

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

LINES OF DEFENCE OF THE BIBLICAL  
REVELATION.

II. THE WISDOM OF BEN-SIRA AND THE WISDOM OF  
SOLOMON.

SINCE we shall be occupied in this chapter with the Wisdom literature as it is called, let us endeavour first to obtain a clear idea of what the Old Testament means by "Wisdom." The author who tells us most clearly what is denoted by it is Ben-Sira.<sup>1</sup> Wisdom, he tells us, is higher than heaven, broader than earth, more unfathomable than the abyss; it has been steadily built up from the beginning;<sup>2</sup> God only knows it, has measured it, and spread it over His works.<sup>3</sup> At the commencement of the world it took up its residence with Adam and abides with his posterity.<sup>4</sup> Fear of the Lord is the commencement of it; yet all mankind have some share of it, only those who fear God have the largest share. Similarly he states that the whole process of creation was done in the presence of Wisdom; and that, being given the choice of all the world, Wisdom, while reserving to herself a *pied-a-terre* in every race, chose Jerusalem,

<sup>1</sup> Ben-Sira's verses can ordinarily be restored by simple retranslation from the Greek, remembering that the verse must have the rhythm  $\bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{\cup}$ .

<sup>2</sup> Ecclus. i. 3, 4:—

נְבִיא שְׁמַיִם רָחַב אָרֶץ  
וּתְהוֹמוֹת קְמָה מִי יִשְׁקֵב  
מִכָּל־אֱלֹהִים רִבְתָּה חִכְמָה  
וּתְבִנָּה קָנָה מִקֶּדֶם

<sup>3</sup> Ecclus. i. 6, 7:—

אֲתֵד הוּא חִכְמָה נִזְרָא לְחַד  
יֹשֵׁב עַל כְּפָאוֹ יְהוָה הוּא  
בְּרָאָה וְרָאָה וּסְפָרָה  
וַיִּשְׁרְנָה עַל כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו (sic).

<sup>4</sup> Ecclus. i. 13:—

עַם אָדָם מִיִּסוּד עוֹלָם הִתְקַדֵּר  
נָנָה יַעַם וְרַעוּתָא מִן

David's city, for her headquarters.<sup>1</sup> And finally he identifies Wisdom with the Bible as it was then known to him. "All this is the Book of the Covenant of the Most High God, with the Law that Moses commanded us, the heritage of the Synagogue of Jacob."<sup>2</sup>

Ben-Sira is not an original writer, but a poetical paraphraser of the ideas of the Old Testament; and the ideas of these paragraphs are also to be found separately or together in the Proverbs, Job, and the Wisdom of Solomon. His identification of Wisdom with the Bible seems however to be his own. And the noble truth that Israel only had a larger share of the treasure in which all races participated to some degree is assuredly nowhere stated so distinctly as in the verses that have been quoted.

What then is this Wisdom? What is there known to us which will suit these descriptions? The answer is of course *science*. It is the privilege of man that he has insight into the works of God; here and there he can grasp their meaning, and the processes by which they are accomplished; not unfrequently he can imitate them. Between instinct and reasoned action there is a gulf that can never be spanned. In the one case the actor and the designer are one; in the other they are wholly different beings. Man is in the image of God, because God as revealed in nature uses the same instrument as man can use; the syllogism with its major premiss of a universal law. So far as the world is carried on by the working of laws, the difference between the work done by nature and that which is performed by man is quantitative rather than qualitative; the building of a human frame and the building of a steam-engine are processes which differ in complication rather than in any other

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. xxiv. 11:—

בְּשֵׁר דְּוֹר בְּן הַיְחִינִי  
וּבִירוּשָׁלַיִם יִשְׂרָאֵל

<sup>2</sup> Ecclus. xxiv. 22.

respect. Hence what Ben-Sira says of Wisdom in the passages quoted is literally true and exact, if we interpret Wisdom as *science*. It was present at the Creation; for the whole universe is the solution of a scientific problem. It took up its abode with Adam at the commencement of human society, because man is the only rational agent who mixes with that society. He only acts because he is acquainted with the laws that make effect follow cause; and the longer the chain of reasoning whereon his conduct is based, the more far-reaching the effects which it contemplates, the more Godlike is his conduct. But on the other hand science has been constantly *built up* from the beginning; not science as known to God, but as known to man. It is an accumulation of observations and deductions from the time when man first became a reasoning being. With constant accumulation facility of conservation and assimilation has also increased. What to one generation has seemed a mighty fabric of science to a later one seems a humble erection: it has *gone on building from the beginning*; no one can prophesy how high the fabric is destined to rise. We are like those insects who contribute (if we are fortunate enough) our grain to the hill, but the ultimate height and shape of the cliff is beyond our ken.

But further, the fear of the Lord is the commencement of the whole.<sup>1</sup> Without morality the continuance of the race would be possible, but its progress would not be possible. Fear, or self-restraint, for however short a period is the necessary condition of all science. The savage who, instead of devouring his captive, makes a slave of him, has started science and civilization; for in view of a future gratification he has restrained a present appetite. And when the pursuit of science itself becomes the absorbing interest, apart from all other gratifications, all of which are sunk in that of the contemplation of the works of God, and

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. i. 12.

intercourse through them with Him, then the fear of the Lord may be said to be a satiation with Wisdom.<sup>1</sup> For the whole being has then become filled with it.

This is not forced into the Hebrew writers, but is the only explanation of their words which will suit every portion of the description. Viewed as God's, science is before the worlds; viewed as man's, it is coeval with him, and has been steadily growing with the growth of human society. Viewed as an instrument for ameliorating man, it is the most effective that Christianity can employ; for by inventing anything you divert possibly an unlimited number of human beings from preying on the others and turn them into co-operators for the general welfare. The more each one of us becomes dependent on all, the more are the interests of all made identical.

Ben-Sira, as we have seen, identifies "Wisdom" with the Bible; thinking, evidently, that the Bible was the complete store of science. And in thinking Scripture science he was right; for clearly morality is no less science than chemistry; and science cannot dispense with history, which furnishes matter for her syllogisms. But in regarding Scripture as the sum total of the knowable he was mistaken, and indeed it may be doubted whether he could have coolly maintained such a view.

The Hymn to Wisdom which forms chapter xxiv. of his Proverbs was composed about 200 B.C. Speaking of Scripture as a whole, then, he says that it is identical with that Wisdom of which so glowing an account is given in chapter i., that the first man did not fully know it, and that the last shall not sound it to the bottom, for it is deep as the ocean, and perennial as the Euphrates. Surely no man could use such language of a book that did not occupy a unique position, such as can only be acquired by long

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. i. 14.

familiarity and reverence. And by Wisdom he means not the Law in the narrower sense, but the Old Testament in the wider sense. For he states that his own work consists of gleanings from it; his book is a rill taken from the great river. Therefore if we can trace the source of his imitations, we know what his Bible was, and what he identified with the Wisdom that helped at the creation of the world. It is not necessary to prove here that Ben-Sira draws matter from all three collections of Biblical books; that may be taken as generally known. But the question that is clearly apposite is—If a collection of books had in 200 B.C. acquired such tremendous authority that a writer of unusual common sense could identify it with the Divine Wisdom—in other words speak of it as Mohammedan writers speak of their Koran—how could any fresh matter be smuggled in to that collection later than 200 B.C.? We might conceive an occasional word or an occasional verse being interpolated, though even this would be difficult: for in Oriental countries a man is not supposed to know anything that he does not know by heart. The Semitic writing is somewhat of a *memoria technica* rather than an accurate representation of sounds. There would be no difficulty in finding Israelites now who could repeat the whole Old Testament verbatim. Such persons would testify to the spuriousness of a new chapter at once; they could also testify to the spuriousness of a new verse or even a new word. If we consider the conservatism which characterizes such persons, it may be doubted whether the introduction of a work of any considerable dimensions into their canon could be executed: if such an operation were performed, the probability is that posterity would hear something of it.

The facts of the Greek translation of Ben-Sira's book being dated and the work of a known man, render it suitable for building inferences. Therefore attention should be called here to some points about the book which show

us that since the completion of the canon Hebrew literature and Hebrew society have greatly altered.

The poetry of the Bible is unmetrical. Attempts to reduce it to metre are utter failures. If there were any metrical laws, they would not shun the light, but be plain and obvious as is the metre of the Vedas or the rhyme of the Koran. But it has no such artifices because it does not require them. "The word of the Lord is tried." It will win approval on its merits only. It thrills more than any other poetry, albeit it is not rendered attractive by such gay costume as other poetry puts on. Such performances as the second or the forty-fifth Psalm are like mountain torrents; the thought of hemming *them* in with locks and regulating their pace with sluices is too absurd for consideration. But by Ben-Sira's time things have changed. Some of the ideas of Greece have found their way into Palestine, and the measuring of syllables is probably one of them. Since inspiration flows now in no such torrents, art has to do something to compensate for the loss. The fact, then, that Ben-Sira's work is metrical shows the gulf that separates the Psalms from 200 B.C.

Secondly, let us compare the society addressed by the author of the second or the forty-fifth Psalm with that to which Ben-Sira speaks. "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be prudent, ye that judge the earth." "Hearken, O daughter, and give ear"—this is how the author of Psalm xlv. addresses a queen! But Ben-Sira's audience is very much humbler. "Make thyself agreeable to the synagogue, and bow thy head before the Rabbi."<sup>1</sup> "Among Rabbis do not exalt thyself, and where there are presbyters do not talk much."<sup>2</sup> What a descent! From a congrega-

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. iv. 7:—

חָבַב נַפְשֶׁךָ לְבָנִים  
וְלָרֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־רֵאשֶׁתְּךָ

<sup>2</sup> Ecclus. xxxv. 9:—

בֵּין רְבִירָבִים אַל תִּתְרַבֵּר  
וְזִקְנִים לֹא תִרְבֶּה תְּסִיחַ (Syx. חֲקָפָה תְּסִיחַ).

tion of kings and queens to one in which the Rabbi of the synagogue is the towering figure! After enumerating the great men of his race the author thinks fit to mention as its last hero a certain Simon son of Onias, of whom unfortunately little is known; but his services to the community seem to have consisted in spending money on public buildings. Ben-Sira is fully conscious of the oppressed condition of the community of which he is a member; he prays for the renewal of the wonders of which he has read so much, and desires that some positive proof should be given of the grandeur of Israel; and it may be that that prayer helped to raise up Judas Maccabæus. But if we wish to find the parallel to the society which Ben-Sira addresses, we shall find it in the works of authors like Saadyah, who writes as a member of a subject community at a time when the Caliphate of Baghdad was supreme in the Eastern world.

Thirdly, a word may be said about Ben-Sira's language. Jewish writers call him "one of our holy Rabbis,"<sup>1</sup> and the specimens which the oral tradition preserved of his verses bear this statement out. He writes the language of the Rabbis, not the language of any part of the Bible. An oral interpretation of large portions of the Old Testament was then current; and when his metre requires it, he substitutes the words used in that oral interpretation for those of the text of the Old Testament. The beginnings of the Mishnah can here and there be traced in his work, and even a few of the technical terms<sup>2</sup> which the scribes evolved in the course of their study of the law. The name Mishnah itself was not yet in circulation, for that is apparently several centuries posterior to the Christian era.

That Ben-Sira knew and used the Wisdom of Solomon

<sup>1</sup> Nahmanides in his Preface to the Law at the end.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, *halachas*, i. 4*d.*



was suggested in the former article. This proposition must now be demonstrated.

In his account of Solomon he states that "the countries marvelled at his *Odes, Parables, Proverbs, and Commentaries.*"<sup>1</sup> Since the first three of these names clearly refer to the writings attributed to Solomon—and indeed "the countries" could scarcely wonder at them except by reading them—it is probable that the fourth word "Commentaries" also refers to a book; the alternate text of this verse substitutes "Prophecies" for "Commentaries," but this is probably a guess at an unusual word. The first three are clearly identical with the Song of Songs, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; for Ecclesiastes is certainly imitated by Ben-Sira; and since the tradition which identified Koheleth or "the Preacher" with Solomon is not known to have sprung up after Ben-Sira's time, we are justified in finding an allusion to it in either "Proverbs" or "Parables." As is well known, the ancient languages do not distinguish very carefully between these two notions, and which ever of these names does not belong to "Proverbs" is intended to signify Ecclesiastes.

The only book ascribed to Solomon which can with justice be called a Commentary is the *Wisdom of Solomon*. A considerable portion of it might be termed a Midrash on the Pentateuch. The purpose of this sort of commentary is not linguistic, but edifying or homiletic; it gives an insight into the deeper or more hidden meaning of events or enactments; and Wisdom not only reminds the reader of, but is occasionally identical with, the desultory comments on passages of Scripture contained in the Mishnah and Gemara. Ben-Sira's assertion that "the first man had not completely understood the Bible,"<sup>2</sup> implies that such commentaries had been tried by many persons.

<sup>1</sup> xlvi. 17.

<sup>2</sup> xxiv. 26 : לא כלה הראשון לדעתה

Secondly, there are places in which Ben-Sira has matter that is very similar to that contained in Wisdom. And in such a case it is reasonable to assign the priority to Wisdom, on the ground that Ben-Sira confesses himself an excerptor.<sup>1</sup> Whether Solomon wrote Wisdom or any one else, the book makes no similar *confession* to that which Ben-Sira makes. The writer of Wisdom claims to have been naturally talented, and by praying for Wisdom to have obtained it. It at any rate lays claim to originality, and in the places where it bears a strong resemblance to other books we shall presently have to inquire into the justice of that claim.

The remarkable passage Wisdom iii. 16 to iv. 6 is too strikingly like certain passages of Ben-Sira's book to admit the possibility of independence. The treble doctrine that is taught in these passages is that the offspring of adultery will not thrive; that even if they live long, it will not avail them; and that childlessness is better than an ill-doing progeny. The corresponding passages of Ben-Sira are xvi. 1-3, xxiii. 22-27, xli. 5-11. If these passages of Ben-Sira be read side by side with those of Wisdom, it will, I think, seem clear that the priority is with the latter. In the first place the verses form a single paragraph in Wisdom, whereas they are scattered about Ben-Sira. Secondly, some things that are clear in Wisdom are obscure in Ben-Sira. "Such fruit," says the author of Wisdom, speaking of adulterous offspring, "is uneatable and generally useless, for such children are a witness to the wickedness of their parents." Compare with this the account of the adulteress in Ben-Sira xxiii. 25: "Her children shall not take root, and her branches shall not give fruit"; and xli. 7, "An impious father shall be reproached by his children, because on his account they shall suffer shame."

Wisdom iv. 1: "Better is childlessness with virtue, for

<sup>1</sup> xxiv. 28.

immortality is in the memory of it, since it is recognised by God and man; whereas a prolific crowd of evildoers will not be of use." Ben-Sira xvi. 1: "Desire not a multitude of *useless* children, neither rejoice over impious sons: if they be many, rejoice not over them, if the fear of the Lord be not with them. For one is better than a thousand, and to die childless than to have impious children."

Wisdom iii. 16: "The children of adulterers shall be without result, and the offspring of unlawful union shall be destroyed. If they be long-lived, they shall not be accounted of: and their old age at the end shall be dishonoured. And if they die quickly, they shall have no hope, neither consolation in the day of discrimination."

Ben-Sira xli. 5 (after observations on the fact that death is appointed to all mankind): "Abominable children are the children of sinners, and they that consort with the dwellings of the impious: woe unto you, impious men, that have abandoned the law of the Most High; if ye are born, ye shall be born unto cursing; and if ye die, a curse shall be your portion." "The grief of men is over their bodies; but the ill name of sinners shall be blotted out. Have a care of your name, for that will last longer than a thousand myriad talents of coin.<sup>1</sup> A good life lasts a few days, whereas a good name lasts for ever."

I can only regard the verses of Ben-Sira as a paraphrase of the doctrine of Wisdom. Immortality may be interpreted in three ways: either (1) as *continuity*; and this interpretation we find in Plato. A man has a share in immortality in so far as he has the power of being a parent. Hence the high importance attached to parenthood in many religious systems. Each citizen is bound to see that the honours of the gods do not lapse; and this can only be by a constant supply of persons to maintain them. But if the offspring be either unlawfully born, or be of bad character, this form

<sup>1</sup> מֵאֵלֶּה רַבּוֹת אוֹצְרוֹת הוּן

of immortality is undesirable. The curious thing is that neither the author of Wisdom nor Ben-Sira can quite distinguish between these two alternatives. (2) As perpetuation of the *name*. Whereas, says the author of Wisdom, the immortality which most men aim at consists in leaving descendants (compare Ben-Sira xxx. 4), virtue gives an immortal *name*. It is admired during life, and mourned for after death. This doctrine is found in Plato also, where the observation is made that the immortality of a Homer or Hesiod is a better thing than the immortality which consists in being one of an infinite series. The thought of this form of immortality is what suggests to Ben-Sira the "praise of famous men" (men of name) with which his book closes. (3) As personal continuance after death. This doctrine involves that of the resurrection and the final judgment. Ben-Sira hopes to be one of those who shall rise at the coming of Elijah. "He of whom it is written in the 'Remonstrances,' that he shall come to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children; happy he who, having seen thee, is cut off: how much happier we who shall arise!"<sup>1</sup> The author of Wisdom is far clearer on this subject. The idea that early or even shameful death is a misfortune is, he says, a mistake due to superficiality. The certainty we have of God's justice proves that the condition of things must have been misunderstood. On the "day of discrimination" the wicked will find out their error—when it is too late to repair it. They will turn out to have forfeited all three sorts of immortality; for their children will not survive; their name, if it survives, will be ignominious; and finally, the next world has no consolation for them, but the very contrary.

<sup>1</sup> xlvi. 10:

הַכְּתוּב בְּתוֹכָהֶן לְאַתּוֹת  
 לְהִשְׁיב לֵב אֲבוֹת אֶל בְּנֵיהֶם  
 אֲשֶׁרֵי רֹאֵה וּמִתְחַרֵּם  
 אִם כִּי אֲנַחְנוּ הִיָּה נְחִיָּה

Whereas, then, in Wisdom we have this (assuredly remarkable) doctrine worked out in a series of closely reasoned paragraphs, the ideas are scattered about Ben-Sira's book: nor is Ben-Sira sufficiently philosophical to banish from his work the commoner notions. It would seem to be characteristic of *proverbial* philosophy not to trouble itself to reconcile the often contradictory aphorisms which superficial examination of phenomena suggests. But what seems clear is that the paragraphs in Ben-Sira and those in Wisdom cannot be independent; the one writer must be adopting the ideas and even the phrases of the other. And since Ben-Sira acknowledges himself an imitator, and seems very clearly to mention Wisdom among Solomon's writings, we are justified in concluding that Ben-Sira imitates Wisdom. Hence we have shown that Wisdom was a Hebrew classic to Ben-Sira, who attributed it to Solomon. In the last paper reasons were given for thinking Wisdom the first Hebrew book translated into Greek. Hence we have taken Wisdom back to about 350 B.C. Let us see whether we can take it back still further.

The chief question that suggests itself is connected with the passage in which the origin of idolatry is explained (xiii. 10-19). Much of this passage is also found in Isaiah xl.-xliv. Is it the case that the verses in Wisdom are taken from Isaiah, or that the verses in Isaiah are taken from Wisdom?

The clue that we have to start with is the same with which the above inquiry in the case of Ben-Sira started. Isaiah is known to embody in his prophecies matter that already existed; so in xvi. 13 he says, "This is the word which the Lord spake against Moab aforetime"; and the prophecy with which chapter ii. starts is also an old one. Wisdom, as we have seen, acknowledges no obligations.

In the second place, the description in Wisdom forms a closely reasoned paragraph, whereas in Isaiah the verses

are scattered and mingled with other matter. Either, then, they are scattered reminiscences of Wisdom utilized by the prophet, or the author of Wisdom has gathered the disconnected verses of Isaiah. The former is the more likely operation.

It is also a canon that the more intelligible passage is likely to be the earlier. In Wisdom everything is clear. After condemning other forms of Paganism, the author proceeds to that which consists in worshipping idols, which he shows us means putting faith in the dead. These idols are either of metal, or of stone, or of wood: The process by which the last is made is then described. Some carpenter cuts down a tree, scrapes off the bark, and first of all makes some utensil or piece of furniture. The sawdust and chips he then uses for cooking his food. Probably some knotty and crooked stump remains, and of this in his idle hours he makes a god. He carves it, that is to say, into the resemblance of a man or some animal, *paints it red*, raises for it a shrine to which he nails it, so that it should not fall: for, being an image, it cannot help itself.

If we compare this description with Isaiah's (xliv. 13-16), we shall find some certain marks of originality in the description given in Wisdom. Isaiah in his indignation has *forgotten one important detail* in the operation; viz., the original purpose of the carpenter in cutting down the tree, which was of course to make some article of furniture. The purpose of the operations with gauge, rule, and pencil described in Isaiah xliv. 13 must surely be to make a table or a chair; but the writer has simply *forgotten that it is so*. The place where the furniture should be mentioned is xliv. 16: "The half thereof he burnt in fire; on the half thereof he eats flesh, he roasts him a roast, and fills himself; yea, he warms himself and says: I am warm, I have seen fire." It is evident that the prophet's idea of the use of the second "half" does not differ materially from the first. Perhaps

we are to distinguish the cooking fire from the warming fire, but this distinction seems strange. Yet in verse 18, where the description is repeated, the real distinction is still obscured. The further operations of fixing the image in the shrine are mentioned by Isaiah xl. 20, where a clever carpenter is sought in order to fix the statue so that it should not fall. The cleverness would seem rather to be required for *shaping the image* out of the wood, as is described in Wisdom xiii. 13.

In Wisdom xv. 7-10 another form of image is described; viz., that produced by the potter. He, we are told, rivals the metal-workers, and thinks it a great thing to counterfeit their work. But it is his heart which is *dust*, and his hope which is more worthless than *earth*, and his life which is more dishonourable than *clay*. For surely he must know how absurd his practice is. Of all forms of image-maker, the potter is the most contemptible. If we study Isaiah xl.-xliv., two phrases will be found that seem to come from the Solomonic description.

xliv. 20: "He feedeth on dust; a deceived heart has made him to swerve," follows after the account of the worker in wood. For the words "he feedeth on dust" the LXX. substitutes what is clearly a reminiscence of the passage of Wisdom, "know that his heart is dust." This reminiscence is felicitous, but not employed with sufficient dexterity; it should rather have taught them to render the words of Isaiah, "his thought is dust:<sup>1</sup> a deceived heart has led him astray." Thus it appears that both writers use the same phrase, the author of Wisdom of the potter, Isaiah of the worker in wood. But in Wisdom it is suggested by the context. The potter is said to be the most contemptible of the idol-makers, because his material is *worthless*. Gold and silver are at any rate precious metals; and wood is not valueless, for a special kind of tree has to

<sup>1</sup> Pointing רָעָה for רָעָה.

be sought out for such a purpose ; but *clay* is worthless, so that to make a god of *it* is the grossest form of Paganism. The brains of such an idol-maker must be as worthless as his material. And the writer repeats this thought twice.

But in Isaiah, where the sort of idol described is one of *wood*, this thought is not suggested by the context, since the prophet allows that the material is of some value. We might, indeed, render the word translated "dust" by "ashes," and think of a reference to the parts of the tree that have been *burned*; but we should have to supply in thought too many premisses, in addition to the fact that it is unfair to identify the material (wood) in the state in which an idol can be made of it with the same material in a wholly different state. Hence we have two writers employing the same phrase, and one so remarkable in its character that they cannot be employing it independently. To one of these writers it is suggested by his context, while to the other it is not suggested by the context, though the context may very well have *reminded* him of it. Hence it must be the property of the former writer, and borrowed by the latter.

Next we see that the author of Wisdom taunts the potter with *rivalling* the workers in more choice material. Compare with this Isaiah xli. 6 : "Each man helps his neighbour and says to his brother, Be strong." "So the smith strengthened the smelter, the hammerer the forger. Saying of the soldering, It is good, and strengthening it with nails that it should not fall." This "strengthening" would seem to refer to the co-operation of various labourers in making an idol ; it reminds us of the word *rivalling* used in Wisdom of the potter, which would probably be expressed in Hebrew by a derivative of the same root.<sup>1</sup> Moreover we have seen already that the operation of fixing

<sup>1</sup> קח.



with nails seems to belong rather to the case of the wooden idol with which Wisdom associates it.

A point noticed by the author of Wisdom, but not by Isaiah, is the painting of the wooden image with red chalk or red lead. The localization of this practice would require some archæological investigation.<sup>1</sup> The combination of this statement in Wisdom with the other about nailing the image to its place reminds us of a fragment quoted by Suidas,<sup>2</sup> which refers to the treatment of an image by the people of *Tyre*. At the time of the attack on their city by Alexander the Tyrians, fearing that one of their idols intended to desert to the enemy, "nailed it to its base, and scourged it with ropes steeped in red lead." I presume that the purpose of that substance was to make it seem as though the scourging had drawn blood.

Whereas then the supposition that the stray flashes in Isaiah were combined by the author of Wisdom into his orderly and closely reasoned paragraphs presents considerable difficulty, the hypothesis that Isaiah wove into his "remonstrances" various phrases taken from the passage in Wisdom suits all the facts that are before us.

Isaiah xxviii. 15: "Ye have said, We have made a covenant with death and a treaty with the grave." The idea of making a covenant with death is not quite easy to grasp. People who thoughtlessly devote themselves to pleasure are sometimes said to act as though they had *immunity* from death;<sup>3</sup> but to make a *covenant* with death implies giving and taking. What is it, then, that the drunkards reproved by Isaiah give death in order that they in turn may be delivered from the passing scourge? This is not stated by the prophet, who only assures them that their covenant

<sup>1</sup> Pliny asserts that the gods of the Ethiopians were painted red.

<sup>2</sup> *s.v.* *μυλτρος*.

<sup>3</sup> Hariri, ed. de Sacy, p. 108: "'Tis as though ye had put yourselves under the protection of death, and had procured a safe-conduct from destiny.

will be got rid of; death will find a quibble by which to get out of it.<sup>1</sup> But in Wisdom i. 16, where the same phrase occurs, we again find ourselves in the middle of a closely reasoned paragraph, which tells us far more of the nature of the contract in question. Death had originally no part in the world. It is the conduct of the wicked that has summoned him. "Thinking him a friend, they melted (?) and made a treaty with him." Of what notion the word "melted" is a mistranslation it is not necessary now to inquire;<sup>2</sup> we learn, however, that the treaty with death was to admit him into the world on condition that he spared them. This, then, seems to be the same phenomenon as before: what is a flash in Isaiah is part of a steady flame in Wisdom. And when this reminiscence has been identified, other points in Isaiah xxviii. are made more intelligible by the same clue. The coarse verse xxviii. 8 is the prophetic representation of Wisdom ii. 7: "Let us leave everywhere signs of our merriment." The "crown of pride of the drunkards," which is the subject of verses 1, 3, and 4 in Isaiah, is the crown of rose-blossoms which the drunkards in Wisdom would put on before they fade.

Isaiah xl. 15: "With whom took He counsel? For the nations are like a drop *from a bucket*, and are accounted as the dust of the balance." Wisdom xi. 22: "Who shall resist the might of Thy arm, seeing that the nations before Thee are like the dust of the balance, or like a drop of morning dew *descending*<sup>3</sup> to the earth?" It is evident that either Isaiah is imitating Wisdom, or the author of Wisdom is imitating Isaiah. In the case of one of these images the imitation is close, in that of the other it is remote. The context must decide with whom the originality lies. The

<sup>1</sup> The phrase in Isaiah is very near the Arabic usage.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps הִסְסוּ in Syriac, "they sought" (*Theo. Syr.*, col. 1021).

<sup>3</sup> The word סֹרֵלִי (from a bucket) is used with the sense "ascending" of dust in B. *Taanith*, 9b.

author of Wisdom is dealing with the power of God as compared with that of *man*. He chooses to punish men in kind (compare B. *Sotah*, 9b), *i.e.*, in the same manner as they have sinned. And this must be designed; for owing to His almighty power he could punish them in any way He chose. For who can resist Him, seeing how infinitely great He is as compared with man? Here, therefore, the context requires that the infinite disproportion between man and God should be illustrated in some such way as is here given. But in the passage of Isaiah there is no such necessity. It is the *absolute* greatness of God with which the prophet is occupied; he is explaining how utterly unworthy of Him is the idea which the idol represents. Hence the *nations* are only mentioned in a series of objects; they are followed by the *isles*; then by the forest and the herds of Lebanon, which together would not produce an adequate sacrifice. The context does not, therefore, necessitate an illustration of the triviality of the nations. If the author of the Wisdom of Solomon were consciously borrowing a phrase from either the original of Isaiah or from the LXX. version, his altering it would be surprising; but if he altered it in order to avoid the appearance of anachronism, it is strange that he should not have altered it more completely. On the other hand, there would be nothing remarkable in Isaiah, while utilizing the phrases of a national classic, altering them arbitrarily.

What the two illustrations actually meant is another question. If the "dust of the balance" mean a weight so small that its addition or subtraction makes no appreciable difference, it is an appropriate concept, though the possibility of such an interpretation is doubtful. "The drop from the bucket" is picturesque, but suggests the disproportion less forcibly than we should have expected it to be expressed: in Wisdom the drop of morning dew is sufficiently forcible as well as picturesque, but scarcely natural. Probably the

actual illustrations which lie at the base of both passages are lost.

The most remarkable parallel between Isaiah and Wisdom is, however, to be found in the celebrated fifty-third of Isaiah as compared with Wisdom ii.-v.

The chief differences between the scene presented in Wisdom and that in Isaiah are three: (1) In Wisdom the Sufferer is distinctly said to call Himself the *Son of God* (ii. 16, 18), whereas in Isaiah the words Righteous and Servant are applied to Him, but not Son. (2) In Wisdom nothing is said of His intercessory function, on which so much stress is laid by Isaiah. (3) In Wisdom the oppressors of the Just One are identified with those who afterwards marvel at His deliverance, whereas in Isaiah there is not more than a passing allusion to this.

Otherwise the scene in Isaiah greatly resembles a reduction or abridgment of the scene in Wisdom. What is it at which the nations and kings, whose words are recorded in Isaiah liii., wonder? Wisdom tells us: "They shall wonder at His extraordinary deliverance" (v. 2). "We thought His life madness and His end dishonoured: how then is He reckoned among the Sons of God, and His lot among the Holy Ones?" Wisdom says, "His endurance must be put to the test" (ii. 19); Isaiah adds that this test was properly undergone. The dishonourable *death* is insisted on by Wisdom (ii. 20, v. 4), while the remarkable character of His *burial* strikes Isaiah (liii. 9). Even Isaiah's first phrase in this most remarkable passage seems to require Wisdom to interpret it: "Behold my Servant shall be prudent" (lii. 13). This must mean what we are told in Wisdom (iii. 9): "They that trust in Him shall understand the truth, and those that are fearful in love shall wait for Him," *i.e.*, shall understand the Divine counsel in allowing apparent injustice to be perpetrated, whereas the wicked who interpret the facts superficially are absolutely deluded (ii. 22).

Although in these two passages there are striking differences, as well as similarities, and the comparison between them by no means lessens the admiration which each of the writers may claim, it seems rather easier to think of Wisdom as utilized by Isaiah than of Isaiah as utilized by Wisdom. The phrase "Righteous, my Servant" (Isaiah liii. 11) implies familiarity on the prophet's part with the identification of the typically Righteous One with the Servant of the Lord, and this identification needs Wisdom ii. 12, 13 to explain it: "Let us waylay the Righteous, for He is grievous unto us; He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls Himself the Servant of God." 18: "If the Righteous be the Son of God, He will help Him." v. 1: "Then shall the Righteous stand with much boldness before the face of His oppressors." Here we see that the name whereby He is familiarly known to the author of Wisdom is "the Righteous," whereas to Isaiah He is best known as "the Servant of the Lord." But the name "Righteous" is so familiar to Isaiah that he can use it as a proper name without the article; whereas in Wisdom (ii. 13), where the statement that the Righteous is God's servant is regarded as an arrogant assumption by the wicked, which they propose to put to the test, the latter is clearly not yet a familiar phrase in this context. Hence Isaiah implies Wisdom, but Wisdom does not imply Isaiah.

"By His knowledge shall Righteous, my Servant, justify many." Here again the thought is not sufficiently clear without the guidance of Wisdom (ii. 13): "He professes to have knowledge of God." His insight into God's purpose is what, enabling Him to stand every trial, justifies the human race, because Satan's accusation against it is answered. In the chapter on Job this will be more fully worked out.

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.

(To be continued.)