to the line. Goodrick 1913: 160. The MSS support is for ἀνελύθη.

wooden keel which must make a mark in the water, the bird beats the air with its wings and the sound can be heard, likewise the javelin can be seen and touched and heard. The vivid description of the ship passing and the detailed awareness of the action of the wings in flight⁷⁶ give a sense that these comparisons have recognisable substance. Yet, the contrast is between substance and non-substance, and in spite of the detail of its activity the bird has no more substance to offer than the shadow. The wicked search vainly for signs which would protect them from the judgement, and the change from shadowy to concrete images only heightens their despair. Their admission of defeat (5.13) is their final self-condemnation, and God's subsequent action is vindicated. The device of the comparisons, seemingly increasingly concrete and vivid, contains, in fact, an ironic twist as only the intangible aspects, i.e. movement, are depicted. Thus, instead of furnishing the wicked with some tangible proof of the value of their existence they furnish God with the final justification for their destruction.

3.3. *Relationship of the First Speech of the Wicked to the Second Speech.*

It has long been recognised that the second speech of the wicked forms the counterpart of the first speech.⁷⁷ In addition to the contrast between the

76. There was significant interest in Alexandrian art and literature to depict movement accurately as part of an artist's wish to imitate real life, see Zanker 1987: 55-102. Scientific notions of how movement takes place had changed with knowledge of anatomy (see Fraser 1972: 350 on Herophilus and Praxagorus) and a renewed interest in scientific and pseudo-scientific data, see Fraser 1972: 336.

77. Winston 1979: 146, Lindez 1993: 206, Gregg 1922: 44, Schmitt 1996: 36. Schmitt draws his list of parallels and antitheses from Offerhaus 1981: 407.

'*sign of virtue*' (5.13) and the '*tokens of mirth*' (2.9) there are other significant parallels and contrasts. In 5.4, the wicked confess that they thought the life of the righteous man was madness (μωνία), a similar assessment to their comment in 2.15 that the righteous man lived a life unlike that of other men. Due to his strangeness, they assumed his life would end without honour (καὶ τὴν τελευτὴν αὐτοῦ ἄτιμον 5.4), and, in fact, devised for him the shameful death of 2.20. The eschatological question in 5.5, which is also a moment of total illumination for the wicked, has as its counterpart the mockery of 2.13, '*he calls himself a child of the Lord*', and 2.18 '*If the just man is the son of God*' (Εἰ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ δίκαιος υἱὸς Θεοῦ), and the admission that they have not known God's ways (5.7) is contrasted with the profession of the righteous man in 2.13. The empty consequence of the pride and riches accumulated by the wicked (5.8) is the very opposite of the value they had formerly placed upon the good life (2.6). All that they thought to have achieved has passed away like a shadow (ὡς σκιά 5.9) because life passes like a shadow (2.5) for those who have no hope of immortality (2.1-5).

Further, just as the first speech of the wicked has strong links with various passages taken from Isaiah,⁷⁸ so too, the second speech is

78. Isaiah Chapters 14 and 28, as noted in our analysis of the first speech.

coloured by references to the suffering and exaltation of the servant of God in Isaiah, Chapters 52-53.⁷⁹

In *Wisdom* 5.1-2 the righteous man appears before those who had caused his suffering. He is silent (Isa. 53.7), preferring to be vindicated by God (Isa. 52.13). Those who had thought of him with contempt (*Wis.* 5.4, Isa. 53.3) and believed him to be without honour (*Wis.* 5.4, Isa. 52.14) are amazed at his status (*Wis.* 5.2, Isa. 52.14), and the promised inheritance he seems to have achieved (*Wis.* 5.5, Isa. 53.12). Contemplation of the position of the righteous man forces on the wicked a revaluation of their own position, which culminates in the confession that they have strayed from the way of truth (*Wis.* 5.6, Isa. 53.6).⁸⁰

Several points must be noted at this stage. In the earlier part of our dramatic presentation, the story of the kings making their bond with death in Isaiah 28, and in their arrogance believing themselves impervious to the judgement of God as in Isaiah 14, furnished our author's imagination with a story-line in which he could present the justice of God and set his narrative of the righteous man who suffers at the hands of his enemies. Nickelsburg⁸¹ has noted that the theme of God's vindication of the persecuted righteous usually

79. Suggs 1957: 26-33. Suggs' reading of *Wisdom* 2.10-20 and Ch.5 is that it is a homily on the Fourth Servant Song of Isaiah 52 and 53. Whilst recognising the high level of Isaianic influence on certain sections of *Wisdom*, and particularly Chapters 2-5, Suggs does not really define 'homily' and seems to think that it could be used to comfort and provide explanations for Jews undergoing persecution. As we have seen in our introduction above, it is extremely unlikely that *Wisdom* was written in a situation of persecution. Additionally, as we have seen, our author does not confine himself exclusively to Isaianic allusions, although they do form a significant, even dominant, part of these chapters.

80. Winston 1979: 146, Nickelsburg 1983: 132, Ruppert 1993: 22-23, Schmitt 1996: 21-22.

81. Nickelsburg 1972: 48-58, 1983: 131-32. Nickelsburg also includes Gen. 37-41, Esther, Susanna.

occurs in the form of a fairly stereotyped plot such as the stories of Daniel 3⁸² or Daniel 6.⁸³ In each of these stories the righteous are maligned by their enemies and sentenced to death, and whether they live or die is then a test of their decision to trust in the God who can deliver them. Seeley⁸⁴ has also noted that there is a pragmatic element to these stories. The persecutors in the majority of these stories wish the victim to be removed for political reasons, and the victim, once persecuted, must trust to God for deliverance or die. The story-line is, clearly, different in *Wisdom* where the rulers are testing the principle of justice itself, i.e. whether it is only related to power and influence (2.10-11), whether torture and death will produce a refutation of belief on the part of a man claiming to be just (2.19-20), and whether it is, or not, a concern of God (2.18). As faith in the value of justice, even when facing death, is the high point of the test, it is inevitable that the just man must die and his vindication and exaltation must take place in another sphere. The suffering servant of Isaiah 52-53, with its possible interpretation of heavenly exaltation and vindication, thus provides a paradigm for the resolution of the plot.

Yet there is one significant factor missing from *Wisdom's* re-working of the Isaianic story. In Isaiah 53.4-6, and again in 53.11-12, there is a strong emphasis on vicarious suffering which brings healing to others. Nickelsburg

82. Daniel 3.19-27. The story of the three men thrown into the blazing furnace and delivered.

83. Daniel 6.10-24. The story of Daniel being delivered from the den of lions.

84. Seeley 1990: 65.

has noted that the language of sacrifice is used in Isaiah 53.10.⁸⁵ Similarly, the language of sacrifice is used of the righteous in *Wisdom* 3.6, which Larcher⁸⁶ considers a possible echo of Psalm 50.19, '*then shall you be pleased with a sacrifice of righteousness*' (θυσίαν δικαιοσύνης). In spite of the statement in Psalm 50.13 that transgressors will be taught the ways of God and the ungodly will turn to God, the connecting thread is becoming too loose at this point. There does not appear to be an element of vicarious suffering in Wisdom's reinterpretation of the Isaiah servant motif.⁸⁷ The motivation of justice for the just man is in response to his recognition of God's activity in the world, his awareness of God's attributes, and his willingness to suffer is in allegiance to that principle. Neither others similarly righteous nor the ungodly benefit from his death, and in the case of the latter their repentance comes too late to save them from judgement.

4. God's Judgement - The Calamity of the Wicked (5.17-23).

We have already recognised that the grounds on which God will uphold the just man are the twin grounds of God as creator, who created a healthful world without the elements of destruction (1.14) and designed man for immortality (2.23), and God as the sustainer of moral law, whose

85. Nickelsburg 1983: 135 note k.

86. Larcher 1983: 283.

87. As well as Nickelsburg, quoted above, Suggs also remarks that no use is made of the concept of vicarious suffering, Suggs 1957: 31.

relationship with mankind is such that he prizes their attempts at righteousness (1.1) and values those who search for him 'in simplicity of heart'. The wicked, as is revealed in their first speech, are oblivious to God's work as creator, seeing life instead as random existence (2.2), and equally oblivious to his relationship with mankind exemplified in his justice (2.11). They live, consequently, in the absence of covenant, and fill that gap with the false covenant of their own mocking rituals (2.7-8), with deities which, ironically, because of their lack of any substance, must inevitably prove false and lead to death.

It is death as the negation of life that the wicked describe, so that life becomes a tiny spark of the heart, and life-breath mere smoke or mist (2.2). When this brief interlude is over, the body turns to ashes, names and works are alike forgotten, and the grave claims its own for eternity (2.4-5). There are obvious similarities here with the view of death expressed in Qoheleth, where death makes no difference between men and beasts (Eccl. 3.19), the wise man and the fool (Eccl. 2.14) and equates the stillborn child with a man who might live two thousand years (Eccl.6.4).⁸⁸ The difference⁸⁹ lies in the fact that Qoheleth is haunted by such a death, particularly where life has proved unjust and oppressive (Eccl. 4.1-2). Qoheleth is, however, as Fisch states '*as sure as*

88. Fisch 1990: 161.

89. The relationship between *Wisdom* and Qoheleth has been frequently discussed with a view to finding in Qoheleth's scepticism the identity of the wicked, see Goodrick 1913: 23-31.

any other biblical writer of God's being and power, of the fact indeed of his government of the universe.⁹⁰ Unlike Qoheleth, the wicked in *Wisdom* are resigned to this negation of life, and even unjust death for others. Whereas Qoheleth searches to find his life-experience reflected in the teaching of the sages:

I said to myself, I too shall suffer the fate of the fool. To what purpose have I been wise? (Eccl. 2.14), Wisdom's tyrants see an opportunity, And no man shall have our works in remembrance (2.4) (therefore) let us oppress the poor righteous man..... (2.10). Extinction is the end of opportunity, therefore, extinction must be held at bay for as long as possible.

That which the wicked dread, which would cut across all their plans, is the intervention of God in a decisive moment of judgement, in fact, 'the Day of the Lord',⁹¹ where the forces of creation are unleashed in scenes of the apocalypse, and tyrants '*shall be crushed to the earth*' (Isa.14.12). It is to hold such an event at bay that they make their empty, hopeless covenant, believing, erroneously, as *Wisdom* states, that the god who represents death must be the god who controls the forces of death. The image of this death-covenant is not sustained through the second speech and the scene of judgement, but its

90. Fisch 1990: 164.

91. The 'Day of the Lord' is the prophetic concept of the sudden intervention of God as the judge of the nations. It occurs in Isa. 2, and forms the backdrop, as we have seen, to other chapters (e.g. 14 & 28) Amos 9, Obad. v.15, Micah 2.4, Zeph. 1.12. It is also the main theme of the Book Of Joel. The word ἐπισκοπή came to have particular associations with this event (*Wis.* 2.20, 3.13). The description in Isa. 24.22 is helpful in this context, '*And God shall bring his hand upon the host of heaven, and upon the kings of the earth. And they shall gather the multitude into prisons, and they shall shut them into a stronghold, after many generations they shall be visited*' (διὸ πολλῶν γενεῶν ἐπισκοπή ἔσται αὐτῶν). Symbolically, it is the point when God will uphold the righteous.

impact, the absence of the possibilities of life-covenant, of miracle and hope (5.5), is one of the factors leading to their condemnation.⁹²

The desolation which comes upon the wicked begins at 5.17 with God arming himself for judgement. The description is formulaic:⁹³ God's attributes are compared to the items of armour used by a warrior going to battle.

Righteousness, thus, becomes the breastplate, true and impartial judgement is the helmet (5.18), his holiness is the protective shield (5.19), and his honed anger the sword (5.20). Gregg⁹⁴ suggests that the stylized picture is meant to suggest fear and wonder, rather than an actual judgement. However, there is little doubt regarding the outcome. The wicked, beaten down by hail (5.22), tossed about by flood waters and wind (5.22-23), are finally driven away, remembered no more than a guest at an inn who moved on after a day (5.14), their thrones and power totally overturned (5.23).

Various texts have been suggested as background to this description of the catastrophe. The image of the bow is used in Hab.3, as is the picture of the storm and the raging waters, but storm imagery to depict the judgement is commonplace in prophetic works.⁹⁵ What is significant for *Wisdom* is the idea

92 'Death is the state in which the wicked live here and now - the end of which is extinction' Nickelsburg 1983: 135.

93. The passage is very similar to Isaiah 59.16-18. In Isaiah, the breast-plate is also representative of righteousness and the helmet is salvation. The divine warrior also wears a cloak for the recompense and reproach of his enemies, and divine wrath is here compared to a mighty river. See also Eph.6.13-17.

94. Gregg 1922: 51.

95. For Hab. 3.11 see Goodrick 1913: 165, Gregg 1922: 53. Larcher 1983: 393. Some commentators understand the reference to the 'well-drawn bow' (εὐκύκλου τόξου) to refer to Gen. 9. 14. The image of the bow then becomes an inversion of the promise that God will never again destroy the earth. There is a very close parallel in Homer *Iliad* IV 124-125 (κυκλωτέρες μεγα τόξου). Gregg, following Deane and Grimm, sees a deliberate echo of the Red Sea in the drowning of 5.22, Gregg 1922: 53-54.

that the forces of creation join in re-establishing the moral order. This is a strong feature of our author's thought and a recurring theme in *Wisdom*, particularly in the diptychs of Chapters 11-19, and prompted Mazzinghi's comment that the forces of nature are always working against God's enemies in *Wisdom* and an additional source of terror.⁹⁶ Here, it is sufficient to show that they who boasted that they would use and exploit creation (καὶ χρῆσώμεθα τῇ κτίσει ὡς νεότητι σπουδαίως 2.6) now find that it is the weapon used to bring about their ruin (καὶ ὀπλοποιήσῃ τὴν κτίσιν εἰς ἀμυναν ἐχθρῶν 5.17). In true irony, the wicked who believed that there was nothing beyond the grave (2.1-2), and who denied the immortal potential of humankind, are blown away with the storm (5.23) so that nothing of their lives will remain.

5. The Dilemma of the Death of the Righteous Man.

In order to understand the central crisis of this conflict between the wicked and the just man, we need to return to the point where we left the wicked rulers in their moment of triumph at the end of their first speech. Remembering that this speech of the wicked is equivalent to the action of the drama, we assume the death of the just man. In spite of the manifest

96. Mazzinghi 1995: 173.

injustice of his death, God does not intervene to save him, and the wicked need not acknowledge a God who upholds the moral order. In this we touch upon one of the central dilemmas within the tradition of biblical wisdom, namely, that tradition's inability to traverse the barrier of death.⁹⁷ In essence, the principle of wisdom stated that the rewards of the wise come to them in this life in the form of riches and longevity,⁹⁸ and, conversely, that the absence of these rewards on earth denoted a foolish and sinful life. Death levels both foolishness and wisdom.⁹⁹ We have reached, as it were, the limits of the wisdom tradition and God must save before the point of death or justice is undercut. In the terms of the discourse on justice in *Wisdom*, death and its finality has become the only disinterested test of the just man's righteousness. Death, thus, becomes necessary in the context of the drama, and the rewards of the wise must be granted in another sphere.

We are alerted to this possibility early in *Wisdom*, in the comment of 1.15 that righteousness is immortal and the promise of 2.23 that man was made in the image of God's eternal nature. It is this concept of immortality that our author now uses to reaffirm the value of the lives of the just. The annihilation of the wicked is couched in the language of apocalyptic judgement, and in the language of apocalyptic eschatology he will vindicate

97. Davidson 1983: 197.

98. Prov. 3.1-2 '*My son, forget not my laws, but let your heart keep my words. For length of existence, and years of life and peace, they shall add to you.*'

99. '*He destroys the blameless and the wicked alike*' Job 9.22, also Eccl. 2.16 '*Alas the wise man and the fool die the same death.*' Sirach has a similar problem coping with the concepts of blessing and death. His position seems ambivalent, death is both the result of sin (7.26) and divine decree (41.3-4), with the latter assumed as a theological consolation for death. No after-life is presumed in Sirach.

and exalt the faithful.

6. The Vindication of the Just (3.1-15, 5.15-16).

There are two parts to our author's vindication. The first occurs in Schmitt's central meditative block,¹⁰⁰ which we have discussed as the backdrop to the second speech of the wicked. The second lies in the summary verses just prior to the final judgement of the wicked. The dramatic function of the former is the unexpected reversal of the circumstances on which the developing plot hinges,¹⁰¹ and it acts to create anticipation for the judgement.

The vindication both opens and closes with the death of the just man. In 3.1-9, we discover that the just man, whom we last saw facing his enemies before his torture and death, those enemies '*out of whose hands*' (ἐκ χειρός 2.18) God is challenged to save him, is safely '*in the hand*' of God (ἐν χειρὶ Θεοῦ 3.1), together with others who are just. Although '*in the sight of the unwise*' (ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἀφρόνων), '*in the sight of men*' (ἐν ὄψει ἀνθρώπων) the death of the righteous is a final and ruinous step, they are '*in peace*' (ἐν εἰρήνῃ 3.2-4) and their hope is full of immortality.

In the examination (δοκιμάσωμεν 2.19) by the wicked, the just man is found to be, by their definition of law and strength in 2.11, worthless

100. Schmitt 1996: 39.

101. Schmitt 1996: 47.

(ἀχρηστον). In the examination (ἐδοκίμασεν) by God, he, who thought the wicked counterfeit (κίβδηλος 2.16) is discovered to be gold (ὡς χρυσόν 3.6). The wicked were able to tyrannize the righteous (2.10) because they were rulers, judges of the earth (οἱ κρίνοντες τὴν γῆν 1.1), now the just ones of God will be the rulers of the nations (κρινούσιν ἔθνη 3.8). The sneer of the wicked, that the just man would be visited (ἐπισκοπή) according to his own words (2.20) becomes in God's visitation (ἐν καιρῷ ἐπισκοπῆς αὐτῶν 3.7) the fate of the wicked, who are punished according to their own reasoning (3.10). The righteous, who were inconvenient and poor, will now shine like the stars,¹⁰² as the reward for their trust (3.9), the promise of 1.2.

The complete change in the fortunes of the righteous is due to the apocalyptic picture that all events on earth have direct consequences in the heavenly realm. Thus, huge reversals of expectation and valuation may be made because those on earth are party only to one side of each exchange. The efforts of the just man to act in accordance with the principle of righteousness is no longer a guarantee of riches and long life on earth, but his conduct will be rewarded in the heavenly sphere where the events of his life are viewed with grace and mercy (χάρις καὶ ἔλεος 3.9, 4.15).

102. Isaiah 1.31 *'And their strength shall be as a thread of tow, and their works as sparks, and the transgressors and the sinners shall be burnt up together.'* Due to this quotation several commentators have assumed this to be the role of the righteous in destroying the wicked, Gregg 1922: 27. Winston suggests Zech 12.6. More likely is the idea found in Dan. 12.3. *'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and.... as the stars for ever and ever'* and Enoch 104.2. The sparks among the stubble then becomes a description of their sudden appearance and brightness. For a full discussion on the just being admitted to the heavenly sphere see Collins 1974: 32-34.

This process of reversal and revaluation continues with the two images of the fruitless: the woman who has no children (3.13), and the eunuch (3.14), and these our author sets against the fecundity of the wicked (4.3-6).

Earlier in our analysis, it was noted that the two categories of the barren woman and the eunuch have particular resonances as the fulfillment of prophecies in Isaiah. Isaiah 54.1-8 paints the picture of a barren woman, a figure of Israel, enlarging her tent and lengthening the cords to make room for her children among the Gentiles. In *Wisdom*, it is the hidden fruit of the woman's piety which will be made known when the judgement begins. The eunuch appears in Isaiah 56.2-5, where he '*restrains his hands from unrighteousness*' (καὶ διατηρῶν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ μὴ ποιεῖν ἄδικα Isa.56.2, /ὁ μὴ ἐργασάμενος ἐν χειρὶ ἀνόμημα Wis.3.14). Deuteronomy 23.1 debar the eunuch from participation in 'the assembly of the Lord'. In *Wisdom*, he is promised the portion (κλήρος) in the temple, which has so long been withheld from him. This is also the promise of Isaiah 56.7 where God states that he will accept their sacrifices and make them glad in his house of prayer.¹⁰³

Not only is the barren woman promised 'fruit', and the eunuch 'place', but in this revaluation, the children of the ungodly, instead of producing the

103. For another interpretation of the place of the eunuch in the 'new age' see Acts 8.26-40. Winston thinks the prophecy of Isaiah 56 referred to Jews who were castrated during the Exile (1979: 132).

expected delight and promise, are shown to be unstable, easily broken, their fruit useless and unripe (4.3-5). More bitterly still, they become the accusers of their parents (4.6) in their trial.

These references have particular significance. Not only are the barren woman and the eunuch categories of peculiar vulnerability socially, but the root of their vulnerability lies in the covenant promises to Israel that such a state of childlessness is the result of failed response to the covenant,¹⁰⁴ or in this case to the moral law. Children were accounted a blessing (Psalm 126.3-4), yet here we have a situation where the childless are regarded as blessed, and the children of the wicked are a curse (3.13). The revaluation is, then, the mercy of God extended to dishonoured social categories, but that mercy can only be extended in a new interpretation of events. For the Ethiopian Eunuch of Acts 8, that new interpretation occurs with the coming of Christ. In *Wisdom*, the new age for the just begins with the Day of Judgement, which does not signal the end of the world but rather a changed state in a new sphere.

The children of the wicked are described in 4.5 as fruit that is unprofitable (ἀχρηστος) and unripe (ἀωρος), untimely. With this play on words, our author draws us back to the estimate made by the wicked of the value of the just (2.11) and their cynical arrangement of his early death. In this

104. See Exodus 23.25-6. 'There shall not be on your land one who is impotent or barren.'

second picture of the death of the just man, from 4. 8-14, we are given, as it were, a different angle. Old age, the sign of blessing in traditional wisdom writing, has also been revalued. Now it is set against wisdom and a sinless life (4.9). God's pleasure at sinlessness is shown in his mercy towards the young man who was removed from the world of sinners (4.11),¹⁰⁵ in case he is 'bewitched' (βασκανία 4.12).¹⁰⁶ In 4.15, just prior to the final confrontation of the righteous man with the wicked, which results in their confession and destruction, our author repeats the theme of this middle section, '*grace and mercy (χαρίς καὶ ἔλεος) is among his chosen, and he visits (ἐπισκοπή) his saints with their due.*'

Our second section on the due reward of the righteous (5.15-16) is described in terms reminiscent of Isaiah 62.3. '*And you shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord (καὶ ἔση στέφανος κάλλους ἐν χειρὶ Κυρίου) and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.*' *Wisdom* promises that the righteous will live for evermore. This state of immortality is their principal reward from God who has a care for them (5.15) and is conceived of in terms of a glorious kingdom, and conflating the parallel from Isaiah, a beautiful diadem (τὸ διάδημα τοῦ κάλλους 5.16) from the hand of the Lord.

105. The terms of the translation are taken from Gen 5.24 and refer to Enoch, although this is a comparison, see Gregg 1922: 37. The righteous man in 2.20 was not translated, but killed, as is clear from 5.1, but God's taking him away may be viewed like the translation of Enoch.

106. For the personification of βασκανία, μῶμος, φθόνος in Alexandrian poetry, see Fraser 1972: 757. This trio are the Evil-eye, Envy and Spite and are frequently found together. We have met φθόνος in 2.24, belonging to the devil, and given as the reason for the devil's desire to bring sin into a good creation. In 4.12 the same envy could destroy the goodness of the young man, so God takes him away.

7. Transition: The Second Address to the Kings (6.1-6.21).

One further section needs to be discussed, but only briefly, because we will be obliged to consider this same section again in relation to divine wisdom. The second address to the kings is, as we have seen, a transitional section, which interweaves the incoming theme of divine wisdom with the outgoing theme of the judgement of the kings. Verse 21 is the last time that the kings are addressed by the speaker, and it provides a convenient finishing point, although, in fact, the theme of wisdom's role is well-established by this verse. The last exhortation to the kings occurs in 6.11 and, thematically, this might be a better conclusion.¹⁰⁷

In fact, this section repeats the warning of Chapters 1-5 in the charge to the kings to be impartial in judgement (6.5)¹⁰⁸ and the clear message that the lowly will be more readily pardoned than those who have exercised power (6.6). Additionally, we are reminded that the kings have not judged correctly (οὐκ ἐκρίνατε ὀρθῶς 6.4), neither have they kept the law, both phrases designed to echo the insolence of the first speech of the wicked rulers (2.1, 2.11). Moreover, the works and counsels of the kings will be tested (ἐξετάσει 6.3) as we were promised they would be tested by wisdom in her role as justice (δίκη 1.8-9), because power is the gift of God (6.3) and a

107. For the limits of the sections in the commentaries, see previous note 4. p. 83 above.

108. See Bassler 1982: 8-43, for the use of the key phrase πρὸ προσώπου - *before the face of* - עַל-פְּנֵי (Wis. 6.7 προσώπου) used in Ex. 34.6 and Ex. 32.34 to signify the importance of God's impartiality for Israel, i.e. God's justice is unaffected by the influence of any person. Additionally, Bassler notes that God's impartiality as expressed in 2 Baruch and Ps. of Solomon, as in *Wisdom*, is rooted in his prior impartiality in creation (p.38).

severe judgement will fall upon those who abuse power (6.6-8).

Our author, then, is still concerned with social justice in this section, and the obligation of the rulers to imitate the righteous rule of God for the well-being of all, i.e. the φιλανθρωπία which is laid out for us in both the Mercy Dialogue (12.15-19) and the transitional verses between the Drama and the wisdom praise-poem (6.24). The failure of the wicked rulers to comply with any part of what is required of them and the extremity of their wickedness, draws down (1.12) upon them the destruction which is inherent in the regulatory principle of *'measure, number and weight'* (11.20d) by which the cosmos is governed.

Nor is the mercy principle of 'little by little' compromised in the account of the judgement, as there are several factors in the drama which would indicate time passing in which repentance would have been possible. The presence of the heavenly reversals between the speeches of the wicked, with the gifts of immortality for the just (3.1-9) and 'fruit' and a share in worship for the barren woman (3.13) and the eunuch (3.14) respectively, do not simply act as signs of the imminent judgement but, as we have seen, imply the passage of time (see p.109 above). Also the wicked speak of themselves as taking their fill (ἐνεπλήσθημεν 5.7) of the ways of lawlessness and destruction, a phrase which may impute to them a lifetime of wickedness.

More tellingly, the wicked are clearly in possession of the concept of law (2.12), which, as we noted at the opening of this Chapter, acts as a warning mechanism for breaches of the moral order,¹⁰⁹ and their planned exploitation betrays a knowledge of the requirements of just rule even as they undervalue it. Their foolish, unrighteous reasonings (λογισμῶν ἀσυνέτων ἀδικίας 11.15) in the Mercy Dialogue, which lead to self-deception, are the same reasonings which will cause the '*holy spirit of discipline*' to leave them to the consequences of their own wickedness in 1.5. Further, the justice which will inevitably fall in 5.17-23, with hailstones full of rage and a mighty storm of God's making to blow them away, is the same punishment which God rejects in the Mercy Dialogue when he sends the plagues upon Egypt rather than the destructive might of the apocalyptic dragon (11.18).

Thus, to be numbered among the sons of God and to have a portion among the saints, i.e. immortality, the central aetiological question of this section, requires the love of righteousness supported by moral law. Without that love of righteousness, the warning punishments take effect backed by the full weight of the judgement to come, for these two concepts of deferred judgement and final judgement are inextricably linked. God, however, as it states in the dialogue, does not punish the undeserving (12.15) and exercises mercy upon all (11.23). In addition, then, to the gift of immortality for the

109. See Romans 5.13 and 7.7.

righteous after death, he provides with the gift of wisdom the means by which righteousness may be discerned and learned in life, and by which humans become as like God as possible.¹¹⁰ Thus, our second aetiological question at 5.8, (*What has pride profited us, or what good has our wealth or boasting brought us?*) with its terrible price of judgement, has also come into play, and leads us to another set of questions related to the end, or purpose, of life itself. This new generation of questions can only be answered by the introduction of personified wisdom as the criterion of knowledge, as the teacher who defines righteousness, and as the maker of paradigms for all to imitate.

110. Plato *Theaetetus* 176b. For the importance of this idea for *Wisdom*, see Introduction above, p.9 n.18.

3. *THE CREATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS -
THE WISDOM CHAPTERS 6-10.*

*Make this to seem a temple in their sight
Whose main support, holy religion frame:
And one, Wisdom; two, Courage; three, Temperance; and
four, Right;*

Make seem the pillars that sustain the same.

B. Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness* (lines 226-229).

Our first encounter with divine wisdom occurs in the opening verses of *Wisdom*, where we are told of her distaste for sin (1.4) and how, as the 'holy spirit of discipline', she cannot remain with the unrighteous (1.5). She is also the means by which God's love for the creation, i.e. his *φιλανθρωπία*, is expressed (1.6) because, as the Spirit of the Lord, she fills the inhabited world (1.7). Wisdom is, thus, the divine agent of God, or God's activity in the world. As such, her role is unique, and before we examine the Chapters in which that role is to the foreground, i.e. Chapters 6-10, it may be useful to summarise here what we have understood of that role in the other section of *Wisdom* where her activity is directly described .

1. **Wisdom's role in the Apocalyptic Drama (Chapters 1-6).**

As we have noted, in the opening verses of *Wisdom*, divine wisdom is described as a 'spirit of love towards man' (*φιλάνθρωπον γὰρ πνεῦμα σοφία* 1.6) in keeping with her role in Proverbs 8.31. Yet, the way in which this love is demonstrated is in a sharp recoil from those actions which lead to

judgement. Wisdom will not enter a soul which harbours malice nor remain with a body in subjection to sinful desires (1.4). She will escape from deceit, remove herself from any place where there is no understanding, and leave unrighteousness behind her (1.5). Moreover, she will have some part to play in the final judgement of the wicked (1.6). Her all-pervasiveness and her intimacy with God 's voice and commands (1.7) must lead to the exposure of all unworthy thought or speech (1.10-11).

As Winston has noted, wisdom here, in her activity of listening, reporting, and avenging (1.8), bears a strong resemblance to personified justice (δίκη) in Greek literature, who similarly listens to the speech of humans, reports to Zeus, and so brings judgement upon the wrong-doers.¹ In the opening Chapter, wisdom is acting strategically, as can be seen from these parallels with the activity of δίκη. Many of the images in this chapter are images of sound: wisdom will not acquit anyone who blasphemes (1.6), the sound of words will be brought to the Lord (πρὸς Κύριον) as evidence of wickedness (1.9), even murmuring or backbiting will ultimately bring destruction upon a soul (ἀναρῆι ψυχὴν 1.11). Consequently, there is a hidden picture of wisdom moving through the world hearing all words, reporting to God, and positioning the attributes of God for the final conflict

1. Winston 1979: 105. Δίκη is personified, for example, in Plato *Laws* 715E, 872E and Sophocles *Electra* 475, 528.

with, and judgement of, the wicked.² That conflict takes place in 5.17-23, where it is these same attributes which are used to make war upon the wicked and 'a mighty wind' (πνεῦμα δυνάμεως 5.23) which finally carries the wicked to their destruction. Thus, there are reasonable grounds for assuming an intermediary role for wisdom in the opening Chapter, between God and the world, and that role anticipates participation in the judgement of Chapter 5.

In addition to this close association with avenging justice, benevolence is promised to those who look for God and neither tempt him nor mistrust him (1.2), for it is to such as search '*in simplicity of heart*' that wisdom will enter (εἰσελεύσεται) and remain (κατοικήσει 1.4). For such as these, the creation remains healthful (1.14), death cannot harm them for their righteousness is an immortal quality (1.15).

Thus, several points crucial to our understanding of wisdom's role have emerged from our summary of her involvement in the Apocalyptic Drama of Chapters 1-6. Chief amongst these is wisdom's creation of the environment, the terms and conditions, in which righteousness or wickedness may be chosen, and as the '*holy spirit of discipline*' (1.5) she encourages and trains God's creatures into the responses which will bring the immortality God planned for creation. Additionally, for those who refuse such discipline and

2. Wisdom appears to be understood in this Chapter as the supreme attribute of God, as in Philo's description of Mind, *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim* 4.117.

foolishly fail to take advantage of the training and opportunities given, the result is judgement and death in which, as we have seen, wisdom also plays a significant part. Wisdom, then, is not divorced from our themes of judgement and benevolence, but is the agent who directs both the benevolence in-built into the created order (1.13-15) and the judgement upon those who work counter to that design and choose death (1.16).

2. Genre and Structure of the Wisdom Chapters.

Both the internal structure and external placing of these chapters is of interest. Although there are at least as many projected structures as there are commentators, there is, in the main, fairly broad agreement about where the divisions lie.³

There are, nonetheless, difficulties inherent in this level of agreement. The real unity of these chapters is their concentration upon the role of wisdom. Where secondary or literary features, such as wisdom's relationship to King Solomon, seem to be given a pre-eminent role this produces a distortion, not simply in relation to internal units within the text, but also in

3. See Winston 1979: 10-11, Dimant 1985: 250-253 (based upon Gilbert), Wright 1967b: 168-9, Larcher 1983: 120-121, Lindez 1990: 243-290 (also based upon Gilbert and Bizetti). Wright (1967b: 174) and Gilbert (1970: 301-331) differ over whether Chapter 9 has parallel or concentric symmetry, as Grabbe has noted (Grabbe 1997: 20). Dimant's structural analysis, founded upon Gilbert's study of the inclusions, is reproduced here and presents a fairly typical division of this section, emphasising Solomon rather than wisdom:

- a) 6.22-25 A transitory passage introducing the theme.
- b) 7. Solomon's personal quest for wisdom: wisdom's cosmological nature.
- c) 8. Solomon's love for wisdom.
- d) 9. Solomon's prayer for wisdom.
- e) 10. Wisdom saves the just and punishes the wicked.

relation to the other sections of *Wisdom*.⁴ Furthermore, in our attempts to provide some kind of over-arching theme from the sections based upon the inclusions, we have tended to read the wisdom chapters backwards from 9.7-12, the point where it becomes clear that it is Solomon who is in the role of the speaker. Prior to the references to the construction of the temple (9.8) and the throne of David (9.12), there is no clear identification of the speaker, and the link with the earlier drama would seem to be the theme of kingship. To fail to explore that link, and to 'cut' to Solomon as it were, reduces our sensitivity to the purpose of the clear identification of Solomon when that moment arrives.

Clearly, we need to deal with these chapters as a unit, and yet not in isolation. Chapter 10 leads us naturally into the Exodus reflection, which is used to illustrate both judgement for the wicked and mercy for the faithful, a further relationship with the earlier chapters, and also displays the merciful principle of 'little by little' which is a distinct feature of the Mercy Dialogue. Also, there is the unexamined relationship between the life guided by divine wisdom and its counterpart in the emptiness of idolatry (Chs.13-15),⁵ which also is connected to the benevolence and judgement of God. Any structural analysis of this section must take each of these points into account and present both the external coherence of *Wisdom's* themes and the internal coherence

4. Many of the structural analyses begin with Solomon's quest for wisdom. The distorting effect of this is then seen in Chapter 10, which features wisdom as the rescuer of the righteous but does not mention Solomon. As a consequence, some commentators have seen the locus of Chapter 10 in a different part of *Wisdom*, see Clarke 1973: 65, and Gregg in his 1909 edition, Introduction. L. Wright understands Chapter 11 as a complete break in theme, with Chapter 10 acting transitionally to make up the number of verses in the first half of *Wisdom*, Wright 1967a: 228.

5. See Chapter 4 below.

based upon wisdom's centrality.

2.1. *Genre.*

In 1908, Louis Maries published an article in which he contended that 6.12 to 9.17 of *Wisdom* was the third of three poems, the first two concerned with the respective themes of immortality and judgement.⁶ Maries argued that the poems should be read together responsively as strophe/antistrophe with the third poem, comprising 90 verses, as the final strophe, and he based his claim upon the resultant sense and symmetry of the number of verses, the verse groupings, and the level of repetitions of words. Maries was criticised by Wright on the grounds that some of his separations seemed forced and that to maintain the numerical symmetry of the verses required unsupported alterations to the accepted versification.⁷ This criticism is a valid one,⁸ nonetheless, some of Maries' observations remain interesting and are worthy of closer inspection.

In the first instance, Maries has correctly placed wisdom at the centre

6. Maries 1908: 251-257. The 'discovery' of the first two poems was, in fact, made by P.A. Condamin, some of whose work remains unpublished but who had articles represented in *Revue Biblique* July 1901: 352, and *Etudes* July 1906: 56. Maries' structural analysis of the wisdom poem is worth reproducing here as we will follow up some of his sections later:

6.12-21 La Sagesse est facile à trouver.

6.22-7.6 Je vous dirai ce qu'est la Sagesse.

7.7-16 Nécessité de la prière pour obtenir la Sagesse.

7.17-8.1 Splendeur de la Sagesse.

8.2-16 Je m' épris de la Sagesse.

8.17-21 Nécessité de la prière pour obtenir la Sagesse.

9.1-17 Prière pour demander à Dieu la Sagesse.

7. Wright 1967b: 166.

8. One reason for the Maries/Condamin division between verses and sections is a much more limited acknowledgement of the literary feature of inclusion. Whilst recognising some inclusions that are fairly generally accepted, Maries saw others as responses, i.e. beginning a new section rather than closing an existing one (see Wright 1967b: 166) or linking several verses (concatenatio) as in 6.21, 22, 25 where a link is formed between the kings, wisdom, and the instruction given by a particular king. Current scholarly reliance upon inclusions to divide the sections is perhaps over-emphasised, and militates against our seeing verbal repetitions in this way.

of his poetic analysis. Secondly, however forced some of Maries' divisions seem to be, he has attempted to give an account of the underlying rhythm of the text at this point.⁹ Thirdly, Maries noted that where our author uses the Hebrew poetic form of parallelism, it is the verse balance, that combination of strophe and antistrophe within the verse,¹⁰ which forms the basic metric unit rather than the individual stichs - a factor of some importance for later critics.¹¹ Finally, Maries imagined the three poems in a performative context, involving two choirs where the first choir chants the strophes, the second the antistrophes, and both choirs come together for the intermediate strophes. On the basis of Maries' mathematical analysis of the number of verses in each of the three poems, this would mean that each choir performed an identical number of verses.¹²

This suggestion is not as far-fetched as it first seems. In imagining such a performance, Maries is not, of course, suggesting that the poem was performed in this way, only that the possibility of that kind of performance may have influenced our author's style as he wrote.¹³ Thus, Maries seems to have recognised, but not developed, the idea that the embedding of a hymn/poem in a broader text requires, according to literary convention, that the text

9. See Thackeray 1904/5: 232-7. Thackeray comments on the frequency of couplets with seven or eight syllables, and notes 8.3 as an example of a couplet with eleven syllables, (234).

10. Maries 1908: 257.

11. See Kolarcik 1991, and Wright's assessment of the existence of numerical patterns in *Wisdom* 1967a: 218-232.

12. Maries 1908: 255.

13. Maries 1908: 255 note 1.

must supply a performative setting.¹⁴ On this occasion that context is supplied in Solomon's prayer (9.1-18), which possibly has lying behind it Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8.22-53, II Chron. 6.1-42). Also according to the hymn/poem convention, it is this notional setting of the hymn which also provides the poet/narrator's authority to speak in praise of the gods, and Solomon, thus, becomes the authoritative speaker in our praise-poem to wisdom. Maries' analysis of the wisdom section as a poem consequently points the way to wisdom's centrality in the praise-poem and to Solomon's subsidiary role within it, i.e. as the authoritative narrator.

Are there other factors which would identify our wisdom Chapters as a praise-poem? Depew draws up her list of conventions from those most frequently found in hymns and in epinician poetry: praise of gods and praise of men having formal similarities because they are essentially performing the same function.¹⁵ In each of these genres the speaker places his involvement, i.e. his speech, in the present (*Wis.* 6.9) and he may refer to the detail of his own direct involvement (*Wis.* 7.5, 7.7). The speaker usually addresses his speech to another party (*Wis.* 6.21), most often the god or victor who is to be praised, but not exclusively, as those participating in the rite/recitation are sometimes addressed.¹⁶ One point worth noting here, is that although it is

14. See Depew 1993: 57-77, speaking of the Hymns of Callimachus: 'the very realism of the conventions he adopts alerts us to the text's awareness of its own artificiality', p.77.

15. Depew 1993: 58. Within the context of the praise-poem it is possible to include Chapter 10 of *Wisdom* as an indication of the performance of the god/gods, see below.

16. Callimachus addresses his fifth hymn to the women of Achaia who are preparing to wash the statue of Athena Pallas, (lines 1 and 15).

permitted within the form to address the kings, as in *Wisdom* 6.9, and again in 6.21, it would not be unusual to include some additional invocation to the god or goddess.¹⁷ Divine wisdom, however, is never directly invoked, and all mention of her is in the third person. This feature of *Wisdom's* hymn is, of course, not merely stylistic but theological: it is God who is invoked and the spirit of wisdom who comes in response (*Wis.* 7.7).

These conventions we have listed have, so far, all come under the category of '*mimesis*', i.e. those features in a poem which are stylistically imitative of other hymn/poems and consequently provide the traditional framework for the genre.¹⁸ Similarly important to the praise-poem/hymnic genre is the concept of *aitia*, which, as we recognised in the introduction (see p.6 above), provides us with the explanation or cause of some ritual or event. In fact the application of these terms is extremely complex in *Wisdom*, as both *mimesis* and *aitia* have philosophical as well as literary implications within the text.¹⁹ For the moment, however, we are simply concerned with the literary mechanism within the praise-poem/hymn where this feature is used to anchor the text to the world experienced by those addressed and the audience.²⁰ Thus, in Callimachus' *Hymn V*, the myth of the blinding of Tiresias by Athena, because he has seen her bathing naked, is linked to the washing of her

17. In Callimachus' *Hymn V*, the poet addresses the goddess in direct invocation (lines 49-53).

18. Depew 1993: 58. Like the *Wisdom* hymn, Callimachus' hymns were also a textual creation and were not performed in a cultic setting, see Depew 1993: 59, and Henrichs 1993: 129.

19. *Aitia* are also the first causes in philosophy. *Mimesis* is crucial for understanding the importance of paradigm in *Wisdom*.

20. Depew 1993: 58.

wooden statue in another ritual. In this story, the ritual is reaffirmed by the myth, and current belief and practice gain validity from the sacred past.

How does this validating process work within the *Wisdom* hymn/praise-poem? Solomon's speech at 7.1-20 and Solomon's prayer at 9.1-18 serve different functions within the text, a factor to which we will return in our analysis of Solomon's narrative. For the present, we have to recognise that the prayer of Chapter 9 also serves as a Temple *aition*. The Temple was, at the time of *Wisdom's* writing, still in existence. As an existent building its concreteness lends credence to Solomon's more abstract request for wisdom, which in turn is made the cause for all that the reader knows about Solomon, i.e. that he was rich (7.8, 11; 8.5), and that he was honoured and exceptionally wise (7.15-21; 8.10-12). Most importantly, this request for wisdom and the accomplishment of the Temple, as aspects of Solomon's life, confirm divine performance, as does the rescue of the righteous in Chapter 10 of *Wisdom*, which is another traditional function of *aitia*. This matter of divine performance is important for our study of the wisdom hymn and we need now to consider the techniques by which wisdom's performance is revealed to us.

In an excellent essay on the subject of the activity of the gods, Henrichs²¹ examines the ways in which this divine activity is expressed poetically in Callimachus' hymns.²² Henrichs makes a list of seven categories

21. Henrichs 1993: 127-128.

22. There are sound methodological reasons for this comparison with Callimachus in particular, most obviously because he is regarded as having revived and, more importantly, redefined the hymnic genre. See Depew 1993: 63 and Haslam 1993: 111. Moreover, he was an extremely influential poet on the generation of Latin poets who were roughly contemporary with our author and, therefore, we may assume a widespread influence on literary forms generally. Thirdly, the comparison permits us some degree of consistency.

which he regards as a consistent pattern in presenting divine action. These are worth examining as a shaping lens through which to view the literary techniques employed by the author of *Wisdom*:

1. The linking of an epithet to divine powers, either directly or by suggestion.
2. The way in which ritual is used as a link for divine action.
3. The piling up of epithets to generate action.
4. The use of enumeration and counting, e.g. listing divine gifts, to show the status of the divinity.
5. The way in which the poet controls the dynamics of divine action by an incomplete counting process. Callimachus, of course, was dealing with a pantheon of gods and goddesses, whose powers must be separated. Thus, in *Hymn III*, Artemis, in pursuit of her huntress title, notices five large deer of which she catches only four as the fifth is needed by Hera (lines 102-109). In catching the first four deer Artemis displays all her hunting skills, but in the escape of the fifth animal her powers are shown to have limits.
6. The poet's interest in divine children.
7. The poet's use of anthropomorphism to portray epiphany.

Several of Henrich's categories concern the use of epithets, and we will

deal with each of these. The use of divine epithets can often be encomiastic, providing information which is essential to our understanding of the hymn but lies outside its scope.²³ It is noticeable that in the *Wisdom* hymn, where the properties and functions of wisdom are expressed in epithets, as in 7.22 - 27, these give evidence of an unlimited range of powers. This is only what we would have expected from our earlier understanding that there is a relationship between wisdom and the attributes of God, and these attributes may be indirect epithets of wisdom in her role as '*the breath of the power of God*' (ἀτμίς γάρ ἐστι τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως 7.25).

In keeping with this idea that wisdom's powers have no limit, we can see that the piling up of epithets in Chapter 7 paints a portrait of wisdom in which she is capable of acting out any of the roles assigned to her in the book as a whole. The direct evidence of this capability is her immediate action on behalf of the king '*who loved her and sought her from youth*' (8.2-16), but this also anticipates her action in the search for the righteous and their deliverance, directly in Chapter 10, and indirectly in the Diptychs. The intense concentration of epithets in 7.22-23 is a coiled spring from which the later activity of wisdom is generated.

In Maries' structural analysis of his poem (see p.142 n.6 above), he notes that wisdom is granted in response to prayer twice within the wisdom

23. Henrichs 1993: 128.

Chapters (7.7, and in the formal prayer at 9.4). This significant repetition conveys a ritual aspect (Henrichs 2). The ritual here expressed links both God and wisdom for, as we have noted, the prayer is offered to God but wisdom comes in response, and it is wisdom who, consequently, reveals God's activity.

At first glance it does not appear that *Wisdom* uses enumeration to indicate the power of God (Henrichs 4 and 5), nor does our author attempt to control the action of God in the poem by incomplete counting, as does Callimachus (see p.147 above). Nonetheless, there is a variation on this technique being played out in the contrast between the 'single' individual and the 'all' of God's providence in 7.1-23. In this section, the human vulnerability of the king is given full play, and is set against the political demands placed upon the ideal king and also the theological demands of enacting that role in imitation of the divine king, i.e. ruling with wisdom and righteousness as laid out in *Wisdom* Chapter 1. The series of first person verbs (7.1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15), underlined by the emphatic εἶμι (7.1) which opens this section, not only preserves the convention of first person narration, but emphasises vulnerability by the increasing stress on singularity. There is an echo of Adam, first-made (πρωτοπλάστος) and therefore alone, and reference to the 'first cry' (7.3). The vulnerability is the more marked because it is the same for all men (ἴσος ἅπασιν 7.1, πᾶσιν ἴσα 7.3, μία δὲ πάντων εἴσοδος εἰς τὸν βίον, ἔξοδος τε ἴση 7.6). When the king's prayer is answered,

wisdom brings with her '*all good things*' (7.11) and the king rejoiced in them '*all*' (εὐφρόνην δὲ ἐπὶ πάντων 7.12), because God grants '*all wisdom and knowledge of workmanship*' (7.16), so that even the natural world is laid bare by wisdom who is '*artificer of all things*' (ἡ γὰρ πάντων τεχνίτις ἐδίδαξέν με σοφία 7.22). Thus, the effect of this contrasting play on singular and plural enables our author to move the king from a situation of human isolation to one of harmony with God's design and, consequently, to display the power of divine wisdom to bring about such completion.²⁴

As we have commented, the epithets applied to wisdom in 7.23-8.1 indicate her unlimited power, albeit that power is always subservient to God (7.26) and does not act independently. The dynamic of this operation of divine power (Henrichs 5) is shown within the poem by the interweaving of narrative sections and praise sections, much as Shakespeare uses his sub-plot to diffuse or reinforce the tension of the main plot. Thus, after the intensification of the sorites of 6.17-20, our author returns to the kings and rulers and offers a proverbial like exhortation to honour wisdom in return for an eternal reign. In a similar vein, after the concentration of wisdom's properties and powers in 7.22-8.1, our author turns his focus back upon the narrator (8.2).

The subsidiary nature of wisdom's power to God is further demonstrated after the aporetic questions of 9.13-17.²⁵ Wisdom is charged

24. Schmitt 1986: 60. Schmitt sees the collective terms ὄσα and πάντων in these verses as creating a kind of internal tension.

25. See Depew 1993: 61. Depew sees the use of aporetic questions as a way of introducing mythological narrative in such a way that marks its relevance for the present situation of praise, as in Wisdom's use of tradition in Chapter 10.

with the training task of correcting the ways of those upon the earth and teaching that which pleases God, so that humankind is saved through wisdom (καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ ἐσώθησαν 9.18). The implication here of God's essential unknowability is only redressed by the intermediary and interpretive role of wisdom who knows God's counsel, and it is emphatically wisdom (αὕτη 10.1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 15) who translates and teaches what is needful for the saving of humans.²⁶

There are two other indicators of divine performance within the limits set by the poetic text and listed by Henrichs, which we need to examine briefly as they have theological implications for both author and reader. The first of these is the use of anthropomorphism (Henrichs 7), and the second involves the place of children and adolescents (Henrichs 6).

The use of anthropomorphism is rare, both in the wisdom chapters and in *Wisdom* as a whole.²⁷ More significantly, all references outside Chapter 1 are to the hands of wisdom or the hand of God. Although Callimachus also uses the metaphor of the hands and arms of the deities to signify their actions,

26. Grabbe sees this as a departure from a traditional position in which salvation is reserved for God. Grabbe 1997: 79. Some Latin texts had the addition, 'et per sapientiam sanati sunt, quicumque placuerunt tibi, Domine, a principio', see Goodrick 1913: 224. This rendering is supported by no MSS. Scarpat 1996: 497 gives the Latin text as the Greek. This addition would suggest that the early church was unhappy about the role assigned to wisdom here, although how this differs from the acceptable I Tim. 1.15 may prove difficult to justify, logically speaking. Goodrick's claim (p. 224) that wisdom's power to save simply refers to earthly well-being cannot be supported because of 6.18 and 8.13.

27. Anthropomorphism occurs at 1.10 (ear): (hand or hands) 3.1, 7.11, 7.16, 8.18, 10.20, 11.17, 14.6, 16.15, 16.16 (arm), 19.8.

Henrichs has noted that the convention of Greek hymnology favours the divine foot or gait. The importance of this convention in Greek hymns, a convention Callimachus honours, is because the walk/foot of a god or goddess signifies mobility, and therefore holds all the possibilities for epiphany. Thus, in *Hymn 2* to Apollo, those who wait to see the god first feel the vibrations of his laurel branch as he begins to move, and then the tap of his foot on the door of his temple (lines 1-4).

In *Wisdom*, anthropomorphism is not related to epiphany directly. The primary relationship is to the exercise of divine power, and the secondary to the giving of divine gifts, both of which imply a continuous, active presence rather than the sudden arrival of epiphany. There is also a division in the way in which these two relationships are expressed. The divine gifts come from the 'hands' (ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτῆς 7.11, καὶ ἐν πόνοις χειρῶν αὐτῆς πλοῦτος ἀνεκλιπῆς 8.18) of wisdom. The exercise of divine power is from the 'hand' of God.²⁸ In our review of wisdom's participation in the Mercy Dialogue it was noted that there are two references to a guide for the Ark which carried Noah and, more importantly, the means of re-populating the earth. In 10.4 that guide is wisdom, and in 14.6 the ark is guided by God's hand, thereby indicating that these terms are synonymous. Thus, the

28. The exception to this is, as we have noted, 16.16 'the strength of [God's] arm'. However, this is also related to power and, therefore, may be assumed to have the same significance as 'hand' within the text.

anthropomorphic term the 'hand of God' is employed in *Wisdom* to convey wisdom's role in a variety of situations: in creation (11.17), in protecting and exercising mercy towards the righteous (3.1, 10.20, 14.6, 19.8) and in punishing the wicked (16.15, 16.16). The oblique anthropomorphism of Chapter 1,²⁹ is also related to the role of wisdom as a loving spirit who sees, hears, and reports on wickedness. For all its comparative rarity and limitations anthropomorphism is, consequently, important in *Wisdom*. The link which is expressed as 'the hand of God' turns out to be a direct link between wisdom and the power of God, granting wisdom a place in Israel's salvation history and in an eschatological future. The connection between anthropomorphism and epiphany is not completely dissolved, but wisdom's epiphany is measured in her continuous and decisive interventions to bring about the salvation plans of God.

The last topic of our assessment of divine activity is the placing and importance of children. Callimachus uses divine children to emphasise the gods' performance, i.e. they are successful at a much earlier age than humans. Artemis requests the trappings of her divinity whilst still a child (*Hymn III*).³⁰ Apollo prophesies before his birth (*Hymn IV*) indicating his oracular powers.³¹ Moreover, Apollo is described as '*beautiful and eternally young*' (*Hymn II*) a

29. God is described as one who witnesses, sees and hears (1.6). The '*ear of jealousy*' (οὖς ζηλώσεως 1.10) is likely to be a reference to wisdom in her role as personified justice δίκη.

30. Henrichs notes that Artemis 'systematically acquires the tools for her own performance as a huntress', Henrichs 1993: 134.

31. Henrichs 1993: 141.

description reinforced by the references to the children who play musical instruments for his arrival (*Hymn II*, lines 10-15). Youth and vigour in the gods is not merely a sign of their effectiveness, but also of their immortality.

The convention of referring to the birth of a god, apparent in several of Callimachus' hymns (*Hymns I, III, IV*) is marked, but not expanded, in *Wis.*

6.22. This has always been regarded as something of a problem verse as commentators have wondered over the author's failure to expand on wisdom's beginning ($\pi\omega\delta\varsigma \epsilon\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron$). Goodrick has noted that wisdom does have a beginning in Prov. 8.22-25,³² yet, that moment is expressed as before time and before creation. For our purposes, however, the beginning of wisdom to which our author refers is more likely to be tied to the king's perception of her,³³ which occurs after his initial prayer in 7.7. As we have already seen, wisdom's epiphany is closely tied to her active intervention in the affairs of humans, and it is this story of the king's involvement with wisdom which the narrator goes on to tell. Further, the properties of wisdom, as expressed in 7.22-27, are not time or creation bound, they have no beginning or ending and are, consequently, the guarantee that wisdom will deliver the immortality promised in 8.13.

Wisdom, then, is ageless. Nonetheless, there is a strong emphasis on youth in *Wisdom* as a whole, and in the Solomonic narrative in particular. The

32. Goodrick 1913: 178-9.

33. Gregg 1909: 62 and n.75.

Solomon who is presented to us in I Kings 3.5-10, who refers to himself in his prayer as a child (καὶ ἐγὼ εἶμι παιδάριον μικρὸν 1Kings 3.7) is speaking figuratively. He is adult enough to have taken the throne and ordered executions (I Kings 3.45) and has been commanded by his dying father to conduct himself as a man (καὶ ἰσχύσεις, καὶ ἔση εἰς ἄνδρα 1Kings 2.2). In *Wisdom* his youthfulness is repeatedly stressed:

I loved her and sought her from my youth (ἐκ νεότητός μου 8.2).

I shall have honour with the elders though I be but young (καὶ τιμὴν παρὰ πρεσβυτέροις ὁ νέος 8.10)

I was a child of happy disposition and had a good soul (παῖς δὲ ἤμην εὐφύης, ψυχῆς τε ἔλαχον ἀγαθῆς 8.19).

Additionally, there are several phrases, which while not directly portraying the age of the king, nevertheless heighten the impression of youthfulness. He wishes to take wisdom as a bride (8.2), in his formal prayer he is the son of God's handmaid (9.5),³⁴ and he illustrates the human frailties of kings by a picture of gestation and infancy (7.1-6).

Similarly, throughout *Wisdom*, there is an emphasis on youth. The translation of the young man in 4.10 is rationalised by the observation that wisdom is the equivalent of grey hair and a sinless life has parity with old age. The man who makes an image of his son is overcome with grief at the early

34. The comment in this verse that the king is deficient (ἐλάσσων) in understanding judgement and laws may also be a reference to his youth if ἐλάσσων is read as a comparative as Latin 'minor ad intellectum', see Goodrick 1913: 217.

death of his child (14.15). At the outbreak of the final plague, the scene is set between the '*righteous children of good men*' (ὄσιοι παῖδες ἀγαθῶν 18.9) and the '*children that were bewailed*' (18.1).

There is, of course, not one reason for this but several. In part, this emphasis on youth is metaphorical. The righteous, who search for God 'in simplicity of heart' (1.1) are pictured in child-like terms. This not only underlines the attitudes of openness and trust appropriate for the reception of wisdom, but also allows the righteous to assume the role, usually expressed in familial imagery,³⁵ which is traditional for those being instructed in wisdom. The use of father/son terminology in the wisdom schools invests the sages with corresponding notions of community nurture and community authority. In part, the early request of Solomon for wisdom redresses the long traditional association of wisdom with age. According to Fontaine³⁶ that association has a symbolical beginning in Num. 11.16-17, where God instructs Moses to gather seventy elders from among the people who will share the twin loads of administration and justice. Their commissioning requires that God '*will take some of the spirit that is upon you (Moses) and put it upon them*', and when this is completed the change in the elders is indicated by their ability to prophesy for a short time (Num. 11.25). Job 12.12 makes this connection between wisdom and age more forcibly:

35. Fontaine 1990: 159. See also Prov. 4.1, '*Listen, O sons, to a father's instruction*'.

36. Fontaine 1990: 163.

In length of time is wisdom, and in long life knowledge.

Some attempt was made to correct this view. The cycle of Joseph stories describe a young man who clearly has special insight, and in Psalm 105 it is stated that Joseph was freed in order to correct Pharaoh's administrators, and '*teach his elders wisdom*' (Psalm 105.22). In Eccles. 4.13, the speaker draws attention to the advantages of wise youth over power and folly,³⁷ and, as we have already noted, there was a strong Solomonic tradition which placed his request for wisdom early in his reign. There is an element here of precocious performance. The boy whose dreams hinted at power to come becomes ruler of Egypt. The boy-king who requested wisdom plays host to '*all the kings of the earth*' (1Kings 10.24) who come to hear his wise sayings. In *Wisdom* that connection between the early desire for wisdom, above the symbols of power (7.8) and wealth (7.9) and the benefits of health and beauty (7.10) signals the rule of a king invested with all of these.

However, the most important of the reasons for setting youth at a premium is our author's understanding of immortality. This is not merely a question of eternally young gods requiring youthful companions, although that association may be presumed here. Wisdom is presented as ageless and as one who '*renews all things*' (τὰ πάντα καινίζει 7.27) and the companions of

37. This may also be a reference to the Joseph stories, see Crenshaw 1988:112.

her choice are depicted as forever child-like and young, as a consequence of, and a reinforcement of, her enlivening powers (6.13-16). The projection of this life of wisdom into a future which lies beyond death (3.1-9) is a departure in a tradition which affirmed both a qualitative life given by wisdom (Prov. 3.18, Sir. 24.30) and the certainty of death at the end of that life (Eccl. 2.15, Sir. 15.17).³⁸ This departure required a new portrayal of the sages of Jewish tradition, a portrayal in which the immediacy of being aligned to wisdom brings new benefits, and overrides the patriarchal fulfillment which traditionally expressed wisdom's success.³⁹

Thus, we can see that the author of *Wisdom* has adapted the form of the praise-poem/hymn to suit his own theological convictions of unequivocal monotheism where God's active attributes are presided over by wisdom. According to literary convention he has supplied his hymn with a context in the events of King Solomon's life. In this case that context relates the hymn to the subject-matter of the earlier apocalyptic Chapters, i.e. a just kingship which reflects the justice of God, and Solomon as the king who ruled with wisdom is authorised to speak about both wisdom and kingship. Additionally, Solomon's narrative not only establishes him as a king but also as a man, born with all the frailties of the human condition (7.1-21) and as both king and man he must search for a way of life which will lead to the true happiness of the

38. For further discussion on this question of expectations of life and death within the wisdom tradition, see Collins 1978: 177-192.

39. See the blessings of Job both before and after his time of testing. Job 1.1-5, and Job 42.10-17, also Gammie 1990: 497: 'The introduction of a notion of the world-to-come was apparently responsible for the most radical shifts in the design of the houses of the sages.'

soul as life's ultimate purpose. Moreover, as we have seen, wisdom's intervention, with the knowledge she brings of what is pleasing to God, is saving intervention, designed to protect the righteous, to offer paradigms for their existence, and to lead them towards immortality which replaces prosperous longevity as the measure of wisdom's success. It is for this merciful knowledge and intent that wisdom is praised in the hymn.

2.2. *Structure.*

In order to reflect the complexity of wisdom's differing roles, we need to divide the hymn into two parts. These divisions are based around the two sets of questions at 8.5-6 and 9.13-17 which, as we noted in our Introduction (see pp. 27-28 above), are very different kinds of questions.

The first pair of questions, as we observed, is concerned with the individual's way to happiness, the εὐδαιμονία of the soul,⁴⁰ happiness which, in the crucial phrase of Middle Platonism, can only be found by becoming as like God as is possible. Wisdom's first mention is, thus, as something which may be acquired (6.9-10) as part of that process. Her accessibility is stressed (6.13-14), and also her training role for those who wish to learn (6.17-20). In the first autobiographical part of the king's narrative, he presents himself as a man with all the weakness of the human

40. Plato *Theaetetus* 176 AB and *Phaedo* 64E.

condition (7.1-6), but his appeal to God brings wisdom as the purpose of life, as the *telos* (6.15) and the 'goods'⁴¹ which add to that purpose (7.8-14). His human vulnerability is, consequently, a preparation for the role of paradigm man whose purpose in life is directed by wisdom. Further, wisdom comes as the criterion of knowledge: bringing information about the world and the working of the planetary systems (7.15-21), information she is able to give as the active spirit and power in the creation, i.e. the world soul (7.22-8.1). Since it is the business of the soul to create order out of chaos by making the right divisions⁴² and revealing the 'means' between the two extremes of 'too much' and 'too little', wisdom also represents the regulatory virtues by which humans establish order in life (8.5-7).⁴³

The narrative of the king continues with his own experience of wisdom, but this time in his role as paradigm king (8.9-21), culminating in the prayer of Solomon which emphasises his own tasks as judge over God's people and builder of the Temple (9.1-12). The questions which follow at 9.13-17 highlight the importance of Solomon's tasks, not merely in terms of earthly rule, but eschatologically, and the involvement of wisdom in the salvation of the individuals who make up the righteous nation is also an eschatological role (10.1-21). Solomon's paradigm rule in imitation of the rule of God, and the true worship he institutes in the Temple are, thus, aspects of

41. These may be bodily goods such as health and beauty, or external goods such as wealth.

42. Plato *Phaedrus* 265D.

43. Dillon understands this principle of the virtues as 'means' as having a foundation in the Pythagorean concept of τετρακτύς i.e. the sum of the first four numbers, or the sum of the virtues. This concept, consequently, becomes a way of expressing the justice which is not merely ethical but metaphysical, and holds the universe together, see Dillon 1977: 9.

righteousness which sustain, in turn, the righteousness of the paradigm nation. This pattern, then, of wisdom's benefits for the individual, and how these become the means by which the righteous inherit immortal glory through the paradigms, will be the pattern we shall follow in our more detailed view of the king's narrative. Before we turn to that narrative, however, it may prove useful to repeat, in tabular form, each of the structural analyses we have considered for the purpose of comparison.

Comparison of Structural Analyses of the Wisdom Chapters (6-10)

Wisdom as a Praise-Poem (reproduced from p. 31.)

- a. Introduction on Kingship and Wisdom (6.12-25).
- b. Beginning of Solomon's Narrative - Solomon as Paradigm Man (7.1-6).
- c. Wisdom as the Criterion of Knowledge:
 - i. Relationship to the *Telos Agathon* (7.7-14).
 - ii. Knowledge of the Planetary Systems and the World (7.15-22a).
 - iii. Knowledge of Wisdom as the World-Soul or Logos (7.22b-8.1).
 - iv. Knowledge of Wisdom as the Virtues (8.2-8, [questions at 8.5-6]).
- b. Solomon as Paradigm King (8.9-21).
- a. The Task of the King allied to Wisdom (9.1-18, [questions at 9.13, 16, 17]).
- d. Wisdom's Blueprint for Salvation (10.1-21) - This last section overlaps the theme of the third part.

Dimant (reproduced from p.140.)

- a. 6.22-25 Transitory passage on Theme.
- b. 7-8 Solomon's personal quest for Wisdom.
- c. 8-9 Solomon's love for Wisdom.
- d. 9-10 Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom.
- e. 10 Wisdom saves the Just and Destroys the Wicked.

Maries (reproduced from p.142.)

- a. 6.12-21 The Accessibility of Wisdom.
- b. 6.22-7.6 The personal quest for Wisdom.
- c. 7.7-16 The Need for Prayer to obtain Wisdom.
- d. 7.17-8.1 The Splendour of Wisdom.
- e. 8.2-16 The Narrator's love of Wisdom.
- f. 8.17-21 The Need for Prayer to obtain Wisdom.
- g. 9.1-17 Prayer to ask God for Wisdom.

For Maries Ch. 10 is not included among the three poems on Judgement, Immortality and Wisdom.

From this brief overview, it can be seen that Dimant's structure is, as noted, focused almost exclusively upon Solomon. Maries does correctly stress wisdom's role, making the narrator secondary. However, neither analysis

makes any connection between the addresses to the rulers at 1.1, 6.1 and 6.21 and Solomon's ideal kingship. Moreover, Solomon's ability to live out ideal kingship is rooted in the request for wisdom through which mortals may be endowed with the gifts and knowledge for their respective tasks. The task for Solomon in building the Temple is, thus, a task which has its place within wisdom's blueprint. These relationships, between the human condition shared by all and the task of ideal kingship, between wisdom as a metaphysical entity and wisdom as the divine helper of humankind, may now be examined in the direct narrative of the king.

3. The King's Narrative.

3.1. *The Exhortation to the Kings to ally themselves with Wisdom* (6.1-25).

The section on wisdom, though not the praise-poem, begins with a series of addresses to the kings. A similar address opened the first section of *Wisdom* at 1.1, and, therefore, these later addresses serve to provide continuity with the theme of the judgement of the kings, expressed in Chapters 1-5, by reinforcing that judgement with warnings. However, there is also the new theme of the assistance given by wisdom, which offers a more positive expression of the demands and responsibilities of rulership. These direct

exhortations to the kings, then, at 6.1, 6.9, 6.21 are designed to move the reader step by step from the judgement of the tyrants to the hopes of conscientious rule. Kingship, thus remains an integral part of Chapters 6-9, not simply for the sake of continuity, but to provide an initial location for wisdom's actions, and we need to set our praise-poem/hymn into this context.

The first of these exhortations to the '*kings and judges of the earth*' (6.1), in a clear echo of 1.1, is thus expressed in terms of warning and admonition. Power is the gift of God (6.3), who will accordingly test the works of the powerful and examine their counsels.⁴⁴ As noted (p. 133 above), the rulers have not judged correctly (οὐκ ἐκρίνατε ὀρθῶς 6.4), nor kept the law, and in keeping with the earlier chapters they will be severely judged.

Nonetheless, in spite of this close association with what has gone before, our author does introduce two new elements into his warnings. The first of these is the obligation for impartiality (6.5) and the second is the clear message that mercy will be extended to the lowly (6.6), as against those who are able to exercise power.

Set against these warnings is the more positive aspect of wisdom's availability. The second call to the kings (6.9) reintroduces wisdom directly, for the first time since the revaluation of age in 4.9. Verses 6.9-11 could

44. The reference in both cases is to the conspiracy of the kings against the '*Lord and his anointed*' Psalm 2.1-2, which has connections with a ritual for enthronement and, as such, is the traditional setting for wisdom's acquisition. See also Kenik 1983: 122-146.

almost be proverbial material: there is a strong emphasis on learning (ἵνα μάθητε 6.9, οἱ διδαχθέντες 6.10, παιδευθήσεσθε 6.11) and the kings are encouraged to '*desire the words*'⁴⁵ of the narrator/teacher. The alien portion of this call, at least in terms of its proverbial nature, is the distinctive word-play of 6.10a, οἱ γὰρ φυλάξαντες ὁσίως τὰ ὅσια ὁσιωθήσονται (*for they that have kept holily the things that are holy shall themselves be accounted holy*). The phrase is reminiscent of Psalm 17.25-27, a Davidic Psalm in which the psalmist defines the king's righteousness and the purity of his hands, and significantly, it is also placed in the mouth of David in II Sam. 22.26-27:

'with the holy you will be holy, (μετὰ ὁσίου ὁσιωθήσῃ) and with the innocent man you will be innocent, and with the excellent you will be excellent, and with the perverse you will show forwardness. For you, Lord, will save the lowly and humble the eyes of the proud'.

Interestingly, then, the original reference point was a verse concerned with righteousness linked to impartiality. That concept, however, is not its context in 6.10. As Larcher notes,⁴⁶ the purity spoken of in this case has an immediate relationship to piety and virtue in the sense of 'belonging to God', and that relationship is portrayed as the desire to be instructed in wisdom. The use of

45. See the range of such exhortations in Proverbs 4.1-13, '*Hear, attend, (4.1) forsake not (4.2), let our words be fixed (4.4), love (4.7), secure, honour (4.8), receive (4.10), take hold (4.13)*'.

46. Larcher 1983: 415.

ὄσιος in *Wisdom* often carries the implication of being chosen by God, i.e. of election (4.15, 10.15), and Larcher is right, therefore, to suggest that there may be a reference here to the eschatological judgement, particularly in the light of 6.10b where the kings seem to be required to give an answer.⁴⁷ That being the case, our author has made a link between the judgement day depicted in Chapter 5 and the instruction of wisdom which gives the assurance for facing the judgement.

The wisdom praise-poem begins properly at 6.12, but at this stage it remains intimately linked with the theme of kingship, as is evidenced by the final address to the kings in 6.21. In the poem's introduction to this address, our author places emphasis on two aspects of wisdom; her accessibility, and the particular association of wisdom and kingship. There are several reasons for constructing this section in this way.

Wisdom's accessibility is stressed in Proverbs⁴⁸ and our author follows suit in 6.12-14 by emphasising the full extent of her availability. She is '*easily seen*' (καὶ εὐχερῶς θεωρεῖται 6.12) by those who love her and her capacity to '*meet every thought*' (6.16) enables her to discern those who desire her and to move towards them (6.14). As we noted earlier in our discussion on divine performance in *Wisdom*, the only ritual elements in these chapters are

47. Larcher 1983: 415.

48. Prov. 1.20-23, 2.3, 4.11, 8.9, 9.1-3.

the two prayers of the king, which include, in each case, a request which is answered by wisdom (7.7, 9.4). This repetition emphasises that the attainment of wisdom is by request. Interestingly, in Prov. 2.3 wisdom comes in response to a call directly to herself (ἐάν γὰρ τὴν σοφίαν ἐπικαλέσῃ) although Prov. 2.6 does state that wisdom is the gift of God. In *Wisdom*, it is only by calling upon God that wisdom may come.

The manner of invocation, and the double stress placed upon this ritual, add to the sense of wisdom's availability. There are, in other words, no initiation rites, and the mysteries of wisdom are disclosed to those who learn, (6.9), who are prepared to be instructed (6.11), who desire and practise a particular discipline (παιδείας 6.17). Wisdom's availability, then, is not presented as a mystical experience but a rational one, a point that will become increasingly important in our overview of the Diptychs (Chs. 11-19) and in the presentation of idolatry (Chs. 13-15).

This element of rationality is further strengthened by the second point of the praise-poem, which is the special link between wisdom and kingship. In ancient, near-eastern traditions of kingship, wisdom was the gift a ruler received on his accession,⁴⁹ and the account of Solomon's request as reported in 1 Kings 3.9, where Solomon asks not for wisdom but for an '*understanding*

49. The closeness of this relationship is perceived in the purported address from Pharaoh to his chief Vizier at that official's installation, 'Would that thou might act in conforming with what I say. Then Ma'at will rest in her place.' From the autobiography of Rekh-mi-re, *ANET*, 213a, 1.14. See Kenik 1983: 147 Ma'at (wisdom) belonged to the Pharaoh and would be disseminated through society if the Vizier obeyed Pharaoh's words and ruled justly. The formal ritual of asking for wisdom, in this tradition, is not so much a request as an indicator that the king possessed wisdom.

heart' to govern, must be seen in that context. In *Wisdom*, this gift is no longer an automatic part of the process, although the link with good kingship is retained (6.23), as is the form of request. Instead, the gift of wisdom is to be desired because of a series of steps which we find in the sorites of 6.17-20. Wisdom begins with the desire for moral education, which leads to love, which in turn prompts respect for moral law, which offers the assurance of God's plan for immortality and draws us closer to God. That initial desire for wisdom, consequently, leads to a kingdom (ἐπιθυμία ἄρα σοφίας ἀνάγει ἐπὶ βασιλείαν 6.20). That this kingdom is not only to be understood in the sense of the eschatological kingdom of 5.16,⁵⁰ is shown by the immediate reference to thrones and sceptres, the symbols of earthly power in 6.21, and a link is thus formed between earthly justice and eschatological reward (6.24-25). The king continues by offering to disclose wisdom (6.22), nothing will be hidden or secret, and he will not be consumed by envy (φθόνος 6.24) because that failing, here personified, drives wisdom away. Further, φθόνος is the property of the devil which brought death into the world (2.24), and it is their covenant with death in 1.16, which brings about the destruction of the wicked rulers.⁵¹

The play and counterplay here, between the eschatological kingdom of

50. Gregg 1909: 61-62.

51. See Plato *Timaeus* 29E, where envy is banished from the heavens.

God and the hypothetical kingdoms of the rulers who are being addressed, is carefully interwoven. The acquisition of wisdom is presented as a series of steps rooted in moral discipline and willingness to learn, yet these steps lead to an assurance of immortality (6.20). Thrones and sceptres (6.23) are symbols of both earthly power and responsibility, yet combined with wisdom they signify an eternal reign (6.21). Wisdom, who will give immortality, will be openly discussed and shown to mortal kings (6.22). The numbers of those who find wisdom is somehow related to the salvation of the world (6.24). Thus, the link between kingship and wisdom is no longer based upon the idea of a gift given at the moment of enthronement, but is seen as the rational choice of the just king. The request that accompanies this moment is no longer a formalised, royal ritual such as enthronement, but one that has eternal implications.

3.2. *The First Autobiographical Speech of the King/Narrator (7.1-21).*

3.2.i. *The King's Mortality (7.1-6).*

The first autobiographical speech of the king has, as we have remarked, more than one function within the text. In addition to its emphasis on the king's youth, it also provides a sharp contrast between the singular 'I' and the 'all' of wisdom's giving. However, its focal point, as noted, is vulnerability expressed in terms of the shared human condition inherent in the

picture of gestation and infancy. The unexpected nature of this, in the formal account of kingship, has its explanation in the double paradigm which the narrator/king reveals. Thus, the king is mortal man (θνητὸς ἄνθρωπος) like all other men (ἴσος ἅπασιν 7.1)⁵² since the first man. For all the poetry of the verses there is a realism here in the description which underlines the common experience of birth.⁵³ In his mother's womb he was sculpted into flesh (σάρξ). During a ten month⁵⁴ gestation he was '*curdled in blood*' (παγεῖς ἐν αἵματι) out of the '*seed of man*' (ἐκ σπέρματος ἀνδρός)⁵⁵ and the pleasures of lovers (7.2).⁵⁶ And when born he '*breathed in the common air*' (ἔσπασα τὸν κοινὸν ἀέρα), and fell upon (κατέπεσον) the kindred⁵⁷ earth. His first voice gave no oracular utterance, but the normal cry

52. The author's inclusion for this section is ἴσος ἅπασιν/ἔξοδος τε ἴση (7.1/7.6).

53. It is interesting to note how the early Christian church used the physicality of the infancy narratives and the life of Christ, in the Gospels, to refute Gnosticism, principally Docetism. See Ignatius *To the Trallians* 'Christ who was of the race of David, child of Mary, who was truly born and ate and drank' (9.1).

54. According to Roman custom, ten lunar months made up the gestation period. See Winston 1979:163 and Reese 1970:9 and n. 43.

55. See Aristotle *Generation of Animals* 'The action of the semen of the male in setting the female's secretion in the womb is like to that of rennet upon milk' (739b21). Also Job 10.10-11. 'Didst thou not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese. Thou didst clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews. The blood referred to is menstrual blood which combines with the semen to form embryonic material. The semen is presumed to 'form' the embryo by coagulation. See Winston 1979: 164.

56. The Greek here is problematic. There is a variant reading of ὕπνω. Several uncials have ὕπνου, also the Latin, 'et delectamento somni conveniente'. Blomqvist suggests that we regard ὕπνου as an attribute of ἡδονῆς i.e. a transferred participle giving us '*the pleasure of those who come together in sleep*', somewhat euphemistically. See Blomqvist 1985:99-101.

57. See Gregg 1909:65. Gregg notes the difficulty that ὁμοιοπαθής should be translated as 'that suffers the same thing from all her children', as Winston 1979:162. Gregg thinks that the point here is not to show that the king was related to the earth, but to other men. However, the relationship is to the earth, and the reference is to Adam in Gen 3.19.

of a young child (7.3), who for his protection must be wrapped in swaddling (7.4). No king, our narrator says, had any other beginning (7.5), and to underscore the point of common human need he states that all men have one entrance and one exit for life (7.6). It is only the prayer to God which brings wisdom, which differentiates the life of this king from that of ordinary humans (7.7).

The passage is designed to remind us of Adam. There are two specific allusions to Adam: at 7.1, where we are told that the narrator is the offspring of the one who was πρωτοπλαστός (Gen. 2.7 Καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον); and at 7.3, where the new-born infant falling to the earth points up the certainty of human death as the outcome of each birth (Gen. 3.19 ὅτι γῆ εἶ, καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύσῃ). Also, the child wrapped in swaddling, symbolic of assuming the cares of human existence (*Wis.7.4*), may be an allusion to the skins with which Adam and Eve are clothed as they are dismissed from the garden (Gen. 3.22). Moreover, we have to note the play on the Solomonic phrase *for I do not know my going out and my coming in*' (καὶ οὐκ οἶδα τὴν ἔξοδόν μου καὶ τὴν εἴσοδόν μου 1 Kings 3.7), used in its original context to indicate Solomon's youth and lack of knowledge, is employed in *Wisdom* to evoke the more powerful pictures of birth and death (7.6).

This emphasis on the physical nature of human birth, then, is shaped in such a way that we are also reminded of human death, and the picture of Adam which underlies *Wis.* 7.1-6 makes reference both to his exceptional beginning and his fall. Our narrator/king is, consequently, depicting himself in his fallen state without the glory and immortality that preceded the fall. To return humanity to that pre-fall condition where immortality is possible, as it was before sin entered the world, is the ultimate goal of God's creation (*Wis.* 2.23-24), a goal which wisdom actualises by her training and her exercise of judgement and mercy. It is, consequently, the gift of God's wisdom in *Wis.* 7.7 which transforms our narrator/king from a human state of certain death into the paradigm man, the new Adam, who will achieve immortality (8.13).

How does wisdom effect this transformation? Wisdom, who comes as the criterion of all knowledge, nonetheless reveals her knowledge by stages. The first of these stages is shown in the second part of the narrator's speech (7.8-14) where wisdom's gifts are seen in relation to the *telos*, the purpose of life.

3.2.ii. *Wisdom as the Criterion of Knowledge.*

3.2.ii.a. *The Acquisition of Wisdom or the 'End of Goods' (7.7-14).*

The encouragement to look for wisdom is part of the instruction to the kings and rulers (6.9) and forms a parallel with the earlier encouragement for the kings to love and practise righteousness in 1.1. However, whereas

righteousness is described negatively, i.e. by its absence in the early Chapters, which form a preparation for the apocalyptic drama and the judgement of the rulers, wisdom is described positively and is seen as something which may be learned (ἵνα μάθητε σοφίαν 6.9). Moreover, we have already seen that wisdom's accessibility is an important theme at the opening of the wisdom hymn (6.12).⁵⁸ Wisdom already knows those who will want her and goes to meet them (6.13), and those who look for her early⁵⁹ will find her sitting at the gate (6.14).

There are several textual allusions in 6.12-14 which are of relevance in understanding the king's initial request for wisdom. Proverbs 8.15-16 declares:

*Through me kings reign and the powerful decree justice (δικαιοσύνη),
through me grandees become great and rulers rule through me over the earth.*

*I love those who love me, and those who seek me shall find me (ἐγὼ τοὺς
ἐμὲ φιλοῦντας ἀγαπῶ, οἱ δὲ ἐμὲ ζητοῦντες εὕρησουσι).*

Not only does the *Wisdom* passage recall the invitation, but also the context in the address to the kings. Similarly, the reference to wisdom sitting at the gate is an echo of Proverbs 8.3 where wisdom sits by the gates of the powerful

(παρὰ γὰρ πύλαις δυναστῶν παρεδρεύει) encouraging all to receive

58. Note the echo of 1.1, the first address to the kings, where they are exhorted to 'seek God in simplicity of heart', and 1.2 where he will be found by those who do not test him. The repetition of 'seek' (ζητεω) and 'being found' (εὕρισκεται) reinforces the idea that God's accessibility is through wisdom.

59. The literal translation of ὀρθρίσας 'early' is daybreak. In the context of *Wisdom* 6.14 it is probable that both the literal and metaphorical meanings are attached to the word, i.e. 'early' in the sense of the emphasis on youth, and 'early in the day' because of its association with sleeplessness and a sense of yearning. See Theocritus *Idyll* 10.58. For a fuller discussion on the use of this word to imply searching, see Goodrick 1913: 173.

instruction and knowledge.

Another significant allusion is to Psalm 63 which opens with the cry, *O God, my God, I cry to you early* (ὀρθρίζω, see n. 62 above); *my soul has thirsted for you, how often has my flesh yearned after you in a dried up land, barren and trackless.*

The references here to the early invocation of the Psalmist, and to the metaphor of the trackless wastes as a symbol of being without God, are being used to anticipate both Solomon's youthful cry to God in 7.7

(ἐπεκαλεσάμην), and the cry of the Israelites when they were about to die from thirst at their entry into the wilderness (ἐπεκαλέσαντο 11.4).⁶⁰

Wisdom, then, comes in response to an invocation of God, as we have already noted, and is, consequently, a gift of God (8.20). However, we have to ask whether there are any other preconditions for the receipt of that gift expressed within the text. The clear implication of both 6.13, where wisdom knows in advance who will desire her, and 8.19-20, where Solomon's possession of a 'good soul' enables him to discern the importance of wisdom as God's gift, is that there are higher and baser souls being placed in the world, souls which will, ultimately, respond to goodness or evil according to their own nature. Winston quotes the story of Lachesis, the daughter of Necessity, from Plato's *Republic*⁶¹ to illustrate the fall of souls into a range

60. Goodrick notes 'ἐπεκαλεσάμην without an object requires some notice. The verb in its original sense 'always means to call upon a God' Goodrick 1913: 185.

61. Plato *Republic* 617E-618B. See Winston 1979: 26.

of differing bodies, but he also correctly notes that the concept of the fall of souls had already been to some extent modified by Middle Platonism and the idea had become pervasive that souls were designed to give life to bodies, for both positive and negative reasons.⁶²

The inclination towards the good, expressed in terms of possessing a 'good soul', is important because of the choosing and re-choosing which a disciple of wisdom must undergo. This is our second pre-condition. Not only must Solomon ask God for the gift of wisdom and place her above all other gifts, but he must continue to make that choice and pay the cost in terms of a lifetime of learning. Her initial arrival is related to a desire for moral education (6.17), and to follow her lead requires a pious expression of life (6.23). Solomon must prefer wisdom above all else (7.8) and love her (8.2),⁶³ and he must attribute to wisdom the success of his kingship (7.13, 8.10, 8.15-16, 9.6, 9.11-12).

62. Winston notes that the soul seems destined to give life to the body and that this view does not differ significantly from Middle Platonist views, where mortal beings exist to make the universe 'perfect', or rather not imperfect (ἀτελής). The fall of the soul is a positive completion in mirror of the intelligible realm of God's ideas. Albinus (*Didaskalikos*) lists four reasons for the descent: two positive, to fulfill the numbers (of the universe) and by the will of the gods, and two negative, sinful wantonness (ἀκολασία) and love of the body (φιλοσωματία). Philo also seems to have four reasons (*Somn.* 1.138, *Her.* 240, *Op.* 135, *Somn.* 1.147, *Plant.* 14). See Winston 1979: 27, and also Dillon 1977: 245. It is difficult to know how many of these reasons were important for our author; certainly the positive aspects are as in 7.25 and 10.15.

63. Commentators have noted the similarities between the description of wisdom as a beautiful young girl and 'The Choice of Heracles' where Virtue appears in a similar guise and Heracles must choose her above all else. Xen. *Mem.* II.i. 22-33, see Goodrick 1913: 203, Winston 1979: 193. The original similarity was noted by Heinisch 1908: 32-35.

Also, the inclination towards the good is the key to the preference of wisdom above all else. This is due to the shift in perspective in the view of the *telos*. Antiochus had defined the *telos* as living in accordance with man's nature. Eudorus of Alexandria had more specifically understood the *telos* to mean assimilation to God, which was only possible by wisdom and the result of virtue.⁶⁴

In Proverbs 8.19 wisdom states:

It is better to have my fruit than gold and precious stones, and my produce is better than choice silver.

Wisdom 7.8-12 takes up this same refrain. Wisdom is to be preferred to sceptres and thrones (7.8), she is not to be compared to any precious stone (7.9), gold in comparison with her is sand, and silver is merely clay (7.9).

However, our author is not only repeating the claims of biblical wisdom, but is engaging in the philosophical question of whether happiness depends solely on virtue, or on the combined benefits of virtue with 'goods', which may be external goods or bodily goods. Antiochus of Ascalon had held the Peripatetic view that all three levels of 'good' were required for the 'happy life'. Eudorus, Philo, and our author would seem to disagree, although in differing degrees. According to Eudorus all goods are not parts of the *telos* but are merely

64. Dillon 1977: 122.

allowed to contribute to it, and he further divides 'goods' into 'divine' and 'human', divine consisting of the virtues, and human consisting of such personal benefits as health and beauty, and the external benefits of friendship, fame, pleasure.⁶⁵ Eudorus, then, was firmly of the opinion that noble things, i.e. the virtues, are to be chosen for their own sake.

In *Wisdom*, similarly, the goods are not an essential part of the *telos*. Wisdom is chosen over and above health and beauty (ὕπὲρ ὑγίαιαν καὶ εὐμορφίαν ἠγάπησα αὐτήν 7.10),⁶⁶ even above light, but she brings all these goods (τὰ ἀγαθὰ 7.11) in her wake. In his choice of wisdom, Solomon presumes that he is selecting an ascetic path; he finds instead that she brings innumerable riches (ἀναρίθμητος πλοῦτος 7.11). His conviction had stemmed from the idea that the choice of virtue/wisdom was necessary for a happy life (τὸ γὰρ ἐνθυμηθῆναι περὶ αὐτῆς φρονήσεως τελείωτης 6.15), but the addition of the 'goods' is that which constitutes a supremely happy life (εὐφράνθη δὲ ἐπὶ πάντων 7.12) and the king's rejoicing has to be seen in this context. The riches and honour for which Solomon does not ask in 1 Kings 3.13 come, in *Wisdom*, not simply as additional gifts of God but as part of our author's understanding of philosophical principles.

65. Dillon 1977: 44, 124-125, also Winston 1979: 169.

66. The selection of these particular 'goods' may be related to embryology. In the Hippocratic writings, the growth and health of an embryo are dependent upon finding the right harmony and the physical well-being of the child is portrayed in musical terminology. See Burkert 1972: 262.

3.2.ii.b *Knowledge of the World and the Planetary System (7.15-22).*

The second phase of knowledge that wisdom brings to our paradigm man is scientific knowledge of the cosmos. The expression of Solomon's wisdom, in the accounts of I Kings and II Chron., is depicted in certain motifs: his buildings, beginning with the construction of the Temple (1 Kings 6.1-38, II Chron. 3.1-5.1), but including also his palace and his chariot cities, and his wealth and possessions, which may present the evidence of his attachment to wisdom. The third motif in this series is the reaction of other rulers and kings to his wisdom (1 Kings 4.29-31, II Chron. 9.23) culminating in the testing banquet with the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10.1-10, II Chron. 9.1-9). Even at the banquet, however, the precise nature of Solomon's sayings is not disclosed, and the Queen is as impressed by Solomon's palace and the number of his servants, i.e. the evidence of his wisdom, as she is by the wisdom revealed in his conversation.

In 1 Kings 4.29-34 there is an attempt to summarise Solomon's knowledge. He received wisdom and understanding beyond measure (4.29), he had uttered three thousand proverbs, and one thousand and five songs were credited to him (4.32). His knowledge of the workings of the world around him is concluded in verse 33, where we are told that:

He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows

out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish.

In this brief comment, then, we are meant to surmise the extent of Solomon's knowledge and to see that it includes knowledge about the natural world.

This is in marked contrast to the presentation of the knowledge of the world brought by wisdom in *Wisdom* 7.15-21. Here, the point is emphasised that the knowledge comes from God, because it is God who leads to wisdom and therefore directs the wise (7.15). The knowledge is, thus, presented in the nature of a revelation, and this impression is strengthened by the closing comment of 7.21 that, whether the information is hidden or open, it has been made known. With this revelation of wisdom comes the awareness of dependency upon God and, consequently, of his craftsmanship (7.16), in that God's creative and designing skills were employed in the creation of the universe. The extent of the king's knowledge which follows from this revelation is, in Winston's words, 'the full range of human science and philosophy',⁶⁷ and it is this scientific investigation which provides the king with '*the certain knowledge of the things that exist*' (τῶν ὄντων γνῶσις ἀψευδῆ 7.17).

Thus, the knowledge granted to the king involves physics, the bringing

67. Winston lists these subject areas as ontology, cosmology, physics, astronomy, biology, botany, and esoteric knowledge, see Winston 1979: 172.

together of the cosmos and the efficiency of its divisible elements (7.17).

Winston describes the next phrase, 'the beginning, the middle and the end of times' (ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος καὶ μεσότητα χρόνων 7.18) as a common phrase, in classical and hellenistic writing and cites the Orphic fragments to show that it was applied to Zeus, who, after he had renewed the creation, became the beginning, middle and end of all.⁶⁸ This, however, is unlikely to be the context here, where the phrase is concerned with both time and the movement of the sun as it affected seasonal and annual change. Furthermore, since the phrase is placed in the context of acquired knowledge, it is likely to be a precise reference to the sun as the paradigm of cosmic order in that it moved in a regular, circular orbit.⁶⁹ That our author believed in some form of cosmic harmony will appear again in the text in his own explanation of the 'miracles' which took place at the time of the Exodus (19.18-21). The narrator's list then continues with, as Winston has noted, references to biology, botany, and we would have to add, pharmacology (καὶ δυνάμεις ῥιζῶν 7.20). However, it would be an oversimplification to say that our author has updated Solomon's wisdom to concur with the changes in scientific and philosophical investigation which had taken place in the Hellenistic period. The integration of knowledge into a harmonious created order, the purpose of life in God's creation, raised philosophical and theological questions for which

68. Winston 1979: 173. It is, of course, highly probable that the Orphic fragment is also making reference to planetary theory as a metaphor for Zeus' activity. In *Wisdom*, however, the phrase is not applicable to any deity, but is set in the context of knowledge granted. From this we may assume the background to the phrase is the concept of the sun as the fixed point (μέσση) and the arranger of seasons and times (ἡ τοῦ χρόνου τάξις), see Burkert 1972: 328.

69. Burkert 1972: 321-337.

wisdom must be able to provide some answers. The knowledge she brings is in keeping, then, with her role as the intermediary who translates the purposes of God into the realities of existence for humans in the world. It is to this role of wisdom as intermediary that we must now turn.

3.2.ii.c. *Knowledge of Wisdom as World Soul or Logos (7.22-8.1).*

Part of the knowledge wisdom reveals to the narrator is knowledge of herself, in relation to the cosmos and the realities of life within it, and in relation to God. We have already seen that, in *Wisdom*, divine wisdom is identified with the spirit ($\piνεϋμα$) of God (1.5, 1.6) and this is something of a departure from the existing books of the Hebrew wisdom tradition.⁷⁰ This departure is made all the more significant by the presentation of wisdom in 7.22-8.1, where, as we have seen, there is a concentration of epithets describing wisdom's characteristics in terminology which recalls the $\piνεϋμα$ of Stoic philosophy, i.e. the cosmic soul.

In fact, the parallels between this presentation of wisdom and the fiery $\piνεϋμα$ which permeates and gives life to the universe have been well-documented.⁷¹ The picture of wisdom stretching to the ends of the earth and ordering life in the cosmos (8.1) is matched in Plato's *Timaeus*⁷² as well as

70. See Collins 1997: 196. However, it is difficult to estimate how much of a departure this association was. Later wisdom books had made the identification between wisdom and Torah (*Sir.* 24.10-28), and as Grabbe (1997: 77) has noted, there had been a similar identification between the O.T. 'word of the Lord' and the *Logos*. *Wisdom* similarly identified the 'word of God' with divine wisdom (9.1-2). It is possible that these terms of Word, Torah, Logos and Wisdom, had been interchangeable for a period of time.

71. See Collins 1997: 196-202, and also Winston 1979: 178-190.

72. *Timaeus* 36E.

in the developed descriptions of the world soul which occur in Antiochus and Posidonius.⁷³ Posidonius described God, which he conceived in materialistic terms and without any transcendent principle, as 'an intelligent spirit' (πνεῦμα νοερόν),⁷⁴ and a similar description is applied to wisdom in 7.22 (ἔστι γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ πνεῦμα νοερόν). As Collins has remarked, one of the striking characteristics of the wisdom attributes is that they give to wisdom a finely-tuned physical presence which allows her to penetrate everything,⁷⁵ as in Posidonius where the *pneuma* penetrates all *ousia*.⁷⁶

What is not so well-documented about this relationship of *pneuma* and wisdom is the series of relationships which this implies, philosophically speaking. For Middle Platonism, God is transcendent, and therefore, a fixed point and distinct from the activity which is required to infuse the passive elements of the cosmos with form. Only that which is irregular or indefinite can be mobile, and can turn passive matter into formed matter, thereby creating the events of cosmic history.⁷⁷ The emphasis on wisdom's mobility, then, in 7.24 (πάσης γὰρ κινήσεως κινητικώτερον σοφία, διήκει δὲ καὶ χωρεῖ διὰ πάντων διὰ τὴν καθαρότητα - *for wisdom is more mobile than any motion and she passes and goes through all things as a consequence of her purity*) links wisdom firmly, not just with the everyday

73. Dillon 1977: 96, 110.

74. Posidonius *Frag.* 101.

75. Collins 1997: 198.

76. Posidonius *Frag.* 100. Sometimes in speaking of this penetrating capacity the term *logos* is used. *Frag.* 5.

77. For the development of ideas on causes of motion see Burkert on Archytas' definitions which differentiate between matter and form and show the 'irregular' as the cause of motion. Burkert 1972: 47. It is also important in this context to note the ideas of fixity and incident (πάθη καὶ μέρη) which were expressed as numbers, Aristotle *Met.* (986a5).

ordering of the cosmos but with the form of its 'being', i.e. with the enacted patterns of creation. Moreover, in showing wisdom as both active and passive, our author is enabled to show both her relationship to God (passive) and her relationship to the world (active).

Finally, we have to note that wisdom is '*the hand of God*' and also '*the word of God*' (9.1-2). In 18.15 the word of God appears in the guise of a heavenly warrior poised to initiate the last plague. The phrase ὁ παντοδύναμός σου λόγος recalls the ἡ παντοδύναμος σου χεὶρ κτίσασα τον κόσμον ἐξ ἀμόρφου ὕλης (11.17), i.e. the active element of creation is both the province of wisdom and by this association the province of the *logos*. Thus, we can see that our author has created a wisdom which is the intelligent and active spirit of the universe, whose remit comes from the ideas of a transcendent God. Not only is she the image of his goodness, but also the mirror of his power (7.26). If God thinks the created world, then wisdom by '*being one*' (μία δὲ οὐσα 7.27) is enabled to translate that thought into the plurality of a diverse creation,⁷⁸ in which it is possible by her instruction for humans to reach the status of '*friends of God*' and '*prophets*' (7.27). The blueprint for creation is also the blueprint for salvation, and it is wisdom who interprets both and mediates the divine attributes which will bring ultimate judgement or vindication and immortality.

78. This is almost certainly a reference to wisdom as the Monad, which bore the mathematical equivalent of One in 'Pythagorean' numbers theory, and in Middle Platonism. The Monad also acted upon the Dyad, which was unlimited matter having no form or context of its own. See Introduction pp. 19-22.

3.2.ii.d. *Wisdom as the Virtues* (8.2-21).

We have already mentioned the virtues as the regulatory mechanism by which the extremes of 'too little' and 'too much' are held in check in a morally ordered universe (see p.29 above). In 8.7 our author points out that if anyone loves righteousness (καὶ εἰ δικαιοσύνην ἀγαπᾷ τις) then wisdom's work consists of teaching the four virtues of temperance (σωφροσύνη), prudence (φρόνησις), justice (δικαιοσύνη), and courage (ἀνδρεία). Significantly, we have also arrived at our first set of aetiological questions in the wisdom section. These questions, at 8.5 and 8.6, concern the personal quest of the individual for true happiness, which according to the tenets of Platonism can only be achieved by becoming as like God as is possible. The appeal of the questions is, thus, to rationality. Wisdom, as the organising principle of life, is richer than riches and more effective than any work. It is divine wisdom who teaches the virtues and, thereby, provides the means by which an individual becomes as like God as possible, introducing into personal life the regulatory principles through which the moral universe is governed. Thus, in bringing knowledge of the virtues, wisdom makes real the transition from the shared human condition to the paradigm of humankind who act responsibly, ethically, and in accordance with reason. Philo summarises this point in *De Abrahamo*⁷⁹ where three elements are cited as

79. Philo *De Abrahamo* 52-54.

necessary in acquiring perfect virtue: a disposition which favours ethical instruction, i.e. a good soul as in *Wis.* 8.19-21; a suitable teacher (*Wis.* 7.13-14); and the constant practise of the discipline (*Wis.* 8.9-16).

Not only do the virtues act as the expression of wisdom in the life of an individual, they are also significant and important in the education of an ideal king. The acquisition by Solomon of these virtues is, consequently, brought to the foreground before Solomon discusses the particular tasks associated with his rule. A further factor, and one which will become increasingly important in looking at the critique of false worship in *Wis.* 13-15, is the indivisibility of the virtues.⁸⁰ Originally a Stoic formulation, but one that was adopted by Middle Platonism, this concept (ἀντακολουθία) stated that it was impossible to possess one virtue without possessing all.

The idea that the king must be possessed of the virtues was due to the development of the Hellenistic kingly ideal. Gammie⁸¹ has noted that although the great civilisations undoubtedly left their mark on the Hellenistic kingdoms, this cannot be compared to the effect on these kingdoms of 'accumulated Hellenic institutional experience and far-ranging intellectual inquiries among the Greeks.' The changes initiated by the Hellenistic kings involved the royal court, the legal system, education and the structuring and government of the cities. It also involved extensive patronage of the arts and

80. Plato *Gorgias* 507c, see also Antiochus as noted by Cicero in *De Finibus* 5.65-66.

81. Gammie 1990: 147.

learning, and the importation of philosophers, writers, mathematicians and historians brought into the new kingdoms the ideas and the debates that had shaped the politics of Greek city-states.⁸²

Whilst the philosophers were by no means the only, or even the most significant, influence upon the kings, and, in fact, some would go so far as to imply that they merely lent legitimacy to royal power and royal cult,⁸³ it is nonetheless apparent that the philosophical virtues of prudence, righteousness/justice, self-control, and fortitude came to be viewed as kingly virtues.⁸⁴

Antiochus associates each of the virtues with some particular aspect of life,⁸⁵ i.e. courage is virtue in the face of labours and dangers, temperance in the forgoing of pleasure, prudence in the choice of goods and evils, and justice in granting to each person what is due. We may see a similar application of the virtues to the king's tasks in 8. 9-16. Prudence will be a counsellor of good things and a comfort in cares and grief (εἰδῶς ὅτι ἔσται μοι σύμβουλος ἀγαθῶν, καὶ παρααίνεσις φροντίδων καὶ λύπης 8.9). Keen judgement will bring the king the honour and respect of others (8.10-11). Courage is required for the suppression of tyrants and for valour in war (8.15), and temperance in participating in pleasures (8.16) so

82. Gammie 1990: 148. Much of the attraction was the wealth of the new kingdoms. See Theocritus *Idyll 14*, where Thyonichus, recognising that his friend Aeschinas will go abroad, recommends Egypt on the basis of Ptolemy's generosity 'as befits a king'. According to Diogenes Laertius (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 5.37-38) Ptolemy I invited Theophrastus to Alexandria after the philosopher succeeded Aristotle at the Lyceum, and Theophrastus' successor was the tutor to Ptolemy Philadelphus. Zeno, the founder of the Stoics, received an invitation to the court of Macedonia which he refused. However, two of his pupils went, one of whom, Persaeus of Citium wrote a treatise 'On Kingship'.

83. Gammie 1990: 153 and n. 30.

84. See *The Letter of Aristeas* 262, where the translators of LXX are asked 'How may a king avoid arrogant behaviour?'

85. As recorded in Cicero's *De Finibus* 5.67.

that the discipline and piety of a relationship with wisdom may be maintained. Even more significantly, twice in these verses the king draws attention to wisdom's gift of immortality, in 8.13, and in the summary verses of 8.17-18.

Our king, then, has fully realised the benefits of aligning himself with wisdom and exercising the virtues. Additionally, he has recognised that such a gift as wisdom can only be the gift of God (8.21), and he has the pre-disposition to desire this gift with his whole heart (καὶ εἶπον ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας μου 8.21). In so doing, he is searching for the means to personal immortality, to leave behind an everlasting memorial for those who will follow (καὶ μνήμην αἰώνιον τοῖς μετ' ἐμὲ ἀπολείψω 8.13), but crucially, he also reveals his own identity and task in the divinely appointed eschatological plan. It is with this aspect of Solomon's kingship that we will concern ourselves in our examination of the reflective prayer of 9.1-18.

3.3. *The Task of the King with Wisdom - The Second*

Autobiographical Speech (9.1-18).

We have noted the presentation of the king as an unnamed Hellenistic king, with all the concern for ideal kingship which that implies, and a desire for the philosophical gifts which make that role possible. Yet, there is a further picture of kingship contained within the text of *Wisdom* which is

illuminated by the background texts of I Kings and II Chron. These texts provide dual accounts of the two instances when Solomon addresses God: I Kings 3.5-15, the dream of Gibeon (II Chron. 1.7-13), and 1 Kings 8.22-53, the prayer at the dedication of the Temple (II Chron.6.12-42). In neither book is the request for wisdom associated with the prayer in the Temple but its setting is the dream sequence at Gibeon, and Solomon's sacrifice at Gibeon acts as a seal upon his divinely approved kingship. Further, Kenik has demonstrated that the language of I Kings 3.5-15 reflects a shift in perspective from the patron-god of near-eastern tradition to the covenant God of Israel, whose faithfulness is unquestionable. It is in respect of his fidelity to the covenant that the king is judged. The expressions used of the king, consequently, are defining expressions in relation to Israelite views of kingship.⁸⁶

In *Wisdom* the tradition of two separate incidents in the Solomonic story has been maintained in the biographical narrative of 7.1-21 and in the prayer of 9.1-18, and the request which releases the gift of wisdom is made part of both incidents (7.7, 9.4). We have already seen that the wisdom request in 9.4 is given its setting, as is the authority of both narrator and text, from its association with the Temple. Additionally, the prayer of Solomon at 9.1-12

86. Kenik 1983: 71-88.68. עשה חסד 1Kings 3.6a, שמר חסד 1Kings 3.6c, expressing great loyalty on the part of the king and benevolence on the part of God. הלך לפניך 1 Kings 3.6a. again signifies reciprocal fidelity between Yahweh and the king. There is also emphasis on the difficulty of judging Israel (I Kings 3.9d) and gifts requested and given to accomplish this task (I Kings 3.9-11). LXX translates the same passage with 'great mercy' (ἐλεος μέγα) shown to David who appeared before the Lord in truth, righteousness, and uprightness of heart. The request for the gifts to accomplish this difficult task then follows.

contains some of the linguistic phrases appropriate to the Israelite ideal of kingship. It seems, then that our author has transferred the divine approval and affirmation of Solomonic kingship from the first incident at Gibeon to the second incident of Temple dedication, which emphasises the connection between Solomon and the Temple's construction.

The appropriation of the moment of affirmation of Solomon's kingship to Solomon's prayer is reflected in the language of the prayer. The opening is liturgical, although a new element has been added with the significant placing of wisdom as the one who ordained man (καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ σου κατεσκεύασας ἄνθρωπον 9.2).⁸⁷ The description of humankind's ordering of the world includes the Israelite covenant concepts of equity, righteousness, and an upright heart. There is a reference to the people whom Solomon will rule; he is to be king of God's people and judge of God's sons and daughters (9.7), but the burden of his task is no longer the size of the nation (I Kings 3.8) instead it is to be the building of the Temple for which explanation is given in its resemblance to the tent of presence (μίμημα σκηνῆς ἁγίας 9.8). The identification of Solomon which the prayer contains is on the basis of the existence of the Temple in Jerusalem, and is coupled with the *aition* of its symbolic significance.

87. See the liturgical phrasing at the opening of 2 Corinthians. Paul is able to use the phrase 'the father of compassion' (1.3) to balance the need to describe God as 'the father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. He thus makes four statements: 1. Blessed be God; 2. The father of our Lord, Jesus Christ; 3. The father of compassion; 4. And God of all comfort. *Wisdom* 9.1-2 similarly builds four statements, with the second pair specifically related to the plan of God in creation: 1. *O God of my fathers* (Θεὸ πατέρων); 2. *And Lord of mercy* (καὶ Κύριε τοῦ ἐλέους σου); 3. *Who made everything by your word* (ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα ἐν λόγῳ σου); 4. *And through your wisdom ordained man* (καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ σου κατεσκεύασας ἄνθρωπον).

In I Kings 3, the significance of the divine approval of Solomon's succession is that it represents the fulfillment of Yahweh's covenant with David (I Kings 3.6, Chron. 28.2-9). In *Wisdom* that covenant is alluded to in 9.12 when Solomon recognises the need for righteous judgement (καὶ διακρινῶ τὸν λαόν σου δικαίως) in order to be worthy to occupy his father's throne. However the reference is scarcely more than an allusion. The identification of '*your people*' addressed to God at 9.7 and 9.12 is offset by the general reflection upon the place of humankind in the ordering of creation (9.2, 3, 6, 13-18). It is, therefore, difficult to avoid the conclusion that although these concepts of covenant and an elect people are present, *Wisdom's* Solomon is playing out his role on a larger stage.

Starkly different, also, is the manner of the request for wisdom. In the account in 1 Kings, Solomon asks for an '*understanding heart to judge between your people justly*' (3.9), and God's reply is that he will grant an '*understanding and wise heart*', in addition to the other gifts of wealth and fame to enable Solomon to live out his kingly role. In *Wisdom*, Solomon perceives himself as '*too young in understanding for judgement and laws*' (9.5), and for this reason he asks God to send his throne-partner (πάρεδρος 9.4).⁸⁸ A similar form of request is repeated at 9.10 where the reason given is that wisdom knows what is pleasing to God.

88. Winston 1979: 202. Winston notes a series of classical references in which Themis is described as the throne-partner (πάρεδρος) of Zeus, e.g. Pindar *Olympia* 8.22, Euripides *Medea* 843. However, the significance of Themis in mythology is her ability to distinguish between what was permitted and what offended the divine order, and that is surely the sense of Solomon's petition also. This ability of Themis made her the personification of justice, the δίκη of our earlier discussion. See p.138 and n. 1 above.

Thus far, we have seen that certain aspects of the I Kings/II Chron. accounts are retained in *Wisdom's* prayer, principally those qualities of justice, equity, and righteousness, which were so significant a part of kingship and covenant in Israel. The covenant with David, which Solomon fulfills in the earlier account, is given brief mention, as are the people of Israel, but this is not to stress the nature of the covenant so much as to clearly identify Solomon as the same king who built the Temple, i.e. who instituted the true worship which was pleasing to God. The gift of wisdom which resided in Solomon's discerning heart, is now presented as the throne-partner of God, in the manner of Δίκη's relationship to Zeus, a heavenly personification. Finally, we have seen that the location of the dialogue in which the gifts were presented to Solomon has been switched from the dream sequence at Gibeon to the scene of the Temple's dedication, which is probably the new location for both 7.1-21 and 9.1-18. The tradition which ties these incidents, the dream sequence and the dedication, closely together in the life of King Solomon was clearly strong and perceived as significant.⁸⁹ Our author has made use of the tradition that there were two such incidents in separating 7.1.21 from 9.1-18 by placing the Hymn to wisdom and the personal benefits which the king received from her between the two direct speeches. The mechanism our author employs to reconnect the two incidents is the reflection on humankind and mortality

89. We have seen that the narratives of the dream sequence and the dedication appear separately in both I Kings and II Chron. However, in both books they are connected by preparations for the construction of the Temple. It is possible that later synagogue tradition saw the completion of the Temple as verification of Solomon's wisdom, hence our author's use of the Temple in this way. Kenik suggests that the connection lies in Solomon's purpose in going to Gibeon to sacrifice because the Temple had not yet been built, i.e. it marks a transition from no Temple to Temple. This seems highly persuasive, see Kenik 1983: 187.

which begins at 7.1-6 and continues with the aporetic questions in 9.13-18.

The importance of this reflection is its direct connection to the dream of an ideal ruler. For the Deuteronomistic historian who edited the I Kings account, this dream may be characterised as covenant kingship, but in *Wisdom's* account that dream of an ideal ruler is related to the wider issue of the purpose and expectations of created humankind. Solomon's specific tasks of the construction of the Temple for true worship and the exercise of true justice provide for some of those expectations. The aporetic questions of 9.13-17 are also questions about the limits of human knowledge. How adept is humankind before God when human thought is misery (9.14) and we cannot even understand the things of earth far less aspire to the things of heaven (9.16)? The mortal nature of man drags down his soul (9.15), and that mortality weighs upon our thoughts.⁹⁰ Solomon's experience of wisdom has led him to the conclusion that these problem questions are the province of wisdom, who confers immortality because she is able to know God's purpose and communicate that purpose to humankind. Solomon's role, then, of the paradigm king in relation to wisdom, exists in imitation of wisdom's role in relation to God. Solomon is the passive receiver of wisdom's gifts, but he is active in relation to the people who are concerned about human mortality and who desire the piety which enables them to become as 'like God as possible.'

90. The similarity between this verse and Plato's *Phaedo* 81c is well-documented. See Goodrick 1913: 221 and Winston 1979: 207. It may also be noted that the theme here, of the 'earthly tent' representing the human, corruptible body is being contrasted with the 'holy tent' of 9.8 which is revealed as an eternal idea.

Once again, we see wisdom in her training role (9.18) and also, significantly, in the role of personified justice, the throne-partner who moves between heaven and earth introducing to humans a sensitivity pertaining to the ways of God which leads, ultimately, to salvation (9.18). Thus, we have come full circle in our reflection, and have discovered that the philosopher-kings must have, in reality, the qualities of dependence on God which were unveiled by covenantal kingship. That dependence guarantees the gift of wisdom and her saving performance on behalf of the righteous. It is to this historical salvation plan that we now turn in the last of wisdom's self-disclosures.

3.4. *Knowledge of the Blueprint, Wisdom and Salvation History* (10.1-21).

The knowledge wisdom brings of her role in salvation history occurs in Chapter 10 which presents us with the history of deliverance for mankind, from the creation of man to the creation of the paradigm nation, and this is unequivocally portrayed in Chapter 10 as the sphere of divine wisdom. Moreover, in anticipation of the Diptychs, the Chapter also pictures a series of comparisons, in which certain individuals are understood to be the 'righteous' and are saved from their enemies. Thus, this Chapter is concerned with the

exercise of mercy in the lives of those individuals, and judgement in the lives of those who oppose them. It is perhaps worth repeating at this point that the cohesive principle of wisdom has been shown to us, as a result of the king's narrative, to be that which brings about the creation so that humankind might reach the *telos*, i.e. likeness to God and the immortality of his nature. The creation, as it is revealed in the mind of God, thus has an eschatological dimension in-built from its inception, and it is wisdom who actualises the creation and its ultimate purpose. It is, therefore, important that we understand Chapter 10, the poem within a poem, as a historical account of wisdom's creation of the righteous people, the paradigm nation, and as an expression of the eschatological implications of that nation's existence for future intervention, mercy and ultimate justice.

This part of the hymn has a certain independence from the earlier part of the king's narration. The immediacy of the first-person narrative has receded and wisdom, in the repeated third-person $\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta$, is the focus of intensive praise. This independence has been misunderstood by Wright,⁹¹ who concluded that 10.1-11.1 was a transitional section inserted to hold together two independent compositions. Larcher, on the other hand, saw the chapter as closely attached to the preceding chapters where the reader has been prepared for the revelation of wisdom's influence in Israel's history. Larcher gives three

91. Wright 1967a: 228.

reasons for this preparation: the limitations of the human condition in 9.14-16, the identification of wisdom with providence (7.25, 8.1), and the way in which the Solomon/wisdom relationship, throughout Chapters 7 and 8, anticipates the influence possible in the life of one individual.⁹² In fact, Larcher is correct in that there is a link between this chapter and the other wisdom chapters. As we have noticed, the primary link is related to wisdom's purpose as the one who brings about creation with the purpose of saving those who are 'righteous', i.e. those whose goal is 'likeness to God'. However, there are other connecting themes within the text which are related to this blueprint for salvation.

The first of these linking themes is kingship. In *Wisdom* 5.15-16, the rewards of the righteous include a beautiful crown from the hand of the Lord and a glorious kingdom.⁹³ In Chapter 10, we are told that wisdom gave Adam 'the strength to rule everything' (ἔδωκέ τε αὐτῷ ἰσχὺν κρατῆσαι ἀπάντων 10.2) after his fall. Wisdom revealed to Jacob the kingdom of God (10.10) and she carried to Joseph the 'sceptre of the kingdom' (σκῆπτρα βασιλείας 10.14). For Moses, the picture is inverted and his status as a ruler is reflected in his ability to negotiate with kings (10.16).⁹⁴ Before the Red Sea

92. Larcher 1983: 607.

93. See also *Wis.* 6.20-21.

94. The story of Abraham would also be one of inverted status, if we take the 'wicked conspiracy' (10.5) to refer to Gen. 14 and 'the confounding of the nations' (ἔθνῶν συγχυθέντων) to be the collapse of the league of kings. However, most commentators understand this as a reference to the Tower of Babel Gen 11.1-9, where there are verbal parallels. See Gregg 1909: 97, Goodrick 1913: 228, Winston 1979:214. This would, in fact, seem to be its context. According to the traditions of *Bereshith Rabbah* 38.6, Abraham was contemporary with those who built the Tower.

crossing, and before wisdom acts in the capacity of guide for Israel, she *'renders to the righteous a reward (μισθός) for their labours'* (10.17), and we have already seen that in 5.15-16 that reward (μισθός) is described as a glorious kingdom.

Our second linking theme lies in the references to Adam in 7.1 and 10.1. Our narrator/king, as we have seen, becomes a paradigm man when allied with wisdom's gifts, as Adam was a paradigm man in the creation plan. In each case the word used to distinguish Adam, *'first made'* (πρωτόπλαστος), is used in conjunction with a term in which Adam engenders the rest of humankind, *'offspring (ἀπόγονος) of the earth-born'* (7.1), and *'father of the world'* (10.1). According to Dupont-Somner, these terms signify differing roles.⁹⁵ Πρωτόπλαστος refers to the uniqueness of Adam's creation by God. The other part of each of these two verses places Adam definitively in a human context, i.e. we are dealing with the aftermath of the fall. He is *'earth-born'* (7.1) and is invoked to represent mortality and the cycle of procreation and death (πατέρα κόσμου 10.1). Thus, he too needs wisdom in order to regain his immortality. The *'pattern of man'* designed for the human inhabitants of the cosmos was lost at Adam's fall, and the new pattern which emerged is formed from the conjoined forces of divine wisdom and man. Adam, consequently, appears in 10.1 as the first person

95. Dupont-Somner 1939: 185.

in the list of the δίκαιοι, though he is not given that title.

The third linking theme is, as we recall, the fact that Chapter 10 gives a performative context to wisdom's divine activity. In examining the literary techniques employed by our author for the purposes of constructing his hymn, it was noticeable that these techniques were formulated deliberately to express his theology. This will prove equally true for Chapter 10. However, in order to understand the significance of our author's claims in this chapter and demonstrate the aspects of divine activity which are being emphasised, we will have to digress for a moment and consider the Isis question.

Several scholars⁹⁶ have argued that the role of divine wisdom in *Wisdom* bears a strong affinity to the claims made by Isis in the hymns (aretalogies) of praise to the goddess which have been discovered at sites where the Isis cult flourished.⁹⁷ Reese's original argument has been questioned by Kloppenborg on the grounds that the Isis aretalogies mirror a general hymnic form and not specifically an aretalogical form, that Reese has forced some of his correspondences between the form of *Wisdom* and the aretalogical form and, indeed, some of the parallels,⁹⁸ and thirdly, wisdom's list of saving

96. This question was considered by Knox 1937: 230-237. Knox proposed that the Jewish Sophia was the answer to the problem of young Jews who might find it hard to resist the Isis cult if they wished for promotion. However, as Kloppenborg has rightly pointed out, Knox was referring to the figure of wisdom in *Sirach*, and he saw the presentation of Sophia in *Wisdom* as a Stoic-Platonic-Pythagorean figure who had largely replaced personal wisdom. See Kloppenborg 1982: 58 and n.8. Reese 1970: 40-52 and Mack 1970: 46-60 both came, independently, to the conclusion that the Isis cult had influenced *Wisdom*, also Kloppenborg as above. Useful summaries of these arguments occur in Grabbe 1997: 79-80, and Collins 1997: 203-204.

97. Isis aretalogies come from a variety of sources e.g. Andros, Cyme. For a fully detailed list see Kloppenborg 1982: 57.

98. Kloppenborg notes that the comparison of the 'nature-origin' strophe with *Wisdom* 8.2-18 is possible but there are other comparisons 'more compelling'. See Kloppenborg 1982: 60, also n.18.

deeds is designed to be read as an independent unit.⁹⁹ Kloppenborg then goes on to produce, with reservations, a thesis in which language and mythologoumena related to the Isis cult have influenced *Wisdom*.¹⁰⁰ Thus, he understands the points of correspondence to be wisdom's role as saviour, wisdom's association with the King in 'the logic of royal ideology', which in effect is the triadic formation of Re/Osiris/Isis - God/Sophia/Solomon,¹⁰¹ and the correlation of the powers and attributes of Sophia and Isis.

The equation between the powers and attributes of Isis and Sophia is, as Kloppenborg himself has stated, not sufficient evidence on its own to conclude some kind of dependence. The terms of these powers were within the form of hymns, and the Stoic concentration of epithets in relation to wisdom 7.22-27 was paralleled in the Isis cult, where the goddess also underwent a degree of Stoicising.¹⁰² Also, the triadic formulation in Kloppenborg is hedged about with the caveat that what has been assimilated and adapted is the 'mythic pattern'¹⁰³ of the triad. However, as we have seen,

99. The reason Kloppenborg gives for this opinion is that the section is characterised by anaphora which is lacking in Chapters 6-9. Although anaphora would not be unusual in any hymn form, he is, however, correct to say that Chapter 10 of *Wisdom* may be read as a separate unit, although with strong links to the other wisdom Chapters and equally strong links to the Diptychs of 11-19, as we shall see.

100. Kloppenborg 1982: 72. His position is very close to that of Mack 1970: 46-60.

101. Kloppenborg 1982:78. On page 72 he has referred to this as the Isis/Horus cycle.

102. Kloppenborg 1982: 60-61, 70. See also Plutarch *Isis and Osiris* where Isis is much closer to the principle of wisdom, although Plutarch post-dates *Wisdom* and may reflect a general lining-up of religious and philosophical ideas.

103. Kloppenborg 1982: 78.

that pattern of God/wisdom/ruler was not unknown in ancient, near-eastern kingship ritual including the traditions of kingship within the O.T. Further, Sophia in *Wisdom* is, very carefully, not a goddess, but a gift of God subordinate always to the wishes of God, neither is she the 'mother' of the king who declares himself 'mortal' (θνητόζ 7.1) and like everyone else. In short, while it is possible that some aspects of the Isis triadic, mythic pattern were borrowed for wisdom, the evidence is not at all conclusive.¹⁰⁴

This leaves us with the role of both wisdom and Isis as 'saviour', the most important role for our understanding of Chapter 10 of *Wisdom*, and also the role where real differences are seen to emerge.

In another article by Henrichs, he refers to the changes which took place in the hymnic form as a consequence of certain developments in Hellenistic thought.¹⁰⁵ One of the most significant changes came as a consequence of the atheism of Prodicus and Euhemerus. According to Prodicus, the traditional gods did not exist as gods, i.e. they were humans, who at some time in the past had discovered practical things: food, shelter, skills, and had used these for the benefit of their fellow humans and were, consequently, awarded divine status. From the fragments of Prodicus only two gods are mentioned, Demeter and Dionysus, who have become, importantly,

104. So much of Kloppenborg's thesis is dependent upon his historical assessment of the position of Alexandrian Jews and their need to 'maintain themselves in an atmosphere of intense religious and political propaganda' (78). As Collins rightly states, there is no evidence that the Jewish community found the cult of Isis particularly tempting, see Collins 1997:204.

105. Henrichs 1984: 139-58.

itinerant benefactors and so the epiphanies of the traditional gods became, in Prodicus' treatment, accounts of the arrival of the benefactors.¹⁰⁶ Henrich's argument is that this strain of writing, in which particular examples of kindness to particular humans was needed to support the claim to deity, quickly became a part of conventional hymns, and also divided the gods into 'celestial' (deified heavenly bodies) and 'terrestrial' (θεοὶ οὐράνιοι and ἐπίγειοι)¹⁰⁷ those who roamed the earth building up a kind of divine *curriculum vitae*. Furthermore, Henrichs also argues that the Isis aretalogies are the natural offspring of this change in the hymnic form, and a consequence of the equation between Isis and Demeter.¹⁰⁸

It is in this context, then, that we must regard the claims made for Isis in the aretalogies. In the aretalogy from Cyme, the most complete text, Isis portrays herself in fifty-six statements, many of them in the first-person. She invented writing, agriculture, navigation and marriage contracts (K 3c, 7, 15, 30), she also gave laws, abolished cannibalism and murder, founded cities and cult practices (K 52, 4, 21, 26, 22-24). Her ethical principles are maintained by her role as τὸ καλόν and τὸ δίκαιον (K 16, 17-20, 27-29, 32-38) and as such she protects marriages and families. She also has

106. Euhemerus' *Sacred Record*' has been preserved in Ennius' *Sacred History*' a Latin adaptation.

107. This division between the celestial and terrestrial things appears in *Wisdom* 9.16 as part of the aporetic questions in which wisdom brings the knowledge of what is pleasing to God.

108. Henrichs 1984: 154.

control over the forces of nature (K 13-14, 39, 42, 49). Her inventiveness, her desire for social order and her control over nature are the principal factors which also make her a saviour. By controlling the sea and inventing navigation she becomes the patron of sailors (Medinet Madi 2.7-8), and she saves those in prison or in the power of death (ὄσσοι δ' ἐμ μοίραις θανάτου συνέχονται ἐν εἰρκτῆι Medinet Madi 1.29).

When we turn to *Wisdom* Chapter 10, we see this convention in outline form only. Divine wisdom is clearly intervening in the lives of men, but she never refers to herself, nor is she directly petitioned. The thanks expressed at the close of the hymn are addressed to God praising his 'hand' that fought on behalf of the righteous (10.20). The force of the repeated αὐτή places the hymn in the mouth of the distant narrator/author, and wisdom is only discernible through direct reference to God.

The *Wisdom* hymn is also more explicit in terms of who wisdom has saved. Rather than broad categories, 'mariners',¹⁰⁹ 'those in pain' (Medinet Madi 1.29-34), wisdom saves specific individuals who, with the exceptions of Adam and Moses, are spoken of as the 'righteous'. Adam, as we have seen, heads the list in his role as the template for man. His unique position is emphasised: he was the 'only-created' (μόνον κτισθέντα 10.1) and his fall was, therefore, equally unique (παραπτώματος ἰδίου 10.1). Wisdom

109. There is an allusion to wisdom's ability to save those at sea in 14.1-5. The desire to save would seem to be God's, but wisdom acts here providentially. God's goodness in providing a path through the sea is effective in spite of the call upon the ship's gods (14.1).

averts the dangers of his new, mortal vulnerability, she preserves Adam (10.1) and awards him the power to rule in his new state (10.2).¹¹⁰ Danger again threatens when the fury of Cain, the ἄδικος who rejects wisdom, results in the murder of his brother and imperils the world by unleashing the flood (κατακλύζω 10.3-4).¹¹¹ Wisdom's intervention, by steering the righteous (Noah) in the Ark, receives additional information from 14.6. Noah's escape is the hope of the world (ἡ ἐλπὶς τοῦ κόσμου) and he leaves a '*seed for generation*' (σπέρμα γενέσεως).

The theme of regeneration also links the reference to Noah to the story of Abraham. Abraham is protected from exercising his natural compassion towards his child (10.5) in the sacrifice of Isaac. Not only does this allusion provide a contrast with the wickedness of the Canaanites in 12.5, who feel no compunction about murdering their children and practice cannibalism, but additionally, it acts as a reminder to Israel that God's blessing was conferred upon the descendants of Abraham. Abraham is blameless for God (ἄμεμπτον Θεῷ 10.5), and the nation that will finally be delivered from oppression are also described as '*blameless seed*' (σπέρμα ἄμεμπτον 10.15)

In the Abraham episode, wisdom appears to search for the righteous (εὑρεν τὸν δίκαιον) among the wicked who constructed the Tower of

110. Goodrick points out that Adam's 'dominion over all things' was renewed by God after the fall (Gen. 9.2) , and this is presumably the incident referred to here. Goodrick 1913: 226

111. Gregg notes that Cain, the unrighteous man, is contrasted with Adam in that he '*fell away*' from wisdom(Gregg 1909: 96-97). Also Gen. 4.11 provides the image of the earth opening her mouth to receive Abel's blood. In Aeneid 6.106, Aeneas associates the opening of the door of the underworld with the flooding of the Acheron, and a similar idea may be present in *Wisdom*, i.e. that when the earth opened to receive Abel's blood it released the underground waters to flood the earth.

Babel. Similarly, she protects Lot from among all the inhabitants of the cities of the plain, upon whom fire rained down (10.6). The depiction of the landscape as a smoking wasteland, with fruits that are stunted and the salt pillar of Lot's wife standing as an eternal monument to foolishness (10.8), lends verifying detail to the narrative at this point, as though our author, or perhaps the narrator, was familiar with the site where these events took place. However, the picture also adds to the series of internal contrasts between the respective fates of the righteous and their enemies. The inhabitants of the five cities did not know what were 'good things' (μη γνῶναι τὰ καλὰ 10.8), while Jacob is introduced by wisdom to the kingdom of God and the knowledge of 'holy things' (καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ γνῶσιν ἁγίων 10.10). Like Abel, Jacob was confronted with the anger of his brother (10.3,10.10), and at his flight wisdom became his guide and deliverer as she had for Lot. She preserved him as she had preserved Adam (διεφύλαξεν 10.1, 10.12) and foiled the conspiracy of those who lay in wait for him (ἐνεδρευόντων 10.12).¹¹² The climax to the Jacob narrative occurs in his struggle with the angel (ἀγῶνα ἰσχυρόν) but its purpose in *Wisdom* is to teach the value of 'piety' (εὐσέβεια 10.12).

If Jacob begins the process of accumulating the riches which are promised with wisdom, that process is completed in Joseph who receives, in

112. The same verb ἐνεδρεύω is used by the wicked kings in 2.12 when they conspire to kill the righteous man.

actuality, the sceptre which signifies his princely status (10.14) and fulfills the offer made to the kings in 6.21. Joseph's accusers are shown to be liars and, consequently, will be the recipients of death because of the judgement threat of 1.11 *'a mouth that lies slays the soul'* (στόμα δὲ καταψευδόμενον ἀναίρει ψυχήν). Joseph is granted eternal glory (δόξα αἰώνιος) which, as Raurell has demonstrated, is a share in an eschatological future.¹¹³

The cumulative effect of the repeated pronoun αὕτη and the subsuming of a variety of different characters under one definitive title, ὁ δίκαιος, creates in Chapter 10 a finely-balanced tension between the pace of the events and the certainty of the outcome. Wisdom, as depicted, moves with confidence among flood, fire and brimstone, and human conspiracy to select those whom she knows to be her own. The picture is entirely consistent with the promise of 6.16, *'for she goes about seeking those who are worthy of her, shows herself favourable to them in the ways, and meets their every thought.'*

The pace of wisdom's activity is emphasised by the brief allusions to the narratives of the Pentateuch, which has the effect of hinting at a much broader, more detailed *paideia* of which the author has knowledge, and by a marked use of assonantal and alliterative patterns.¹¹⁴ Wisdom's purpose is finally revealed in 10.15:

113. Raurell 1979: 378-381.

114. Deliberate assonance is always more difficult to detect in inflected languages because of the coincidence of case endings. Larcher notes 10.3b ἀδελφοκτονοῖς συναπώλετο θυμοῖς as signifying Cain's rage. Larcher 1983: 616. There are many examples of alliteration being used to create intensity, 10.6 φυγόντα πῦρ...πενταπόλεως and 10.7 καπνιζομένη καθέστηκε χέρσος καὶ ἀτελεσιν. See also the use of inversion 10.3 instead of the expected αὕτη, we have ἀποστοῶς δὲ ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἀδίκος because Cain rejects wisdom.

She delivered the righteous people and blameless seed from oppressors

(αὕτη λαὸν ὄσιον καὶ σπέρμα ἄμεμπτον ἐρρύσατο ἐξ ἔθνους
θλιβόντων).

We have already seen that the '*blameless seed*' is a reference to the descendants of Abraham, who was protected by wisdom so that he was blameless before God. The seed is, undoubtedly, the actual, physical descendants of Abraham, i.e. the Jews, and thus wisdom has brought into being our third paradigm, the righteous nation.

Wisdom's concerns in Chapter 10 are extended to the realities of the experience of individuals in history, as with Isis. However, this action on behalf of mankind is not wisdom's purpose, but a by-product of her wish to activate the creation plan of God for the immortality of humans as expressed in 2.23. In the final sequence (10.16-21), the nation has become representative of the righteous, and the story of the Exodus and Red Sea crossing is told in anticipation of wisdom's training of Israel in the metaphorical labyrinth of the wilderness. From this point wisdom deals with the nation as the pattern of the eschatological community. She executes judgement in that she destroys the enemies of God's plan, as she did in the Pentapolis and again at the Red Sea, but she is also merciful, saving those who call upon God, coming to their aid and teaching them '*the things that are pleasing*' to God (9.18), and fitting them to take part in that eschatological plan.

4. Conclusion.

Wisdom's creation of Israel as the historical and eschatological template is an expression of mercy. Although wisdom is not mentioned specifically in the Mercy Dialogue, we are aware of her role there too, in creating (11.17), orchestrating (11.20), expressing the love of God (11.24), withholding punishment (12.2) and, as the spirit of God, being present in the creation so that it can never be undervalued (12.1). Wisdom, as God's activity in the world is, thus, demonstrating the total *philanthropia* of God, a concept with which wisdom has already been associated (1.6, 7.23) and which Israel must emulate as the righteous people. In so doing, Israel provides humankind with an earthly model of a righteous community whose true worship and practice of piety acts as a signpost towards immortality and a constant reference point for righteousness. Thus, in the Wisdom Chapters, as in the Mercy Dialogue, we see that the route to immortality which was God's design is utterly contingent upon wisdom's plans, both in the lives of individuals, and in the election of Israel and her fidelity to her special calling. Wisdom's intermediary role is crucial to our understanding of that interplay between the divine judgement that protects the righteous, and benevolence, by which people and nations are trained in such a way that they are encouraged to discover what is pleasing to God. Thus, wisdom is God's mercy in the

creation.

If, however, wisdom brings saving knowledge (9.18) and the paradigms of true human existence for our benefit (7.14, 8.17-18, 10.17), as it states in the Wisdom Chapters, and creates a righteous environment in a morally ordered universe (11.20d) and opportunities for a righteous response to the events of life (12.2), as it states in the Mercy Dialogue, how is it that any human is lost to '*utmost condemnation*' (12.27)? The answer to this question lies in the corrosive effects of false worship and the counterfeit piety which results from such worship. Israel's discovery in the testing experience of the wilderness is the God of the Mercy Dialogue who loves the creation and wishes life for all his creatures (11.26), but that discovery simultaneously reveals the emptiness of idolatry and its certain route to death. Thus, in contrast to wisdom, our author reviews the claims of false worship and the paradigms which bring about judgement.

4. THE CORRUPTION OF LIFE - THE REVIEW OF
FALSE GODS: CHAPTERS 13-15.

*Think if I could be left
dry-eyed, when close before me I had seen
Our image so distorted, so bereft of dignity.
Dante, The Divine Comedy I Canto XX (lines 20- 22).*

In our examination of the Wisdom Chapters (*Wis.*6-10), it became apparent that wisdom's activity was not confined to these specific Chapters, and that the more intensive exploration of her roles as mediator between God and the created order had, in fact, been anticipated in the opening to the Apocalyptic Drama (1-6) and could also be seen to be present in the Mercy Dialogue (11.15-12.27) and the final drama of the Diptychs. Similarly, wisdom's antithesis, i.e. the many forms of worship employed by those ignorant of the true God, also make an appearance in other sections of *Wisdom* and we will return to these at a later stage once we have been able to establish the significance of the critique in chapters 13-15 and its identifying motifs.

The key to understanding our author's position here, and the reason for referring to the idolatry chapters as wisdom's antithesis, lies in the aporetic questions of 9.13 and 9.17. In these questions our author speculates on what the human creature can know of God, the creator.¹ The identification of wisdom with the Holy Spirit in 9.17, as a gift of God who brings discernment as part of her endowment, is also the definitive answer to the question of how humans come to know anything of God. It is, consequently, the absence of the

1. Note the τίς γάρ ἄνθρωπος γνώσεται βουλήν Θεοῦ; of 9.13 (*What man is he that can know the counsel of God?*) and the opening verse of the review of false worship (13.1), μάταιοι μὲν γὰρ πάντες ἄνθρωποι φύσει, οἷς παρῆν Θεοῦ ἀγνωσία (*Vain surely are all men by nature who are ignorant of God*).

gift of divine wisdom which causes mankind to fail to know God, and the manufacture of idols is simply one manifestation, albeit the most evident, of that failure. Although there may be more sympathy expressed towards those who attribute divine qualities or divine representation to the planetary system (13.1-7), ultimately, this is still a failure to exercise wisdom and merits an adverse judgement (13.8-9).

Thus, we have identified two problems for our author. If the over-arching sin is one of a failure to know God because of the lack of wisdom who mediates that knowledge, then this attack upon varying forms of worship cannot stand alone as a literary section but must be a counter-image, a photographic negative for which the Wisdom Chapters stand as the positive image. The means by which our author conveys this consists of the careful interplay between that which has substance and that which is merely illusion. This device is not simply literary, but finds support in the views of Middle-Platonism where the basis of reality is located in the ideas of God and not in what is perceived by our senses.² It is this particular authorial device which, as we will see, acts as a searchlight upon all incorrect views of God.

The second problem faced by our author stems from the first. If the failure to acquire wisdom and discernment results in a concomitant failure to know anything of the true God, then all forms of counter-worship must merit

2. See Philo *De Opificio Mundi* 16-19 for a detailed interpretation of this view.

the same judgement. This would seem to be the case as we have noted in 13.6-8, where those who seek God and earnestly desire to find him are led into erroneous belief by the beauties of creation (καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ τάχα πλανῶνται Θεοῦ ζητοῦντες, καὶ θέλοντες εὐρεῖν 13.6) and are ultimately condemned (13.8). However, those who find God in the beauties of the cosmos are '*less to be blamed*' (ἔστι μὲμψις ὀλίγη 13.6), while those who create idols create '*an abomination*' (βδέλυγμα) and '*stumblingblocks to the souls of men*' (καὶ εἰς σκάνδαλα ψυχᾶς ἀνθρώπων 14.11). How does this degree of shading and sympathy make sense in the face of a blanket condemnation of incorrect views of God? The answer lies in two other facets of false worship to which our author continually draws our attention: the impulse to worship, i.e. motivation, and the appropriateness of the chosen response. On these principles, then, substance versus illusion and motivation and propriety, our author will build his critique of the varying forms of error practised by those ignorant of God.

It is, perhaps, somewhat tautologous to say that one of the categories of knowledge that wisdom brings is knowledge of herself and her role in the created order. Yet wisdom, as we have seen, is the world soul who maintains the moral order of the world for the purpose of creating an earthly paradigm and, ultimately, an eschatological community according to the ideas of

God. In order to fulfill this remit, she applies the Mercy Dialogue principles of regulation (11.20d) by restricting evil and promoting good, and by the creation of situations in which sinful humans may come to acknowledge God, i.e. little by little (12.2). Any incorrect view of God is, then, by definition, an absence of wisdom and forms the basis of condemnation. Moreover, incorrect views must also be illusions in *Wisdom* because the unseen 'realities' are those which are executed by wisdom in accordance with the ideas of God.³ Each perceived incident which is affirmative of faith is, thus, proportionate in terms of a broader whole of unseen realities in a faith which includes the totality of the created cosmos. It is this factor which makes sense of our author's concept that incorrect or foolish reasoning makes the wicked the portion of the larger whole of death (1.16-2.2), while right reasoning grounds the faithful upon God's moral creation in absolute terms.

In this section, then, we are at the heart of our judgement/mercy divide, where the degree of substance or illusion, the categories of error and the motivation for error, become increasingly important in assessing the need for judgement and the opportunities for mercy according to the Mercy Dialogue. Moreover, these aspects of false worship will also be examined against wisdom's purity of motivation in carrying to humans saving knowledge of God and promises of eternity.

3. We have noted several passages where wisdom has this role, not least the praises of wisdom in 7.22-8.1, where wisdom's ordering of the world is rooted in her character as an emanation or reflection of God.

1. Structure of the Critique of False Worship (1).

Various suggestions have been put forward by scholars as to the structure of chapters 13-15. Reese proposes a four-fold division which is held together by the 'rhetorical figure of digression'.⁴ Reese's divisions take the following form: the criticism of nature worship (13.1-9), the worship of wooden idols (13.10-14.9), the worship of clay idols (15.7-13), and the worship of animals (15.14-19). He further notes that at the half-way mark our author begins his digression which exposes the origins of idolatry by showing its commonplace, human roots in the manner in which Prodicus and Euhemerus described the origin of the gods (14.10-15.6).⁵

Wright⁶ understands basically two divisions: the first on nature worship and the second on idolatry with a concentric arrangement which pairs the carpenter of 13.11-14.2 with the potter of 15.7-13. These are paired around four paragraphs on the origin and evils of idolatry. However, whilst Wright is correct to note that there are concentric elements in the two descriptions of the craftsmen who make the idols, the purpose of the two passages is not the same. The carpenter creates his idol for personal protection, i.e. he makes a household god, and invests this god in his prayers with the power to provide success and happiness (13.17-19). The potter, on

4. Reese 1965: 393-394.

5. See Chapter 3 of this study pp. 198-199 above, also Henrichs 1984: 139-158.

6. Wright 1967a : 222-3, and Wright 1967b: 180-182.

the other hand, makes his clay figure entirely for commercial gain and to enhance his professional reputation. He does not pause to reflect upon the human condition or inevitable death, but attempts to produce an artifact which rivals the work of other craftsmen (14.9). He has no investment of hope, as does the carpenter, for his heart is ashes (14.10) and he does not scruple to turn a profit whatever the means (14.12). As we have suggested, this distinction in motivation is important for our author and is reflected in the overall structure.

Perhaps the most interesting, as well as the most detailed, examination of the structure of this section occurs in Gilbert,⁷ and his structural analysis also forms the basis for the plan of *Wisdom* proposed by Larcher.⁸ Gilbert has attempted to assess the divisions in Chapters 13-15 based upon the categories of false worship in which people participate, rather than a view in which the creation of each idol forms a new sub-section. The categories, then, are nature worship, idol worship, and the worship of beasts, denoted by the adjectives describing the condition of the participants at 13.1 (μάταιοι - *vain*), 13.10 (ταλαίπωροι - *miserable*), and 15.14 (ἀφρονέστατοι καὶ τάλανες - *more foolish and miserable*).⁹ The weakness of Gilbert's argument is that 15.14-17 is not concerned with the worship of beasts but is still deeply concerned with the worship of idols, and a mere two verses (15.18-19) expresses the abhorrence of animal worship as the text anticipates the second

7. Gilbert 1973: 245-257.

8. Larcher 1983: 122.

9. Gilbert 1973: 253.

Diptych at 16.1-3.

Nonetheless, there is an advantage in accepting Gilbert's analysis as we shall see. This advantage consists in the fact that by taking the condition of the participants to mark the internal divisions of the unit, i.e. the vanity and misery occasioned by erroneous worship, the discussion has moved on to philosophical grounds. The philosophical goal (τέλος) of life is 'happiness' (εὐδαιμονία) which cannot be achieved without the acquisition of virtues, i.e. *assimilation to God* - (ὁμοιωσις θεῷ). To be assimilated to God 'according as is possible' in Plato's famous phrase,¹⁰ requires precisely that knowledge which is the product of the search for virtue, commonly philosophical knowledge, but in the case of *Wisdom* the knowledge brought by divine wisdom. The battleground for the discussion is, thus, knowledge of God (ἐπιστήμη) brought by wisdom (φρόνησις 7.16) versus ignorance of God (θεοῦ ἀγνωσία 13.1). The unhappiness, emptiness, the κενοδοξία (14.14) of the false worshippers is the indicator of the failure of false concepts of God to offer to mankind its true goal of happiness.

Consequently, it can be seen that by using the unfulfilled dreams and unhappiness of those who engage in false worship, our author is appealing to the objective criteria of philosophical goals. The importance of this for our understanding of the structural arrangements in chapters 13-15 is that Gilbert's

10. Plato *Theaetetus* 176b. The phrase in question is κατὰ τὸ δύνατον which became important for Middle Platonist interpretation and particularly for Eudorus. See Dillon 1977: 123.

model, based upon the expressions of failure to achieve happiness, remains the most serious and most likely analysis of the structure of the section.

Moreover, in maintaining Gilbert's principal divisions at 13.1, 13.10, and 15.14, we are able to highlight the breaks for the sub-divisions by the use of the linking words of εἰδέναι/ἐπέγνωσιν 12.27 and 13.1, πορισμοῦ/πορισμῶν at 13.19 and 14.2, ἁμαρτανόντων/ἁμαρτωμεν at 14.31 and 15.2, and πάντας/πάντες at 15.13 and 15.14.¹¹ Additionally, our own analysis would also require the addition of εἰδώλοισι/εἰδώλων at 14.11 and 14.12 as the closing of the sub-section on idols for protection, and the opening of the *aitia* for the development of idolatry (see below).

However, there are difficulties. In our discussion of the Wisdom Chapters we used five categories to define the knowledge brought by wisdom. These were: [1] the earthly 'goods' of wealth, beauty and health. These, as we saw, were related to the *telos*; [2] knowledge of the world and the planetary systems; [3] knowledge of wisdom as the world soul; [4] the heavenly goods of the *telos*, i.e. the virtues; [5] knowledge of the blueprint of salvation. Together, these five categories of revealed knowledge comprise what we can know of God. Since we are aware that the varying forms of false worship result from ignorance of God, we should also be alert to the possibility that the counterfeit worshippers will express ignorance of the same philosophical

11. Gilbert 1973: 255.

categories.

Additionally, in the hymnic genre into which we placed the wisdom Chapters we noted certain identifying features associated with that genre: the presence of a speaker to give authority to some aspect of the hymn, the conventions of *mimesis*, i.e. drawing upon traditional stylistic or thematic motifs of hymns, *aitia* giving explanations for particular rituals, and some assessment of the performance of the gods. If the reflection on idolatry in Chapters 13-15 is, in fact, a negative image of the wisdom hymn, then these significant features of that genre should be noted either for their presence or their absence.

There are two further points to note on structure. Firstly, although both Wright and Gilbert have remarked on the concentric nature of the section on the manufacture of idols,¹² it is also apparent to the critics that the forms of false worship are examined in a descending scale of sympathy, with planetary representation of the gods and idols for protection eliciting a higher degree of understanding than the mercenary potter or the worshippers of beasts.¹³ The concentric balance, then, of the two sections on the carpenter and the potter as the manufacturers of idols, must be derived from something other than a basic similarity of task and *modus operandi*.

Our final point concerns the last verses of this section at 15.14-19. By

12. Wright 1967a: 222, and Gilbert 1973: 254.

13. Gilbert 1973: 255.

now we have grown used to *Wisdom's* transitional sections in which the themes being phased out are interwoven with the themes which will open up in the following passages. However, we have also noted in the passage on kingship and wisdom (6.9-21), which marks the end of the Apocalyptic Drama and the beginning of the Wisdom Chapters, that the first theme does not necessarily disappear although it is no longer emphasised in the same way, and wisdom's relationship to kings remains part of the underlying subject matter of the Wisdom Chapters.¹³ In a similar way, there is a close association between the punishments meted out to the Egyptians and their worship of animals as our author makes clear in individual Diptychs (16.2-3, 16.9, 16,18), and it is, thus, more than probable that the underlying theme of idolatry continues as the rationale for all the plagues and punishments of Egypt.

Bearing each of these factors in mind, it is now seen to be impossible to make a structural analysis of the critique of idolatry without knowing the content of the individual sub-sections. Accordingly, we will proceed on the basis of Gilbert's three main sections of 13.1, 13.10, and 15.14, with the sub-sections marked by the linkwords as noted above and illustrated in the table below. We will then return to the matter of the structure of these Chapters once that material is in place as part of our assessment.

13. See Chapter 3 of this study pp. 167-169 above . There is a similar pattern established at the close of the Wisdom Chapters where divine wisdom is only mentioned again at 11.1 but is, nonetheless, the guide of Israel throughout the re-telling of the Exodus story in the Diptychs.

Structural Analysis of Chapters 13-15 (reproduced from Gilbert 1973: 255).

1. Μάταιοι (13.1) - link words εἰδέναι, ἐπέγνωσιν 12.27 and 13.1.
2. ταλαίπωροι (13.10).
 1. Carpenter (13.10-13.19) - link words πορισμοῦ, πορισμῶν at 13.19 and 14.2.
 2. A Way through the Sea (14.1-11) - link words εἰδώλοισ, εἰδώλων at 14.11-12.♦
 3. Causes of Idolatry (14.12-21).
 4. Moral Failures (14.22-31)...link words ἀμαρτανόντων, ἀμαρτωμεν at 14.31-15.2.
 5. Potter (15.1-15.13) - link words πάντας, πάντες at 15.13 and 15.14.
3. ἀφρονέστατοι (15.14-19) - Failure of Idols and the Baseness of Animal Worship leading to the Second Dyptych.
 - ♦ Not included in Gilbert's analysis.

2. Constructing Errors - An analysis of the sub-sections in Chapters 13-15.

2.1. *Knowledge of the World and The Planetary Systems (13.1-9).*

All such, whether hidden or displayed, I learned (ὅσα τέ ἐστι κρυπτὰ καὶ ἐμφανῆ ἔγνω), says the narrator/king in 7.21, in describing the extensive scientific knowledge of the world and astronomy which divine wisdom brings with her from the God who created the cosmos. In 13.1-9, this position is reversed. Humankind is ignorant of God, vain in nature, and unable to discern from the beauties of creation the mind that conceived them. Here, then, is our first antithesis to wisdom's knowledge.

Gregg defines the content of 13.1-9 as a critique in which 'nature-worship is the least reprehensible form of false worship'.¹⁴ How we define that worship of the elements is concerned with the area that Burkert refers to as 'the point of contact between mythology and φυσιολογία',¹⁵ i.e.

14. Gregg 1909: 124.

15. Burkert 1972: 317.

the point at which natural phenomena have become representative of the powers and qualities of individual god. There is evidence to suggest that even amongst some earlier Greek mathematicians there was a reluctance to identify the planets and their movement with the mobility of the gods.¹⁶

This difference between the mythology associated with astronomy and the mathematical and scientific discoveries of astronomy has not been clearly understood by some of *Wisdom's* critics. Reese, for example, understands 13.1-9 as a critique of the pagan philosophers who, although looking for the divine, are still to be labelled as foolish because they are not searching for the true God.¹⁷ This critique would, on that basis, include Plato, and even allowing for the difficulties in interpreting Plato's theories on creation, it would seem improbable that our author would use Plato to confound Plato. On the contrary, Plato would seem to be among those who recognise that the '*originator of beauty had created them*' (the planets and elements 13.3). In the *Timaeus*, he writes that the sun, moon and planets were created by god as '*instruments of time*',¹⁸ and in the *Laws*, astronomy, once suspected of leading

16. Burkert 1972: 313. Burkert quotes Seneca *Quaestiones Naturales* 7.3.2 who states that Democritus 'knew neither the number nor the names of the planets'. However, in the same report, Seneca accuses Democritus of expressing: 'the suspicion that there were more planets (*susplicari se ait plures stellas esse*)'. The 'more' here, must, as Burkert notes, be in addition to those planets Democritus already knew. This prompts the question stated on p. 313 n.73, 'Did Democritus intentionally ignore the divine names of the planets?'

17. Reese 1970: 53. Reese states: 'In Greek philosophy matter always remained the irrational element, existing independently of the divine intellectual principle, which was not the cause of matter itself, but was able to some extent to harness it and organise it into a cosmos. For pagan thinkers the divinity was not the unique, transcendent, ultimate cause and creator of all' (p.53). He further comments that Plato's god created the 'ideas' but the physical process of creation, that is the individual, existing objects were not attributable to god (p. 53 n.93). This, as we have seen, is the role assigned to the *logos* in Middle Platonism, and in *Wisdom* to divine wisdom. In connection with the development of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* see Winston 1979: 38-40, also Schmitt 1986: 106.

18. Plato, *Timaeus* 38 c-d.

to atheism, holds a quasi-religious position among the sciences and is thought to be '*dear to god*'.¹⁹

Philo, from a critical position similar to that of *Wisdom*, recounts a list of natural phenomena and gives the name of each god assigned to each element.²⁰ Also, Seneca states that Augustus built a temple to one of the winds which he understood to be a god.²¹ It is against such 'superstitions' as these that our author directs his critique, as 13.2 makes apparent, and not, as has frequently been assumed, against the philosophers and scientists.

However, if philosophers and scientists are not the subject of our author's criticism, and it is directed at those who see the wonders of the cosmos in representative terms, what then is the basis of *Wisdom's* sympathy with the participants? The answer lies in the beauty of the created order (ὧν εἰ μὲν τῇ καλλονῇ τερπόμενοι, θεοὺς ὑπελάμβανον 13.3), but there is, here, a subtle twist. Beauty is one of the virtues,²² and to be able to appreciate beauty is an indicator of goodness and a life of virtue. However, we need to bear in mind the concept that the virtues are indivisible (see Ch. 3 p. 183 above) and that to possess one without the others is deemed to be a mere imitation of true virtue.²³ The claim to appreciate beauty is, consequently, a false claim based upon the perception of the senses.

The argument being represented by the astrologists is the Stoic argument in favour of recognition by the senses, here recognition of the power

19. Plato, *Laws* 821a.

20. Philo, *De Decalogo* 12. See also 52-53.

21. Seneca, *Quaestiones Naturales* 5.17. 5.

22. See *Wisdom* 7.10 where wisdom is to be preferred to beauty, health and light.

23. Plato, *Gorgias* 507c.

and operation of the elements (the δύναμις and ἐνέργεια of 13.4), where certain precepts strike our senses in such a way as to make it impossible to disbelieve them and so act as a guarantee of their truth.²⁴ This core principle was used by Stoic philosophers to support certain critical dogmas, most importantly that the world is ruled by Providence, an idea they claimed to be as evident as perception itself.

The issue, as it is presented, revolves around the key verbs 'to know' (εἰδέναι 13.1, 13.9, γνώτωσαν 13.3) 'to perceive' in the sense of acknowledge (ἐπέγνωσαν 13.1), 'to see' (*out of the good things that are seen* - ἐκ τῶν ὀρομένων ἀγαθῶν 13.1, *the maker of them is seen* - θεωρεῖται 13.5, *they believe their sight because the things are beautiful that are seen* - καὶ πείθονται τῇ ὄψει, ὅτι καλὰ τὰ βλεπόμενα 13.7), 'to suppose' (ἐνόμισαν 13.2), and 'to understand' (νοησάτωσαν 13.4). In our author's play upon these words 'knowledge' is firmly associated with God, and therefore has the property, in contrast to 'supposing' or 'believing', of making an objective statement about the world. As we have seen in earlier chapters, Middle Platonism draws a sharp distinction between the activities of the mind and the activities of the senses as only the mind, through memory or analogical inference, can construct concepts. This is the counter-argument to the sight/perception discussion which is presented here.

24. For a full discussion of this idea as propounded by the Stoics, and the debate with the New Academy which ensued, see Dillon 1977: 62-69. Antiochus, whose ideas were formative for Middle Platonism, first held the Stoic position but later came to revise it.

Gilbert has correctly noted the significance of 13.5 in the counter-argument.²⁵ *Wisdom* states that an analogical inference should be made from the '*greatness and beauty of the creation*' which corresponds to the nature of the creator (ἐκ γὰρ μεγέθους καλλονῆς κτισμάτων ἀναλόγως ὁ γενεσιουργὸς αὐτῶν θεωρεῖται). Goodrick points out that this was arguing from the less (the creature) to the greater (the creator),²⁶ but such inferences were the commonplace of geometrical propositions,²⁷ and, as is evidenced by Job 37-41, were not unknown in traditional biblical wisdom. However, the importance of this analogical approach, as it was traditionally understood by philosophy, is that it enabled a discussion in which a visible part of some entity could be used in order to construct a greater, invisible whole. The existence of this unseen whole provides, in this instance, the reality of a creator governing the cosmos, and to reach a conclusion founded only upon that which is seen is to be led astray.

The opening words of this section, μάταιοι μὲν γὰρ πάντες ἄνθρωποι φύσει οἷς παρῆν Θεοῦ ἀγνωσία (*vain indeed are all men by nature who are ignorant of God* 13.1), immediately inform the reader that our author is constructing a portrait of error. The picture is, therefore, one of contrasts, not just between the 'seeing' and 'knowing' upon which we have already commented, but between the master technician, the one that exists

25. Gilbert 1973: 25-30.

26. Goodrick 1913: 281.

27. Gilbert uses the example of the doxographers who divided the earth into zones and, from this, concluded that the earth was spherical, Gilbert 1973: 27.

independently of all else (τὸ ὄν), and the works he has created, between the magnificent 'lords of the cosmos' (πρυτάνεις 13.2), and the 'first author of beauty' (γενεσιάρχης τοῦ κάλλους 13.3) whose design includes even the former.

Precisely because the elements and planets are part of God's creation, they are described in all their living, moving beauty. Fire and wind both have animated properties, the air is depicted as swift (ἡ ταχινὸν ἀέρα 13.2), the stars as running in their circles, the waters turbulent, and the sun and moon in their beneficent function as the lights of heaven (ἡ φωστῆρας οὐρανοῦ). Nonetheless, this picture is not as it seems.

In presenting these elements as moving and dynamic, our author is demonstrating that they are that which must be acted upon (κινεῖσθαι) according to philosophical theories of locomotion which included the potential to change, grow and decay. As we discovered in the Wisdom Chapters, in Middle Platonism God is transcendent, a fixed point, complete and removed from any need to infuse form into matter.²⁸ The important point for our purposes here is that that which is mobile, which must be acted upon, cannot be God. Wisdom, as we noted, was 'more mobile than any motion' (πάσης γὰρ κινήσεως κινητικώτερον σοφία 7.24), but then wisdom is an emanation from God (7.25) and not God. Further, in the Wisdom Chapters,

28 See Barfield 1957: 96-106.

we discovered that part of the knowledge brought by wisdom was *'the certain knowledge (γνώσιν ἀψευδῆ) of the things that are, to know (εἰδέναι) how the world was made and the operation of the elements, the beginning, ending and middle of times'* (7.17-18). The influence of the heavenly bodies upon the earth is confined to the relationship with time (7.18-19). Our author does not deny the beauties of the creation. He endorses them both in his description of the deified elements and in 13.7, where he notes their visual impact (ὅτι καλὰ τὰ βλεπόμενα). However, in the corresponding passage in the Wisdom Chapters (7.15-21) the information granted is revealed knowledge and has no basis in visual perception.

'Seeing', then, cannot provide the individual with the true knowledge of God, anymore than it can the true size of the planets or the nature of their influence upon seasons and tides. By searching for observable realities we are faced with the illusory nature of how things appear to us. Nonetheless, our author has a certain sympathy with those participants who have looked beyond their everyday concerns and searched for a god in an explanation which takes into account the existence of the universe. They have tried to form theories about the world in time (13.9). Their response does not measure the true scale of God's activities but it recognises something of that scale. Their

astonishment (ἐκπλαγέντες 13.4) at creation's beauty is, therefore, classified by our author as having a certain appropriateness, even though this is a case of the old adage where a miss is as good as a mile. The participants 'know' more than most, but are content to know a little, and the section closes with the further hint of their culpability: *'If they could know so much as to be able to form theories about the world, how is it they did not find the Lord of these things sooner (13.9) ?'*

2.2. *The Idol-makers.*

2.2.i. *The Carpenter (13.10-19).*

If those who formulate ideas about the universe and its relationship to the gods are sunk in empty vanity, their condition is still to be preferred to those who are reduced to the manufacture of idols.²⁹ They hope in dead things (ἐν νεκροῖς αἱ ἐλπίδες αὐτῶν 13.10). What they call upon as gods are the works from the hands of a craftsman. Covered with gold or silver, these works are still nothing but representations of beasts (ἀπεικάζματα ζώων) or weathered stone. For all their supposed artistry, they are incapable of giving anything but misery.

The author's use of the adjective '*miserable*' (ταλαίπωροι 13.10) marks a distinct break from the previous sub-section. This break heralds our

29. By using the designation 'idol' (εἶδωλον), our author is playing a word game. Within Epicurean tradition it has the technical meaning of a film given off by any object which transmits an impression to the eye. By this token the planets and visible phenomena would equally be 'idols'. See Apollonius Rhodius. *Argonautica* 3.1004 where εἶδωλα οὐράνια refers to the constellations. However, in Middle Platonism the term is used for any unsubstantial form. Since Philo assumed that the heavenly bodies were alive and conscious, *De Gigantibus* 8, there is no reason to suppose that *Wisdom* did not also hold this view.

further descent into the world of the artisan and the idols he fashions from his own experience, but it also signifies, in the opinion of our author, the inability of pagan worshippers to produce a coherent system. Those who participate in the worship of the beauty of the night sky would have little or nothing to say to those who carve stone gods. Whereas wisdom's knowledge is all-encompassing, false worship is essentially fragmented, a factor which is reflected in the construction of the sub-sections.

13.10 is, in fact, a more general comment related to the making of representations of gods, and serves as an introduction to the whole section on manufactured idols³⁰ and not merely the carpenter with whom we will be most concerned. The derision expressed in this verse against the '*resemblances of beasts*' and worthless stones should alert us to the fact that we are dealing here, foundationally at least, with more traditional pictures of biblical idolatry.³¹ With the return to sculpted idols, we move, not just into the territory of transgression against the second commandment, but also into an area in which biblical polemics have developed conventions. It is against the

30. It thus forms a parallel with Isa. 44.9-20

31. Criticism of astrological forms of worship are not unknown in the Hebrew Bible.

Goodrick 1913: 276-277 quotes Job 31.26-28 '*If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, and my heart was secretly enticed, and my hand kissed my mouth, this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges for I should have been false to God above*'. However, criticism of manufactured idols is far more common, not only because it is a failure to obey the second commandment, but because Israel's distinctiveness as God's special people was at stake if she succumbed to the idols of those around her. Prohibitions against making idols occur in Ex.20.4; Lev 26.1; Deut. 4.16,23,25; 5.8; 7.5,25; 12.3; 27.15; Judg. 3.19,26; 17.3,4; 18.14,17,18,20,30,31; II Kings 17.41; 21.7; Isa. 10.10; 21.9; 30.22;40.19-20; 42.8,17; 44.9-17; 45.20; 48.5; Jer. 8.19;10.14;50.38;51.17,47,52; Hos. 11.2; Mic. 1.7;5.12; Nah.1,14; Hab. 2.18; Pss. 78.58;97.7; II Chron 33.7;19.22;34.3,4,7. This list corresponds with Tatum 1986: 180 n.13 where he itemises prohibitions against the making of a *pesel*. It follows that there are other prohibitions where differing vocabulary is used, but the point is well made.

background of these conventions, in the case of the carpenter of 13.11-19 and the potter of 15.7-13, a background drawn from Isaiah 44.9-20 and 45.9-13 respectively, that we must understand these two descriptions as mimetic.

Mimesis, as we noted in our discussion on wisdom, is an important feature of the hymn, which must faithfully 'reflect the world's surface'³² and obey ingrained cultural models for character motivation and for plot. Nonetheless, there is a triple word-play in operation. Firstly, the carpenter's task, or the task of any craftsman, may be described as *mimesis*. The high point of Greek sculpture was that it was an imitation of life (*mimesis biou*), although our author has intentionally set his craftsmen well below that level to heighten the absurdity of such a concept. Secondly, as we noted in the Wisdom Chapters, some form of technical *mimesis* in the text is indicative of the concept of a philosophical paradigm, as, for example, where the visible world mirrors an ideal of God. Thirdly, there are literary examples of *mimesis*, in which the conventions of style and language forge our perceptions of ourselves and the world by the use of established cultural models. All three are in operation here, and the latter we need to understand against a formal biblical background.

Tatum has noted these conventions in relation to interpretations of the second commandment, and their focus upon the use of perjorative terms

32. Lucente 1979: 1.

which imply the insubstantial nature of idol worship³³ and descriptions of the process whereby the idol was made. These conventions are applicable in both passages in *Wisdom* in which the idols are constructed. Tatum has also shown that the term 'idol' (εἶδωλον 14.11-12) had come to mean 'alien god' within the context of LXX, and presumably it held that meaning for *Wisdom* also.³⁴ Finally, we see that Isa. 44.9-20 and Isa. 45.9-13 provide the cultural models of the carpenter and the potter as a frame around a passage in which God promises to redeem Israel.

In Gilbert's analysis of this section, he notes that the accounts of the making of the idols in both Isa.44 and *Wisdom* 13 are both more than usually developed descriptions, and that the structure of each account follows, broadly, the same sequence.³⁵ Additionally, the sequence of events, as the craftsmen begin their work, is carefully aligned.³⁶ There are also certain key verbal parallels which we need to consider.

1. The use of μᾶταιοι (Isa. 44.9, and *Wis.* 13.1), signals both similarity and difference. Although it occurs in both passages the context is different in each case: in Isaiah, its use is reserved for idol-worshippers, and in *Wisdom* it is specifically associated with those who attribute deistic status to natural

33. Tatum 1986: 181. Tatum refers to 'dung' (*gillulim* e.g. Eze. 6.4), 'nothing' (*elil* Isa. 2.8), 'grief' (*ásab* or *óseb* Hos.4.17), and 'vanity' (*hebel* Jer. 8.19).

34. Tatum 1986: 193.

35. Gilbert 1973: 71-72. The structure of both passages is covered by the following broad outline: 1. Judgement by the author on the makers of idols (Isa.44.9-11, *Wis.* 13.10). 2. The first type of material to be used (Isa. 44.12, *Wis.* 13.10c-e). 3. Development of the carpenter account: his work and his prayer (Isa. 44.12.17, *Wis.* 13.11.15). 4. Judgement upon the artisan for participating in these acts (Isa.44.18-20, *Wis.* 13.16-19).

36. Gilbert 1973: 72. Gilbert lists these internal similarities as: the selection of a particular tree, the three-fold destination of the wood, the making of an idol in the form of a man, the positioning of the idol, and the prayer.

phenomena and the adjective *ταλαίπωροι* (*miserable*) becomes the designated term for idol-worshippers.

2. Similarly, the expression *σποδὸς ἢ καρδία αὐτῶν/αὐτοῦ* - (*their/his heart is ashes*) occurs in Isa. 44.20 and in *Wis.* 15.10.³⁷ Again, the context has been altered. The expression in Isa. 44 clearly refers to the carpenter who has used some of the wood for fuel to cook his food and some to make his idol. In *Wis.* the words are used only of the potter and depict his lack of expectation and hope.³⁸

3. In both portraits the artisan is referred to as *τέκτων* (Isa. 44.12,13, *Wis.* 13.11).

4. In each case a contrast is drawn between the legitimate uses of the wood and the use of the remainder to form an idol. In Isa. 44.16, however, the word *ἐνεπλήσθη*, indicative of the artist's satisfaction with his meal, subtly hints at the human weakness of the god-maker. The same word in *Wis.* 13.12 is part of a series of expressions designed to emphasise the poor quality of the material selected to become a god.³⁹

5. The use of *γλυπτόν* Isa. 44.17/*ἔγλυψεν* *Wis.* 13.13 for the carving of the idol.

6. The use of *προσεύχομαι* Isa. 44.17 and *Wis.* 13.17 to describe the action of praying, although the content of each prayer differs.

37. Goodrick 1913: 314 notes that the LXX version of Isa. 44.20 is a mistranslation of the MT. '*He feeds on ashes, a deceived heart has turned him aside.*'

38. Gilbert 1973: 73, where he concludes, following Skehan, that this must be more than coincidence as the thought is uncommon.

39. Note the force of *ἀπόβλημα εἰς οὐθέν εὐχρηστον* *Wis.* 13.13. The sense is 'leftovers of the leftovers'.

Gilbert understands these word parallels as key-words,⁴⁰ and forms the conclusion that the Isaiah passage has influenced the account in *Wisdom* but that we should not minimise the differences. Gilbert's explanation of both the importance of the key-words and the clear differences between the passages is attributed to the freedom of the author within the literary genre⁴¹ and the possibility that other sections of the O.T. also had an effect on the shaping of *Wisdom's* carpenter.

This explanation is only partial, however. We have made the claim that the character of the section on the carpenter is mimetic, i.e. it imitates certain vocabulary, character motivation and the line of the plot from established idol parodies within the Old Testament, in this case from Isaiah 44.⁴² Its purpose is to re-create a picture of the absurd nature of worshipping a carving as though it were a god, in a literary form which is accessible,⁴³ and which creates a counter-paradigm. The key-words point us to the passage in Isaiah as the model for *Wisdom* 13.10-19 and we need to scrutinise not merely differences of context but also the differences of specific vocabulary in *Wisdom's* account of the carpenter at work.

We have already seen from the verbal parallels that although our

40. Gilbert 1973:74.

41. Gilbert 1973:75.

42. Goodrick 1913: 282 notes that the sense of the prayer is similar to the polemic in the *Epistle of Jeremiah*. There is, however, a notable difference in that the Jeremiah prayers are concerned with public cults and the public failure of the Babylonian idols.

43. Attacks on the absurdity of making idols were also prevalent in Greek and Roman literature. See the well-known account in Horace *Satires* 1.8.1. It is interesting to note the view of Roth 1975: 30-31 that the idol parodies within the O.T. are themselves negative participial hymns.

author sometimes utilises a similar word or wording, he does not necessarily use it in the same context or to achieve the same effect. In Isa. 44.10, they fashion a god (οἱ πλάσσουντες θεόν), whereas in *Wisdom* they '*call them gods*' - (ἐκάλεσαν θεούς 13.10). The term '*his heart is ashes*' has been removed from the story of the carpenter to be used in the balancing story of the potter. Where *Wisdom* examines the contrast between the legitimate use of the wood and its profane use as an idol, his lack of stress upon the idol-maker's need for food has altered our perception of the offence. The Isaiah passage points up the feeble nature of men as opposed to God, while *Wisdom* 13.13 notices the quality of the wood. It is σκολιός - *crooked*, recalling the crooked thoughts (σκολιοί λογισμοί 1.3) of the wicked whose purpose is to deceive. There are other warnings too. On the Judgement Day, we are informed that the wicked will die quickly and '*have no hope*' (οὐκ ἔξουσιν ἐλπίδα 3,18),⁴⁴ and the idol-makers are forewarned '*that among the dead (ἐν νεκροῖς) is their hope*' (ἐλπίδες αὐτῶν 13.10). The carpenter pursues his objective and constructs an idol which was '*made to resemble the image of a man*' (ἀπέικασεν αὐτὸ εἰκόνι ἀνθρώπου 13.13), or '*the likeness of some vile beast*' (ἢ ζῶω τινὶ εὐτελεῖ ὡμοίωσεν αὐτό 13.14) thereby making a mockery of God's intention that man was made

44. Goodrick 1913: 135, where he translates ἐλπις in the sense of 'having no hope of God'.

for immortality and in the image of God's immortal nature (καὶ εἰκόνα τῆς ἰδίας ιδιότητος ἐποίησεν αὐτόν 2.23).

The most significant aspect of our author's idol parody, however, is its relationship to the person of Solomon in his role as paradigm man. Solomon declares himself as '*mortal man*' (7.1) but that condition also carries the glory that was Adam's, which, as we have seen, is the potential for immortality. In a reversal of Solomon's hopes, the idol-maker places his hopes among the dead (13.10). Solomon was '*sculpted*' (ἐγλύφην 7.2) into flesh from blood and the seed of man, the idol was carved (ἐγλυψεν 13.13) from a piece of crooked wood, full of knots. Solomon called upon God (ἐπεκαλεσάμην 7.7) in direct invocation, and understanding (φρόνησις) was granted to him, while the carpenter merely termed (ἐκάλεσαν 13.10) his idols as gods, and formed them by his limited skill and understanding (13.13). Solomon was commissioned to build the Temple, symbolically high on a hill, a temple in which God's specific presence was guaranteed by its resemblance (μίμημα) to the Tent of Presence (9.8), while our idol-maker searches for a suitable niche (οἶκημα 13.15) in a wall, where he can secure the idol with chains. The individual prayers, too, are illuminating. Whereas, Solomon prays for wisdom whom he prefers to power, riches, health and beauty, and, as a consequence, receives each of these (7.7-12), the carpenter prays for

secondary goods, protection for his family, for health, and for success and riches to attend his journeys and his business (13.17-19).

Thus, our carpenter is being presented to us as a man who has failed to realise his potential within the purpose of life (*telos*). Not only is his idol incapable of delivering that which he requests, as the irony of vv.17-19 makes plain but, additionally, the form of his petition shows that he has misunderstood life's goals. He does not search for virtue alone, but wishes to acquire the benefits of virtue (goods). However, in spite of the deception of his idol, ultimately a deception practised only upon himself, and the illusory powers of assistance he attributes to this symbol of a benign deity, he is not irredeemable. His response to the world is spiritual in that he sees the need for a divine power to act in favour of frail humanity, but translates that need into something deeply inappropriate. Philosophically, he is one obeying the primary natural instincts of self-preservation gifted to every individual at birth, a pre-ethical code⁴⁵ which in the *telos* is replaced by reason and the opportunity and obligation to live according to the virtues. Thus, our carpenter is our second antithesis to wisdom's revealed knowledge. He is animate (*ἐμψύχος*) and, therefore, endowed with a soul, while his idol is lifeless and

45. See Dillon 1977: 70.

without a soul (ἀψύχος 13.17), yet he is unable to discern the heavenly 'goods' asking only for those that are earthly and, as such, represents a failed paradigm.

2.2.ii. *The Ship's Idols* (14.1-11).

The theme of self-preservation is also a feature of the opening of our second sub-section on idolatry at 14.1-11. The immediate connection between this section and the section on the carpenter is the manufacture of wooden idols for the purposes of protection. In this case the tutelary gods were made for the prow or the stern of a ship,⁴⁶ and could be invoked should the ship encounter difficulties. However, in spite of this connection, we have moved into a different domain. Our carpenter, as we saw, made for himself a household god, to whom he privately prayed for those things he wished to secure. Safety at sea, on the other hand, in terms of soldiers posted abroad, diplomatic missions, and commercial cargoes has a public dimension. There was, consequently, an almost universal acknowledgement of the existence of ships' deities, and to travel at all almost certainly meant doing so upon a ship where carved idols signified protection. Moreover, for the educated at least, they were symbolic only, signifying an alignment of the stars which promised fair weather for sailing,⁴⁷ and so have something in common with the worshippers of the planets.

46. Gregg 1909: 132.

47. See Horace *Ode* 1.3.

The section is presented as authorial reflection, rather than the conventional format of idol parody which surrounds the carpenter and his idol in both Isaiah and in *Wisdom*. There are frequent changes of subject; from ships (14.1-2) to God's providence (14.3), to the work of wisdom and the mission of Noah (14.5-7), to the culpability of the idol-maker and the dangers of idols (14.8-11). Consequently, although the opening verse implies a storm at sea with the potential to develop along the lines of Acts 27.9-44 where Paul faces just such a storm, or Jonah 1.4-16 where the ship's crew ultimately recognise Jonah's God,⁴⁸ we have to assume that the issue of shipwreck is only indirectly of interest to our author.

Several commentators have linked the invocation to the '*unsound piece of wood*' (σαθρότερον ξύλον 14.1) with Castor and Pollux (Polydeuces),⁴⁹ but given the claims of Isis relative to navigation and protection at sea it is not impossible that she also had become a figurehead for ships,⁵⁰ although Castor and Pollux evidently remained important for sailors.⁵¹ It is noteworthy that both Goodrick and Gregg quote from Horace's *Odes* 1.3 where the '*Greek brothers*' (frates Helenae - line 2) are said to be in place in the skies, thereby implying a favourable voyage.

However, the significance of Horace's *Ode* 1.3 lies less in its identification of the gods under whose aegis the ship will sail, than in the

48. Acts, we must presume, was written after *Wisdom*, and we have no way of knowing our author's degree of familiarity with the story of Jonah. However, stories of ships and shipwreck were common in the classical world, as in the *Aeneid* 1.81-143.

49. Gregg 1909: 132, and Goodrick 1913: 288.

50. Larcher 1983: 789.

51. In addition to Horace *Ode* 1.3 see also Catullus IV (line 27) '*gemelle Castor et gemelle Castoris*'-*To Castor and the twin of Castor vowed*, Theocritus *Idyll* 22 *The Dioscuri*, and Acts 28.11.

sentiments the poet expresses with regard to the enterprise of such journeys. In this poem, Horace is entrusting his mentor and friend, Virgil, whom he depicts as 'animae dimidium meae' - *half my soul* (line 8), to the ship and its safe passage. Its journey and the well-being of passengers and crew, then, are the motives which prompt his reflection on the progress of man. God in his wisdom has estranged ocean and land, but those reckless of divine power (impiae - line 22) leap over the water. They dare every consequence (audax omnia perpeti - line 25) in their rush to do that which is forbidden: like Prometheus bringing fire to men (line 27), like Daedalus who would not recognise that humans cannot fly (line 35), or Hercules who forced a way through Acheron, '*heaven itself we seek in our folly*' (caelum ipsum petimus stultitia-line 37). Thus, Horace's poem focuses upon the daring of those who defy the gods and refuse to remain within the limitations set upon man. As we noted, the role of the gods who protect the ships is merely symbolic, it is the correct alignment of stars in the sky which signals fair weather and increases the odds on a safe journey.⁵²

Similarly, in *Wisdom*, as we have noted, neither the carvings on the prow nor the dangers of shipwreck are the immediate concern of our author, though they must be related themes and both are addressed in the opening verse. The waves are wild (ἀγρία 14.1), and the wooden figurehead is dismissed as being of less protection than the ship itself. What is at stake,

52. See also Theocritus' introduction to the Dioscuri *Idyll 22 'of ships that defy the signs in the stars'*.

however, concerns the sea itself, who rules it, and who gives such protection as may be found for those who cross it.⁵³ The ship is designed and built for the purposes of trade (ἐκεῖνο μὲν γὰρ ὄρεξις πορισμῶν ἐπενόησε, τεχνίτης δὲ σοφία κατεσκεύασεν - *for that (vessel) which hunger for gain devised, and a workman built by wisdom*, 14.2) and it is wisdom as human skill, here, which is set against God's Providence (πρόνοια) and which guides the ship along (διακυβερνᾷ 14.3). God has given 'a way in the sea' - (ὅτι ἔδωκας ἐν θαλάσση ὁδόν) and 'a safe path through the waves' (καὶ ἐν κύμασι τρίβον ἀσφαλῆ 14.3).

We need to be quite precise about what is being said here. Firstly, the parallelism of 14.3 is curiously reminiscent of an earlier incident. In the second, despairing speech of the wicked they admit:

'We have gone astray in the paths (τρίβοις) of lawlessness and destruction, and crossed deserts where there lay no way, but the way (ὁδός) of the Lord we have not known' (5.7). Further, in the First Diptych, where Israel begins her time of testing in the wilderness, the wilderness is characterised by the fact that there is no way through it (11.2) apart from wisdom's leading. The incidence of this parallelism of 'way' and 'paths' has, for *Wisdom*, soteriological significance. God is able to save from all dangers (ἐκ παντὸς σώζειν 14.4), and has a desire, as we saw in the Mercy Dialogue, to spare

53. This, of course, is equally the purpose of the shipwreck story in Acts 27.13-44.

all (11.26, 12.13, 12.18).

Secondly, if we recall the guidance of Noah in 10.4, God/wisdom is anxious to save from the sea even where knowledge of seamanship is lacking. Several commentators have thought that the '*journey to sea without art*' (14.4) is a reference to the Red Sea crossing.⁵⁴ This seems to have been suggested by the occurrence in some of the Vulgate MSS of the reading '*sine rate*' (*without ships*), instead of '*sine arte*', and a crossing without ships can only refer to the Red Sea. Nonetheless, on the face of it, this seems unlikely. The connection between providence/wisdom and the safe steering of ships has already been established, as we have noted, at 10.4, and the Noah reference which follows the comment '*without art*' (ἀνευ τέχνης), i.e. without seamanship, in 14.6 shows that this is the narrative to which our author refers.

The allusion to Noah in 14.6 is revealing in several ways. The *nephilim* of Gen. 6.4 are merely described as '*giants*'. *Wisdom* renders them '*proud giants*' (ὑπερηφάνων γιγάντων 14.6), thereby implanting a link with Zeus' lengthy war with the Titans (γίγαντομαχία) and the arrogance displayed by the latter, a concept of arrogance which we saw mirrored in the Horace poem. In addition, the LXX translators had turned Noah's ark into a coffer or box (κιβωτός Gen.6.15,16), similar to the ark of Moses only covered in pitch. *Wisdom's* author not only rejects this description, and that of

54. See Gregg 1909: 133, Gilbert 1973: 104.

an ordinary ship (ναῦς), preferring σχεδία (*raft or barque* 14.5,6), the roughly-made craft upon which Odysseus escaped from the Calypso.⁵⁵

Thus, by the contrivance of a few carefully placed words we now have our Noah story in a new framework, one that links the destructive flood from which Noah escaped with the presumption of those early inhabitants of the earth, and also that indicates the desperate nature of humanity's plight in being forced to escape over water. The flood itself represents a failure of the plan of creation. Not just our individual carpenter, but mankind has been led astray from its purpose of becoming 'likened to God' by false ideas of capability. Nonetheless, the plan is not a total failure. Noah is a righteous man (Gen.6.10, *Wis.*10.4) whose specific task is to provide continuity (σπέρμα γενέσεως - *a generative seed* 14.7) and to re-activate the creation ideals (ἡ ἐλπίς τοῦ κόσμου - *the hope of the world* 14.6). His escape to the sea lacks personal culpability because it is guided and prompted by God's hand (14.6), which, as we have noted, is a figure for wisdom, and the wood of the ark, rather than being crooked (13.13), or unsound (14.1), or even cheap and worthless (εὐτελοῦς 10.4), is praised (εὐλόγηται 14.7) for its participation in the divine plan.⁵⁶

There are several points worth noting here. The association of pride

55. *Odyssey* 5.33. The whole of Book 5 is concerned with this escape of Odysseus, first from the Calypso, and secondly from the perils of the sea. Reese has also noted the possibility that the Calypso was a death goddess whose name implies hidden rites, Reese 1970: 5.

56. 14.7 was for some time thought to be a Christian interpolation. See Goodrick 1913: 292, who makes the point that the εὐλόγηται (*blessed*) corresponds to the ἐπικατάρατον (*accursed*) of 14.8. The final blessing of the wood used by wisdom is also in keeping with the emphasis placed upon the materials used for the manufacture of idols. Gilbert 1973: 82.

and presumption with idolatry has already been explored in *Wisdom* in the pact of the wicked rulers with the god of death (1.16), and their subsequent betrayal of justice (2.10-20) and destruction on the judgement day (5.17-23). In *Wisdom's* summary verses on the sea-crossing (14.8-11) there is an echo of the apocalyptic drama which overtakes these rulers. The idolaters are once again the ἄσεβεῖς of 1.16 (14.9) and their idols are depicted as ἡ ἀσέβεια. The announcement of God's 'visitation' (ἐπισκοπή 14.11) comes in response to the idols as obstacles to the 'souls of men' (ψυχᾶς ἀνθρώπων) recalling the expected 'visitation of souls' (ἐν ἐπισκοπῇ ψυχῶν) of 3.13. Further, our author again draws attention to the key verse at 2.23, a verse which embodies the divine plan for mankind:

ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ἔκτισε τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπ' ἀφθαρσία,
καὶ εἰκόνα τῆς ἰδίας ιδιότητος ἐποίησεν αὐτόν

For God created man for incorruption (immortality)

In the image of his own eternity he made him,

in 14.8b, where the verse is almost parodied.

καὶ ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὸ, ὅτι ὁ μὲν ἠργάζετο
τὸ δὲ φθαρτὸν θεὸς ὠνομάσθη

And he that made it (is accursed), because he made it, and because, though corruptible, it was called God.

In the end our rulers had nothing to show for their lives, having missed the way and opportunity of salvation just as the sea-farers have missed their opportunity. The inappropriateness of the ships' idols as a response to the dangers of travelling upon the sea is also highlighted by the parody verse (14.8) and the threat of punishment and visitation in 14.10-11 is an echo of both that earlier judgement in *Wisdom* and the judgement which resulted in the flood.

The second point we need to note is the underlying concept of Noah as the righteous non-Jew with whom God makes an eternal covenant in Gen. 9.1-17.⁵⁷ God/wisdom's saving of Noah from the flood for the purpose of reproducing humanity represents, as noted, both the failure of the initial creation plan and its reinstatement and is, consequently, a claim about God's universal care for creation, i.e. his providence (*Wis.*14.3). Also, in the covenant of Gen. 9, the place of humans in the created order is re-affirmed, both in the valuing of life against life, and in the reference to Gen. 1.27 where humans are made in the image of God (Gen. 9.6), a concept, as we have seen, parodied in 14.8. Our sea-crossing, then, under the protection of idols is another failure; this time a failure to discern God's providence at work and discover the creation blueprint.

57. Levenson 1996: 147-148.

2.2.iii. *Causes and Origins of Idolatry* (14.15-21).

This section, as we have noted, forms the central section around which the critique of manufactured idols is built. It is also an attempt to provide a rationale for the origins and growth of idol worship which is compatible in its points of reference and points of sympathy with other explanations.⁵⁸ This section, then, presents an argument appealing to rationality and it is placed at the centre of the pictures of absurd worship and the social and private damage of moral failure to which this worship lends itself.

The invention of idols, says our author in his introductory verses, is the beginning of fornication and a corruption of life (14.12).⁵⁹ Since these idols were not present in the beginning they are time bound, and therefore must come to an end in time (14.13). Their entry into the world was the result of the *vainglory* (κενοδοξία) of men and their ending is decreed (14.14). The first example of an instance in which a cult flourishes is then given. A father loses his child unexpectedly (ἄωρος 4.15), and overcome with grief, has an image made of his child, and then bases a household cult around the image. The rituals, which seemed appropriate to the expression of grief, become hardened into the ceremonies of the cult. In due course, where those instituting the cult are sufficiently powerful, the '*ungodly custom*' (τὸ

58. By far the most comprehensive account of various cult observances which have an affinity with *Wisdom's* father stricken by grief (14.15) and distant ruler (14.17) occurs in Winston 1979: 270-280. Since for *Wisdom* these are exemplars only, it is not important to determine whether he took his examples from surrounding Graeco-Roman practice, or the more likely source of literature.

59. The association of idolatry and sexual license is traditional in Old Testament idol polemic. The metaphor of adultery is frequently used for idolatry in that idol worship is a violation of the covenant promises. This association may, then, be mere convention, or it could have some basis in the rituals and ceremonies offered to certain gods. See Hos. 4.11-14.

ἀσεβὲς ἔθος) becomes '*as law*' (ὡς νόμος) and so, by the instructions of kings, graven images come to be worshipped (14.16).

The second instance of the beginning of a cult is a short step from the first. A king, ruling from a distance, needs to be honoured by his subjects. His image is then made and is granted the due honours, so that the '*absent*' is flattered '*as though present*' (ἀπόντα ὡς παρόντα 14.17). In this, the spread of the cult is assisted if the image is presented by an artist of skill (14.18) who, wishing to please the authorities, produces an object of beauty (14.19) which the crowd venerate as a god. In this way a deception is practised upon the world and humans, in thrall to either the calamity of personal disaster, or the tyranny of demanding rulers, have offered to sticks and stones the honours due to the God of the cosmos (14.21).

However, the picture of idolatry's origins is less straightforward and less understanding than it appears at first glance. Firstly, we need to examine the introductory verses of 14.12-14. The contrast is once again being made between that which is created by God and that which is created by man. It is not an immediate contrast, only one side of the comparison being evident, but it is implied by the emphasis upon time in 14.13 and the comment that the discovery of idols is the corruption of life (14.12). We are aware, from 2.23, that God's design for man was life and immortality. In philosophical terms

both life and immortality are realities because they are the ideas (ἐννοιαι) of God. Consequently, for man to use his inventive powers (ἐπίνοια 14.12) for the creation of idols, to use the inanimate to represent the living, is a betrayal of the principle of life.

Moreover, we are told that it is through the *vainglory* (κενοδοξία 14.14) of human beings that idols were permitted to enter into the world (εἰσῆλθεν εἰς κόσμον). Several of the critics translate κενοδοξία as 'empty fancy'⁶⁰ and we shall see in a moment why this is inadequate here. Goodrick alone notes that the word should be classed with φιλόψυχος in 11.26, as one which has been wrongly employed.⁶¹ However in our analysis of the Mercy Dialogue, it was apparent that *Wisdom's* construction of φιλόψυχος was in order to create a new philosophical category which could be attributed to God, and it is evident that a similar construction process is being employed here to resolve the difficulty between Jewish and Greek understandings of δόξα. For Middle Platonism *doxa* was an opinion, and therefore connected to thought based upon sense perception, as opposed to ἐπιστήμη which was a true knowledge through which God's transcendent

60. Gregg 1909:136, Goodrick 1913: 296, Winston relates it to the Epicurean concept of idle imagination 1979: 273. Larcher 1983: 809, favours 'vain opinion' on the grounds that it is more in keeping with the servility exercised by the grieving father's servants for whom 'vain glory' was hardly possible.

61. Goodrick 1913: 296, describes it as a word which our author has 'wrongly resolved into its original elements', as with φιλόψυχος. Goodrick, however, has little patience with our author's Greek, either in its creative aspect in which new words are coined or in the changes of meaning or grammatical convention brought in by Hellenistic Greek.

62. Dillon 1977: 35-36.

ideas could be apprehended.⁶² Within Jewish thought, as a consequence of the LXX translation, *doxa* was related to the presence of God, and, as Raurell has explained, had come to be synonymous with immortality.⁶³ Our author's use of *kenodoxia*, already a word with negative connotations,⁶⁴ thus enables him to create an impression which is both active and hostile, a kind of anti-glory, or perhaps a contempt for eternity, whose real malevolence is to be detected from the phrase εἰσῆλθεν εἰς κόσμον. The last time we encountered this phrase it was used of the Devil's envy bringing death into the world (2.24) in order to destroy the life principle of a good creation.

Neither should we be certain that we should feel sympathy with the grieving father (14.15). His '*untimely mourning*' (ἄωρος πένθος) was predicted in the discussion of the families of the wicked (4.3-7).⁶⁵ In *Wisdom* 14.16 it is the custom which '*grows strong*' (κρατυθέν) until it is '*kept*' (ἐφυλάχθη) as law, reminding us of the battle wisdom fought with Abraham '*keeping*' him '*strong*' against his natural compassion for Isaac (10.5). The father's interest in *Wisdom* 14.15-16 may be in the creation of the cult, and his children could be amongst those who will witness against him on the judgement day (4.6). Also, there is more than an element of coercion suggested in the title given to the father's servants (ὑποχειρίοις 14.16) and household.

63. Raurell 1979: 381.

64. See Winston 1979: 273 where he notes the range of meaning within Epicurean thought. Its more forceful use as an anti-heroic term is not explored.

65. Winston and Schmitt both give the example of Cicero's shrine to his daughter Tullia, (*Ad Atticum* 12.35-36) and Winston cites many other examples from Graeco-Roman literature (Winston 1979: 275-277, Schmitt 1986: 118).

Similarly, coercion, although of a more subtle kind, is suggested by the phrase διὰ τῆς σπουδῆς (14.17), 'in their zeal'. Vested interests have commissioned the statue of the king. Their desire is to flatter (κολακεύω), and they practise a deception upon the ignorant. They imagine the likeness from afar, and then construct their idol/statue in the image of an honoured king, thereby making the artist complicit in the deception.⁶⁶ It is also noticeable that the critique of the representational arts is not all negative. Our author notes the skill of the craftsman, the beauty of the work produced (14.19), and the favourable report of the statue (14.20) which, unfortunately, increases its capacity to seduce the crowds. His quarrel, then, is with those who intentionally deceive, the flatterers and the artist whose skills inspire worship of something counterfeit.

Thus, nothing is quite as it seems. The mourning father may be without that natural compassion which would elicit our sympathy, and may, in fact, be a tyrant, imposing his cult upon others, and providing a link to the ruler cult described at 14.17-20. This connecting link is further emphasised by

66. There is little doubt that what our author refers to is the creation of a statue of one ruler with the honours due to another, what is known as the Idealising style of Hellenistic royal portraiture. See Reeder 1988 : 134 [Bust of Ptolemaic king as Dionysos - Plate 50]. Also Pollitt 1986: 36 and 37 show two heads of Mithradates VI, as Alexander and as Herakles. Recent statues recovered from the sunken quarter of Alexandria show Ptolemy Philadelphus in Pharonic stance, and there are two statues of unnamed queens as Isis, see *Time* June 15 1998. Rome continued this practice with the issue of coins bearing the imperial images in poses suggestive of certain gods. We have inferred before that *Wisdom's* sources are often literary. With regard to the crowd being seduced by the life-like quality of the statue we need to consider the XV *Idyll* of Theocritus. In this mime/poem two women visit the palace of Queen Arsinoe for an Adonis festival. When they reach the palace, they are stunned by the life-like quality of the tapestries and even speak directly to the woven Adonis (lines 78-90). The principle upon which representation could be assessed was truth to life (*mimesis biou*), which our author valued (14.19) but how 'true' were the idealised statues of royal cults and the mythical representations of the kings?

the repetition of words associated with the concept of honouring another,⁶⁷ and by the formal terms of command, νόμος and τυράννων ἐπιταγαῖς in 14.16, and the verb θρησκειύω indicating the demand for worship in both cults (14.17,18).⁶⁸ The gap, then, between family cult and ruler cult in our text may have been intentionally narrowed.

Moreover, although the phrase '*absent as though present*' (ἀπόντᾳ ὡς παρόντᾳ 14.17) is immediately applicable to the distant ruler, it is equally true of the dead child. The 'presence' is created in one case by the instructions of the father and the rituals he imposes to give life to the image, and in the other case it is the skill of the artist and his ability to give a life-like appearance to his work. In contrast to this we have the pattern of Solomon as ruler whose request is for wisdom to be present with him (9.10) as she was present at the creation (9.9) and at the throne of God's glory (ἀπὸ θρόνου δόξης σου 9.10). Additionally, Solomon's task is to build the Temple in imitation of the tabernacle in the wilderness (9.8), which features as the traditional locus for the presence of God with his people (Exod. 25.8), and the revelation of his glory (Exod. 29.43).

With this concept of presence we have set in place our contrasting *aitia* where the causes and formal origins of the idolatrous cults are set against the Temple *aition* and, consequently, against wisdom's revelation of the

67. Gilbert 1973: 130. He notes ἐτίμησεν 14.15c, τιμᾶν 14.17a, τιμωμένου 17c, φιλοτιμία 18b, τιμηθέντα 20b.

68. Gilbert 1973: 130-131.

formal worship which guarantees the presence and the glory of God.

Moreover, the *Aitia* which are designed to make a present reality from myth and rite, have been subverted in 14.12-21. Instead of a supporting framework being erected around the cult, that framework is undercut from the opening sentences. Before we know anything of the cults our author will describe, we know that they have an evil intent, based not upon the ἔννοιαι and δόξα of God, which holds the guarantee of his presence and the assurance of immortality, but upon the ἐπίνοιαι and κενοδοξία of humans, which is by its nature an absence of God, offering instead a counterfeit presence promised by effigy and ritual and which is, ultimately, a betrayal of the presence and involvement of the creator.

2.2.iv. *Idolatry as Vice* (14.22-31).

In the Wisdom Chapters we noted that divine wisdom was representative of the virtues (see pp.187-189 above), and that these virtues were the means by which humans become 'likened to God'. Thus, it is evident that the catalogue of vices listed in 14.22-31 is a signal of increasing insensitivity towards God. Furthermore, our author's construction of this section has the same intensity as the section on wisdom (7.22-8.1) in which epithets describing wisdom were stacked one upon another prior to the

account of wisdom's saving action. In 14.22-31 a similarly intense build-up also signifies the consequences of idol-worship, i.e. we are measuring the 'performance' of the idols and their incapacity to point towards God which, according to Middle Platonism, is the goal (*telos*) of humankind.

Also of particular interest is the sequence of events. 14.22 serves as an introduction to these verses and links the ignorance of God betrayed by the idolators with the vices which follow. This verse, additionally, highlights our twin themes of substance versus illusion and the propriety of the responses. Idolatry has now produced such a distortion of viewpoint that its practitioners see their 'war of ignorance' (ἀγνοίας πολέμῳ) and its 'so great evils' (τὰ τοσαῦτα κακά) as though they were signs of peace in society,⁶⁹ a view which must be illusory. The implication of οὐκ ἤρκεσε (14.22) indicates, as we have commented, that our idolators knew nothing of God and that their desire for virtue, the appropriate response to the *telos*, was blunted. There is a similar passage in Plato's *Theaetetus*⁷⁰ where Plato contrasts knowledge and ignorance of God, the one leading to wisdom and virtue, the other leading to foolishness and vice. In *Wisdom* the reason for what Larcher refers to as the 'total insensibility of the soul' is explained in 14.23.⁷¹ The rites and rituals the idolators follow in their worship, with their lack of real substance, lead, inevitably, to a process which damages truth and affects both private and

69. This specific reference to a declared peace (εἰρήνη 14.22), and the list of social evils which come in its wake, could easily find a real historical situation in Roman Alexandria. See Lindez 1990: 386 for the idea that this is likely to be a play upon the 'Pax Romana'.

70. Plato *Theaetetus* 176C.

71. Larcher 1983: 825.

public morality. Thus, our author's list of vices begins with the rituals of religious observance and, only then, catalogues the private and social offences.

What is equally clear is that there is a process of escalation within this section on idols. We have progressed from worshippers who framed a picture of God which included the cosmos, through the carpenter who responded to his instinct for self-preservation and the arrogant who defy the limitations set by God upon humankind, to those who are without any sense of God. This escalation is underlined by the intensity of the description of vice in 14.22-31 and, like the similar build-up in the Wisdom Chapters where wisdom then acted in favour of the righteous, this intensification also heralds decisive action. We are led to believe, by the references to the flood narrative and the echoes of the Apocalyptic Drama in the early chapters of *Wisdom*, that we are moving towards the judgement of those who are truly, perhaps endemically, wicked. What is important for us to note is how our author at the same time underlines and undermines this sense of the judgement by calling our attention to the mercy of God in 15.1-3. As we shall see, he will continue to balance the judgement/mercy equation throughout the description of the potter at work.

One of the notable aspects of our list of vices is how closely the religious observances resemble the vices of the inhabitants of Canaan in the

Mercy Dialogue (12.3-6). The idolators are accused of '*slaying their children in sacrifices*' (τεκνοφόνους τελετάς 14.23), and the Canaanites were guilty of '*unlawful sacrifices*' (τελετάς άνοσίους) in addition to being '*merciless killers of children*' (τέκνων τε φονέας άνελεήμονας 12.5). The Canaanites ate the flesh of humans and drank blood at their feasts (12.5), while our idolators practice '*hidden mysteries*' (κρύφια μυστήρια) and '*strange, frantic ravings with trance-like oracles*' (14.23) which leads to confusion, blood and murder. The Canaanites were responsible for the death of '*helpless souls*' (ψυχών άβοηθήτων 12.6), presumably their new-born infants, while the idolators destroy souls by staining them with crimes and polluting them with guilt (ψυχών μiasμός 14.26).

The Canaanites, as we know, were ultimately destroyed. God, who hated nothing that he had created (11.24), came to hate them because of their evil intentions (12.4) and practices. In the same way God hates the idolators and the idols they have created (14.9) and the threat hangs over them that they shall shortly be brought to an end (14.14). The closing verses of this sub-section leave hanging the double threat of the justice which will inevitably come (μετελεύσεται τὰ δίκαια - *(they shall) be pursued with justice* 14.30),⁷² (ή τών άμαρτανόντων δίκη - *the just award of sinners* 14.31).

Further, Gregg has commented upon the possible reading of 14.26 as

72. The Greek here is problematic. One MS. (A) has a variant for δίκαια (άδικα). Most translations read 'pursue' (μετελεύσεται) as governing both the following clauses, i.e. thinking badly of God, and paying heed to idols, as indicated by άμφοτέρα.

'troubling of the good, forgetfulness of favours', and notes that if this reading is accepted then it provides for such a case as the death of the just man in Chapter 2.⁷³ In fact, what Gregg has registered is the strain of similarity between some of the social offences of 14.25-26 and those against which the wicked are warned in Chapters 1 and 2. Although there are some verbal parallels, they are few, and it is largely the setting which reminds us of events in the earlier chapters. The mysterious rituals involving murder may be connected, as Gregg suggests, with the execution of the just man. The idolators use an ambush (λοχῶν 14.24) in the killing of their victims and the wicked rulers 'lie in wait' for the righteous man (2.12) before his murder. 'Perjury' (ἔπιπορκία 14.25) recalls the specific warnings of 1.11 related to deceit and lying, and 'theft and deceit' (κλοπή καὶ δόλος 14.25) is that which the holy spirit/wisdom will avoid (1.5). Δικη (also wisdom), in her role as avenger, appears in both sections (1.8, 14.31). Finally, the wicked in Chapter 1 are encouraged not to seek death in the error of life (ἐν πλάνη ζωῆς ὑμῶν 1.12) nor bring down destruction upon themselves by the works of their hands (ἔργοις χειρῶν ὑμῶν), and in 14.8 we are told that that which is made with hands (τὸ χειροποίητον) is cursed and that idols are the 'corruption of life' (φθορὰ ζωῆς 14.13).

Thus, the impression given by our list of vices, though not its precise

73. Gregg 1909: 140-141. Greek MSS take θόρυβος on its own (*turmoil* 14.26). In which case, as Gregg points out, it would mean little different from '*tumult*' (τάραχος 14.25). Latin joins with ἀγαθῶν giving '*tumultus bonorum*'. See also Goodrick 1913: 304.

vocabulary, seems to make for us, the readers, a double picture with which we are already familiar. God is inevitably bound to judge such vices as these in the same way as the wicked rulers were judged in Chapter 5.17-23 and the Canaanites were judged in 12.8-11. Yet, we must beware of making everything so clear-cut. There is still time before the judgement day scenario of our Apocalyptic Drama will be enacted, and so that section acts as a powerful, future warning of the consequences which may be expected if people continue to live without righteousness. Further, in the past the Canaanites were driven from the land, but only after they had been warned by the wasps, indicative of the sense of the numinous and dread, sent ahead of the destroying army (12.10). God's principle of mercy, *little-by-little* in order to grant '*a place of repentance*', was employed even on behalf of the Canaanites, whose malice was ingrained and whose thoughts could not be changed (12.10), and this principle is employed again in the very existence of an Apocalyptic Drama which gives warning by telling of the ultimate fate of the unrighteous.

Thus, just as we misjudged God over the matter of the newly-created dragon which could be turned loose upon the Egyptians (11.18), or the battle-host or stern rebuke which could have destroyed the Canaanites (12.9), so we bring our preconceptions into our examination of God and the idolators,

and misunderstand the nature of God. God is φιλόψυχος, the lover of souls (11.26), who takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living (1.13), and who is '*gracious and true, long-suffering, and who orders everything in mercy*' (15.1). In this liturgically formulated interruption of 15.1, which we will discuss again for its implications in the second picture of an artisan (the potter) making his idols, we realise that the judgement and power are still held in check. The overriding principle remains one of mercy, even for the potter of 15.7-13. In the light of this understanding we must now turn to the Potter, the last of our craftsmen, and consider his particular error.

2.2.v. *The Potter* (15.1-13).

At the close of the section on the moral failures and vice brought about by idolatry, we noted the liturgical interruption which, even in the face of such wickedness, calls to mind the mercy principle and acts as a closing scene upon the wickedness which has been listed. Though the wicked will be punished, it will not occur yet, and the potter, for whom this interruption acts as an introduction, is likewise safe from the threat of immediate, though not ultimate, judgement.

The interruption takes the form of a prayer whose cadences suggest liturgical familiarity, '*But you, our God, are gracious (χρηστός) and true (ἀληθής), long-suffering (μακρόθυμος) and in mercy (ἐν ἐλέει)*

ordering all things (διοικῶν τὰ πάντα). For if we sin, we are yours, knowing your power: but we will not sin, knowing that we are counted as yours. For to know you is perfect righteousness: and to know your power is the root of immortality' (15.1-3).

Most commentators have noted the similarities between the attributes of God listed here and those of the Sinaitic revelation (Exod. 34.6, Deut. 32.4). Gilbert further notes the parallel with the liturgical formulations of certain Psalms, principally Psalm 85(86).15-16, Ps. 102(103).8, and Ps. 144(145).8-9, where the reprise of the Exodus formulation is usually accompanied by a request not to treat the people according to their sins.⁷⁴

The Exodus formula, the original context of this liturgical prayer, was the discovery of Israel in the immediate aftermath of the incident involving the Golden Calf (Exod.32.1-35),⁷⁵ after which God instructed Moses on the pattern for the Tent of Testimony (σκηνὸς μαρτυρίου) which was to be pitched just outside the camp and denoted the constant presence of God with Israel. Thus, there is a rich symbolism in the placing of this prayer at the close of the failures rooted in the practice of idolatry. Israel, too, was guilty of the creation of an idol, the more deeply grievous because of the complete betrayal contained in Aaron's words, *'These are thy gods, O Israel, which have brought you up out of the land of Egypt'* (Exod. 32.4), which both mirror and

74. Gilbert 1973: 177.

75. Gilbert 1973: 181. He notes also that God's invitation to Israel, and Israel's response, is renewed in Jeremiah 2.28 and 3.22, again after accusations of idolatry. In both Exodus and Jeremiah the response of the people is *'we will be yours'* (LXX ἐσόμεθά σοι) which is clearly the framework for understanding *Wisdom's* σοί ἐσμεν 15.2.

mock the words used by God on Sinai (Exod. 20.2). Yet, Israel found God to be merciful and, significantly, it was at this point that God gave the instructions for the tent which, as the pattern for all worship, would become the model for the Temple and would be intimately related to the constant presence of God. Israel, then, in the teeth of the profound failure of idolatry and betrayal, was restored and promised the continued presence of God. The message of God's forgiveness for idolatrous practices is, consequently, carried by the temple nation as part of their history, serving both as a reminder of their own undeserved privilege and as a promise for others that God's mercy is paramount.

Although this picture of God's mercy cuts directly across vices and sins which most people would have deplored, it is also true to say that this allusion could only be fully understood, in all its complexity, by a Jewish readership. It is, therefore, important to ask ourselves why it is necessary for our author to remind his Jewish readers at this stage of so bitter a failure on their own part. The answer lies in our author's insistence on a God who created all, loves all (11.24) and wishes that all might be spared (11.26). In the Mercy Dialogue we understood that it was necessary to correct the impression that God's punitive action would be over-hasty or would be confined exclusively to Gentiles because of a prejudice in favour of Israel. On that

occasion this false picture of God was called into question by the reminder of Israel's own failures of covenant and subsequent punishment (11.17), and the clear establishment of the mercy principle which was granted even to the most immoral of nations, the Canaanites (11.23-12.10). God, we were told on that occasion, who is able to use power in any way he wishes, is, nonetheless, master of that power, and is able to judge with equity and order us ($\delta\iota\omicron\kappa\epsilon\hat{\iota}\varsigma$ $\eta\mu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ 12.18) with favour. In a similar phrase, in the description of wisdom as the soul of the world, we were told that God's agent in so '*ordering all things*' ($\delta\iota\omicron\kappa\epsilon\hat{\iota}$ $\tau\acute{\alpha}$ $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$) is wisdom, and that this task is performed '*graciously*' ($\chi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ 8.1). Thus, the liturgical prayer serves as a reminder that God's grace, i.e. wisdom, is available to all, and that God's creative impulse is not towards punishment for erring humans, but towards immortality.

We have, consequently, come full circle with the impetus for all human worship being summarised in the concept of becoming '*likened to God*' and the responsibility of each individual in the *telos* to reach for immortality by means of the virtues. That immortality is the province of the individual soul (3.1, 11.25-12.1), which in its turn is a copy of the world soul, granting to created humans the potential to be '*in the image of his (God's) eternal nature*' (2.23). Our penultimate encounter with error, then, in the shape of the potter, will be the battle between life, with all its promise of immortality, and

death, between the soul of the world and the denial of the soul of the individual.

The liturgical formulation of 15.1-3 is, in fact, the opening sequence of a prayer which sets up its own contrast. On the one hand there is God, whose creative power is such that it is the basis of life in eternity, and who is also committed to grace and truth, patience and forgiveness in the wish to bring that eternal life to completion. On the other hand, we have the malicious (κακότεχνος) invention (ἐπίνοια 15.4) of men (recalling the malicious souls rejected by wisdom in 1.4), planning deception, with images painted with life's colours,⁷⁶ and the fruitless illusions and shadows of that which has no substance,⁷⁷ so that fools desire the form of a dead image that has never drawn breath (15.5).⁷⁸ In 8.2, our narrator/king declared himself to be a 'lover' (ἐραστής) of wisdom's beauty, because she knew the mysteries of God and loved his works (8.4). In 15.6, our author declares that those who desire such images, in addition to those who create them and those who worship them, are all alike 'lovers' of evil things (κακῶν ἐρασταί). Without the power to learn anything of God, the supporters of images make themselves worthy of the evil things in which they have hoped.

The supporter of images, *par excellence*, is the potter of our second

76. Winston notes that the painting of statues was a regular occurrence (1979: 283).

77. The use of σκιαγράφια (15.4) is intentionally dismissive. The term was technical, implying the creation of reliefs based upon a shadowy outline. It had come to mean any painting which gave the illusion of solidity. See Winston 1979: 282.

78. Several commentators note, in this context, the story of Pygmalion, king of Cyprus, who fell in love with the statue of Aphrodite. See Gregg 1909: 144, Goodrick 1913: 310, Winston 1979: 283.

mimetic passage. In our assessment of the Wisdom Chapters, it was noted that there were two incidents involving Solomon: the dream of Gibeon⁷⁹ and the dedication of the Temple,⁸⁰ thus providing us with a background for Solomon's two speeches in *Wisdom* (7.1-21, and 9.1-18). However, when we examined the original contents of these speeches, we discovered that the backdrop to both speeches, as they are represented in *Wisdom*, was the dream sequence from Gibeon, and that although the Temple dedication may have provided a notional setting for the prayer/second speech, no material from the incident of that dedication had found its way into the prayer. When we turn to the potter of 15.7-13, we find that something very similar has happened.

Although the potter is mentioned in Isa. 45. 9-10 (13), in fact the potter in *Wisdom* owes more to Isaiah's account of the carpenter (44. 9-20) which we have already discussed. This, then, is a balancing section, following the plot already uncovered in relation to the carpenter, which accounts for similarities of structure noted by Gilbert,⁸¹ and the importation of that one phrase related to the carpenter in Isaiah 44 (*their heart is ashes* Isa. 44.20) into the story of the potter.

The structural similarities between the carpenter and the potter in *Wisdom*, which together maintain the symmetry of the unit on idol manufacture, are as follows:

1. Both sections open with a critique of idol-makers (13.10, 15.6).

79. I Kings 3.5-15, II Chron. 1.7-13.

80. I Kings 8.22-53, II Chron. 6.12-42.

81. Gilbert 1973: 202-203.

2. Both first engage in making a vessel fit for our use (ὕπηρεσίαν 13.11,15.7).
3. They fashion an idol (13.13, 15.8).
4. Each section contains a reference to the materials used by other craftsmen (gold and silver. The potter section adds a reference to brass. 13.10, 15.9).
5. A description follows of the speech related to the idol. The carpenter prays to his idol (13.17-19) while the potter excuses his actions on the basis of commercial gain (15.12).

Although there are differences apparent in each section, it can be seen from this that both sections are following the same mimetic conventions.

This does not mean, however, that there is no relationship between the potter in *Wisdom* and the potter in Isaiah 45.⁸² In the Isaiah passage, the potter (κεραμεύς Isa. 45.9) is a metaphor for God acting upon his creation, the clay (πηλός). The invitation is given to enquire after '*God's sons*' (Isa. 45.11) and to command him with respect to '*the works of his hands*'. The special nature of the relationship between God and humans is, therefore, set out in the promise that humans will be raised up as '*a king with righteousness*' (Isa. 45.13) and that God's care of the people shall not be for '*ransoms or rewards*'. The picture presented by that relationship is, thus, the relationship enjoyed by Solomon in *Wisdom* who lives according to the righteousness of wisdom, and hopes for

82. Gilbert is also of the opinion that both the carpenter and potter sequences are inspired by Deutero-Isaiah (1973: 203).

immortality from God 'who has formed the things to come' (ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἐπερχόμενα Isa. 45.11).

In direct contrast to this presentation, as we found with the carpenter, is the description of the potter in *Wisdom*. He himself was fashioned from clay (15.8), mortal man like Solomon (7.1) and therefore possessing all the creative potential with which God has endowed humanity. Thus, he may choose to make what he wishes of his clay (15.7) as he is the judge of its use (ἡ χρῆσις). However, his choice is to employ his skills for evil (κακόμοχθος 15.8) in the making of a vain god (θεὸς μάταιος) out of the same earth from which he, himself, was made and to which he will return. The crucial difference between the potter and his idol is that he must render up the life lent to him (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπαιτηθεὶς χρέος 15.8),⁸³ whereas the idol is without soul and without life. He does not take into account the possibility of being worn out with work (κᾶμνειν)⁸⁴ or that his life is short (15.9),⁸⁵ but imitates (μιμῆται) other craftsmen in the creation of counterfeit artifacts which is all he understands of glory or immortality. Thus, his heart is ashes, his hope more cheaply held than earth (15.10), and his life, without knowledge of the creator and the active soul or living spirit inspired by God (15.11), is of less value than clay. His motive is gain, even from evil (ἐκ

83. Most of the commentators note this idea from Plato's *Timaeus* (42E) that the young gods borrowed elements from the cosmos, i.e. earth, fire etc. in creating the mortal parts of man. These elements must then be returned. The same idea occurs again in 15.16.

84. κᾶμνω often has the translation of 'to be worn out', but may also be used of the dead in the sense of 'those whose work is over' (L.S. 1968: 872). This latter would seem to be its meaning in 15.9 thereby making an internal, synonymous parallel with 'shortness of life'.

85. Even the wicked rulers in Chapter 2 are concerned about the shortness of life (2.1).

κακοῦ), life is a plaything, able to be manipulated, a trading fair in which everything has a price (15.12).⁸⁶ He offers to his idols no prayer, but quotes a piece of commercial wisdom. There are, consequently, two areas in which he offends above everything (παρὰ πάντα 15.13). His misuse of the creative gifts of man and his pragmatism in respect of belief show him to be skeptical about the hope of immortality and the individual souls which, alone, can attain it. Secondly, in denying the souls of men he also denies the world soul of which human souls are merely a copy. Since, the world soul/wisdom enacts the creation plans of God, this is, in effect, a denial of God. As *Wisdom* states, the potter did not know his maker (15.11) and was unable to discern from living man the living God who was his creator.

We have already noted that the carpenter and his idol were contrasted with Solomon in his task of building the Temple. In the case of the potter, however, it is Solomon as the new Adam who comes to the foreground. In the Isaiah passage in which the potter is mentioned (Isa. 45.9) the κερამεύς is a metaphor for God as creator, as we have seen.⁸⁷ The choice of the potter, then, in *Wisdom*, stresses the desire of God for man in his own image and likeness (Gen. 1.26) which our author understands in terms of the eternal nature of God (*Wis.* 2.23). We have returned, consequently, to the creation of

86. These two notions - of man as a plaything of the gods, and of life as a fair - were both commonplace. See Winston 1979:288.

87. Goodrick (1913: 312) notes not just the passage in Isaiah, but other passages in which God is presented as a potter which are also specifically associated with God's role in creation (Isa. 64.8, Jer. 18.4, Sirach 38.29-30, Rom. 9.21).

Adam, and it is as the descendant of Adam that Solomon first introduces himself in the autobiographical speech at 7.1. Solomon is mortal and descended from one who was born of earth (γηγενής), whilst the potter was recently formed from the earth (ἐκ γῆς γεννηθείς 15.8) and will return to it. Solomon, in similar vein, comments that life for all humankind has one entrance and one exit (7.6).

Solomon's request for wisdom, without whom he cannot reach his state of kingship, is shown as a preference over gold, which is compared to a little sand, and silver, which will be counted as clay (7.7-9). The potter, meanwhile, competes against goldsmiths and silversmiths (15.9) and, as a result, his hope is more cheap than earth, and less honoured than clay. The potter finds life a fair (πανεγυρισμόν 15.12) in which he can always gain, while Solomon finds in wisdom a treasure (θησαυρός) which never fails and which transforms the lives of *'those who use it'* (οἱ χρησάμενοι 7.14) so that they become friends of God and prophets. For Solomon, there is the brightness of the everlasting light (φωτὸς αἰδίου 7.26), whereas the *'glory'* (δόξα) of the potter is limited to the creation of figures which have no eternal reality (15.9). The potter is a judge (ὁ κριτής 15.7) over his clay, as Solomon is over Israel (7.7), but the potter has not realised that he is the clay of God, and may be

judged in his turn. Moreover, Solomon recognises that *'the corruptible body weighs down the soul'* (9.15) and that we may only aspire to think of the things of heaven when we have the discernment that comes with divine wisdom. In failing to recognise his maker, the potter shows himself to be unable to distinguish the one who infused him with an active soul (ἐμφυσήσαντα αὐτῷ ψυχὴν ἐνεργοῦσαν 15.11) because such a concept of life is meaningless to him (15.12). The description of the potter's greed is, thus, a betrayal of the creative potential of Adam and the enlivening spirit that makes humankind distinctive.

With the potter, we come to the end of the critique on the manufacturers of idols, but not, as we have seen, the end of the discussion on false worship. We now need to consider the closing section of this critique in the light of our author's understanding.

2.3. *The Author's Summary and the Introduction to Animal Worship.*

In the closing verses of 15.14-19, our author is concerned to give a summary of the conclusions drawn from the review of commonplace errors of belief. He also has to call our attention to the Egyptians and their worship of beasts, because it is as a consequence of such worship that Egypt faces the trial of the wilderness, the repeated calls to repentance as laid out in 12.10,

and the final judgement at the Red Sea. These are somewhat disparate aspects of false worship, and we need to consider the ways in which our author has joined them together.

Our author begins this section, as we noted in the section on structure, with the characteristic adjective πάντες δ' ἀφρονέστατοι - *most foolish of all* (15.14). As if this superlative were not enough, he also adds the charge that the subjects of his sentence are *miserable* (τάλανες) even beyond the soul of an infant (νήπιοι), perhaps referring to a child's ignorance of its own condition. The author refers to the enemies of God's people who oppress them (καταδυναστεύσαντες), which in this case is a reference to the Egyptians. The same charge, of conspiring to oppress (καταδυναστεύειν) the holy nation, will be levelled at them again in 17.2, as the reason for the plague of darkness. Their destruction is predicted, even as they enter the wilderness/Passover experience (11.3). Their link with the idol-makers is expressed in their misery (τάλανες) because they tolerated the idols of the heathen and thought of them as gods (15.15).⁸⁸ At the same time they are beyond even the idol-makers, who can at least claim representative (*mimesis*) status for the idols, in their worship of beasts which are senseless (ἀνοία 15.18)⁸⁹ and lacking any beauty (15.19).

88. Gilbert 1973: 225. He sees 15.15a in relation to the idols thought of as gods, and 15.18a on the worship of beasts, as having been placed in parallel, and as indicative of the unity of the section. Both verses relate to the Egyptians.

89. Goodrick 1913: 319. For the difficulties of reconstructing ἀνοα. The Latin text has 'insensata', making ἀνοία.

The worship of beasts is not a major feature of this part of the critique, generating, as we have seen, only two verses (15.18-19). However, the purpose of these verses is to return to the theme of animal worship, last encountered in the opening of the Mercy Dialogue (11.15-16) and at the close of the first Diptych, and in anticipation of the further Diptychs still to come. These verses are, thus, important for two reasons. They show that the rationale of Egypt's punishment in the Diptychs is on the basis of her continued idolatry; and, remembering our points related to motivation and appropriateness, they illustrate how degraded Egypt's animal cults are, even in terms of other forms of idolatry. The verses from 15.14-19 form, consequently, not a new section but a transitional section which summarises the work of the idol-makers and introduces the flaws which result in the judgement of Egypt. The key sentence in the summation of the review on idols occurs at 15.16:

For man made them, and he that borrowed his own spirit fashioned them, but no man is able to make a god like unto himself (ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα δεδανεισμένος ἐπλασεν αὐτούς. οὐδεὶς γὰρ ὅμοιον ἄνθρωπος ἰσχύει πλάσαι θεόν). The final phrase perhaps makes more sense as 'for no man is able to make a god *even* like himself'.⁹⁰

Humans have the use (χρησις 15.15) of eyes, noses for breathing, ears to hear, they may touch and move about.⁹¹ Even mortal man (15.17), working to

90. Goodrick catches the sense of this in his comment, 'even though a man's spirit be borrowed, yet he cannot borrow it for one of his images; he cannot even make an idol like a man, i.e. alive, much less like God himself' (1913: 318).

91. See Psalms 115.4-7, 135.15-17.

wicked purpose, is better than the things he creates for worship because he was once alive, and to be alive is to have all life's potential as God has designed it. In a subtle twist, the goal of humankind in philosophy which was the ὁμοίωσις θεῶ of Plato,⁹² is offered to the idols as the vain challenge that they might even be 'like man' (αὐτῶ ὅμοιον 15.16).

3. The Structure of The Review of False Worship (2).

In our earlier attempts to discuss the structure of the Idolatry Chapters, several points were noted (see pp. 214-219 above). Firstly, that we are in the somewhat tautologous position of needing to know something of God before we can discern true worship. Secondly, that the required knowledge of God comes through the revelation of wisdom as:

- i. the purpose of life, i.e. the *telos*, divided into earthly and heavenly goods;
- ii. knowledge of the world and the planetary systems;
- iii. knowledge of wisdom as the world soul;
- iv. knowledge of wisdom as the virtues; and, finally,
- v. knowledge of the plan for salvation;

and that these elements of revealed knowledge comprise all that we can know of God. Further, we understood that because wisdom is the revealer of knowledge about God, and idolatry signifies ignorance of God, the review of idolatry must in some way reflect the antithesis of the Wisdom Chapters, and

92. Plato *Theaetetus* 176B.

particularly the antithesis of that revealed knowledge. Moreover, if our analysis of the Wisdom Chapters leads us to believe that our author has constructed those chapters on the form of a hymn/praise-poem, then what we have in the Idolatry Chapters is an anti-hymn, built upon the same conventions of *aitia* and *mimesis*. Having completed our analysis of the various sub-sections on idolatry, we are now in a position to complete our structural assessment.

Firstly, we noted that the false worship of the planets (13.1-9) was occasioned by a failure to understand the nature of God as creator of the cosmos, a failure which resulted in the practitioners relying upon sense perception rather than the revealed knowledge of the world gifted to Solomon (7.15-21). Secondly, our carpenter, though desiring a force outwith himself, i.e. making a representative idol, failed to achieve his potential in the *telos* by asking his idol for earthly benefits, as opposed to Solomon whose desire is for wisdom/virtue alone (7.8-10). Our carpenter is, thus, a failed paradigm. The makers of ships' idols exhibit failure to recognise the plan of God for salvation (14.1-8) in their presumptuous crossing of water under the guidance of masthead figures. They are in contrast with the trust displayed by the righteous who form the paradigm nation (10.1-21) and who followed wisdom's leading '*where there lay no way*' (11.2). The verses at 14.12-21

explain the roots and possible causes of idolatry, and are thus an *aition* upon idol-worship, and 14.22-31 shows how the illusions and self-deceit brought on by idolatrous practice ultimately leads to a distortion of right and wrong so that idol-worship leads not to virtue but to vice. Finally, the potter, like our carpenter built upon conventions of *mimesis* and idol-parody, is unable to discern that humans have souls (15.11) as a part of the world-soul which is in the whole creation (12.1).

The sub-sections in the Idolatry Review are, thus, as we suspected, a counter-image of the knowledge and paradigms which were the gifts of divine wisdom. The knowledge, where it exists at all (as in the worshippers of planets 13.1-9) is only partial, and the paradigms are those who fail to reach their potential as human beings in the creation plan. Moreover, idolatry corrupts and distorts truth so that the real condition of the participants is not revealed and the full extent of their misery is unknown to them. The counter-hymn, as we see, does not follow slavishly the same order as the wisdom hymn but, nonetheless, the failures it records and, consequently, its structures, reflect its antithetical position to that other hymn.

4. Conclusion.

Thus, we may see that the visible world and its realities are

underpinned by the ἐννοιαί, the creation ideals of God, and these alone have substance. The representation of God, in either idols or animals, is stripped of its illusory qualities. The idols have no senses with which to discern the plight of those who pray to them, and the beasts no intellect with which to make sense of what they see. The stunning inappropriateness of these responses is depicted in setting the animation of man against the deathly inactivity of the idols (15.17), and in the warning of the withdrawal of God's praise and blessing for the creatures who are without any quality of beauty (15.19).

As has been suggested, there are several significant passages where we have glimpsed the themes associated with false worship elsewhere in *Wisdom*. The first instance of such delusion occurs in the first speech of the wicked,⁹³ where their view of life leads them to make a pact with the god of death (1.16) and leads to the depiction of their judgement in 5.17-23. The second instance observes the attitudes of God to the malign Canaanites (12.2-11), whose viciousness is like that of the idolators in 14.22-31. This second incident in which the themes of our Idolatry Review appear, exposes the view that God's destructive judgement runs parallel with his displeasure. The destruction of the Canaanites is not immediate, but occurs only after they have been warned so that they might learn to repent and trust God (12.8-11). God, as we discovered in the Mercy Dialogue, is the lover of souls (11.26) who wishes to

93. See pp. 99-102 above.

spare all those he has created, and instead of destruction he sets in place the mercy principle of 'little-by-little' in order to bring sinners to repentance. It is, then, as a consequence of this principle, that the Egyptians, in the final section which reveals the folly of idolators, i.e. the Diptychs, will be offered their opportunities together with Israel in the drama of the Passover and Exodus. The decisions these nations make, as representatives of the righteous and the wicked, are decisions between the rationality of wisdom with all its potential for eternal existence, and the fragmentation of false worship based upon illusions which, if pursued, must bring inevitable judgement.

5. THE JUDGEMENT OF EGYPT AND THE TRANSCENDENT
'IDEAS' OF GOD - THE SEVEN DIPTYCHS (11.4-14, 16.1-19.22).

*Incarnate devil in a talking snake,
The central plains of Asia in his garden,
In shaping time the circle stung awake.*
Dylan Thomas *Incarnate Devil* (lines 1-3).

We have now arrived at the final segment of the text, the seven-fold comparison or *syncretis* involving the events of the Exodus and Passover traditions, as they affected the respective nations of Israel and Egypt who are portrayed as representatives of the 'righteous' and the 'ungodly'. In fact, we have noted that this technique of comparison is a feature of *Wisdom* as a whole,¹ the most significant of these comparisons being the theory of knowledge brought by personified wisdom in opposition to the fragmented and misleading theory of knowledge which results from the worship of false gods in Chapters 13-15.

Nonetheless, the comparisons of Chapters 11-19 are distinguished by the fact that they refer, very specifically, to the events of Israel's salvation history. Therefore, they may be measured and discussed against the other texts related to that portion of Israel's history, such as Exodus and Numbers in the Old Testament, and to the other interpretations of those events as they occur

1. See Kolarcik 1991: 40-42, where he regards the sections involving the barren woman and the eunuch opposed to the many children of the ungodly (3.13-4.7) and the youth/old age discussion of 4.8-15, as similar kinds of comparisons.

within the canonical books and intertestamental and pseudepigraphical literature.

However, the Exodus motif is more than an account of Israel's past history, and the place of that motif, in the religious consciousness of the nation and as part of the collective identity, needs to be briefly examined.

The importance of this motif stems from its early presentation as 'the consummate expression of divine power and national redemption'.² In this guise, the motif held a central place within Judaism as the event in which the nation was called into existence, out of misery and slavery, by the intervention of God.³ The same event was perceived as the basis for relations within the community, with the divine laws of protection for the vulnerable being framed from the perspective of an Israel vulnerable in Egypt.⁴ In addition to creating Israel's self-identity as the nation who were saved by God, the event gave shape to Israel's God as one who could be relied upon to hear of their suffering, to provide for them as in the wilderness, and to grant their future expectations in a new society in a new land. Significantly, the event enabled Israel to project all future acts of national crisis and redemption in terms of a new exodus.⁵ Thus, the motif had become 'the temporal-historical paradigm in whose image all future restorations of the nation are to be manifest'.⁶

Successive reinterpretations of this event were also a feature of

2. Fishbane 1979: 121.

3. Keesmaat 1994: 35.

4. e.g. Deut. 5.15, 6.20-25, 10.19, 15.15.

5. See Keesmaat 1994: 36 and n.21 where she lists a series of studies which deal with the Exodus as the basis of future restoration in the prophets, and notes also the view in which the Exodus event is invoked as a comfort for Israel in moments of national crisis. It is difficult to imagine what comfort the texts could provide unless they were related to an expectation that the God, who had so acted, could act again.

6. Fishbane 1979: 121.

intertestamental literature,⁷ for the community at Qumran,⁸ and Keesmaat has suggested that the Exodus motif may also be recalled in Romans 8.14-30.⁹ The intertestamental references are slight and fleeting, rarely more than a verse or two, and sometimes, as in the case of 1 Macc. 8.18, they refer to a specific historical situation with which the Exodus event is to be compared.¹⁰ According to Keesmaat's hypothesis, in Romans Paul struggles with God's faithfulness to Israel and, like Isaiah and Jeremiah battling with this same question, the result is a transformation of the tradition. Paul re-affirms God's faithfulness by calling into play the motif which *par excellence* signifies that faithfulness for Israel, and he also transforms the narrative of 'bondage-groaning-liberation'¹¹ into a broader story of regeneration for all the people of God and, indeed, creation itself.

The sustained Exodus motif in Romans, thus, allows Paul to appropriate for the new, Christian community all the promise of renewal which was traditionally applied exclusively to Israel, and Israel, as a consequence, has been re-defined. We have, then, to ask ourselves whether *Wisdom's* author has a new understanding of Israel to validate in terms of the scriptural legacy of the first Israel. This brings us to the first question that this

7. Sir. 36.10-11, *Pss. Sol.* 17.27, Tob. 13.15, Bar. 5, 1 Macc. 8.18, 1 En. 28.1, 29.1

8. *The Community Rule* Col. II. See Vermes 1962 : 74, and *The Damascus Rule* Col.1. See Vermes 1962: 97.

9. Keesmaat 1994: 49.

10. 1 Macc.8.17-30 purports to tell the story of the a treaty made by the Jews under Judas Maccabeus, with the Romans as Jewish protectors against the Greeks. The justification for the embassy to Rome is given as Greek oppression of Israel with servitude (8.18), and is, thus, an allusion to Israel in Egypt.

11.Keesmaat 1994: 49.

study must attempt to answer. What is the purpose of *Wisdom's* sustained Exodus/Passover imagery throughout the Diptychs?

Also, that purpose must be defined in such a way that it offers the fullest explanation possible of the peculiar structure, emphases, omissions, verbal links and absence of chronological sequence with which these comparisons are woven together. In a monograph, Schwenk-Bressler notes that the Diptychs of *Wisdom* are instructive in intention, and that the whole work has a protreptic character with which the Diptychs are in broad agreement.¹² However, it has to be asked whether the particular combinations of events as they are cited in *Wisdom's* Diptychs, with unusual details from the Exodus/Numbers accounts coming to the fore and the foreground of the Exodus/Numbers accounts sometimes disappearing without trace¹³ is, first and foremost, instructive in the sense that Schwenk-Bressler means it to be. *Wisdom's* adaptations lack the straight-forwardness of exhortation. What, then, could our author's radically different interpretation add to the knowledge of his desired audience?

Other questions must also be considered in any examination of the

12. Schwenk-Bressler 1993: 54. It seems almost a pity to cite Schwenk-Bressler's careful and open study in the context of an example here. However, he has failed to pay adequate attention to the development of Jewish writing within a hellenistic *milieu* with its allusory references and, more particularly, its interpretive role. His understanding of *Wisdom's* purpose is as a corrective of the mystery cults, which would account for the difference between traditional accounts and *Wisdom*. Also Schwenk-Bressler has noted that *Wisdom* at times seems closer to the Exodus interpretation as presented in the Psalms than from within the Exodus tradition proper, thereby confirming that there is a literary aspect to *Wisdom's* construction of events (p. 54). For a consideration of the wider literary question of non-biblical Exodus interpretations, see Cheon 1997.

13. The plagues of gnats [3] flies [4] locusts [5] all become the insect stings of Diptych 3. Boils [6] and the death of domestic animals in 5 are omitted altogether. Also, the Red Sea crossing and loss of the Egyptian army is not a plague in the Exodus tradition.

purpose of *Wisdom's* adaptation of the Exodus story. Firstly, because the Exodus motif is central to Israel's self-understanding it also provides the basis for the Passover. Therefore, any conclusions we might form as to *Wisdom's* purpose must include a relationship to the Passover as it was observed by participants and portrayed in the wider community. Larcher has understood the importance of maintaining this connection between Exodus and Passover in his discussion of the parallels between *Wisdom's* principle of benefit and punishment at 11.5 and Passover haggadah.¹⁴

We have little information related to the celebration of Passover in the late first century B.C.E. and early first century C.E. in Alexandria. We do have rather more information regarding the ways in which Jewish accounts of their own history, and the Exodus theme in particular, were viewed by a somewhat hostile Egyptian populace. Barclay¹⁵ suggests that it is possible that the Egyptian priesthood circulated a series of stories which countered the claims made in the Jewish version of the Exodus and presented the Jews, among other charges, as those who ate sacred animals at their festivals. It is not difficult to take the step from the existence of these counter stories to a point where the annual Passover ritual becomes a touchstone for racial and

14. Larcher 1985: 657-658. Larcher comments that several critics have associated the comparisons with the laws of talion as expressed in such Old Testament adages as '*an eye for an eye*' Ex.21.24, Deut. 19.21.

15. For a discussion of the racial tensions between Jews and Egyptians in Alexandria and how this situation was exploited by figures such as Manetho, see Barclay 1996: 33-34.

religious sensitivities. Any account, therefore, that we are to give regarding *Wisdom's* interpretation of the Exodus might also include the means of redress for a damaged portrayal of the Passover.

The final purpose-related question which arises as a consequence of *Wisdom's* adaptation of traditional Exodus material concerns eschatology and eschatological judgement. In Fishbane's account of the transformation of the Exodus traditions, he notes that the re-use of the literary motif acted upon the national consciousness in two ways: as a lens through which they might either view their history or anticipate their future.¹⁶ In our discussion of the wisdom chapters, we discovered that those individuals singled out by wisdom in Chapter 10 constituted a blueprint for salvation. Collectively, those individuals made up both Israel and her history, but their rescue from adverse circumstances formed part of a wider plan in which those who responded to God's wisdom were granted the former glory of Adam: i.e. the immortality which was God's initial hope for humankind.¹⁷

In *Wisdom* 10.15 the representative role of the 'righteous' is assumed by Israel and, consequently, it is Israel who is cast as the new Adam and who will inherit immortality. God's patience throughout the Diptychs and final judgement upon the Egyptians at the Red Sea, is indicative not only of an

16. Fishbane 1979: 122.

17. See Chapter 3 of this study pp. 195-196, 201-204.

earthly rescue from destruction but also anticipates the eschatological promises of eternal life. In our reading, then, of *Wisdom's* interpretation of the Exodus event, we should recognise that the familiar cycle of Exodus incidents is adapted in terms of the imagination and aspiration surrounding an ultimate judgement or vindication.¹⁸

Thus, our introduction to this series of comparisons between the respective fates of Israel and Egypt is no simple matter of an analysis of God's mercy towards Israel and judgement upon her enemies. In order to understand the interweaving of the principles of judgement and mercy, we must find satisfactory answers to other questions upon which the exercise of justice and benevolence depend. In addition to considerations of form and structure we must attempt to solve our author's purpose in so adapting his source material, Cheon's 'how and why' question.¹⁹ Further, we must, as we have seen, give attention to the relationship with the Passover and the eschatological implications for the future. Finally, following Keesmaat, we must consider the question of a possible re-definition of Israel. It is, consequently, with these questions in mind that we will examine our author's account of God's justice and benevolence in his unique rendition of the Exodus story.

18. It is, of course, precisely this point that Schwenk-Bressler's concern with the mystery cults addresses (Schwenk-Bressler 1993).

19. Cheon 1997: 18.

1. Genre and Structure.

1.1 *Genre.*

Much of the discussion related to the genre of *Wisdom* 11-19 has circled around the definitions of midrash and syncrisis. Wright, for example, has understood *Wisdom's* Exodus account to be midrash.²⁰ The difficulties attached to this definition stem from the all-encompassing nature of midrash when that genre is categorised as 'a composition that explains the scriptures and seeks to make them understandable and meaningful for a later generation'.²¹ By this token, all writing on scripture is midrash and the term has no significance. Reese has argued for the retention of the term midrash to specify early Rabbinic exegesis from about the 3rd century C.E. onwards,²² and favours the view of Focke that our author has arranged his material in conformity with the technique of syncrisis.²³

Focke's detailed study of the literary form of syncrisis is persuasive with regard to *Wisdom's* Exodus account.²⁴ Not only does our author employ the characteristic technique of placing negative comparisons before positive, but his work, as Schwenk-Bressler correctly noted, has a didactic purpose

20. Wright 1990: 557.

21. Wright 1990: 563.

22. Reese 1970: 95-99 and n. 33. See also Cheon 1997: 14.

23. Reese 1970: 98.

24. Focke 1923:330.

which is carefully structured.²⁵ Moreover, the discipline imposed upon the presentation of the contrasting fates of Israel and Egypt is not extended to the use made of source texts which have been freely and creatively adapted to suit the author's purpose and to enhance the comparisons. Such a free adaptation would be unusual in Rabbinic midrash,²⁶ as would a more rigid general structure.²⁷

Cheon notes the use of the term 'rewritten Bible',²⁸ to describe the retelling of Israel's narrative traditions for expansion and/or clarification. The term was introduced to take account of such Palestinian works as were themselves the product of haggadic reflection and interpretation.²⁹ Not only is this inappropriate for *Wisdom*, which is the product of Alexandrian Jewish thought, as Cheon correctly surmises, but it is also doubtful that *Wisdom* intended to provide clarification of the existing narratives, but rather to use the framework of those narratives for the creation of quite a different perspective on historical events.

One other comment upon the genre of *Wisdom's* comparisons is of particular interest here. Amir has revived the suggestion, first posited by Heinemann, of a form of Haggadah based upon the principle of 'measure for

25. Schwenk-Bressler 1993: 54.

26. Neusner 1987:23.

27. Reese 1970:98.

28. Cheon 1997:15-16.

29. As defined by Vermes in 1961. The list includes *Jubilees*, *Pseudo-Philo*, *Genesis Apocryphon*, and *Josephus' Antiquities*. Vermes specifically exempted *Wisdom*, but later scholars working on this theme of narrative retelling have included *Wisdom*, *Sirach*, and *Baruch*. See Cheon 1997: 15n.19 and Reese 1970: 99.

measure' as expressed in later Talmudic literature.³⁰ In this essay we are not concerned to see this as an alternative to the idea of syncretism, the more particularly because Amir himself acknowledges 'the peculiar trends' in the development of the 'measure for measure' principle as it was exposed to the influence of hellenistic culture.³¹ The results of that influence must be something very like syncretism. What is of particular significance for us is Amir's understanding, not simply of the inevitable artificiality of such comparisons, but of the equally inevitable reconstruction of the Exodus account which those comparisons entail, i.e. a new mythology.³² It is hoped that as this analysis unfolds, that reconstruction will emerge. It must also be borne in mind that the same reconstruction is a determining factor in the structure of Chapters 11-19, to which we now turn.

1.2 *Structure.*

Wright refers to the presentation of the Diptychs as a linear development,³³ which, as we noted in our discussion on the Mercy Dialogue (see Chapter 1 pp. 35-36 above), cannot be the case. Israel both begins and ends her experience of the wilderness at the Red Sea (10.18-19, 19.5). Egypt

30. Amir 1992: 30-31. The idea is originally suggested in Heinemann 1948: 241-51, and is explored by Larcher. See note 14 above.

31. Amir 1992: 36.

32. Amir 1992: 30. Fishbane also talks of the *mythos* of the Exodus, which he defines as a 'life teaching in which an objective past recurrently gave way to a subjectivized event of the present', Fishbane 1979: 121-122.

33. Wright 1990: 558.

is charged, in the first instance, with the drowning of the Israelite infants in the Nile (11.7), and, as a consequence, faces the loss of her children in the sixth Diptych (18.10-11), and the drowning of her armies in the seventh (19.5). There is, as we have seen, a circular construction in this experience of the Diptychs for both Israel and Egypt.³⁴

Similarly, as we perceived in the Callimachus hymns, the creation of a literary spiral or labyrinth is representative of chaos or even in some instances of a void.³⁵ In *Wisdom* both meanings of that metaphor are called into play.

The wilderness into which Israel is projected after the Red Sea crossing at 11.2 is uninhabitable and hostile, devoid of towns, roads, or order.³⁶

Διώδευσαν ἔρημον ἀοίκητον, καὶ ἐν ἀβάτοις ἔπηξαν σκηνάς-
they travelled through uninhabited wilderness, and pitched tents in places where there lay no way.

In our author's reflection upon the events of Israel's salvation and the destruction of her enemies at 19.6-11, he portrays these incidents as a new creation.³⁷ The protective cloud of Exodus 14.19 which places itself between Israel and the Egyptians assumes a different place in *Wisdom*.³⁸ In *Wis.* 19.7, it overshadows the camp as the spirit of the Lord does the deep in Gen. 1.2, eventually producing dry land, vegetation and living creatures.

34. See Chapter 1 of this study pp. 34-38.

35. See Callimachus *Hymn IV* - Delos.

36. Gregg first suggested that ἀοίκητον was related to the absence of cities, which Goodrick views as far-fetched (Goodrick 1913: 239). However, it is not out of keeping with the metaphor that the absence of civilisation would also stand for chaos (Gregg 1922:92)

37. Beauchamp 1964: 491-526, Gilbert 1987: 323-44, Winston 1979: 325, Cheon 1997: 98-99.

38. As in Numbers 9.18.

Inside the labyrinth, the nations are subjected to seven tests, each one potentially life-giving or life-threatening,³⁹ and a comparison is made as to the responses of the two nations and the outcome. The tests are as follows:

Israel enters the wilderness (11.2).

1. Thirst (11.4-14 [15-16 transitional])
Nile turned to blood/Water from the rock for Israel.

2. Hunger ([16.1 transitional] 16.2-4)
Plague of frogs/Quails for Israel
3. Animal Pestilence (16.5-13[14-15 transitional])
Plague of insects/Israel's snake-bites healed
through symbol of bronze serpent. #
4. Fire ⁴⁰(16.16-27 [28-17.1 transitional])
Plague of storms/Manna rains from heaven upon Israel.
5. Darkness (17.2-18.4)
Plague of darkness/Israel receives light from pillar of fire.
6. Death by Conspiracy (18.5-25)
Death of the first-born of Egypt/Israel healed from
disease plague in the
wilderness. #
7. Death by Drowning (19.1-5)
Egypt's army lost in the Red Sea/Israel crosses Red Sea

Israel participates in a new creation (19.6-22).⁴¹

Israel is punished at the third and sixth Diptychs, with serpent bites and disease respectively. In the Numbers account, this is the result of speaking against God and Moses (Num. 21.4-9) and for murmuring after the Korahite rebellion (Num. 16.41-50).

39. Wright (1990: 558) adopts the earlier proposal of both Gregg and Goodrick that there are five Diptychs, thereby tying his assessment to the ten plagues sent upon Egypt. He combines 2. and 3. (above) as a plague of little animals, with the bronze serpent as a digression. Similarly, he combines 6. and 7. (above) and treats the disease plague as a digression. For the significance of the idea of seven Diptychs, see below pp. 284-286.

40. Wright (1967b: 183+ n.2) argues that the point of the comparison is plagues from heaven/food from heaven and not fire as suggested by Reese 1965: 398 and Schwenk-Bressler 1993: 193-195. However, the fire brought by the storms destroys all food but manna.

41. The above diagram by no means exhausts all the links that it is possible to make between the Diptychs. Diptychs 3, 4, and 5, for example, are each concerned with the word of God in some aspect. It is hoped that these more finely-tuned leads will be illustrated in the individual analysis of each Diptych.

The importance of the seven tests or, more precisely, seven linked sets of adverse circumstances, lies in their ability to present reactions and responses on the part of Israel and Egypt as though they happened simultaneously. In this way a truly chronological sequence of events may be by-passed in order to allow other connections to be emphasised and these adverse circumstances may then be expressed as the instrument of benefit to one nation and the instrument of punishment to the other, as in 11.5. We may also ask, given the nature of these tests, whether *Wisdom* subscribes to the view expressed by Philo that Israel was immune to the consequences of the plagues?⁴² Israel's early sufferings in the wilderness are placed alongside Egypt's sufferings in the plague cycle, and all we can understand for certain is that the same sufferings were applicable to both in those contexts. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to imagine a true compatibility in the process of testing. God's right, as creator, to afflict the nations has been plainly stated in 12.12-13 as has the equal right to admonish (νοουθετέω 11.10) rather than condemn, which though not an exclusive privilege for Israel (12.2), still remains at God's discretion. Further, this demonstrates how closely we must read the Diptychs in relation to the Mercy Dialogue to which they are intimately tied.

Two other matters must be discussed before we can leave the structure of the Diptychs. The first of these revolves around the seven tests and whether

42. *De Vita Mosis* 1.143. See also Cheon 1997: 34 where he argues that in *Wisdom* as in Philo and Josephus, the inference may be drawn that Israel was unaffected by the Plagues. In Cheon's favour is the evidence of the fourth Diptych of hail/manna in which Israel merely observes the effect of the storms (16.17-18), and the statement of 18.1d.

there is, of itself, any significance in the number. The second is concerned with the long interval between the first Diptych and the ensuing six, an interval which contains the Mercy Dialogue (11.15-12.27) and the Review of False Worship (13.1-15.19). In fact, these matters of number and interval are not unrelated to each other as we shall see.

Winston has demonstrated the importance of the number seven in Aristobulus' writing, in which the number is identified with wisdom and light,⁴³ an identification which goes back to the neo-pythagorean tradition which in turn influenced Middle Platonism. Thus, we see a similar association in Philo, for whom the number was also symbolic of the archetypal light and the *logos*.⁴⁴ The choice of seven points of comparison, consequently, has philosophical implications in which the number seven represents wisdom, the active, creative element of God. Wisdom's continued renewal of the created world (7.27) is also evidenced in the blueprint for salvation which occurs after Adam's fall, and from which Israel, as a pure nation, is the expected outcome (10.1-15). The incidence of seven comparisons, then, can also be seen as the continued involvement of wisdom with that process of purification and renewal.

The number seven, as we know, is also significant in terms of Jewish thought and is linked to ideas of the sabbath and creation. The creation

43. Winston 1979: 36-37.

44. Philo *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit* 225. See also Dillon 1977: 155-6 for Philo's relation to the Hebdomad.

accounts of Genesis, in which the work was completed in six days and God sanctified the seventh (Gen.2.1), is not merely an affirmation of the sabbath but also a model for future world order. Thus, the first sabbath, at the completion of creation, is also a beginning for all that will be created in the future.⁴⁵

In addition to correspondences between the number seven and the creation narrative, there are similar correspondences in the ways in which the Exodus narrative is recounted. Fishbane has observed the patterns in which the Exodus plague stories are told (Ex. 7.8-12.36) and anticipated (Ex. 4) and they frequently follow the form of three signs + climax.⁴⁶ In the plague cycle itself the pattern is 3+3+3+1, in which we have three groups of three signs, with the death of the Egyptian first-born as the climax. Two shorter versions of this pattern (3+3+1) may be found in the Exodus re-tellings of Ps. 78. 43-51, and Ps. 105.27-36.⁴⁷ This does permit us to make a link between these traditional cycles and a structural pattern in which the number of events in the plague sequence is reduced to seven within a poetic context. What is especially interesting about *Wisdom* in this respect is that, with the first Diptych separated from the two groups of three signs, the pattern would appear to be inverted (1+3+3). The dramatic impact of the death of the

45. Fishbane 1979: 9.

46. Fishbane 1979: 70.

47. Psalm 78. 43-51. i. Rivers to blood ii. Flies iii. Frogs - i. Locusts devouring crops
ii. Hail upon crops iii. Hail upon cattle - i. Death of the First-born.

Psalm 105.27-36. i. Darkness ii. Waters to blood iii. Frogs - i. Flies ii. Hail iii. Locusts
- i. Death of the First-born.

first-born, usually the climax of Exodus re-tellings, has been maintained in *Wisdom* by the device of making Diptych 6 (18.5-25) the point where Egypt finally recognises the truth of Israel's claims and Israel's God (18.13). The pursuit to the Red Sea and God's deliverance of the Israelites there has to be understood in the light of that knowledge both at 19.1-5 and at 10.16-21, where wisdom's guidance leads into the wilderness experience. The special significance of Diptych 1 (11.4-14) is that it anticipates the testing and revelation of the later Diptychs. The circularity of the account means that the new creation occurs in the wilderness experience and is fashioned from the same circumstances.

In our analysis of the Mercy Dialogue, we noted that Israel entered the metaphorical labyrinth (11.2) in a state very similar to that of the wicked in the estimate they give of their own profitless lives (5.6-7), where the trackless wastes symbolise a lack of knowledge of the ways of God.⁴⁸ We will return to this point again in our exegesis of the first Diptych. For the moment, we are concerned to show that Israel's education in the wilderness is designed to build her trust in the God of the Mercy Dialogue (11.9-10), and reveal the emptiness of the false gods worshipped by other nations (13.1-15.19), and that these theological concerns are given expression within the structure both in the

48. See Chapter 1 of this study p.36.. See also Scarpat 1996: 364.

choice of numerical patterning and in the hiatus in the flow of the Diptychs.

There are two further points in relation to the matter of the number seven, and both may serve as indicators of traditional interpretations. In the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel, the time taken from the events of the Passover night to the arrival at the oasis of Elim, which itself anticipates the promised land, is seven days. The *Exagoge* is, of course, a dramatic reconstruction, but may reflect a tradition in which the Exodus events are portrayed in terms which are related to the seven-day creation. Secondly, it is possible, in respect of Egypt's position in the Diptychs, that there was a fairly firm tradition that seven acts of forgiveness represented the abundance of divine mercy.⁴⁹ Each of these factors must be borne in mind as we turn our attention to the individual Diptychs.

2. Analysis of the Diptychs.

2.1. *The Context of Diptych 1 (11.1-14).*

The first Diptych occurs as the sequel to the rescue of the righteous by divine wisdom in Chapter 10. In that chapter, our author selects six individual heroes from traditional Hebrew narrative⁵⁰ and illustrates their difficulties by one or two key phrases which give them their identity. Nonetheless, it is not the individuals who are of primary importance in Chapter 10, but wisdom herself. It is wisdom who puts into operation her blueprint for salvation, by

49. See Amos 1.3-2.6, Job 33.29 in relation to the synoptic saying of Matt. 18.22, and Luke 17.4.

50. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Joseph. Israel then forms the seventh personification of the righteous.

which the glory and immortality which belonged to Adam prior to his fall is restored to mankind. The seventh personification of the righteous is Israel, who is rescued from those who oppress her, and is safely led (διήγαγεν 10.18) through the waters of the Red Sea.⁵¹ Her enemies meanwhile are drowned in the rush of waters, emphasised by the onomatopoeic phrase, καὶ ἐκ βάθους ἀβύσσου ἀνέβρασεν αὐτούς:

and from the bottom of the deep she spat them up (10.19).⁵² The contrast is thus made, between the ἀναβράζω - *casting up* of the Egyptians and the Israelites crossing (διεβίβασεν 10.18) the sea in safety under wisdom's guidance. As we have noted, this same incident, the crossing of the Red Sea, will form the final Diptych in 19.5. Also Wisdom's use of διεβίβασεν (10.18) recalls *diabasis*, the formal term for the Passover, and a term usually associated with the death of the first-born of Egypt which, as we have seen, is the customary climax of the Exodus plague-cycle.

Thus, our author is doing several things at once in the closing stages of Chapter 10. He sets the context of Israel's wilderness experience firmly within the plan of salvation activated by divine wisdom. Also, by recounting the contrasting fates of Egypt and Israel at the Red Sea prior to the first Diptych, in addition to the account in the final Diptych, he creates high points to this

51. For the importance of ἀγειν and its compounds as technical vocabulary related to the Exodus, see Keesmaat 1994: 38-39.

52. The same verb ἀναβράζω is used of the foam crashing among the rocks and cliffs of Thynia in Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* II 566. The argonauts, when they see the foam, believe themselves to be facing 'destruction without escape' (ἀμήχανος ἦεν ὄλεθρος line 578) until the intervention of Athena allows their escape.

Exodus re-telling both at the beginning and at the end of the narrative. Israel's entrance to and exit from the labyrinth are by the same gate, the Red Sea crossing. In the final Diptych the drama has been heightened by the unfolding of the plague narratives and the increasing severity of the Egyptians' suffering. In the first diptych, the tension is highlighted because, after the repetition of the emphatic αὐτή which declares her presence, wisdom is suddenly gone and with her the intense, personal involvement with the individuals and the nation. It is Israel's weakness we feel at 11.2, a weakness reinforced by the dangers of the wilderness as they have been interpreted in the second speech of the wicked (5.6-7). Finally, our author, by drawing attention to the Passover in 10.18 with specific reference to the drowning of the Egyptians rather than the death of the first-born, has untied the ritual from a specific incident and allowed it to find its place in the midst of a more general recounting of the Exodus story. This process, of course, was already far advanced among Jewish interpreters, as in Ps. 78.43-55, but in the case of *Wisdom* we are presented with the widest possible engagement between the explanatory text and the Passover ritual.

2.2 *Analysis of Diptych 1.*

Israel's vulnerability in the wilderness is immediately made apparent in

the opening of the first Diptych. There is nothing to drink. Not only do the righteous thirst ἐδίψησαν (11.4) but they also despair, the water when it comes is no longer hoped for (11.7).

What makes the crucial difference between Israel's thirst and the thirst of the Egyptians lies in the responses of each nation. Israel calls upon God, ἐπεκαλέσαντό σε (11.4). This phrase is important for our author's understanding of events and we need to consider its implications.

The thirst felt by Israel is the first barrier to her progress in the wilderness, but the call to God produces an immediate reversal of the circumstances. As a response to the call, water is given to the Israelites from the sharp rock - (καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἐκ πέτρας ἀκροτόμου ὕδωρ 11.4), and not merely enough water, but an abundance of water comes from this unexpected source (11.7). What triggers this blessing to Israel is, thus, the call. However, as has been noted earlier,⁵³ the same verb is used by Solomon in his prayer to God for understanding (7.7) and it is wisdom who comes to him. It is an important characteristic of wisdom that she brings in her train many gifts, far beyond the need or expectation of the moment (7.11). Not least among these gifts is the presence of wisdom herself, as an inexhaustible (ἀνεκλιπής) treasury for mankind (7.14) whose use and training mark the

53. See Chapter 1 of this study, p. 37.

recipients as *'friends of God'* commended for their learning (ὄν οἱ χρησάμενοι πρὸς θεὸν ἐστείλαντο φιλίαν, διὰ τὰς ἐκ παιδείας δωρεὰς συσταθέντες). *'Friends of God'* is, moreover, a term with technical connotations, implying those who live a life of virtue in their efforts to be *'like unto God'*.

However, what we have to consider here is whether the spring of water to which Israel suddenly has access in *Wisdom* 11.4 can carry the implication of wisdom and her gifts. It is noticeable that both the accounts of water from the rock in Num. 20.6 and Exodus 17.4 include the complaints of the people, a prayer, and some action of striking the rock on the part of Moses before the water appears. In *Wisdom* this repeated pattern of action has been subsumed into the cry to God which produces the water as though, as Larcher notes,⁵⁴ Israel had released a subterranean stream. This is not merely playing down the miraculous element, but indicates that *Wisdom's* author bases his account upon the poetic rendering of the narrative as it appears in Deut. 8.⁵⁵ Two factors make this association between *Wisdom* and Deut 8.1-16 plausible: the first concerns the verbal parallels and the second lies in the motivation behind God's action towards Israel.

Although *Wisdom's* account is brief, certain points are underlined. The sharpness and hardness of the rock is emphasised in both *Wisdom* (πέτρας

54. Larcher 1983: 656.

55. Larcher 1983: 656.

ἀκροτόμου 11.4) and Deut.8.15 (τοῦ ἐξαγαγόντος σοι ἐκ πέτρας ἀκροτόμου πηγὴν ὕδατος). The description in Deut 8.15, of the fountain of running water (πηγή) has been repositioned in *Wisdom* to highlight the loss to the Egyptians when the free-running Nile is polluted with blood (11.6). Instead of the perpetually moving river (ἀντὶ μὲν πηγῆς ἀεννάου ποταμοῦ), the source of Egypt's fertility and wealth, the water is defiled and choked with gore (αἷματι λυθρώδει ταραχθέντες). This picture of the Nile in *Wisdom* also acts as an effective contrast to the freshness of the '*torrents of water and underground streams*' - (χείμαρροι ὑδάτων καὶ πηγαὶ ἀβύσσων) of Deut. 8.7, which is promised to Israel in the new land and which will be the basis of her agrarian wealth (Deut. 8.8).

The poetic account of Deut. 8 acts as a scenic background in more general ways. The dangers to Israel in the wilderness are spelled out in 8.15 where Israel is exhorted not to forget the Lord:

'who brought you through that great and terrible wilderness where is the biting serpent, and scorpion, and drought, where there was no water' - (τοῦ ἀγαγόντος σε δια τῆς ἐρήμου τῆς μεγάλης καὶ τῆς φοβερᾶς ἐκείνης, οὗ ὄφιδος δάκνων, καὶ σκορπίου, καὶ δίψας, οὗ οὐκ ἦν ὕδωρ.)

More significantly, this account also repeatedly stresses the training of

Israel through the wilderness experience,⁵⁶ in contrast to the motivation of Num. 20 and Ex. 17.⁵⁷ This emphasis on training recalls the promises of *Wisdom* 6.12-20 that wisdom is accessible to those who are looking for her, that she will show favour to them 'in the ways' and come to meet their every thought. Also, Wisdom's education has an eschatological purpose, as we see from the sorites of 6.17-20, where the beginning of wisdom's discipline (παιδείας) leads, ultimately, to a kingdom.⁵⁸ Moreover, Israel's training and punishments are described as 'in mercy' (ἐν ἐλέει παιδευόμενοι 11.9).

It is in this context, then, that we must interpret the call of the Israelites to God. Deuteronomy's description of abundance in the promised land becomes in *Wisdom*, because of the promise contained in the sorites, the first steps along a road which has as its destination an immortal kingdom reached by discipline and training. Israel's call to God in 11.4 brings wisdom with all the knowledge and gifts at her disposal, and it also, inevitably, marks an unbridgeable division between Israel and Egypt. The thirst that threatened to overwhelm each of the nations in the separate situations of wilderness and plague can now be seen in its true context. The Israelites are admonished

56. Deut. 8.2,3, 5, 16. The 'sonship' of Israel is here summarised in Deut. 8.5, οὕτω Κύριος ὁ Θεός σου παιδεύσει σε - so the Lord your God will discipline you.

57. The motive contained in Ex. 17.1-7 is punishment for the Israelites' dissatisfaction with Moses' leadership and their questioning of his relationship to God. In Num. 20.3-13, the complaints of the Israelites are more general and include a list of the foods which cannot grow in the wilderness, a list which Deut. 8.8 specifically counters. The water is, thus, the proof of God's intentions.

58. For the relationship of the sorites of 6.17-20 to the promise of immortality see Chapter 3 of this study, p.167.

by their father,⁵⁹ whilst the Egyptians are judged and punished by a severe king. The severity of the landscape for the thirsty Israelites (πέτρος ἀκροτόμου 11.4) is set in play with the severity of the king's judgement (ἀπότομος βασιλεὺς 11.10) upon an Egypt that fails, not in her recognition of an action of God (11.13)⁶⁰ but in her response to it. The thirst of the Egyptians is, thus, of a different order (οὐχ ὅμοια δικαίοις διψήσαντες 11.14) in that it represents a denial of God.⁶¹

As such, the first plague also anticipates the final outcome of the struggle in the Diptychs. The reference to the ever-flowing river (11.6) symbolises the wealth and power which has accrued to Egypt from the Nile floods,⁶² and, crucially, the power over Israel which resulted in Pharaoh's edict against the Hebrew children (Ex. 1.22). As a consequence of that edict, not only will Egypt suffer the death of her first-born (18.5), but the strange death brought upon her armies is seen to be their due fate (19.5). Egypt's drowning

59. See Cheon 1997: 33. However, Cheon relates the 'testing' (δοκιμάζω 11.10) of Israel to this specific incident of thirst. It is 'an educational opportunity for the righteous people to understand how God punished their enemies'. This is clearly not the interpretation of Deut. 8.14 where the testing is to prevent 'exaltation of heart' - ὑψωθῆς τῆ καρδίᾳ in the riches produced by the land, the kind of exaltation of which Egypt is guilty and which is summarised by the 'perpetually flowing river' of Wis. 11.6.

60. The comparison of the respective thirsts of Israel and Egypt is understood to have demonstrated to the Egyptians that this was an action of God, 'they had some feeling of the Lord (ἤσθοντο τοῦ κυρίου 11.13).'

61. See Scarpat's relationship of this thirst to Psalm 62.1. Scarpat 1996: 169.

62. See Larcher's suggestion that the first plague is centred upon the Nile because of the cultic activity surrounding the Nile (Larcher 1982:656). This is a possibility. Certainly, the Nile, here, is representing Egypt, although, as we have seen, Deut. 8 portrays the promised land in a way that redresses the complaints of Israel for the food and goods they have abandoned in leaving Egypt. Thus, these complaints of Israel seem to be related more to wealth and range of agrarian produce i.e. Egypt's affluence and power, which the Nile could readily symbolise.

in the waters of the Red Sea, the godless void of our author's labyrinth according to 10.19, is, then, the destiny they prepared for themselves in their refusal to acknowledge God's action in the waters of the Nile. In a similar fashion the wicked, in their first speech in Chapter 2.1-20, depict an empty death without an after-life, which ultimately becomes their fate in Chapter 5.17-22.

The condign element of punishment in *Wisdom* remains important and inextricably linked to the choices made as representatives of the righteous and the godless. These choices also have over-arching implications for future choices. In *Wisdom* Israel, in her cry to God, has taken the first step towards God's design for humankind, i.e. immortality. Additionally, she has received the first of a series of gifts - her thirst equating with a thirst for God which is answered in the person of wisdom - and which will be unveiled in the Diptychs as the creation ideas of God, rooted in the design for the cosmos and in harmony with it. Conversely, Egypt, in her refusal to acknowledge God, has taken the first step towards the death which God did not desire for the world (1.13) and which has no jurisdiction over life except through the actions and words of the wicked (1.16).

Thus, through the mythical device⁶³ of a parallel thirst, our author has been able to expose the underlying trends in the pictures of both the just and

63. See Cassirer 1955: 35.

the unjust. The inclination to '*think of the Lord in goodness and seek him in simplicity of heart*' (1.1) on the part of Israel has as its counterpart the Egyptians' courting of disaster by '*drawing down destruction*' (1.12) upon themselves with their actions in the edict against the children, and in their refusal to admit God's activity in the first plague. The separation between Israel and Egypt is, consequently, complete at this point. Although they will face a further six parallel tests, their respective progress through the labyrinth will, from this moment, be guided along differing routes. These routes may be charted in the relationship which exists between Diptych 1 and the sections of *Wisdom* which follow on immediately: the Mercy Dialogue of 11.15-12.27, and the Review of False Worship of 13.1-15.19.

The relationship between Diptych 1 and these ensuing sections of *Wisdom* has already been extensively discussed in the chapters pertaining to those sections.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, some of that material may be useful for our examination here, particularly where it has special relevance to the punishment of Egypt and the benefit to Israel which is the central principle of the Diptychs. Accordingly, a brief summary of our findings is included.

2.3 *Relationship of Diptych 1 to the Mercy Dialogue and the Review of False Worship.*

The first lesson that Israel learns in the wilderness labyrinth in *Wisdom* is that she is not to be left to face these terrors alone. The people call upon

64. See Chapter 1 above, pp. 79-80, and Chapter 4, pp. 269-270.

God, and meet an immediate response in the rush of water which is released from the rock. Not only does their cry ease their physical thirst but, in accordance with Psalm 62, it is an expression of their need and longing for God's presence. The release of the water can, therefore, be understood allegorically, as standing for the presence of God, whose mercy lies at the centre of Israel's testing experience.

Further, the Mercy Dialogue stresses that God, in his role as creator, is a lover of everything he has made (11.24-12.1) and has placed his incorruptible spirit into all things in order to fulfil his design for the immortality of his creation as expressed in 1.14-15 and 2.23. The plan, then, for the redemption of a creation corrupted by idolatry (14.12) and in partnership with death through wickedness (1.16), is the selection of individuals by wisdom (10.1-15) and their training through the experiences of the wilderness in the representational Diptychs. Israel, then, has her own specific responsibilities and tasks. What these tasks represent is important for our understanding of the events which follow in the subsequent Diptychs and, consequently, we need to give them our attention.

These tasks are not presented to us in any kind of a list, but rather must be pieced together from all the various parts of *Wisdom*. Principally, the people must be 'righteous' with all that such a term entails, i.e without malice or deceit, without blasphemy or the desire of wickedness (1.1-16), having

knowledge of God (2.13) and living according to that knowledge (2.15). The desire for righteousness brings them into contact with divine wisdom (1.4,5) whose range of knowledge includes the cultivation of the virtues of temperance, prudence, justice and fortitude (8.7). More specifically from the Mercy Dialogue, they are to deal favourably with others, in emulation of God's righteousness and his forgiveness (12.19), and, from the Diptychs, to be faithful to God's words (16.11) and to the covenant commands of God (18.24). The concept of *philanthropia*, as expressed in 12.19, held specific Torah obligations as we know, but also implies a wider context in the goodness of God towards his creation.⁶⁵ Certainly, Israel is not to seek revenge for maltreatment, as it is God/wisdom who vindicates.⁶⁶ The exalted, righteous man of 5.1 does not speak and sets at nothing his trials (τῶν ἀθετούντων τοὺς πόνους αὐτοῦ) because his position is safeguarded by God (5.5).

More revealing still, in terms of social obligations, is the sense of 18.2, though the Greek has proved difficult.⁶⁷ The implication of the verse is that the Egyptians, vulnerable during the plague of darkness, were grateful that the Israelites had not harmed them and asked pardon for past enmity. The background to this claim occurs in the closing confrontational meetings of

65. For the Jewish, wider Hellenistic, and Middle Platonist concepts of *philanthropia* see Chapter 1, p. 61 and n. 64.

66. *Wisdom* 5.17-23, 10.19-20, 12.3, 12.17, 14.9-10, 19.1.

67. See Goodrick 1913: 349-350. Goodrick notes that the received text for 18.1, which has most manuscript support (G⁸BC) ὅτι μὲν οὖν κάκεῖνοι ἐπεπόνθεισαν requires that the οὖν remain untranslated. GA and L read as οὐ giving a translation 'because they had not suffered the same things, they counted them happy'. Thus, the verbal contrast is between the ὅτι μὲν οὐ of 18.1 and the ὅτι δὲ οὐ of 18.2, rendering 'because they had not suffered the same things they counted them happy, but for that they (who were first wronged) do not hurt them and were thankful.'

Moses and Pharaoh in the Exodus plague cycle, where Pharaoh attempts to negotiate terms for Israel's departure (Ex. 10.17, 10.24, 11.8, 12.33) with especial focus on 10.17 in which Pharaoh asks for pardon from God and Moses.⁶⁸ Although it is clear that *Wisdom* has modified this account, perhaps to counter charges of the unsociability of the Jews,⁶⁹ what is more interesting from our point of view is that the Exodus confrontations were designed to highlight the distinction between Israel and Egypt,⁷⁰ and the *Wisdom* account is also serving this purpose. By the lack of active Jewish hostility to the nation that had so oppressed them, Israel is disclosed as forgiving, and distinctive.

The purpose, then, of Israel's time and testing in the wilderness is designed to educate her and purify her⁷¹ for the tasks ahead in her role as the template of all the nations. Nonetheless, we have to consider whether that paradigm role is fully satisfied by the mere existence of Israel among the nations, as a kind of social leaven, or whether there is a further step of educating others. The issue is a highly complex one and cannot be easily answered,⁷² particularly because the lines between apologetic and persuasion

68. Schmitt 1986:131.

69. Barclay 1996: 33.

70. Ex. 11.7 ὅπως εἰδήσῃς ὅσα παραδοξάσει Κύριος ἀνά μέσον τῶν Αἰγυπτίων καὶ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ - *that you may know how wide a distinction the Lord will make between the Egyptians and Israel.*

71. On the relationship between the literary concept of the labyrinth and notions of purity see Chapter 1 above, pp. 39-40 and also Bing 1988: 113.

72. This question is further complicated by the understanding of some critics that *Wisdom* is the response to Jewish persecution in Alexandria (see Introduction above, pp.17-18, Winston 1979: 25, Cheon 1997: 145, Scarpit 1996: 21) in spite of recognising the reflective and literary nature of the work as a whole, thus making it the unlikely product of such social pressure. Reese's 1990 essay now gives *Wisdom* a place in 'the vast literature of persuasion in the hellenistic era' (229). However, the persuasion he sees is directed at the Jewish community and is for the purposes of re-affirmation. For a discussion which draws out the difficulties of making clear divisions in Jewish attitudes to the world around them, see Barclay 1996: Chapter 4.

are, in fact, extremely fine. In Deut. 8. the backdrop to the first diptych, the issue is more expressly stated. The question is one of 'sonship' (vv. 5-6), portrayed in terms of Israel's obedience to God's statutes, and even the destruction of other nations is seen as an object lesson to Israel should she fail in her covenantal obligations (v.20).

In *Wisdom*, however, we have to see the selection and training of Israel as the response to the call of the first Diptych, but we also have to see it in relation to the mercy of God towards the whole created order (11.23-12.1), and also in relation to the instructive nature of the Review of False Worship (13.1-15.19). Israel's call, like Solomon's, sets her in antithesis to those who worship idols in that she exhibits '*likeness unto God*' (ὁμοίωσις θεῶν) according to the Platonic ideal, which is the path of virtue for mankind. For Israel to be such a template in any meaningful sense makes necessary a teaching role towards the other nations, a role which would be in conformity with the later diptychs, and especially with the summary of Israel's task at 18.4, and also emulates the teaching role of wisdom herself (7.13-22).

What, then, of the Egyptians, and their failure to respond to God in their thirst during the first plague? How does this negative aspect of the first diptych relate to the Mercy Dialogue and to the Review of False Worship?

Firstly, it must be remembered that Egypt, in her denial of God's action, was not giving expression to her faith, but to a form of collective deception (11.15). Within the construction of our literary labyrinth, Egypt heard of the water which the Israelites were given and fully understood its implications in respect of God's activity (11.13). Moreover, in the allusion to Moses, as one of the children exposed to the dangers of the edict and consequently held in little esteem, we hear that they came to admire him (ἔθαύμασαν 11.14),⁷³ presumably in his role as the holy prophet of God (11.1). Thus, when the Egyptians return to the worship of senseless animals in 11.15, they are doing so in defiance of their knowledge of God and of Moses' standing with God. They have, accordingly, also made a choice, which divides them from Israel and will condition the final outcome of the Diptychs.

Egypt's position in the Mercy Dialogue has, then, become the earlier position of the Canaanites (12.3-7). They will be offered a further six opportunities, according to the principle in which God punishes *'little by little'*, and, by the selection of a suitable punishment, provides knowledge of the exact nature of the offence (12.2). The purpose of this punishment is also educational. The hope is that they will leave behind the corrupting influence of their idolatry and come to believe in God, but the hope is vain. The charge

73. There is no suggestion of the first plague producing this level of awareness among the Egyptians in the account in Ex.7.20-25. In fact, the reverse is true. Pharaoh *'returned to his house and did not fix his mind on this thing'* 7.23. Cheon notes the parallels with the Joseph story. The brothers cast (βίπτω) Joseph into the pit (Gen. 37.20) and in Gen. 42. 21-22 they are astonished and admit their earlier failing (Cheon 1997: 36). He also observes the similarity with the vindication of the just man in 5.4-13 and the astonishment of the wicked that the one they despised is among the *'children of God'* (5.5). Pharaoh does admit knowledge of the Lord after the plague of Frogs (Ex. 8.10).

of Egyptian idolatry, and the lowest form of idolatry in their worship of animals (15.18-19), will be the point at which we will encounter the second of the tests of the labyrinth, hunger.

Additionally, the Egyptians have become the enemies of God's people in their attempts to destroy the Israelite children (15.14). This is significant for deeper reasons than the mere preferential treatment which is accorded to Israel. As the template nation, Israel's survival is of eternal significance as she is to provide the exemplar of piety which will make '*friends of God*' (7.14) and hold out the promise of immortality for which man was created (2.23). Enmity to Israel is, consequently, enmity towards God and enmity towards creation by permitting and encouraging the encroachment of death in the world (1.14). As we shall see, creation, too, will take part in engineering the safety of Israel and the confounding of her enemies (5.20).⁷⁴

2.4 *The First Three Signs: Diptychs 2, 3 and 4. (16.1-29).*

The choices, internal to the labyrinth, have now been revealed. On the one hand, we have the God of the Mercy Dialogue who wishes to spare all his creatures and, on the other, the adherence to various forms of idolatry whose dangers and empty promises have been explained. Further, Israel and Egypt have both made their choices and selected their paths. From this point in our

74. Compare Romans 8.19-24.

combined plague/wilderness narrative, the tests faced by each nation follow one another in quick succession. In the two Psalms which we have discussed as giving poetic accounts of the Exodus plagues (Ps. 78.43-51, Ps. 105. 27-41)⁷⁵ the ordering of the signs and the grouping by threes appears, at first glance, to be fairly arbitrary, with the exception of the death of the first-born as the climax of events. In *Wisdom*, as we have noticed, even this final plague is made of less significance than the safe emergence of Israel from the labyrinth in the Red Sea crossing.

Nonetheless, there is a kind of order to *Wisdom's* grouping by threes. In the poetic renderings of the plagues several of the early plagues are connected with the theme of hunger. In Ps. 78.46, the insect plague is described as giving '*their fruit to the caterpillar and their labour to the locust*'. Similarly, their vines and trees are destroyed by the hail and, in the fire which comes with the storms, their cattle are lost (vv. 47-48). In Ps. 105, even the Nile's transformation is linked to the death of the fish, rather than to thirst. Thus, although our author is drawing a different lesson from each Diptych, it is more than likely that the frogs/insects/ hail plagues were traditionally associated more generally with hunger. The theme of hunger is present in this first group of Diptychs but is, admittedly, not strong, and only by implication

75. For the order of the plagues in these two Psalms, see p. 285 n.47 above.

can it be said to be associated with Diptych 3. Nor does the existence of a thematic group rule out a relationship between Diptychs from different groups (e.g. between Diptychs 4 and 5). However, the final group of three Diptychs (5-7) is most definitely concerned with death, and the second Diptych in each group of three (Diptychs 3 and 6) stress Israel's two punishments. It is, thus, reasonable to assume that some kind of thematic grouping was intended (see the structure of this section above p. 282). These plagues, then, of frogs, insects, and hail, together with the blessings for Israel of quail/the bronze serpent/manna, form the first group of signs in Diptychs 2, 3, and 4.

2.4.i. *Diptych 2 (16.1-3).*

According to the 'little by little' principle of mercy and punishment (12.2), any punishment must convey to the recipients the nature of their offence. In 11.15-17 the contrast is pointed up between the senseless beasts worshipped by the Egyptians and the '*almighty hand*' (ἡ παντοδύναμος σου χεῖρ) of God that shaped and fashioned the world from matter. That sense of God's power, the dread of Joshua 2.9,⁷⁶ is made known to the Egyptians in the changing of the Nile water to blood (11.13). Their reversion to the worship of '*most hateful*' beasts (καὶ τὰ ζῶα δὲ τὰ ἐχθίστα σέβοντα 15.18) thus, brings upon them the plagues of loathsome frogs

76. *Wisdom* 12.8 notes that the wasps sent against the Canaanites were perceived as forerunners of the Israelite host. They are, therefore, synonymous with the dread that heralded the Israelites' approach. See Chapter 1 of this study pp. 68-69. Goodrick, as we have noted, translates 11.13 as '*sensed the hand of God*'.

and other small creatures.⁷⁷

Very little is actually made of the frog plague in *Wisdom*. It occupies a mere four verses (16.1-4) two of which (16.1, 16.4) seem to offer different reasons for its implementation. The first of these, in 16.1, is in accordance with the principle stated in 11.16. The Egyptians are punished with the arrival of the frogs because they have continued to worship beasts. The second reason, in 16.4, is related to the change of emphasis which our author introduces in order to construct the plague as a test of hunger. There is no mention of hunger in the account of the frog plague as it is presented in Ex. 8.1-15. What is stressed in that account is the ubiquitous nature of the plague which presumes a certain repulsion, although that is not implied until the description of the death of the frogs at 8.14. It is, nonetheless, this repulsion on which our author focuses because it creates a situation of need. As with the Nile plague, we have to bear in mind that the power of Egypt lay in the fertility of the river which gave them agrarian wealth. Thus, to attack Egypt on the ground of need for food is to humiliate her, and very likely her gods.⁷⁸ Her power she had abused in her treatment of Israel. The humiliation of need is created, in this case, by the repulsion for the frogs (διὰ τὴν δειχθεῖσαν - *through the hideousness*

77. Cheon notes, correctly, that there is no mention of frogs in *Wisdom's* account of the plague (Cheon 1997: 43). However, in the creation account of Gen. 1.20-22, God instructs the waters to bring forth 'reptiles having life' followed by winged creatures. Whilst our author is not following this order slavishly, the pollution of the plagues begins with the water (Nile), moves from the water to the land (frogs) and from the frogs to the insects whose domain is the air. Consequently, it would seem likely that the plague does refer, by implication, to the frog plague, as most critics have understood.

78. Schwenk-Bressler 1993: 166.

16.3) which we have already noted, and which leaves the Egyptians unable to desire food, even though they need to eat (16.3).

Egypt's hunger, then, in the midst of plenty, is a psychological hunger based upon repulsion for that which they have formerly worshipped. This is not to be confused with the hunger they will experience after the plague of storms in which their crop (also related to injustice) is destroyed by fire. Similarly we will notice in our second group of signs, the psychological fear inflicted by the plague of darkness acts as a presage of the real death suffered in the subsequent plagues.

By contrast, (ἀνθ' ἧς κολάσεως 16.2)⁷⁹ to the frogs that 'come up and cover the land of Egypt' (Ex. 8.6), Israel in the wilderness receives quails which come up and cover the camp (καὶ ἀνέβη ὄρτυγομήτρα, καὶ ἐκάλυψε τὴν παρεμβολήν Ex. 16.13).⁸⁰ For our author, pointing up the psychological difficulty faced by Egypt, the desirability of the quails is important, hence his reference to taste (γεύσεως 16.3). The exotic nature of the quail-meat, far from repulsing the Israelites,⁸¹ encourages their appetite so

79. Cheon claims that only the positive elements of the quail story are retained in *Wisdom's* account (Cheon 1997: 45). However, there are clearly two traditions in the Pentateuch regarding the quails. In Ex. 16, the quails are an extra gift of God in association with the manna, whilst, in the Numbers 11 version of events, the quails are given in response to complaints about the manna. Psalms 105.40 and 106.14-15 carry both versions. Contrary to Cheon, *Wisdom* seems to be harmonising both traditions. The ἀνθ' ἧς κολάσεως is ambivalent in that it could imply that Israel also deserves punishment, and the use of ἐπιθυμίαν (16.2) recalls the craving of Ps. 106.14 and Num. 11.24. See also Dumoulin 1994: 44.

80. The use of the same verbs in both accounts in Ex. indicates that some previous association between the frogs and quails had already been made.

81. This may, of course, be a veiled reference to Israel's dietary laws.

that they are nourished even in the wilderness, while Egypt, with her abundance of food, goes hungry.

2.4.ii. Diptych 3 (16.5-15).

In Diptych 3, the pollution of Egypt continues, this time from the air, in the combined insect plague (16.9). In the separate plagues of lice, flies and locusts,⁸² as Exodus recounts, there are no deaths of persons, although the land is stripped of every plant and all grass. Similarly, in Ps. 105.34-35, it is the crops and foodstuff for livestock which are destroyed in the insect plagues. In *Wisdom*, however, the devastation to crops and fruit is ignored and the death (ἀπέκτεινε) of those Egyptians who were bitten or stung (δήγματα 16.9) is the outcome of the plague. Further, there is no healing possible for Egypt's injuries (16.9).

The focus of this Diptych is, however, upon Israel, and upon the first of her representative punishments.⁸³ The existence of the two punishments implies Israel's failure to understand the lessons of wilderness, and thereby highlights her learning role.⁸⁴ Additionally, the punishments demonstrate that the dangers of Israel's position in the wilderness have not diminished, and that the response she made in Diptych 1 must be renewed for each test.

The background to the punishment of Diptych 3 occurs in the incident recounted in Num. 21.4-9. Just prior to this incident, Israel had won a military

82. Ex. 9.16-19, Ex. 9. 20-32, Ex. 10.1-20.

83. See analysis of Diptych 6 below (pp. 331-341).

84. Cheon 1997: 50.

victory against a Canaanite king whose territory lay alongside the wilderness (21.1-3). As Num. 21.4 continues the story, the people then lost their courage and began to complain about God, Moses, and the manna (*our soul detests this light bread* - Num.21.5) and, once again, their reference point for a plentiful supply of food and water was Egypt. God then sent '*deadly serpents*' (τοὺς ὄφεις τοὺς θανατοῦντας) from whose bite there is normally no recovery (Num.21.6). After the confession of the Israelites as to their sinfulness, Moses was instructed to make a serpent and hang it on a staff, so that each person who had been bitten could look at this bronze serpent and live.

The connection that is made between the punishment and the healing in the Numbers version of the story is one of equivalence,⁸⁵ i.e. there is no direct cause, instead a 'sympathetic' relationship is assumed to exist between the gaze directed towards the bronze serpent and the area infected by the serpent's bite. Thus, the Numbers telling of the bronze serpent story, based upon the relationship of equivalence, is founded upon a mythical form of thought.⁸⁶

It can immediately be seen from this, that the account of this event in *Wisdom* 16.5-14 has a new basis. *Wisdom's* version also has a relationship of equivalence, but, as in each of the diptychs, that situation is artificially

85. See Cassirer 1955: 52, also Cheon 1997: 50.

86. Cassirer 1955: 52-53.

created in the testing circumstances, in this case between the fatal stings (δήγματα 16.9) of the insect plague and the fatal serpent-bites (δήγμασι 16.5) which afflict the Israelites. Nonetheless, our author attempts to establish a relationship of cause and effect between benefit and punishment, as we have seen (11.5, 16), and also here in this Diptych, where there is no relationship of equivalence between the snake-bites and the bronze serpent. Instead the serpent functions symbolically, 'having a sign of salvation' (σύμβολον ἔχοντες σωτηρίας 16.6) representing God in his saving capacity (16.7) which, in turn, is earthed through God's law and oracles (16.6, 16.11). In order to grasp this transformation more fully, we need to examine this section in detail.

Firstly, we can see that the complexity of this punishment meted out to Israel is not related to the account of Numbers 21, which merely provides a framework for the setting of a new event. Secondly, we have to note that the language employed by our author bears a strong similarity to that of other sections of *Wisdom* and of the *Mercy Dialogue* in particular, and also recalls Genesis 3. The serpents are described as σκολιός - (*crooked* 16.5) reminding us of the '*crooked thoughts*' and deceit of the wicked in 1.3. Moreover, they are raging beasts (θηρίων θυμός) as was the apocalyptic serpent/dragon of

11.18 (ἡ νεοκτίστους θυμοῦ πλήρεις θήρας ἀγνώστους), in a passage in which our author highlights God as creator of the world and in control of monsters denoting destruction and chaos.⁸⁷ We are reminded in 16.7 that God is the saviour of all, as implied by the desire to spare all in 11.23, 26, and 12.16. God's wrath, which in *Wisdom* is not maintained against Israel (16.5), has already been depicted in 5.20 as a sharp sword (ῥομφαία). The same word is used of the fiery sword in Gen. 3.25 which guards the tree of life after Adam has been cast from the garden.

It is only by piecing together these slight and fleeting references that the true nature of Israel's peril emerges. If the purpose of Israel's journey through the labyrinth is to provide both the means and the training by which Adam's glory, i.e. immortality, may be restored to humankind, then Israel's recalcitrance at Diptych 3 places that hope in jeopardy. The offence of the Israelites at Diptych 3 was to forget, or perhaps resist, their specific role with its demands and privileges. They were, consequently, reminded of the commands of the law (16.6), and goaded into memory of God's promises (εἰς γὰρ ὑπόμνησιν τῶν λογίων σου ἐνεκεντρίζοντο, καὶ ὀξέως διεσώζοντο, ἵνα μὴ εἰς βαθεῖαν ἐμπεσόντες λήθην, ἀπερίσπαστοι γένωνται τῆς σῆς εὐεργεσίας -

87. See Gilbert's important essay on the persistence of Gen. 1-3 references throughout *Wisdom*, and the need to underline these for our understanding of *Wisdom's* events (Gilbert 1987: 323-344). We have already seen the significance of the Adam references for both Solomon and for the antithetical portraits of the idol-makers in the Review of False Worship.

For it was to remind them of your sayings that they were stung and speedily saved,

*in case they fall into deep forgetfulness and become distracted from your goodness. 16.11).*⁸⁸

Within this framework, the symbol that reminds them of a merciful God (16.10), a God who has power over both life and death (16.12), becomes a symbol of admonition followed by healing and restoration. The cures of healing professionals have no power (16.12) because the poison consists in loss of hope and courage and the threat of death (16.13). The wording here is very close to that which conveys the loss of hope and the inevitability of death in the first speech of the wicked in 2.1-5.⁸⁹ The problem is, thus, one of eschatological hope, with the crooked serpents representing both the deceit and the destructive instinct of the first serpent whose guile robbed Adam of the garden. The teeth (16.10)⁹⁰ of this serpent can only be overcome by a reminder of God's purpose for Israel as expressed in the biblical promises.⁹¹

88. There are problems with the translation of this verse. *ἐνεκεντριζοντο* used only here and in patristic Greek would seem to be a passive form of *ἐγκεντριζω*. See L. & S. 1968: 471, also Goodrick 1913: 326. We translate *ἀπερίσπαστοι* (16.11d) with Winston as expressing indifference, i.e. distraction or complacency (Winston 1979: 296).

89. Note the similarity between 16.14 '*The spirit when it is gone does not return* (*ἀναστρέφει*) *neither the soul received come up again*' with 2.2, 2.4 and 2.5 '*and at our end there is no returning, for it is sealed fast so that no man comes again*' (*ἀναστρέφει*). There is a deliberate contrast here with the action of God in bringing up souls from the gates of Hell (16.13).

90. There is no link between the teeth of serpents and the serpent in Gen.3. In mythology, however, the dragon's teeth are representative of additional difficulties experienced by Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece, and this is its sense in *Wisdom* also. Jason, in his contest against Aetes, is described as 'somewhat resembling Ares, and somewhat Apollo of the golden sword' (lines 1281-2). The implication is that the dragon's teeth may only be overcome with the additional help of the gods. See Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* III. 1280-1408.

91. Schwenk-Bressler remarks on the word link of *ἀνόμνησιν* (16.6) *ὑπόμνησις* (16.11) and *λήθη* (16.11), 1993: 183.

One further point before we leave Diptych 3. Our author emphasises that the destiny of each nation, once in the labyrinth, cannot be avoided (16.4, 16.15), and this punishment indicates that this is as true of Israel as of Egypt. This makes of the labyrinth an almost Euripidean setting for events, i.e. the circumstances in which the characters of Egypt and Israel are placed imposes limitations upon their free will and moral choices. Thus, the situation which creates Egypt's tragedy and Israel's deliverance comprises, in both cases, the tension between freedom and necessity.⁹² The wilderness/plague tests create situations of necessity to which the nations may respond freely. It is their characters as the righteous and the wicked, established in the first Diptych, which make inevitable the choices which will be favoured by each nation.

2.4 iii. *Diptych 4 (16.16-29).*

We can see this tension between freedom and inevitability in the introduction to the fourth Diptych. The ungodly are those who have denied knowledge of God (16.16) and the judgement of the storms bringing rain, hail, and pitiless showers is, therefore, unavoidable in the face of that denial.⁹³ The links between the fire which is unleashed by the storms⁹⁴ and the manna are that, firstly, both come directly from heaven, a feature of each subsequent

92. See Conacher 1967: 49 for an analysis of Euripides' contribution to the structure of mythological tragedy. Euripides does not de-value free will or imply the futility of moral choice, but shows that the response to circumstances is illustrative of the whole character and so plays an important part in the character's downfall.

93. The literal meaning of ἀπαραιτήτοις (16.4, 16.16) is unmoved by prayer or petition. L. & S. 1968 :179. *Wisdom* is, consequently, depicting God as implacable towards the Egyptians.

94. Ex. 9.23-24.

Diptych until the Red Sea event and, secondly, both are presented to us as a series of paradoxes.

The fire is described as strong even in water that would normally extinguish it (16.17), even though the flames are being held in check (16.18). At another moment the fire burns with more than usual force to destroy the fruits of the land as a return for injustice (16.19). These fruits provide a false sense of nourishment (16.26), clearly a reference to Num. 11.5, where the people of Israel list the fruits they remember eating in Egypt. Similarly, as we have noted, the manna is presented paradoxically. Although it can be cooked it does not melt in the fire and, like the snow and ice it resembles, it continues to sparkle through the rain and hail (16.22). Only the rays of the sun, when the manna has been left to lie by the ungrateful, can melt it, and it disappears like unwanted water (16.29).

Larcher has commented that, in the context of Ex.16, the arrival of the quails has little significance and that it is the manna which is the important response to Israel's need for food.⁹⁵ This is certainly the effect of the liturgical declaration of Ex.16.15-16:

οὗτος ὁ ἄρτος ὃν ἔδωκε Κύριος ὑμῖν φαγεῖν.

Τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα ὃ συνέταξε Κύριος

95. Larcher 1982: 892. Childs is of the opinion that the abrupt handling of the 'quails' in Exodus reflects the text's complicated history (Childs 1974: 288). *Wisdom*, similarly, is more interested in the manna than the quail, but these emphases may reflect either a lack of source material, or simply traditional interest.

This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.

This is the word which the Lord ordained.

The association between manna and the word of God is retained in *Wisdom* 16.26 where it is made plain that it is God's word which preserves mankind rather than the fruits grown in the earth. In fact, the relationship between manna and the word of God is a consistent theme of Jewish writing whatever its provenance, and is found equally in Palestinian midrash and Philo.⁹⁶ Our concern, in the case of *Wisdom*, is to ascertain whether such an allegorical association may be made and sustained, and whether a similar association may be applied to the plague of storms.

Firstly, we have to note that the paradoxical setting conveys to us that the miraculous element of the manna story is to the fore in *Wisdom*, a fact rather strengthened by the indication that the storms are also strange and unusual. Egypt receives little rain and relies instead upon the annual Nile flood for the water to grow crops. This regionalised phenomenon has an effect upon Philo's interpretation of the manna story:⁹⁷

So now it seemed good to him that the air should bring food instead of water.....What is the river of Egypt, where every year it overflows and waters the fields with its inroads, but rain from below? De Vita Mosis 202.

96. Borgen 1965: 1-27.

97. See Borgen 1965: 6-20.

Thus, the first point we must consider is that the food grown on the land in Egypt comes from 'below', as does the water. The rain and the manna coming from 'above' are, then, miraculous occurrences.

Secondly, the involvement of the cosmos in the storm plague holds resonances from earlier chapters of *Wisdom*. The hail (χάλαζαι 16.16) of the plague was also used as a weapon against the wicked in the apocalyptic judgement where hailstones '*full of wrath*' formed part of the cataclysmic storm (5.22). Also God, in arming himself against the wicked, takes creation as a weapon on behalf of the just, (καὶ ὀπλοποιήσει τὴν κτίσιν εἰς ἄμυναν ἐχθρῶν - *and he shall make the creation his weapon for the repulse of his enemies* 5.17). Again, in 16.17, the same point is made in relation to the action of the cosmos (ὑπέρμαχος γὰρ ὁ κόσμος ἐστὶν δικαίων - *for the cosmic order champions the righteous*) and is reinforced in 16.24. Importantly, the control exercised over the fire⁹⁸ is for the purpose of showing the Egyptians that they '*might see and perceive that they are pursued by God's judgement*' (16.18). This same, sudden pursuit by justice was an option rejected by God in the Mercy Dialogue in favour of the 'little by little' punishment principle (11.20), and the re-appearance of certain judgement, thus, heralds a change. Although the 'little by little' principle is maintained

98. 1 Kings 18.38.

until the final Diptych, the need for justice has become inexorable, and the last three signs for Egypt will focus upon premonitions of death and death itself. Dumoulin's argument,⁹⁹ then, that the plague of storms alerts us to an action of judgement from God is the most likely reading of the text. The storms can also be said to represent that judgement allegorically.¹⁰⁰

Dumoulin additionally points out that the paradoxes of the storms/manna Diptych demonstrate two aspects of God, summarised by the strength of God's arm (16.6) and his sweetness (16.21), and that these aspects are, in fact, inseparable,¹⁰¹ and demonstrate God's discernment. Not only is this true of the storms/manna Diptych where both food metaphors and weather metaphors occur in both the positive and negative sections of the comparison,¹⁰² but it is also a feature of *Wisdom* in 1.12-16 and in the discussion on God's kingly power at 12.14-18, where the might of God is held in check because of the need for both equity and mercy in judgement. For the moment, we are simply registering the fact that in this Diptych, as in other parts of *Wisdom*, judgement and mercy both seem to be rooted in a unified concept, i.e. the power of God.

99. Dumoulin 1994: 68.

100. Winston (1979: 298) raises the interesting question of the plagues in *Wisdom* happening coterminously on the basis of 16.18 and 19.21. Exodus 7.25 states that seven days passed between the Nile's transformation and the frog plague. Our author clearly does envisage some overlap with the plagues as in 16.18. However, *Wisdom's* labyrinth allows the syncrisis to be applied to events which did not occur simultaneously, and, consequently, we are not speaking in *Wisdom* of narratives in historical time.

101. Dumoulin 1994: 68.

102. See *Wisdom* 16.19 where the fire associated with the storms burns up the fruits of an unjust land, i.e. injustice, while the manna in 16.22 is compared to snow and ice.

We must turn, then, to the manna, and to the question of whether or not this phenomenon may be allegorically explained. We have already seen that certain key passages make a connection between manna and God's word. Ex. 16.15-16 fits this category, as does Deut. 8.3, where the teaching aspect of Israel's wilderness experience is underlined. Recent critics have understood the manna to represent teaching in some way,¹⁰³ although Cheon limits the range of information to an understanding of how the wicked were punished in the hail plague and, following Reider,¹⁰⁴ how Israel must offer daily prayer before sunrise. This seems a somewhat simplistic view of an incident which had, even in the earlier accounts of the Pentateuch and the Psalms, been understood as a significant metaphor. In order to uncover that metaphor in *Wisdom*, we need to examine certain aspects of the manna gift.

Firstly, the teaching aspect of manna in *Wisdom* cannot be doubted as manna brings knowledge of sonship and the value of God's commands (16.26) in addition to the daily requirement of thanksgiving (16.28). However, manna also expresses the sweetness by which God sustains the creation (16.21) and in order that the righteous be nourished, creation is drawn into the fray on behalf of the righteous and against the ungodly (16.23-24).

Moreover, the fruits of the Egyptians are perishable (διαφθείρω

103. Schwenk-Bressler 1993: 195, and Cheon 1997: 66-67.

104. Reider 1957: 195.

16.19, καταφθείρω 16.22) and, consequently, cannot sustain either humans or the created order against death and decay. In contrast to those fruits, the word/manna of God has a preserving quality (διατηρέω 16.26) for the children who are loved by God. Further, the properties of manna are such that it can remain (ὑπομένω 16.22) throughout the fire of judgement, changing only in response to the need of the trusting (16.25).

There are parallels here with the role claimed for divine wisdom. Not only does wisdom grant knowledge of God (7.22-25), but it is she who sustains and orders the world (8.1). It is wisdom who enters holy souls, turning them into friends of God (7.27) and, as such, those who live with wisdom are loved by God (7.28) and the inheritors of immortality (8.17). Wisdom's properties are unchanging, '*she remains in herself*' (καὶ μένουσα ἐν αὐτῇ τὰ πάντα καινίζει 7.27) in order to effect her renewal. She is incorruptible (7.24) and imperishable (7.26) and, like manna, the gift of God (8.21, 16.25).

Philo, too, regards manna as wisdom.¹⁰⁵ Borgen also highlights Philo's use of the metaphors of agriculture and self-grown fruits in order to distinguish between that which is taught by instructors and that which is self-taught by nature, i.e. in Philo's case, philosophy which brings intuitive

105. Borgen 1965: 101. See Philo *Legum Allegoriae* III.162, *De Mutatione Nominum* 260.

wisdom.¹⁰⁶ The fact that the manna in *Wisdom* is stressed as angels' food or heavenly bread, which is prepared without the co-operation of human endeavour, is indicative of a similar interpretation to that of Philo. The pre-disposition of Israel towards virtue, which would be required for such teaching, coming as it does without human aid, has been demonstrated in Diptych 1 with the spontaneous call to God.

Is wisdom/manna also Torah? It is never specifically identified as such. We have noted that this passage does not play down the miraculous aspects of the gift, rather it enhances them by highlighting the strangeness of both storms and nourishment. Nonetheless the manna that is able to endure the fire and retain its own properties, must also, as Larcher has commented,¹⁰⁷ express the concrete aspect of the narrative, i.e. the visible sign of God by which the people will be nourished. Torah is, then, at the very least, a concrete expression of wisdom. In its negative guise, the fire that rains down on the Egyptians is designed that they might '*see and perceive*' that they face a judgement of God (16.15), and their straying into wickedness comes from their status as '*untutored souls*' (ἀπαίδευτοι ψυχαί 17.1). Finally, in the fifth Diptych, the plague of darkness versus the light given to Israel, which also needs to be read closely with the manna and storms, there is an identification of light with the law (18.4) and it is the malice of the

106. Philo *De Mutatione Nominum* 255-263.

107. Larcher 1983: 928-932.

Egyptians in trying to curtail that light which brings upon them the darkness plague.

We should notice one further point. Manna is not only an important feature of the Exodus/Passover story, but is presented to us as that which nourishes daily piety (16.28-29). Here our author makes an important connection. The Passover, as we know, was perceived as hostile to Egyptian interests and indicative of the unsociable nature of the Jews.¹⁰⁸ However, by linking the manna with the daily piety of home and synagogue, in early prayers and gratitude for the gifts of God, the festival becomes part of a broader and more generalised picture of accepted, or even expected, religious practice.¹⁰⁹

2.5 *The Second Group of Signs - Diptychs 5, 6, and 7 (17.1-19.22).*

The second group of signs are each associated in some way with the theme of death. The fears and ghosts aroused by the plague of darkness are given as the premonition of the death of the first-born (18.17-19), while the plague itself anticipates the manner of death at the Red Sea (17.21) where Egypt will return to the darkness of the deep according to 10.19.

The sense of intensification in the conflict in the final three plagues is created by the overlap from one Diptych to the next. The fire from the storms

108. See p. 275 and n.15 above.

109. Various texts show that Jewish piety was associated with prayers before the sun arose. See Winston 1979: 301. Goodrick suggests that there may have been, originally, a connection with sun-worship and possibly this custom had a Babylonian source. He further notes that references to early morning prayer are scattered throughout the Old Testament, e.g. Psalm 5.3, and that there is no need to assume an association with the Essenes, (Goodrick 1913: 336-7). The question of appropriate thanksgiving was important throughout the Graeco-Roman world, see Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* IV, 1419-22 and 1591-6.

is insufficient to give light during the plague of darkness (17.3), the ghosts of the dark are present when the first-born are killed (18.17) and the mourning Egyptians pursue Israel towards the Red Sea before their death-rites for the first-born are completed (19.3). This degree of overlap is, however, not solely for the purpose of giving a sense of urgency to the coming judgement, but also to blur the distinction between the instruments of judgement. We will examine how this works in each Diptych.

2.5.i. Diptych 5 (17.1-18.4).

Diptych 5 consists of the description of the darkness which surrounds the Egyptians, and the psychological terror that the darkness unleashes, set in contrast to the fiery pillar given to Israel to light her journey through the wilderness. However, there is a sense in which this Diptych is a continuation of Diptych 4, in which we noticed that a change was signalled on the part of God by the re-introduction of the concept of an avenging justice (16.18). The fire that rained down upon Egypt was both a judgement to Egypt and nourishment to Israel. Manna, as the word of God, both judges the wicked and nourishes the faithful,¹¹⁰ and, significantly, it also illuminates. It is the '*untutored souls*' who hope to oppress the holy nation, who are wrapped in the pall of darkness (17.1) and to whom the pillar of flame appears as a self-kindled fire (αὐτομάτη πυρᾶ 17.6).¹¹¹ In the Philo passage we have

110. See Hebrews 4.12-13.

111. See L. & S. 1968: 1555 where it is stressed that πυρᾶ does not belong with πῦρ, meaning rather a beacon or funeral fire. The storm-fire of the Manna Diptych may be presumed to have assumed a different manifestation in Diptych 5.

already discussed as providing interpretive keys for these Diptychs,¹¹² Philo refers to the fruits which grow by themselves during the Sabbatical year as 'having a self taught nature' (ἀπαυτοματιζούση φύσει) in contrast to the cultivation of the earth by technical means which implies for him a Greek, encyclical education. If we import this Philonic interpretation here, then we can see that the categories of those particularly mentioned as suffering from the effects of the darkness in *Wisdom 17.17*, 'the husbandman, the shepherd, or the labourer in the field,' are all those who cultivate food from the earth.

Thus, the column of fire is, like the manna, the wisdom/word/law of God which illuminates, divides, and which is both teacher and interpreter of itself. The darkness that surrounds the fiery column is ignorance of wisdom, a wisdom which cannot be artificially manufactured by other means (17.7), and an ignorance which by running counter to reason induces dread (17.12-13). The full description of the terror spread over the Egyptians occurs only here in the fifth Diptych, and is not repeated in the final comparisons.¹¹³ Nonetheless, in its anticipation of the death scenes in Diptychs 6 and 7 it serves to

112. Philo *De Mutatione Nominum* 255-263. Also *De Fuga et Inventione* 170-171. For a discussion of Philo's understanding of self-taught education according to nature (philosophy), and cultivated education (encyclical) which has a lesser relationship to virtue, see Borgen 1965: 99-121.

113. It is, however, alluded to in 18.17-19, as we have noticed.

express the fear felt by the Egyptians in all three punishments. We need now to examine this terror in more detail.

It is noticeable that images of death predominate in this Diptych. The verb *κεῑμαι* - *to lie* (17.2), used to emphasise the isolation of the Egyptians caught in their individual fears, is also frequently used of those laid out for burial.¹¹⁴ The '*sad faces*' (*κατηφῆ προσώποις*) referred to in 17.4, traditionally characterise the subjects of Hades and Persephone.¹¹⁵ The '*curtain of forgetfulness*' (*λήθης παρακαλύμματι* 17.3) under which the Egyptians labour and which posed a similar threat to Israel in 16.11, refers to the forgetfulness which came over the dead if they drank from the River Lethe in the underworld. Neither the burning fire nor the brightness of the stars was able to light '*that stygian night*' (*στυγνός* 17.5), which is a further reference to the underworld rivers, in this case the Styx, and the cascades of waters which they hear falling around them (*καταράσσοντες* 17.4) is possibly a reference to the cascades of Mount Chelmos with which the Styx was traditionally associated.¹¹⁶ Also the disturbed state of the Egyptians, expressed in terms of a strange sleep, is located as coming from the depths of hell (17.14).

114. Mazzinghi 1995: 13. See also Matt. 28.6 and Luke 23.53.

115. Larcher 1983: 953.

116. There are several variants. *Καταράσσοντες* occurs in A, B^c, C, V, Lat., Syr., *ἐκταράσσοντες* in B, O, Aeth. Arab. Also *ταράσσοντες* in S, Cant. As Goodrick notes (1913: 339), the former is the difficult reading and is supported by the Latin '*sonitus descendens*' and by Ziegler.

In addition to the metaphors taken from underworld journeys to the land of the dead, the Diptych stresses isolation and secrecy. The Egyptians are 'enclosed under their roofs' (17.2) where they commit secret sins (17.3) and even the recesses (μυχός 17.4) where they lie cannot protect them from the sight and sound of the apparitions or their attendant fears. Although they are bound with one chain of darkness, they are nonetheless scattered (έσκορπίσθησαν 17.3),¹¹⁷ unable to find companionship in their terror, even from those magicians whose special task it is to drive away fear from souls that are troubled (17.7-8).

The same themes of secrecy, isolation, fear and Sheol lie at the heart of Psalm 87[88]. The Psalmist's difficulties have carried him to the approaches of Hades (v.3). His misery is expressed in images of the pit and the dark places where he is laid (v.6) and he has no hope of God's righteousness extending into the 'forgotten land' (έν γη έπιλελησμένη v.12). Moreover, his circumstances have left him friendless (vv. 8 + 18). However, the Psalmist does not cease his supplications, he prays in the early morning (v.13) and entreats God with a cry (v.9).

In *Wisdom*, as we know from 7.7 and 11.4, a cry to God brings the gift of divine wisdom, with all that such a gift entails. The importance of

117. Some Mss. have έσκοτίσθησαν (G^{AC}). έσκορπίσθησαν is certainly the more difficult reading as to have the Egyptians 'darkened' makes more sense in the context than to have them 'scattered'. However, as we see in Psalm 87[88], a sense of isolation was presumed in times of difficulty, and this would seem to be re-inforced by 19.17 when 'each' sought his own doorway.

the Psalmist's prayers, then, lies in their support for the position of the Egyptians, who may yet receive mercy even at this late stage. The long night comes upon them because they are banished (φυγάδες 17.2) from God's eternal providence, as Jacob was banished (φυγάδα 10.10) by the anger of his brother. Wisdom, when she finds Jacob, protects him from his enemies (διεφύλαξεν αὐτον ἀπὸ ἐχθρῶν 10.12) whereas the Egyptians, without wisdom, cannot be preserved from fear (ἀφόβους διεφύλασσε 17.4). Wisdom goes with Joseph into the pit (συγκατέβη αὐτῷ εἰς λάκκον 10.13) and she does not leave him when he is chained (ἐν δεσμοῖς 10.14) and imprisoned. The Egyptians are fettered by the darkness (δέσμιοι σκότους 17.2) and their brief glimpse of the depths of hell brings upon them sudden fear (17.14-15).

The contrast between Egypt and Jacob/Joseph as the righteous does not merely indicate God's favouring of Israel. Jacob was taught the importance of godliness (10.12) and Joseph was delivered from his sins (ἐξ ἁμαρτίας ἐρρύσατο αὐτον 10.13) by divine wisdom when she came to them. By implication, then, banished Egypt caught in chains of darkness, still has the possibility of accepting the assistance and security of reason, which her inordinate fear shows her to have refused (οὐθὲν γὰρ ἐστι φόβος, εἰ μὴ

προδοσία τῶν ἀπὸ λογισμοῦ βοηθημάτων - *For fear is nothing but the betraying of the help that comes from reason* 17.11). Egypt, however, is still making choices. Her desire to exercise oppression (καταδυναστεία 17.2) towards Israel, recalls an earlier attempt to subject (καταδυναστεύσαντες 15.14) Israel, related to Egypt's determination to continue the practice of idolatry. The pall of darkness which encloses the Egyptians under their roofs (κατακλεισθέντες ὀρόφοις 17.2) is, therefore, the return for the enclosing (κατάκλειστοι 18.4) of Israel and the light of the law, which is her mission.

Being enclosed (κατακλεισθεῖς 17.16) is, similarly, the fate of the agricultural workers¹¹⁸ who, as we have seen, may be representative of an education without the goal or ethics of virtue. They too are imprisoned, but in a prison without iron bars, i.e. one where wisdom and virtue are betrayed, and fear rather than reason rules the day (17.11-13). As a consequence of this fear, the known world of creation becomes part of the experience of terror. In order to emphasise this point, our author contrasts clear, aural imagery with descriptions of the depth of the darkness and its hindrance to sight. The partial flashes of sight created by the column of flame (17.6-10) impose only a distorted outline of what lies beyond the darkness, and, therefore, serve to

118. Goodrick points out that the labourer in the desert (ἡ τῶν κατ' ἐρημίαν ἐργάτης 17.17) may also be a term used for the labourer in the 'field' (Goodrick 1913: 348). The Latin text presupposes this translation 'agri laborum operarius'.

highlight the fear produced from the sounds (ἐκδειματούμενοι δὲ τῆς μὴ θεωρουμένης ἐκείνης ὄψεως, ἠγοῦντο χεῖρω τὰ βλεπόμενα - *being terrified of that sight when it was no longer visible, they believed the things they saw to be worse* 17.6).¹¹⁹

Thus, the noise produced by the wind (συρίζω 17.18) is the same sound that is associated with serpents (17.9). The wide-spreading branches (ἢ περὶ ἀμφιλαφεῖς κλάδους 17.18) in which the birds sing their melodious song, recalls the branches (κλάδοις) of 4.4, which will be shaken in the time of God's judgement.¹²⁰ The force (βία 17.18) with which the Egyptians hear the rhythm of the falling water, is the force (βίαις ἀνέμων) of the winds as they root out the imperfect branches, also in 4.4. The Egyptians hear the crashing of stones in some act of destruction,¹²¹ perhaps an earthquake, and the drumming and roaring of unseen wild beasts (17.19). Further, they hear an echo (ἠχώ 17.19) from the hollow mountains.

119. Goodrick 1913: 340, points out the difficulties of translating this verse if ὄψεως is taken as a genitive of comparison. The most likely interpretation is to take τῆς ὄψεως as a causal genitive dependent on ἐκδειματούμενοι.

120. An interesting comparison is noted by Mazzinghi 1995: 166. In Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica*, II .733, the poet describes wide-spreading (ἀμφιλαφεῖς) plane-trees at the headland of Acheron, just over the cave which communicates directly with the underworld. Apollonius' description resembles our author's in other ways. The cave is set in a hollow (κοίλη 735) overarched by wood and rocks and there is a continual, echoing (ἠχῆεντος 741) murmur from the sea.

121. The verb καταρρίπτω (17.19) used to describe the sound of stones crashing down, also occurs in Lam. 2.1 where the glory of Israel is cast from the heaven to the earth, a reference to the destruction of the Temple. In *Wisdom* 17.19 it may imply the destruction of Egyptian temples as below (p. 328).

Mazzinghi has commented on the use of the resounding echo from the hollow mountains (17.19) as a possible reference to the Egyptian pyramids.¹²² Not only was this the presumed scene for Israelite oppression, but also the location of the cry of Israel to which God responds in Ex.3.7. Its antithesis, then, becomes the ill-sounding cry of the Egyptians (ἄσύμφωνος ἐχθρῶν βοή 18.10) on the far side (ἀντήχει) of the land which has been visited by the angel of death. Not only does this remind us of the justifiable outcome of the Passover but, if Mazzinghi is correct, then perhaps we might go further and suggest that it is conceivable that encrypted into these verses is an attack on the religious system of ancient Egypt, i.e. against the birds and beasts they venerated, against the Nile cult symbolised in the crocodile, Sobek, and the hippopotamus. We have already noted that the stones cast down (17.19) may be a reference to the destruction of the ancient temples,¹²³ and δρόμος (17.19), in Egypt, also had the technical meaning of an avenue of sphinxes leading to a temple.¹²⁴

What is more than speculation regarding these verses, is that here we see an intensification of the process by which the created order seems to be breaking down for the Egyptians. The river upon which they depended has turned to blood, and frogs have covered the land. Swarms of destroying

122. Mazzinghi 1995: 169.

123. See note 121 above.

124. L. & S. 1968 (ed.): 450.

insects have attacked the harvest, and unnatural storms have brought strange weather conditions and fire. Now, even the ordinary aspects of nature, birds singing in the trees or the sound of a waterfall, hold a sinister note in a situation where creation itself has become an enemy (5.17, 16.24).

In fact our author builds his sound pictures of whistling wind, singing birds, falling water, running and roaring beasts and mountain echoes, around the concept of 'not seeing' (ἀθεώρητος 17.19). This is in contrast to the Egyptians who look for light from the fire and the stars (17.5) and rely upon sight in a situation where sight is distorted (17.6). Thus, our author places the Egyptians in the category of those who depend only upon vision, and who are unable to infer from *'the greatness and beauty of the creation'* the greatness and beauty of God, the creator (13.5).

Israel, on the other hand, is given *'a great light'* (τοῖς δὲ ὁσίοις σου μέγιστον ἦν φῶς 18.1) which is also to be her guide for the unknown journey ahead (18.3). This light is self-kindled (17.6) which not only denotes its relationship to virtue and ethics, as we have seen, but in this case indicates its heavenly origin as the light that never goes out (7.10), i.e. the light of wisdom, the image of God's goodness. In 7.30 we are given a picture of day yielding to night (τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ διαδέχεται νύξ - *for after this*

night is received) which recalls the earlier explanation that wisdom will leave a soul which is subject to sin (1.4). In 17.21, we see the completion of this process. The heavy darkness spread over the Egyptians is an image of the darkness of Hades, which waits to receive (διαδέχεσθαι) them. Moreover, the whole world shines with a brilliant light (καταλάμπετο φωτί), so that there is no obstacle put in the way of Israel's activities (17.20-21); while most MSS describe wisdom's light as προτέρα in its superiority to ordinary light, a few have λαμπρότερα - *surpassing brilliance* (7.29).¹²⁵

The final identification of the light with the law is linked to the definitions of Israel in this fifth Diptych. The Israelites are ὀσίοι σου (18.1). In our examination of wisdom and kingship, it was noted that ὀσίος is used in two significant ways in *Wisdom*.¹²⁶ Firstly, in the sense of 'belonging to God', which is not only related to piety but also to the desire to be instructed in wisdom. Secondly, there is an obligation to be righteous, i.e. just in all dealings and taking special cognizance of the vulnerable. This latter meaning is depicted in the Davidic Psalm 17.25-27 where the term is used to define David's kingship. Both meanings are conveyed by 6.10 and 10.15, and

125. All but a very few MSS. have προτέρα although λαμπρότερα has been adopted by Ziegler. See Larcher 1983: 513 and Mazinghi 1995: 175.

126. See Chapter 3. of this study p. 164-165.

Mazzinghi understands 18.1, similarly, to represent both meanings. ' Ὅσίοι represents the completion of 17.2, the '*holy nation*', and is underlined by the personal pronoun σου. This is the people to whom God has shown fidelity and mercy because of their righteousness, a righteousness expressed in fidelity to the law.¹²⁷ The law given to Israel, which lightens her way and protects her from the darkness, is both the benevolence of God for Israel, and Israel's custodial task for God and the world. The Egyptians, in their pursuit of false worship, are destined (μέλλοντος 17.21) for the eternal dark, whereas Israel is destined (ὧν ἤμελλε 18.4) to give the light of the law to the world.

2.5.ii. Diptych 6 (18.5-25).

In order to understand the position of the relative parties at the beginning of the sixth Diptych, we need to return for a moment to our picture of the wilderness/plague experience as a labyrinth. Israel, cast upon the wilderness, cries out to God and is given abundant supplies of water/God's wisdom with all the gifts at her disposal (11.4). She is, thus, granted all that is required to survive in a hostile environment. She is fed upon exotic meat (16.2) and heavenly bread (16.20), and healed from the serpents' bites by the oracles of God (16.10) which also confirm her task and her immortal

127. Mazzinghi 1995: 206. See also Cheon 1996: 73 and n.6.

destiny (16.26). In the giving of the manna/fire she receives the law, and its teaching/light provides guidance for the journey through the labyrinth.

Egypt, on the other hand, has refused to acknowledge God's intervention in the Nile plague in spite of the sense of the numinous which accompanied the plague (11.13) and which falls on her again, with renewed force, during the plague of darkness. Additionally, Egypt's agrarian wealth has been de-stabilised by the pollution of the Nile and the arrival of swarms of insects and strange weather conditions, thus breaking the rhythm of Egyptian social and economic life. Moreover, wandering blind and guideless through the labyrinth, Egypt has arrived back at the beginning, and conspires against the Israelite children in the edict of Ex. 1.22 (*Wis.* 11.7, 18.5) and the saving of the exposed (ἐκτεθέντος 11.14, 18.5) child, Moses, is a figure of Israel's salvation.

Those taking part in the conspiracy against the children (βουλευσαμένους 18.5) are, thus, those participating in the '*counsels of the ungodly*' (διαβουλίαις ἀσεβοῦς 1.9) whose words and wicked deeds are the object of punishment by wisdom in her avenging role (1.8-10) as δίκη. Wisdom is also the power of God which, when put to the test, convinces (ἐλέγχει 1.3) the unwise, as the loss of the Egyptian children will convince

and reprove (εἰς ἔλεγχον 18.5) Egypt of the wickedness of her conspiracy.

Set in contrast to this conspiracy is the common accord of the saints (ὄσιοι) to sacrifice secretly and make a divine law,¹²⁸ and to share each other's future for good or ill (18.9). The basis for this agreement lies in the task allotted to Israel which, as Larcher notes, is to mediate the gift of the law to the world (18.4).¹²⁹ This task was accepted by Israel in Diptych 3, after the serpent attack (16.12-15). Also, it was apparent from the manna/fire Diptych (4), that should Egypt continue on her course, her judgement would become inevitable (16.24). Thus, there is an acceptance (προσδέχομαι) among the Israelites that Egypt's curtailment of the divine task for which Israel was called¹³⁰ must lead to the 'glorification' of Israel and Egypt's destruction (18.7-8).¹³¹

Here in 18.4-9, our author expresses his theodicy for the final events of the Passover, the sensitive issue of the death of the first-born, and the decisive act at the Red Sea. Some commentators have interpreted the ritual elements of sacrifice and hymn singing as evidence that our author conceived of the first Passover in terms which reflected the Hallel of later

128. The variant ὀσιότητος for Θειότητος is usually considered the easier reading and is, therefore, less favoured. Θειότητος, though difficult to translate implies consent over the worship of God.

129. Larcher 1983: 992. Larcher makes the point that this occurs before the giving of the law on Sinai and has generally been assumed by scholars to refer to 'the religion of Israel', as Goodrick 1913: 351.

130. Israel's call to God in 11.4 is, thus, God/Wisdom's initiative and God/Wisdom's call to Israel. See *Wisdom* 6.16. and Ex. 3.18.

131. Raurell 1979: 381. Raurell understands δοξάζειν here to be equivalent to the σώζειν that the Israelites expect in 18.7.

times.¹³² Larcher, however, questions this assumption, and suggests that the Israelites sing out their benedictions and repeat the promises given to the patriarchs at the moment of leaving for the Promised Land in anticipation of the conquest.¹³³

The mention of the fathers, in 18.6 and 18.9, does more than contrast the hymns of praise for the patriarchs with the cry of desolation for the children of the Egyptians (18.10), though it does that also. It draws attention to the covenant, the oaths (ὄρκους 18.6) in which Israel had trusted, and to which God refers in the commissioning of Moses in Ex. 3.14-16. It is this aspect of covenant with which this Diptych is principally concerned, and it is also the '*oaths and covenants*' which save Israel from the avenging angel in the second of her punishments (18.22). We now need to observe this contrast between the Egyptian conspiracy and Israel's covenant at close quarters.

There is disagreement among scholars concerning the precise definition of the literary unit. Wright argues in favour of the whole of 18.5-19.22, the sixth and seventh Diptychs, being treated as one unit on the basis that they are linked in the opening verse of 18.5, and that the

132. Goodrick 1913: 354. There is, of course, no reason why our author should not have conceived of the first Passover in terms of the celebration traditionally associated with the festival, especially if, as we suspect, the Diptychs are in part an explanation of the Passover.

133. Larcher 1983: 998-1000. For further reference to the 'hymns and prayers' associated with the Passover, see Philo *Spec. Leg.* 2.148. See also the biblical accounts of 2 Chron. 30.22 and 35.15.

drowning in the Red Sea functions as a completion to the death of the first-born.¹³⁴ This argument has now been settled by Cheon and Schwenk-Bressler¹³⁵ and the common linking themes of praise/lament, multiple death, and the destroying *logos*/angel are sufficiently strong to justify treating 18.5-25 as an extended Diptych in the same manner as Diptych 5.

The conspiracy versus covenant argument is set out in ways that both parallel the events and present their antithesis. The Israelite patriarchs had had prior warning of the event (*προγινώσκω* 18.6), and were expecting both their own salvation and the destruction of their enemies on that one night (18.7). The Egyptians were also informed in advance (*προμηνήσκω* 18.19) by the dreams and apparitions which came to them as the cause of their suffering. Nonetheless, they did not take notice of the warning, and the judgement when it came was unexpected (*ἀδόκητοι* 18.17). Our author's picture of all the Israelites sacrificing and singing hymns, i.e. the nation enacting a priestly role,¹³⁶ not only anticipates the role of the High Priest in 18.21-25, but also, because of its secrecy (*κρυφῆ* 18.9) is in contrast to the lament for the Egyptian children which is carried abroad (*διαφέρω* 18.10). Further, the Israelites have placed their trust in the oaths given to

134. Wright 1967b: 183-4. He also argues that the punishment of Israel (18.20-25) is a digression. However, we have already noted the overspill from one Diptych to another, e.g. the frogs of 16.3 are still active in the storm plague. The reason for the overlap is to accelerate the plagues and anticipate the judgement.

135. Cheon 1995: 78-79 and Schwenk-Bressler 1993: 255. Our author's failure to use the term *ἀντί* in 18.20 in order to link 18.20-25 with 18.5-19 does not signify an independent unit when there are many linking themes.

136. Cheon 1995: 83-84.

their forefathers (ἐπίστευσαν ὄρκους 18.6) whereas the Egyptians are unable to trust because of the '*enchantments*' (πάντα γὰρ ἀπιστοῦντες διὰ τὰς φαρμακίας 18.13).

Additionally, some aspects of this Diptych recall other sections of *Wisdom*. The lack of social distinction between those who suffer the loss of the first-born (*and as the king, so suffered the commoner* - καὶ δημότης βασιλεῖ τὰ αὐτὰ πάσχων 18.11) reminds us of Solomon's claim that there was no distinction between him and his subjects in terms of his human vulnerability (7.1). The destroying angel is presented to us as a personification of the word as warrior (18.15), and we have already remarked that in the apocalyptic judgement of 5.17-22, God arms himself as a warrior going into battle. Also, the place from which the '*almighty word*' (ὁ παντοδύναμός σου λόγος 18.15) is sent is the royal throne of God, recalling both wisdom's role in creation (11.17) and her role as the throne-partner of God (9.4). Finally, the Egyptians have fallen prey to '*enchantments*' (φαρμακία) leading to the destruction (ὀλέθρος) of the first-born (18.13). In 1.14 we were told that God did not allow for a harmful, bewitching destruction (φάρμακον ὀλέθρου) in the creation he designed. That poison

only found its way into the world through the death-pact, the covenant (συνθήκη 1.16) made by the wicked with death. The contrasting covenant (διαθήκη 18.22) with the patriarchs is a life pact, and on the strength of it the High Priest '*parted the way to the living*' (18.23).

Before we leave the sixth Diptych, we need to highlight the two agents, one of whom executes the judgement of Egypt and the mercy offered to Israel in her second punishment, and the other who mediates for Israel, i.e. the Warrior/*logos* and the High Priest respectively.

In addition to being the throne-partner and the hand of God in creation, we need to consider the other attributes of the *logos*-figure.¹³⁷

Earlier, in 18.11, we were told that the justice (δίκη) which falls upon the master also falls upon the servant. Δίκη, as we know from 1.8, is one of the personifications assumed by wisdom, whose principal task is that of avenging unrighteousness.

Nonetheless, it is not merely wisdom with whom our author associates the *logos*. Wisdom, as we know, is by tradition presented as a feminine figure (e.g. 8.2), as are *Dike*, justice, and *Themis*, the throne-partner, within Greek mythology. The *logos* in 18.15 is undoubtedly masculine (πολεμιστής) and would seem closer to a personification of the wrath (ὀργή 18.20,25) of God.

137. Interesting in this context is the passage in Heb. 4.12-13, where the word of God is also depicted as both the warrior and the sword which divides. Again in Heb. 4.13 nothing is hidden from God's judgement, a role which in *Wisdom* is given to wisdom herself (1.8-10).

described as ἀπότομος, as was the wrath of God as king in 11.10.¹³⁸ Also, it is the true nature of God's commands (ἀνυπόκριτον 18.16, and 5.18) which acts as the sword that divides (see n.136 above).

The question which must be asked here, is whether this *logos*/destroyer is, in fact, wisdom? Based on the evidence above, it would seem that the answer is an affirmative. Wisdom's rescuing and punishing work has been indicated before in the calling together of Israel in Chapter 10. Also, as we noted, wisdom is the creative, active element of God in the world (7.22-24) and that element must include the power to enact God's sovereign rights over those he has created (12.12), whilst reflecting the righteousness which guarantees the innocent (12.15).

The second punishment of the Israelites occurs in 18.20-25, and in this Israel also faces the destroyer (τὸν κολάζοντα 18.22, ὁ ὀλεθρεύων 18.25)¹³⁹ in the form of the desert plague which comes after the Korahite rebellion (Num. 16.44-50). No reason is given for this punishment in *Wisdom*, and from that fact we must conclude that its importance here is related to the role of the High-Priest, who figures pre-eminently in this episode.

138. See also *Wis.* 12.9 where the destroying (ἀπότομος) word is a possible punishment for the Canaanites, but is rejected in favour of the 'little by little' mercy principle. Egypt, of course, has already had that principle extended to her.

139. Goodrick notes that ὄχλον - *crowds* (18.22) occurs in almost all manuscripts. However, Goodrick suggests that χόλος - *anger* is much more likely to be the correct reading according to the sense of the verse. Gregg's suggestion of ἀγγελον, though without support, would also make a better reading. See Goodrick 1913: 362. See also Ponizy 1992: 141 for the view that the names given to the destroying angel in *Wisdom* symbolically indicate the avenging authority of God as in Ex. 12.23.

Num. 16.40, which is included in the background narrative to this event in *Wisdom*, stresses the prerogative of the priestly caste to offer incense before the Lord. Additionally in the Numbers account, Aaron's action in running for a censer with fire from the altar occurs under Moses' instruction, and against God's inclination which was to destroy Israel (Num. 16.44-46).

In *Wisdom*, the propitiation is by incense and prayer (18.21) and the reminder to God of the covenant promises (18.22), so that the agent of death is halted not by might but by a word (ἀλλὰ λόγῳ 18.22).¹⁴⁰ Aaron is also described as faultless (ἄμεμπτος 18.21) which was also wisdom's goal for Israel in 10.15. The portrayal of Aaron's action is, thus, heavily coloured by concepts of the High Priest's role on the Day of Atonement.¹⁴¹

As Ponizy has noted, the act of recalling God's covenant promises and forestalling the power of death is also dependent upon the High Priest's special 'vestments' (ποδήρης 18.24).¹⁴² There are several points of interest regarding these items of the High Priest's dress.

Specifically, we are told that in the robe of the High Priest lies a reflection of '*the whole world*' -(ὅλος ὁ κόσμος 18.24), that the four rows of three stones (Ex. 28.17-21, 27-29) are engraved with the '*glory of the*

140. The use of ὄπλων, when in the singular, implies the use of a defensive rather than an offensive weapon, hence its frequent translation as 'shield'. See Goodrick 1913: 361 and also Cheon 1997: 87 and n.41. Gregg, however, translates this as a 'sword' (Gregg 1922: 177).

141. The concept of 'blameless' (ἄμεμπτος 18.21) refers to observance of the Law. The particular 'blamelessness' of the High Priest was important because of his mediatorial role on the Day of Atonement. Paul uses the same term to describe his own standing with the Law in Phil. 3.6.

142. ποδήρης is literally a garment which reaches to the feet. In LXX usage it became the term specifically used of the High Priest's robe. See Ponizy 1992: 142.

fathers', and that God's greatness is on the diadem worn around the High Priest's head. In fact, the description of these items of dress is more elaborate in their Exodus context, and their symbolic meaning is well established. The outer robe is blue for the sky, the twelve stones symbolise the twelve tribes of Israel and this ornament is referred to as the '*oracle*' (λογεῖον Ex. 28.15), and the band, which is fixed around the head, is marked with the words '*the holiness of the Lord*' (ἀγίασμα Κυρίου Ex. 28.32 LXX. [יהוה שׁ־ק־ 'holy to the Lord' Ex. 28.36 M.T.]).¹⁴³

The representative role of the High Priest requires that he wears the λογεῖον each time he enters the inner sanctuary, so that he '*bears the judgements of the children of Israel before the Lord*' (Ex. 28.26). It is in this way that the intercession of the High Priest is made effective for Israel and may be described, poetically, as '*by a word*' (Wis. 18.22). However, the High Priest's role may also be understood in terms of the original representative of humankind, Adam. The list of twelve, precious stones which signify the tribes in Ex. 28.17-20 is repeated in Ez. 28.13 to express the glory of Adam in Eden and the position of Adam in the creation plan. There Adam is depicted in his perfect state as having '*a seal of likeness and a coronet of beauty*' (σὺ ἀποσφράγισμα ὁμοιώσεως καὶ στέφανος κάλλους Ez. 28.12)

143. Goodrick gives an extensive account of this symbolism (Goodrick 1913: 363-364). See also Ponizy 1992: 143-145.

referring to man in his likeness to God, and we have seen that the immortal life of the righteous in *Wisdom* is represented to us at 5.15-16 in terms of 'a glorious kingdom and a diadem of beauty' (διάδημα τοῦ κάλλους).

Thus, our picture of the High Priest's attire in *Wis.* 18.24 underscores several aspects of that role, as the representative of Israel, i.e. the righteous, and as the representative of Adam's race, i.e. humankind in its mortal state, who can, nevertheless, be lifted to immortality.¹⁴⁴ The High Priest's intervention, then, in the test of death (πεῖρα θανάτου 18.20) is for our author the means to life.

2.5.iii. *Diptych 7 (19.1-22).*

The whole of this unit is not, strictly speaking, concerned with Diptych 7, as 19.18-22 includes a summary of all the Diptychs and a closing doxology. Nonetheless, our author's conclusion to the comparisons he has made is clearly related to his understanding of the culmination which occurs in the seventh Diptych. Thus, for our purposes, we will treat this section as one unit.¹⁴⁵

Verses 1-5 contain the plague/benefit comparison. The use of μέχρι - *as for* (19.1) indicates that this narrative is a continuation of the Passover

144. Ponizy also explores the idea that 'the long garment' which symbolises 'the whole world' (18.24) is a reference to the idea of the cosmos as sacral space, i.e. the world as 'a cosmic temple'. Thus, each time the High Priest assumes his representative role he does so on behalf of the created order for whom he offers worship. See Ponizy 1992: 143-145. This is akin to the picture of the High Priest's dress in Philo *Spec. Leg.* 1. 97.

145. Beauchamp 1964: 501 treats only the last verse as separate from the teaching element of the Diptych.

narrative in 18.5-25, i.e. we are dealing with the same representations of Israel and Egypt.¹⁴⁶ Cheon notes the connection between the wrath of God as it affected Israel (18.25), and the wrath without mercy which falls upon Egypt (19.1).¹⁴⁷ However, a different word (θυμός) is used for 'wrath' at 19.1. Moreover, it is a word which recalls the hailstones which are used against the wicked rulers in their final destruction (5.22), and the apocalyptic dragon of 11.18, whose destructive blast is rejected in favour of the 'little by little' tenet associated with God's mercy.¹⁴⁸ Thus, the use of θυμός to express God's anger at 19.1 indicates that Egypt's time of judgement has arrived.

We also have to consider that Egypt, at this moment, is fully in possession of the knowledge that Israel has a specific role. The Israelites are acknowledged to be '*the sons of God*', and the enchantments which prevented Egypt from seeing this fact have been broken since the death of the first-born (18.13). Their recognition of Israel's position echoes the earlier cry of the wicked rulers when confronted by the righteous man whom they had unjustly put to death (5.5), and is also a signal of imminent judgement. Egypt's pursuit of Israel has to be seen against this background and, thereby, makes her worthy of further punishment and, once again, thinking foolishly (λογισμὸν

146. Schwenk-Bressler, although stressing the separateness of Diptychs 6 and 7, nonetheless notes that the final punishment of Egypt has two elements: the death of the first-born and the events of the Red Sea (1993: 296 n. 506). There is, consequently, both continuity and a new event.

147. Cheon 1997: 89.

148. θυμός is also used of the death of the Egyptians from the insect plague in Diptych 3 (16.5) and, consequently, marks that plague as the first in which death occurs according to *Wisdom*. The term ὄργη is used of the Egyptians in the first punishment at 11.9.

ἀνοίγας 19.3) as she did at the end of the Nile Plague, when she had also been aware of the presence of God (11.15).

We have already observed that the '*strange death*' of Pharaoh's army and '*the wonderful way*' of Israel through the Red Sea receives minimum comment in 19.5, having been more fully described in 10.18-20. However, our author goes on to elaborate on the effects of the Red Sea crossing (19.6-9 and 19.11-12) and to equate the Egyptians with other nations whose wickedness had resulted in their ultimate destruction (19.10, and 19.13-17).

The effect of Israel's crossing and deliverance is to see the '*whole creation*' refashioned (διατυπώω 19.6) in order to keep her from being harmed. Thus, as she is freed from the testing spiral, Israel is left marvelling (θεωρήσαντες θαυμαστά τέρατα 19.8) at the events which facilitated her release. The cloud which overshadowed the camp represents the darkness over the deep in Gen. 1.2. As in Gen 1.9-10, dry land appears from the water in *Wis.* 19.7b, creating a clear route for the Israelites to follow through the Red Sea. After the land emerges, it is covered with vegetation (Gen. 1.11-12, *Wis.* 19.7d), followed by animals (Gen 1.24, *Wis.* 19.9) and birds (Gen. 1.20, *Wis.* 19.11-12).¹⁴⁹

For the Egyptians, as Cheon notes, the world had become chaos, the land produced flies instead of nurturing domestic animals, and instead of

149. This was an idea first posited by Beauchamp (1964: 491-526) which has gained acceptance particularly among recent scholars. See Schwenk-Bressler 1993: 296-312, and Cheon 1997: 93-107.

water-creatures the river vomited up frogs (19.10).¹⁵⁰ The cavernous (ἀχανής) darkness that they experience is impenetrable (ἀορασία) to their sight (19.17), while by contrast, Israel 'sees' (εἶδον 19.11) the quails as the visible sign of God's creation ideas.¹⁵¹ For the Israelites the grassy plain appears from the raging water (19.7), while the Egyptians hear the waves crashing like thunder around them (19.13). Thus the picture for Egypt, of impenetrable darkness, swirling water and thunderous noise, is being expressed as the primeval void before a creation which unravelled in the face of their foolishness and sin.

The closing summary of Israel's rescue from that void occurs at 19.18-22, and appears to express some theory of transmutation of the elements. The picture is drawn of a psaltery, or an equivalent musical instrument, upon which different note combinations are played to create different tunes, although the underlying harmony is maintained (19.18). Consequently, the elements of creation (στοιχεῖα 19.18), earth, water, fire and air, have been re-arranged to provide a new created order. Thus, land creatures became water creatures, and swimming creatures crossed the earth (19.19). Fire retained its power in water, and water forgot its ability to quench flame (19.20). Nor was the fire able to burn up the creatures which moved

150. Cheon 1997: 100.

151. Our author's pertinent use of εἶδον (19.11) in this new creation episode recalls the *eidos*, the immanent ideas of God having form or shape in matter, but reflecting a transcendent idea. For this concept see Dillon 1977: 137.

along the ground, or melt the manna which came from the air (19.21).¹⁵²

The purpose of this semi-scientific explanation of the miracles is that it allows our author to reveal a moral law at the heart of creation. Sweet¹⁵³ sees this as an attempt to combine the biblical doctrine of creation out of nothing with the assumption of Greek philosophy that the world was shaped out of pre-existent matter, and functions according to fixed laws. In fact, as we have seen, *Wisdom* does not express the doctrine of creation 'ex nihilo' (11.17).¹⁵⁴ However, our author has established that God, who creates and orders the world through wisdom, does so by '*measure, number, and weight*' (11.20), i.e. with rational order. As a consequence, the miracles of the Exodus/wilderness narrative cannot be seen as breaches of natural law, but must reflect the laws which govern the universe and support the struggle for goodness (16.24). Moreover, the position of Israel, plus her gifts of wisdom/Torah and covenant, in this new creation is the position of a restored Adam with renewed possibilities for immortality. God's purpose in assisting Israel is her glorification (ἐδόξασας 19.22) and the food she eats (ἀμβροσιᾶς τροφῆς 19.21) will be the food of the righteous in paradise.¹⁵⁵

There are two other factors we must consider before leaving the final Diptych. The first of these is the imagery used of Israel as she crossed the Red

152. Philo *De Vita Mosis* 2.266-7 expresses the same idea of changing round the elements.

153. Sweet 1965: 116.

154. Schmitt 1986: 106.

155. See *Sib.Or.* 3. 84, where it is stated that manna will be the eternal food of those who are in heaven.

Sea (19.9), and the second is the introduction of the Sodomites into the summary of events at 19.14-17.

Verse 9 of the final chapter of *Wisdom* describes Israel as being taken to pasture like horses and skipping like lambs, as they praised God for their deliverance. The 'skipping lambs' would appear to be a reference to Psalm 113[114].1-4, which is also a poetic account of the Red Sea crossing and the entry into the Promised Land. In the Psalm it states that the mountains skipped like rams and the hills like lambs:

Τὰ ὄρη ὅτι ἐσκίρτησατε ὡσεὶ κριοί; καὶ οἱ βουνοὶ ὡς ἀρνία

προβάτων (v4), and the *Wisdom* verse is likely to be an echo of this account.

There is, however, no mention of horses in the Psalm, and this reference would appear to recall Isa. 63.13, where it speaks of God separating the waters and leading the people through the deep (δι' ἀβύσσου) and 'as a horse through the wilderness' (ὡς ἵππον δι' ἐρήμου).

The difficulty in *Wisdom* is ἐνεμήθησαν (19.9), supported by all versions, but implying being driven or led to pasture, rather in the way of cattle. Horses are not driven in this way, nor does this picture suit the image of eagerness that the verse intends to convey.¹⁵⁶ However, as Larcher has observed, horse imagery is rare in the Bible and therefore must be pointed.¹⁵⁷

156. Larcher 1983: 1061-62, notes the suggested emendations, but comments that no proposal improves or satisfies the sense requirements of the verse. His own translation, 'ils furent comme des chevaux conduits au pâturage', is perhaps the most considered on this issue.

157. Larcher 1983: 1062.

Undoubtedly the reference to Isa. 63.13 is the primary image recalled here. However, it is also possible that we have one of our author's brushstroke allusions to Greek mythology. In the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, the heroes land on the desert shore of Libya, where the strange pattern of the tide, foam and rocks, makes their retreat by sea impossible, and their way forward is barred by the desert. Certain of their own death, they are then surprised by a sign or portent of their escape (IV. 1364) which comes up out of the sea, a large horse, whose hoof-prints they follow to another bay and a safe launch. The horse symbolises the loosing of the wheels on Poseidon's chariot (IV. 1370), i.e. control of the sea. The use, then, of the horse motif, for expressing God's control of the waters of the Red Sea as the Israelites crossed and wondered at the signs (τέρατα 19.8) they had been given, would be peculiarly apt in this context.

Our final section on the seventh Diptych is not concerned with possible mythological references, but may be concerned with political ones. The introduction of the references to Sodom, in the midst of the judgement of Egypt (19.14), has as its background the story of the visit of the two angels to Lot when he lived in the city of Sodom prior to its destruction (Gen.19.1-11). Fearing for the safety of the angels, Lot encouraged them to accept his

hospitality and protection, but the Sodomites surrounded the house and demanded to have the 'men' handed over to them to be raped (Gen.19.5). The angels punished the Sodomites with blindness, and they were unable to find the door of the house.

The destruction of the city and Lot's escape (Gen. 19.17-28) have been alluded to in *Wisdom* 10.6-8 as part of wisdom's work in rescuing righteous individuals in order to create a righteous nation. However, the cause of the city's destruction in Genesis is the sin of sodomy, whereas in *Wisdom* it is the mistreatment of strangers which is emphasised (19.14). The parallel is made with an Egypt, indebted to Joseph (Gen. 47.27), who then became the oppressor of Israel. The blindness suffered by the Sodomites is pictured as being akin to the plague of darkness, and both instances of darkness are preludes to destruction.

Cheon has commented that the purpose of the comparison is to indicate how wicked the Egyptians were.¹⁵⁸ Yet it would seem that this can hardly be the case. After seven Diptychs stressing the stubbornness of Egypt, in the face of her repeated awareness of God's special presence with, and special role for, Israel further evidence of her wickedness must seem superfluous. Moreover by changing the emphasis of the Sodomite sin, our

158. Cheon 1997: 103. The Sodom narrative, however, is one which is frequently used as a metaphor in the O.T. and often, as Cheon suggests, to indicate extreme wickedness, see Deut. 32.32, Isa. 3.9, Jer. 23.14. It is also used of the destruction of God (Isa. 1.10). In Ezekiel 16.49-50 it expresses social pride and complacency towards the poor and needy.

author has reduced its immediate social impact. What, then, is the purpose of the reference to Sodom?

The answer to this has several distinct but related parts. Beauchamp comments that while the Sodomite references are to the detriment of the immediate context they nonetheless fit into the assembled work as a whole, and he cites the parallel of the comparison of Egypt and the Canaanites at 12.8-11a.¹⁵⁹ God's judgement of the Egyptians for their corruption through idolatry is then placed in the context of God's certain punishment of the sinful nations after they have failed to take heed of the mercy principle.¹⁶⁰

Additionally, the sinful nations are Israel's traditional enemies. Their refusal to conduct themselves in line with the piety required by God endangers Israel's survival and, consequently, her place in the redemptive scheme. The references thus provide further confirmation of Israel's piety and her task, which is benign in intention.

Finally, by changing the emphasis of the Sodomite sin, Israel is able to show that she has the welfare of other nations at heart, and it is the sinful nations, in their behaviour towards her, who practice *μισοξενία* (19.13). This is undoubtedly the most contrived part of the Sodomite references, Beauchamp notes its awkwardness¹⁶¹ and Goodrick sees it as careless.¹⁶²

159. Beauchamp 1964: 502.

160. The destruction of Sodom in Gen. 19 occurs after the discussion between God and Abraham related to that event. During that exchange, God eventually agrees to spare the city if ten righteous people can be found within its walls (Gen. 18.16-33).

161. Beauchamp 1964: 502. *Nous pourrions avancer une explication du gauchissement observable dans cette strophe.*

162. Goodrick 1913: 373.

However, in order to establish Israel and her primary religious festival of the Passover as part of God's benevolence towards his creation, our author must refute the charges of inhospitable and unsocial behaviour which attached to Jews and to the festival.¹⁶³

3. Conclusion.

The Sodomite references of 19.14-17 are deeply artificial. Nevertheless, they serve to illustrate the communication gap which existed between Jewish expectations of their sacred task, and how that role was perceived by the communities around them. It was in defence of both Israel and her task that the Diptychs were created by our author from the framework of a comparison (*syncrisis*) of aspects of the plague/wilderness narratives in the Exodus tradition. The function of the comparisons was two-fold: to express the universal potential of Jewish institutions and to provide an *aetion* of the Passover as the central festival of Judaism.

3.1. *The Mythical Construct in The Diptychs of Wisdom.*

As we noted in our Introduction, the key to the form of an *aetion* lies in the questions it purports to answer. *Wisdom*, as we have seen, has certain

163. As noted above at p. 275 n.15 for a full discussion on the Jews in Alexandrian society in the first-centuries B.C.E. and C.E. see Barclay 1996: 19-81.

key questions embedded in the text, the aporetic questions of 9.13-18, the eschatological question of 5.5, and the questions regarding God's judgement upon the wicked nations in the Mercy Dialogue at 12.12, in which the inevitability of judgement for the wicked is tied to the protection of the innocent and the good. This balancing act between judgement and benevolence, germane to each set of questions and creating the central tension in *Wisdom* as a whole, is the reason for our author's metaphorical labyrinth, with its correspondences of events between a righteous Israel and a persistently wicked Egypt.

The creation of a new set of comparisons from his traditional narratives, permits our author to set up relationships of circumstances which were previously unrelated. The Nile plague of Ex. 7.20 has no relationship to the water given from the rock in Num.20, except by linkage in some form which takes no account of historical accuracy or time concepts such as 'before' and 'after', but is instead posited upon immediate coincidence of thirst. It should, therefore, conform to Cassirer's mythical form of thought.¹⁶⁴ Yet the underlying rationale for the form of the punishment is not simply the idea that the punishment fits the crime as stated in 11.5 and 11.16, but has at its heart the mercy of God, the little by little principle, which points to the nature of the sin and hopes for repentance and faith (12.2).

164. Cassirer 1955: 53-59.

More importantly, the thirst of Israel is for God, and the thirst of Egypt is the result of their denial of God's lordship over creation. Thus, we can see that the mythical comparisons are not designed to express a likeness between the two nations, but very specifically in this instance, to divide them. The mythical form of the tests, to which the nations are subjected is, in fact, a form of diaeresis, made possible by the essential unity of God as creator and the cosmos, a unity held together by divine wisdom (7.22-8.1).¹⁶⁵ Thus, the creative power of God, wisdom, is that which permits the divisive action of judgement or benevolence in individual circumstances. The action is always motivated to restore unity between creator and cosmos, and our concepts of punishment and mercy are in essence one and the same action, something our author is at pains to point out in the Mercy Dialogue (12.16-18) and which he demonstrates in the Diptychs.

Moreover, each part (μέρος) of the division, in the classical usage of diaeresis, should also be an εἶδος or an idea.¹⁶⁶ In the Diptychs in *Wisdom*, we see these Platonic 'ideas' emerging as the ideas of God/wisdom in order to bring about an earthly copy of the community designed for immortality. Firstly as the nation of Israel gathered from righteous individuals (10.15), and then as her institutions of law, covenant, temple priesthood and Passover. Thus, although the comparisons are specific to Israel's history, the key

165. For an extremely helpful discussion on the relationship between myth and diaeresis, see Scodel 1987.

166. Scodel 1987: 50.

elements of Judaism are understood to have universal and eternal significance.

3.2. *Definitions of Israel.*

In our concluding remarks on the Diptychs, and by examining the theological purpose behind our author's mythical construct, we have been enabled to answer our earlier questions related to the adaptation of traditional material and the relationship of the Diptychs to the Passover. Two questions remain which are intimately tied to each other: the question of who constitutes Israel, and Israel's relationship to the eschatological problem of mankind's immortal destiny. In order to understand the relationship between these two questions we need to return, momentarily, to the two punishments of Israel which occur at Diptych 3 (16.5-7) and Diptych 6 (18.20-25).

In the first of Israel's punishments in Diptych 3, we noted that Israel was struggling with the burden of her responsibilities. We further noticed that the metaphorical labyrinth into which the nations were plunged, was a setting from which neither could escape the destinies allotted to them, and both the essential nature of each nation, i.e. Israel's piety and Egypt's corruption, would be constrained by that setting until their characteristics were fully developed.¹⁶⁷ Thus, in Diptych 3 Israel is bitten by the *'teeth of poisonous*

167. See analysis of Diptych 3 above pp. 307-312.

dragons' (16.10) which symbolises both her failure of nerve in accepting her task and the forces that would prevent her from fulfilling it. It stands to reason that had this task no wider implications for other nations then these adverse forces would not exist.

In the second of her punishments in Diptych 6, Israel is tested by death (18.20), but no sin is ascribed to her in *Wisdom*. Rather, it is as though the office of High Priest and the promises of the covenant are being tested for their effectiveness against the forces that would destroy the nation. Moreover, we observed that the robe of the High Priest represented the whole world, and the precious stones he wore as a reminder of the twelve tribes of Israel were also, by later interpretation, associated with Adam before his fall. The High Priest, consequently, symbolises the nation before God, but also mankind elevated to immortal potential by the institutions of Israel.

Thus, in *Wisdom* there is no redefining of Israel, for Israel's task is uniquely her own. However in the Diptychs, the section of *Wisdom* most closely associated with Jewish identity, Jewish history and Jewish eschatology, Israel's mission is discovered to be one of witness, ethics, and appropriate piety. Her law is that which is designed to bring enlightenment to the world, and her institutions are shown to be the transcendent 'ideas' of the eternal God, giver of the life principle, for the fulfilment of creation's design.

CONCLUSION.

'But your Sons were not overcome, even by the teeth of poisonous dragons.' Wisdom 16.10.

We began with the suggestion that the key to interpreting *Wisdom* lay in our author's answers to the clusters of aetiological questions posed within the text. These questions were arranged in four groups (see Introduction pp. 7-10):

1. those at 5.5 and 5.8 which are related to the final judgement of God of the wicked, who are destroyed, and their righteous victims who receive exaltation;
2. those at 8.5-6 which are concerned with the gift of wisdom to the individual and the consequent ability to live by the virtues, i.e. 'likened to God';
3. those at 9.13-17 which anticipate the revelation of God's creation/salvation plans, and their actualisation in the form of an earthly community whose piety and institutions lead to the immortality promised to the righteous;
4. those in the Mercy Dialogue (11.21, 25, 12.12 and 12.20) whose concern is to explain the favour shown to Israel because of her special task, and to demonstrate the principles of mercy offered to the nations before they are judged in the hope that they will recognise their own shortcomings and repent.

The judgement/benevolence dialogue, thus, links each section of *Wisdom*, and is the means by which wisdom as the divine agent effects the

design of creation for humankind to share in the immortal nature of God (2.23). This dialogue, then, impacts upon earthly life and heavenly intent. It shapes our reading of historical events and colours future expectations. Moreover, by showing the gift of God's wisdom as the first step along a path that leads to life, wisdom herself becomes an expression of the mercy of God. Meanwhile, the darkness of idolatry, which shrinks the goals of humankind and displaces the immortal spirit of God present in human souls, draws down death and judgement. We have, consequently, argued that the judgement/benevolence dialogue provides us, not simply with common vocabulary among its discrete sections, but with an integrated and coherent reading of the text of *Wisdom*.

Further, in highlighting the Mercy Dialogue, formerly understood to be a minor digression, we have been able to focus the judgement/mercy debate on the benevolent aspects of creation, i.e. the love of God for the creation and the gift of his spirit (wisdom) to sustain it, and to lay out the theodicy for the historic judgement of other nations because of their hindrance of Israel's special calling. Further, Israel's history makes her the witness to the saving acts of God, which confirms the significance of her particular role.

Also, the nation of Israel is the final representation of the righteous and, as such, she embodies all the roles previously attributed to divine

wisdom. She must represent God's *philanthropia* towards all people (12.19), and her fidelity to cause and covenant will test the nations, over whom she will preside as judge (3.8) at the apocalyptic end of the age. As wisdom is the mirror through which we see the ideas of God (7.26), so Israel becomes the mirror by which we see wisdom (12.19-22). As the earthly and eschatological community wisdom called into being, Israel has been trained and disciplined to exhibit 'likeness to God' which, according to Plato, is the true goal of life. Additionally, she is gifted with the 'ideas' of God, national institutions to encourage true piety. Her law is that which gives enlightenment to the world (18.4), and her worship is rooted in the knowledge of God as the almighty and merciful creator (12.17-18). Thus, the universal invitation of wisdom is not negated by Israel's benefits and obligations, but is assured precisely because of her presence.

Many questions remain which cannot form part of this study. How influential was *Wisdom's* theological perspective on subsequent developments? The LXX, as we know, had been well-received by Jews throughout the Graeco-Roman world, and in Egypt it was regarded with as much respect as the original. In Palestine, however, it was viewed less enthusiastically, and it is still unknown if it was ever used in synagogues there. Other factors contributed to its loss of prestige in Jewish circles. Successive revolts, culminating in the massacre of many of Egypt's Jews after

116-117 C.E., silenced the voice of Alexandrian Jewry and also silenced the most influential support for that version.¹ Jewish suspicions of the LXX were further aggravated by its adoption as the Old Testament of the Christian Church.² In fact, as Swete notes,³ it was not the interpretive arguments with Christianity which made LXX less acceptable to Judaism, for Judaism, too, was in the process of change and re-formulation. With the production of versions by Aquila and Theodotion, Jewish copyists ceased work on the LXX. After its translation in Carthage as the Old Latin Bible, LXX was left in Christian hands for its preservation.

Wisdom's influence upon Christianity, which retained and valued the text, should be clearer and yet remains elusive. In recent years Johannine scholars have come to understand the role of Jesus in the fourth Gospel in the light of a wisdom/*logos* personification,⁴ which has opened new possibilities for that Gospel's interpretation. Romaniuk⁵ has attempted to assess its influence by an examination of the verbal similarities which exist between *Wisdom* and certain passages within the New Testament. However, it is not just in verbal parallels that ideas are carried, re-shaped, and emerge again in different dress. The coincidences of topics between Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* and *Wisdom*: the corruption of idolatry (Rom. 1.18-32), the

1. See Barclay 1996: 80-81, and Frankfurter 1992: 203, who notes that there is little evidence for Jews in Egypt from 117. C.E. until the end of the third century.

2. In Jewish circles the trusted Greek version was that of Aquila, the proselyte. Aquila was reputed to be a pupil of R. Akiba who taught from 95 C.E.-135 C.E. The version must have been produced after that date.

3. See Swete 1914: 30-33.

4. Dillon (1962), Ashton (1986, 1991), Scott (1992), Witherington (1995).

5. Romaniuk 1968: 498-514.

judgement of God (Rom.2.1-11), the problem of sin and Adam's fall (Rom. 5.12-21), the glory inherent in creation (Rom. 8.18-27), and the long struggle with the place of Israel (Rom. 9-11), have never been adequately studied and compared. These topics, of course, are part of the heritage of Judaism common to both authors, but they are dealt with systematically in both texts. The privileges and burdens of Israel which Paul assumes for Christianity in *Romans*, may be better understood against the kind of Jewish self-awareness which a text like *Wisdom* provides.

As well as similarities with New Testament thought, there are certain striking differences. *Wisdom's* author is, as we have seen, concerned to express the apocalyptic end of the age in terms of a final judgement for the wicked and exaltation of the righteous. There is, however, no sense in which our author waits for the coming Messiah on whom Christianity so heavily depends. The roles appropriate to the Christ are all present in *Wisdom*: the innocent man who unjustly suffers death at the hands of the wicked and is granted a special place by God (2.19-20, 5.1-2); the ideal ruler who ushers in a reign of justice and equity (9.7, 9.12); a prophet infused by the spirit of God who performs signs and wonders (10.16, 11.1,14); and a High Priest who atones for sin and whose propitiation is effective against death (18.20-23).

Each of these roles will be claimed for Christ by the New Testament writers, but in *Wisdom* these are the benefits of courage and leadership gifted to Israel by divine wisdom. The sharpened Christologies of Paul and the Gospel writers may owe something to *Wisdom's* portrayal of the earthly and eschatological roles of Israel.

Similarly complex is *Wisdom's* understanding of the concept of atonement. In the re-interpretation of the Suffering Servant motif of Isaiah 53, the death of the righteous man is presented to us as a test of the value of justice itself (2.12-20). There is no sense in which this is an atoning death, even though atonement is significant for the background passage (Isa. 53.4-6). The most likely reason for its omission is to protect the role of the High Priest who is in *Wisdom*, as we have observed, a representative human suffering the conditions of the Fall (18.24) as well as standing for Jewry, and whose office alone can turn back of the wrath of God.

Changes in the understanding of the concept of atonement also have a bearing on the ways in which suffering is viewed in *Wisdom*. The suffering of the righteous man in Chapter 2 is to test the value of justice, and the suffering imposed upon Israel in the Diptychs is related to her training in Diptych 3, (16.6-15), and to the efficacy of the High Priest's intervention in Diptych 6,

(18.20-25). Neither does our author make much of Israel's suffering. God helps his people '*in every time and place*' (19.22) against the forces that would destroy them, and the creation itself, regulated by wisdom, intervenes to assist Israel (16.24).

Yet, we are not to read from that that Israel does not suffer. Rather her sufferings are peculiarly her own, related to her task which includes both protection and exposure, privilege and constraint. Without her mission of enlightenment, Israel is as the other nations. With her mission, she is bound to God, bound to the wisdom of God, and bound in an eternal circle of discipline and election upon which the rest of the world depends in order to see and know something of the creator.

The *paideia* upon which our author draws is the specifically Jewish narratives of LXX and the understanding of God which has been refined and debated in a Jewish context. Additionally, as we have argued, he makes extensive use of Middle Platonist philosophy to present wisdom as the Monad and also as the *logos* of the supreme God. Against this understanding he tests the rationality of his claims for knowledge of God and the mediatorial roles of wisdom and Israel. However, as we have observed, there are other texts forming an invisible backdrop to this work. The use of brush-stroke allusions to mythology, particularly where the mythological narrative makes a similar

point to the biblical story, is an identifiable feature of the text. The horse with which Israel is compared at the Red Sea (19.9) symbolises the releasing of the waters.⁶ The fiery vapour of the hypothetical dragon (11.18) recalls Jason's human struggle against superhuman odds with the bulls of Colchis.⁷ The same story is hinted at again in the reference to the teeth of the dragons (16.10), a reminder of the additional difficulty of having to sow the dragon's teeth, and cut down the enemies that arose, before there was any hope of the Argonauts retrieving the Golden Fleece. The peril faced by the human race during the flood is highlighted by reference to the *σχεδία* (14.6) of Noah, the rough craft upon which Ulysses barely escapes with his life in Homer's *Odyssey*.⁸ Also, the labyrinth setting for the events of the Exodus and Passover places both Israel and Egypt in a situation where their chief characteristics, for holiness or wickedness, will emerge as a consequence of the hostile environment, as in a Euripidian play.⁹

The mythological references and poetic vocabulary in *Wisdom* lie deeper than merely the establishment of a common cultural heritage. They are also the heroic and literary values of the Graeco-Roman world, with which our author has attempted to secure Israel's template status among nations who will be judged according to their estimate of her. For her own part, Israel will

6. See Chapter 5, p. 347.

7. See Chapter 1, p. 51 and n. 39.

8. See Chapter 4, p. 238 and n. 55.

9. See Chapter 5, p. 312 and n. 92.

receive the mercy of God. Yet, in her struggles to come to terms with that part, and to recognise the earthly and eternal weight laid upon her, Israel admits to the inexorable nature of God's righteousness. For neither those being judged nor those receiving mercy, is it '*possible to escape your hand*' (16.15). The mercy of God brings with it its own judgement, and the dragon's teeth which close around Israel and her mission in Diptych 3 (16.10) represent her judgement for the sake of the eternal mercy upon which all others depend.

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