

# 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:



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



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jts-os\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article]

## NOTES AND STUDIES

## THE DIVINE WISDOM

DIODORUS SICULUS (*Bibl. Hist.* 1. 27. 3) tells us that, according to some writers, at Nyssa in Arabia two *stelae* are to be seen with hieroglyphic inscriptions, stating that they were the tombs of Isis and Osiris. The greater part had perished through age. He proceeds to quote the epitaphs.

'Nyssa in Arabia' is suspicious, since it was one of the birthplaces of Dionysus: in any case the euhemerism which makes these monuments graves is no doubt due to Diodorus or his informant. Since the 'epitaph' of Isis consists of the first eight clauses and the last clause of her well-known 'aretalogy' at Cyme and Ios, there seems no reason to doubt that his informant had seen the 'aretalogy' somewhere, in a condition in which, owing to age, only the opening and the last clause were still legible. The existing texts appear to date from the first to second century A.D.

The fullest version of the aretalogy, that of Cyme, runs as follows (the text is that given by W. Peek, the introductory clauses<sup>1</sup> being omitted; the clauses are numbered as in Peek):

(3) Εἷς ἐγὼ εἰμι ἢ τύραννος πάσης χώρας καὶ ἐπαιδεύθην ὑπὸ Ἑρμοῦ καὶ γράμματα εἶρον μετὰ Ἑρμοῦ τὰ τε ἱερὰ καὶ τὰ δημόσια ἵνα μὴ τοῖς αὐτοῖς πάντα γράφηται. (4) ἐγὼ νόμους ἀνθρώποις ἐθέμην καὶ ἐνομοθέτησα ἃ οὐθεὶς δύναται μεταθεῖναι. (5) ἐγὼ εἰμι Κρόνου θυγάτηρ πρεσβυτάτη. (6) ἐγὼ εἰμι γυνὴ καὶ ἀδελφὴ Ὀσειρίδος βασιλέως. (7) ἐγὼ εἰμι ἢ καρπὸν ἀνθρώποις εὐρούσα. (8) ἐγὼ εἰμι μήτηρ Ὀρου βασιλέως. (9) ἐγὼ εἰμι ἢ ἐν τῷ τοῦ Κυνὸς ἄστρῳ ἐπιτέλλουσα. (10) ἐγὼ εἰμι ἢ παρὰ γυναιξὶ θεὸς καλουμένη. (11) ἐμοὶ Βούβαστος πόλις ὑποδομήθη. (12) ἐγὼ ἐχώρισα γῆν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ. (13) ἐγὼ ἄστρων ὁδοὺς ἔδειξα. (14) ἐγὼ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης πορείαν συνεταξάμην. (15) ἐγὼ θαλάσσια ἔργα εἶρον. (16) ἐγὼ τὸ δίκαιον ἰσχυρὸν ἐποίησα. (17) ἐγὼ γυναῖκα καὶ ἀνδρα συνήγαγον. (18) ἐγὼ γυναικὶ δεκαμηνιαῖον βρέφος εἰς φῶς ἐξενεγκεῖν ἔταξα. (19) ἐγὼ ὑπὸ τέκνου γονεῖς ἐνομοθέτησα φιλοστοργεῖσθαι. (20) ἐγὼ τοῖς ἀστόργως γονεῦσιν διακειμένους τιμωρίαν ἐπέθηκα. (21) ἐγὼ μετὰ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ Ὀσιρίδος τὰς ἀνθρωποφαγίας ἔπαυσα. (22) ἐγὼ μνήσεις ἀνθρώποις ἐπέδειξα. (23) ἐγὼ ἀγάλματα θεῶν τιμῶν ἐδίδαξα. (24) ἐγὼ τέμνη θεῶν ἰδρυσάμην. (25) ἐγὼ τυράννων

<sup>1</sup> For the full texts, with several paraphrases of them in various styles of verse, cf. Peek *Die Isis-Hymne von Andros* (Berlin, 1930) 122-125. A text of the Ios inscription in Deissmann *Licht von Osten* p. 91. Professor A. D. Nock (*Conversion*, p. 48) ascribes these documents to the Ptolemaic establishment of the Isis-Sarapis cult.

ἀρχὰς κατέλυσα. (26) ἐγὼ φόνους ἔπαυσα. (27) ἐγὼ στέργεσθαι γυναικας ὑπὸ ἀνδρῶν ἠνάγκασα. (28) ἐγὼ τὸ δίκαιον ἰσχυρότερον χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργυρίου ἐποίησα. (29) ἐγὼ τὸ ἀληθὲς καλὸν ἐνομοθέτησα νομίζεσθαι. (30) ἐγὼ συγγραφὰς γαμικὰς εὔρον. (31) ἐγὼ διαλέκτους Ἑλλησι καὶ βαρβάροις ἔταξα. (32) ἐγὼ τὸ καλὸν καὶ αἰσχρὸν διαγεινώσκεσθαι ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως ἐποίησα. (33) ἐγὼ ὄρκου φοβερώτερον οὐθὲν ἐποίησα. (34) ἐγὼ τὸν ἀδίκως ἐπιβουλεύοντα ἄλλοις ὑποχείριον τῷ ἐπιβουλενομένῳ παρέδωκα. (35) ἐγὼ τοῖς ἀδίκως πράσσουσιν τιμωρίαν ἐπιτίθημι. (36) ἐγὼ ἰκέτας ἐλεᾶν ἐνομοθέτησα. (37) ἐγὼ τοὺς δικαίως ἀμυνομένους τιμῶ. (38) παρ' ἐμοὶ τὸ δίκαιον ἰσχύει. (39) ἐγὼ ποταμῶν καὶ ἀνέμων καὶ θαλάσσης εἰμι κυρία. (40) Οὐθεὶς δοξάζεται ἀνεὺ τῆς ἐμῆς γνώμης. (41) ἐγὼ εἰμι πολέμου κυρία. (42) ἐγὼ κεραίνου κυρία εἰμί. (43) ἐγὼ κυμαίνω καὶ πραινῶ θάλασσαν. (44) ἐγὼ ἐν ταῖς τοῦ ἡλίου αὐγαῖς εἰμί. (45) ἐγὼ παρεδρεύω τῇ τοῦ ἡλίου πορείᾳ. (46) ὃ ἂν ἐμοὶ δόξῃ τοῦτο καὶ τελείται. (47) ἐμοὶ πάντ' ἐπέεικε. (48) ἐγὼ τοὺς ἐν δεσμοῖς λύω. (49) ἐγὼ ναυτιλίας εἰμι κυρία. (50) ἐγὼ τὰ πλωτὰ ἅπλωτα ποιῶ ὅταν ἐμοὶ δόξῃ. (51) ἐγὼ περιβόλους πόλεων ἔκτισα. (52) ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ θεομοφόρος καλουμένη. (53) ἐγὼ νήσους ἐκ βυθῶν εἰς φῶς ἀνήγαγον. (54) ἐγὼ ὄμβρων εἰμι κυρία. (55) ἐγὼ τὸ εἰμαρμένον νικῶ. (56) ἐμοὶ τὸ εἰμαρμένον ἀκούει. (57) Χαῖρε Ἄιγυπτε θρέψασά με.

From other documents which survive it is clear that the aretalogy represents a more or less canonical form of Isis's praises of herself.<sup>1</sup> It will be seen that every clause but three begins with 'Εγὼ. Isis proclaims her greatness to the world, a fashion alien alike to the Greek hymn<sup>2</sup> and the Hebrew Psalm.<sup>3</sup> The Greek texts have a curious habit of repeating the same thought in almost the same words in widely separated clauses; this may be due to the objection of a Greek translator to the common Egyptian practice of repeating the same thought in several almost identical phrases immediately following one another.<sup>4</sup> Consequently our versions represent a considerable rearrangement of the Egyptian text.

Deissmann (l.c.) notes the resemblance of this 'I-style' to the personified Wisdom, which suddenly appears in Prov. viii. Apart from this one feature there are only isolated resemblances of language; for instance, cl. 12 ἐγὼ ἐχώρισα γῆν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ<sup>5</sup> suggests Prov. viii 29, and clauses 22-24 ἐγὼ μνήσεις ἀνθρώποις ἐπέδειξα. ἐγὼ ἀγάλματα θεῶν τιμῶν ἐδίδαξα. ἐγὼ τεμένη θεῶν ἰδρυσάμην suggest Wisd. viii 4 and 8-9; cf. Prov. viii 19. The polytheism of the opening clauses could only be

<sup>1</sup> Other specimens are given by Peek *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Peek *op. cit.* 29.

<sup>3</sup> Even in such Psalms as l and lxxxii, where God speaks at some length, He is more concerned to rebuke the sinner than to proclaim His own greatness.

<sup>4</sup> Peek *op. cit.* 159.

<sup>5</sup> The numbers of the clauses are those of Peek.

reproduced in Judaism with a drastic revision, while the pantheism of the Egyptian, e.g. cl. 44 ἐγὼ ἐν ταῖς τοῦ ἡλίου ἀργαῖς εἰμί is alien to the 'deistic' view of creation characteristic of Judaism before Philo.<sup>1</sup> When, however, allowance has been made for these differences and the dislocation of the text, the resemblance between the two figures is remarkable, the more so when it is remembered that the personal Wisdom appears quite suddenly in Judaism and is obviously interpolated,<sup>2</sup> that she is entirely alien to the whole tradition of post-exilic Judaism, and that she represents some literary convention which the compiler or author regards as something given, with which he must comply.<sup>3</sup> This resemblance can hardly be due to accident. For Isis is the oldest daughter of Cronos, as Wisdom is the oldest and favourite child of God, Isis is the source of law, government, and justice, the teacher and rewarder of virtue, precisely as is the Wisdom of Proverbs; she is the city-goddess (of Bubastis) and the teacher of institutional religion, as is Wisdom in Ecclesiasticus and the Book of Wisdom. The figure in Proverbs lacks these functions, but has the larger cosmic role and follows Isis more closely in her interest in law and ethics.

In Ecclesiasticus xxiv Wisdom becomes a far more personal figure. She is present at the creation of heaven, water, and earth<sup>4</sup>; this is followed by a search of Wisdom throughout the whole cosmos, which ends with her establishment in Israel and especially in the Holy City and the Temple. From this we go on to a comparison of Wisdom to the cedars and cypresses of Lebanon, followed by all the trees and shrubs of the low countries, including those used for the incense of the tabernacle, and the vine; the reader is invited to feast on her fruits. This is

<sup>1</sup> Even in Philo the Wisdom-Logos plays no real part as the divine element immanent in the material. In the Wisdom of Solomon, though Wisdom is said to permeate all things, the writer is only concerned with her as permeating the spiritual world.

<sup>2</sup> The 'interpolator' may be the last compiler who brought the books to their present form. But the panegyrics of Wisdom can in all cases be omitted: even the short interpolation of Prov. iii 19 has no connexion with what precedes it.

<sup>3</sup> Note the formal introduction of Wisdom in order that she may praise herself in Prov. viii 1 and Eccles. xxiv 1, and cf. Wisd. viii 3. A curious feature is her association with 'better than rubies' (Prov. iii 15, viii 11, Job xxviii 18). The word *peninim* occurs six times in the O.T.; besides these three times, once in Prov. xx 15 in a 'Wisdom' connexion (lips of knowledge) and once of the virtuous wife (Prov. xxxi 10). Further, Hannah, the favourite wife, is 'better than Peninnah' in 1 Sam. i. It looks as though 'better than rubies' was a Hebrew proverb for a good wife; if so, there is a very strong personification in its application to Wisdom.

<sup>4</sup> In Prov. viii 24 sqq. we have earth and water before heaven; this seems to reflect the narrative of Genesis, where we have a creation of the 'firmament of heaven' first, but of the heavenly bodies only after water and earth on the fourth day.

followed by this equation of Wisdom to the Torah, which takes the form of a comparison to the four great rivers of Paradise and the Jordan.

This closing section (*vv.* 23 sqq.) may be ignored for our present purposes. It begins with a suspiciously abrupt transition from the invitation to feast on Wisdom, which ought to be the end of the panegyric, since it is a revision of the thought of Prov. viii 19 and the banquet of Wisdom in ix 1-6.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is a Greek interpolation; both Torah and Wisdom are feminine in Hebrew, while a river—whether in Greek or Hebrew—is always masculine, and a Greek river is always a God. It might be argued that a Jew would not be bound by heathen conventions; but Philo, who always equates Wisdom with springs and wells, only once equates her with a river.<sup>2</sup> Here the equation with wisdom or virtue is necessitated by the contrast between the Nile of Gen. xv 18, symbolizing the material in accordance with the usual convention, and the Euphrates, which has to be something good; wisdom in this passage is hardly the personified cosmic Wisdom so much as wisdom as a quality of God. Since the cosmic Wisdom in Philo is regularly a survival from the older tradition of the synagogue of Alexandria, which cannot always be replaced by the Logos, it is clear that the classical convention normally prevents the equation of a feminine Torah or *Hokmah* with a river; it seems, therefore, fairly clear that Ecclus. xxiv 23 ff. are an interpolation by a writer who thought (even if he did not write) in Greek, where an equation of the masculine *νόμος* with a river offered no difficulty.

The rest of the changes are significant. Wisdom's search through the Cosmos, which ends with her establishment at Jerusalem, seems very hard to explain from any Jewish form of thought. Yet a quest of Wisdom reappears in the tantalizing Enoch-fragment (1 Enoch xlii); the quests of Wisdom are the main theme of the cosmogony of Valentinus<sup>3</sup>; and I strongly suspect that Job xxviii, another interpolated Wisdom-fragment, represents not a cosmic myth, based on a search for

<sup>1</sup> This banquet in Proverbs is simply a continuation of the general line of thought of Prov. vii 27. The 'strange woman's' invitation leads on naturally to Wisdom's counter-invitation. The seven pillars need be no more than the normal arrangement of an Eastern house; if they represent anything more, it is hardly likely that they have anything to do with the seven-storied temples of Babylon (Rankin *Israel's Wisdom Literature* 252); if they represent anything, they would naturally mean the seven planets, since Wisdom's house is the whole universe.

<sup>2</sup> *Q. R. D. H.* 62 (315 M. 1. 518). In *Leg. Alleg.* 1. 19 (63 M. 1. 56) the river of Paradise is 'generic goodness' which is at once identified with the Logos. The four rivers have to symbolize virtues, but not 'personified' virtues. Isis in the aretology is mistress of rivers but only as part of her control of nature.

<sup>3</sup> For the quest of Wisdom in Valentinus cf. the role of Isis in Plutarch *De Is. et Os.* 78, 383 A.

Wisdom as a tree of life hidden in a remote or lost Paradise, the evidence for which is remarkably thin,<sup>1</sup> but a rationalization of Wisdom's quest throughout the cosmos. Given the unnatural idea of Wisdom searching for something, it would be simple to transform it into mankind's search for Wisdom.

The main feature of the story of Isis was her quest for the lost Osiris; it was the subject of the main festival of the Isiac calendar.<sup>2</sup> It does not figure in the aretology, but it was too well known to be needed: the character of Isis as a questing goddess had led to her identification with Demeter as early as Herodotus<sup>3</sup>; and the Eleusinian influence in the Ptolemaic form of the Isis-cult would emphasize this aspect of the story. On the other hand, the close association of Wisdom with Jerusalem and the chosen people, though it has a precedent in the aretology (clauses 11 and 57), hardly seems to fit the character of Isis; she was at the time becoming a cosmopolitan goddess, and the local connexions are passed over lightly for obvious reasons. Still there is no reason why in a free composition of this type Jewish patriotism should not have free play. But the next section cannot be suited to Isis in her proper character at all. She does claim to have invented 'fruit' for man, but this means no more than crops; the hymn-writer of Andros who paraphrases the aretology interprets it to mean that she discovered corn and so put an end to cannibalism.<sup>4</sup> In her proper character Isis has nothing to do with the cedars and cypresses of Lebanon. But her acquired connexion with trees was ancient and intimate; Egyptian fleets had to be built with timber from Lebanon.<sup>5</sup> Isis had from remote antiquity acquired a second home at Byblus, where, all unknown, she had nursed the child of Queen Astarte, in order to be near the grave of Osiris.<sup>6</sup> The identification of Adonis and Osiris would involve the identification of Isis with Astarte; this identification can be traced back to the third millennium B.C.<sup>7</sup> It appears on coins of Antiochus Epiphanes.<sup>8</sup> Astarte as the great

<sup>1</sup> For the opposite view cf. Rankin *op. cit.* p. 237. The Jewish creation-story might lead to such ideas; we find wisdom as a 'tree of life' in Prov. iii 18, and again in Philo *Leg. Alleg.* 3. 17 (52 M. 1. 97), and in the Adam and Eve story Adam on his death-bed sends Eve and Seth to find the oil of mercy from the tree of life (*Ad. et Ev.* 32, Charles *Ap. and Ps.* 2. 143); cf. the quest of Gilgamesh in the Babylonian epic. But the connexion is rather thin, and I strongly suspect Job of being an attempt to get rid of the awkward personality of Wisdom.

<sup>2</sup> Cumont, *Les Religions orientales* (4th ed.) 94.

<sup>3</sup> ii. 59.

<sup>4</sup> Isis-hymn of Andros 45; for the text cf. Peek *op. cit.* 17.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Baudissin *Adonis und Esmun* 193.

<sup>6</sup> Plutarch *De Is. et Os.* 15, 357 B; Baudissin *op. cit.* 185 sqq.

<sup>7</sup> S. A. Cook *Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology* 108.

<sup>8</sup> Baudissin *op. cit.* p. 196; it appears doubtful whether the coins show Isis dressed as Astarte or Astarte dressed as Isis.

mother goddess was appropriately symbolized by the cedars of Lebanon ; sacrifices were offered to her before the felling of cedars for the Egyptian fleet.<sup>1</sup> Trees had replaced the primitive *asherah* of Semitic worship before the period of the Mishnah, which assumes that the heathen worship sacred trees.<sup>2</sup> Nor was the bounty of Astarte confined to these particular trees ; all the trees of the forest and the luxuriant shrubs of the plains were expressions of the great mother-goddess of nature.<sup>3</sup> Thus Isis would find no difficulty in appropriating the symbolism of her Syrian rival. But though Isis in the end triumphed, her rival of Syria was not defeated without a struggle : the well-known inscription of Carvoran<sup>4</sup> equates the Syrian goddess with Peace, Virtue, and Ceres ; she is the Virgin, wreathed with ears of corn, inventress of Justice, foundress of cities. The language is distinctly reminiscent of the aretology, and the identification with Ceres-Demeter striking. Even more remarkable is the statement of Philo of Byblus (*Eus. Pr. Ev.* i 10. 21) that Astarte 'put on her head a bull's head as the sign of queenship, and that, wandering about the world, she found a meteorite, which she picked up and dedicated in the Holy Isle of Tyre'. The horns, if borrowed from Isis,<sup>5</sup> were borrowed long before the dawn of history ; but the quest would seem to have been borrowed in the Hellenistic age to provide Astarte of Tyre with a popular feature of her Egyptian rival ; the sacred meteorite was presumably a suitable peg on which to hang the story.

Thus the figure of Wisdom in Ecclesiasticus shows a startling affinity to a Syrian Astarte with features of Isis ; it is probable that the insistence on Jerusalem reflects the character of Astarte as a city-goddess, rather than the faint reminiscences of Isis's association with Egypt and Bubastis. The bounties of nature described in Ecclesiasticus appear on the coins

<sup>1</sup> Baudissin *op. cit.* p. 193. It may be noted that in Babylonian epic the cedar-forests are sacred to Irnini-Ishtar, and the abode of the monster Humbaba, who has found his way into the cult of the Syrian goddess in a romance which replaces an older legend of the temple of Hierapolis (*Lucian De Dea Syria* 19, and cf. Harmon's note *ad loc.* in the Loeb edition, and Garstang *The Syrian Goddess* 58 n. 35). Gressmann, however, denies the connexion in *Das Gilgamesch Epos* 111 n. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Elmslie's note on *Aboda Zara* (*Texts and Studies* viii 2) 60, where Lagrange is quoted for the view that the cypress may have come into favour as the cult of Attis penetrated through Asia Minor. Whether the tree was worshipped as the goddess or the abode of the goddess or the symbol of the goddess is irrelevant from the point of view of Judaism and primitive Christianity. For the cypress as a symbol of the mother-goddess cf. further Furtwangler in Roscher *Lexikon* i 395.

<sup>3</sup> Baudissin *op. cit.* p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Nock *op. cit.* 136.

<sup>5</sup> So Meyer in Roscher *Lexikon* i 651 ; but see Cook *op. cit.* 105 and 126 for evidence that this peculiar head-dress was borrowed by Isis-Hathor from Anath or Astarte. For the identification of Isis and Astarte in the Hellenistic age cf. Baudissin *Kyrios als Gottesname* ii 268.

of Jerusalem of the Hellenistic period on which 'there is a predilection for palms, grapes, and baskets of fruits and cornucopias'.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the allusion to the incense in the Tabernacle (Ecclus. xxiv 21), which, strictly speaking, breaks into the catalogue of trees and shrubs, may refer to the fact that it symbolizes 'the daily offering of the cosmos fashioned by divine Wisdom'<sup>2</sup>; the daily incense offering was a feature of the Isis-cult, but unfortunately Plutarch's explanation of its symbolism is defective.<sup>3</sup> Naturally it is possible that the Syrian goddess should have adopted an Alexandrine explanation of the use of incense.

The sudden personification of Wisdom in these Jewish documents appears at a significant moment. The opening chapters of Proverbs (i-ix) are dated by Oesterley<sup>4</sup> and Nowack<sup>5</sup> at about 250 B.C., while Ecclesiasticus dates itself about 180 B.C.<sup>6</sup> The revised Isis-Sarapis cult was established by Ptolemy I about 300 B.C.<sup>7</sup> During the period when Proverbs viii was written, Judaea fell within the Empire of the Ptolemaic dynasty, of which it remained part until 198 B.C. It is not unnatural that Jewish monotheism, as established by Ezra and his successors, might be seriously threatened by a semi-official cultus of this type, which was compatible with a high morality, and could be interpreted in a more or less monotheistic sense, though it is perhaps doubtful whether allegorization of pagan cults in a monotheistic sense had made much headway outside strictly philosophical circles by this date. In any case Jewish monotheism was a fairly recent establishment in 300 B.C., and young Jews, seeking advancement under the Ptolemaic dynasty, might find it hard to resist the attractions of Isis. The personified Wisdom is the answer of orthodox Judaism: the source of order in creation and conduct is not Isis, but the Wisdom of God. Wisdom had already been canonized as the nature of God and the ideal of man; she now becomes personified.

How far she is by implication the Torah is not clear; she is never specifically identified till the river-interpolation of Ecclus. xxiv 23, which

<sup>1</sup> Cook *op. cit.* 193.

<sup>2</sup> Philo *Q. R. D. H.* 41 (199, M. r. 500).

<sup>3</sup> *De Is. et Os.* 79, 383 A; the allusion to its sixteen components as having a mystical numerical significance suggests a cosmic significance; in Philo the symbolism is part of a panegyric on the virtue of equality (symbolized by the four components of the incense in the Tabernacle), while Plutarch's symbolism is influenced by Pythagorean doctrine (compare his treatment of the atmosphere by day and night with Pythagoras *op. Diog. Laert.* viii 26).

<sup>4</sup> Oesterley in *Westminster Commentaries, Proverbs* p. xxvi puts the first ten chapters in the middle of the third century B.C. by 'general consensus'.

<sup>5</sup> Hastings's *D. B.* Art. PROVERBS iv 142.

<sup>6</sup> Box and Oesterley in Charles *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* i 295.

<sup>7</sup> Nock *op. cit.* 38, where evidence is quoted to show that the cult was known to Menander, who died before 290 B.C.



dates at earliest from 132 B.C. Meanwhile Wisdom in this book has taken on a changed and far more mythological character, approximating to the Syrian mother-goddess rather than to the vague and shadowy Isis of the aretalogies. Is it a pure coincidence that the change appears in a work written after the transfer of Judaea from the Ptolemaic to the Seleucid Empire, when the temptation would be to conform to the religion of Antioch rather than of Alexandria? In the competition for the position of the universal world-goddess the more marked personal character of Astarte was a source of weakness when compared with the capacity of Isis to assume any form whatsoever<sup>1</sup>; but the weakness would not affect her appeal to Jews, since her character was definitely Semitic. The figure of Wisdom has been modified to meet a change in the nature of the danger.

A confirmation of the identity of Isis and Wisdom appears in the description of Wisdom as 'heavenly and many-named' by Philo.<sup>2</sup> There is no reason why the Jewish Wisdom should be many-named, but Isis is not only *multinominis*<sup>3</sup> but *μυριώνυμος*<sup>4</sup>; she is so rightly, since she can assume the name of any goddess.<sup>5</sup>

Thus I suggest we have first a document, or more probably a tradition of oral teaching, in which a Wisdom, modelled on Isis of the aretalogy and similar utterances, praises herself. In this tradition the story of the quest of Isis was changed into the wandering of Wisdom through the world. In Proverbs the mythology has been omitted, and we have nothing from outside the aretalogy type. In Job we have the quest of Isis rationalized into a quest for Wisdom. In Ecclesiasticus we have a Wisdom modelled on a more mythological version, in which perhaps Astarte had replaced Isis. In the Wisdom of Solomon the personal figure is replaced by the Alexandrine Stoic-Platonic-Pythagorean divinity which is concentrated in the firmament yet immanent in the cosmos. But the origin of the personal Wisdom still makes itself felt in such passages as vii 8, viii 4, ix 2, and 9; perhaps, however, these reflect earlier Stoic allegorizations of the same theme.

WILFRED L. KNOX.

<sup>1</sup> In Apuleius *Metam.* XI. v 762 Isis is Proserpine in Sicily, which ignores the fact that she is really Demeter searching for Proserpine; she is also 'Minerva' at Athens and the Mother of the Gods at Pessinus. In fact she is merely a female principle of deity and not a real 'person' at all. In the Carvoran inscription the Syrian goddess has lost this character and is a shadowy Isis.

<sup>2</sup> *Leg. Alleg.* i 14 (43, M. 152).

<sup>3</sup> Apuleius XI. xxii 801. Cf. Demeter in a papyrus of 300 B.C. (Roberts *Ægyptus* (1934) pp. 447-499).

<sup>4</sup> Plutarch *De Is. et Os.* 79, 372 E.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. n. 1 above, and Nock *op. cit.* 150 for a list of the various names that Isis can carry, from a papyrus of the early second century A.D.