

Wisdom of Solomon, Canon and Authority

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ABSTRACT

The book known as the *Wisdom of Solomon* seems to have been held in high enough regard for it to come to the aid of many in the Early Church, at least from the time of Origen until that of Theodoret. A consideration of how the book was used in Augustine, drawing principally on the work of A.-M. La Bonnadière is then followed by an investigation of how theologians other than Augustine understood and used one particular verse: *Wisdom* 13:5. The diversity of translation and interpretation encourages one to think that this text was viewed as one that had to be taken seriously in giving an account of 'religious epistemology' from a Christian viewpoint. It was a powerful text, and is suggestive of a wider conclusion that the Book as a whole in many of its parts was held to have an authoritative message.

1. Wisdom and its status in the early church

Among biblical scholars the *Wisdom of Solomon* is usually regarded as a prime example of the fusion of Judaism and Hellenism, or even as a final stepping-stone on the way to the New Testament, as in the famous study of Martin Hengel.¹ Studies of the *reception* of *Wisdom* have usually begun with how Jews of the early common era interpreted it. Hence William Horbury, playing down

¹ Otto Kaiser states: 'Auch inhaltlich ist die Sapientia Salomonis wie keine andere biblische Schrift durch die griechisch-hellenistische Philosophie beeinflusst. Das gilt für die zentrale Gestalt der personifizierten Weisheit, die als Mittlerin zwischen Gott, Welt und Mensch waltet (7,21-8,1), gleichgültig ob man sie als Hypostase bezeichnet oder nicht.' ('Die Bedeutung der griechischen Welt für die alttestamentliche Theologie', in *Zwischen Athen und Jerusalem: Studien zur griechischen und biblischen Theologie, ihrer Eigenart und ihrem Verhältnis* [Berlin, 2003], 1-38, 30.) If a world is to be ordered and intervened in, then one can expect a judgement. The premature death is no longer a tragedy but a sign of favour (*Wis.* 4:10). From the idea of being created in the image of the immortal God comes the idea of human immortality: this is a preparation for the NT where the life in God is brought even closer into our present. In a more recent work Kaiser speaks of *Wisdom's* relational anthropology, 'in der Sapientia nicht die Konstitution des Menschen sondern seine Verhaltensweisen als Ausdruck ihrer positiven oder negativen Beziehungen zu Gott [sieht]' (Otto Kaiser, *Gott, Mensch, Geschichte: Studien zum Verständnis des Menschen und seiner Geschichte in der klassischen, biblischen und nachbiblischen Literatur* [Berlin and New York, 2010], 349.) See also his *Vom offenbaren und verborgenen Gott: Studien zur spätbiblischen Weisheit und Hermeneutik* (Berlin, 2008).

the hypothesis that its being positioned *after* the New Testament books in the *Muratorian Fragment* implied it was to be considered ‘Christian’, describes its true function as a counterweight to *Ecclesiastes* within Judaism, turning Solomon into a true Pharisee on the matter of ‘resurrection’, with the work an inspired prophecy just as the *Song of Songs*.² Yet by the time of the Fragment (say c. 300) the book had found its place at the end of the NT list, described as ‘*sapientia ab amicis salomonis in honore ipsius*’ – ‘Wisdom written by Philo in honour of Solomon’. However in the more ‘mainstream’ Codices Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus *Wisdom* is back among the OT books. Perhaps one should not make too much of its short-lived association with the NT for the question of its formation, although it is significant for the question of *Wisdom*’s reception.

It is interesting that D. Winston in his *Anchor Bible Commentary on The Wisdom of Solomon* is not at all interested in *Wisdom*’s being the Church’s book, and far less will he explore the issues of its canonicity. Instead he wants to locate it ‘culturally’ between Philo (Hellenistic Judaism) and Albinus (Philosophy), with it containing, *e.g.* a full-blown doctrine of the soul’s pre-existence. Likewise S. Lilla notes the many correspondences between Neoplatonism and the thought of the *Wisdom of Solomon*.³ It seems to him quite clear that Logos-pneuma as ordering principle of the sensible cosmos was a feature of Middle and Neo-platonism, rather than of Stoicism as such.⁴ However just as his learned article itself concludes, is it all that useful to spend much time on an analysis of *Wisdom* along the lines of what it owed to philosophical schools? A little more worthwhile is to ask the question of whether the book made a contribution to the history of philosophy thereafter. *Wisdom* 8:1 speaks of an extension of *Wisdom* from centre to extremes, which can also be found in subsequent philosophers such as Alcinous (*Did.* XIV 170), and with Proclus (*passim*) one finds the principle that the higher seeks to help the lower, which seems a very similar notion. As for the idea of *Wisdom* as governing all things (*Wis.* 1:7 and 14:3), Plotinus’ 2nd and 3rd Enneads are dedicated to this topic.⁵

² William Horbury, ‘Wisdom of Solomon in the Muratorian Fragment’, *JTS* 45 (1994), 149-59.

³ Salvatore Lilla, ‘La Sapienza di Salomone tra Stoicismo e Neoplatonismo’, in *Lecture cristiane dei Libri Sapienziali: 20. Incontro di studiosi della antichità cristiana: 9-11 maggio 1991*, *Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum* 37 (Roma, 1992), 505-22.

⁴ Now in *Wisdom* there is more Platonism than Stoicism, *e.g.* Cratylus 412-3 compared with *Wis.* 7:22-4. *Parmenides* V 1,8 too had *mia kai polloi* of course. Then there was a bringing together of Stoic and Platonic due to Posidonius and Antiochus of Ascalon. In Iamblichus and Proclus this would become division and multiplication. The Holy Spirit is multiplex – as are the *logoi spermatikoi* of Stoics and the *anima mundi* of Plotinus.

⁵ ‘In Proclo gli esseri o divinità superiori “tengono insieme” gl’ inferiori e provvedono ad essi’ (S. Lilla, ‘La Sapienza’ [1992], 513²⁴). Anyway a first and second stage of Logos seems indicated, with the idea of transmission of power from one level to the next, not of creation of a second hypostasis. He links this with the Plotinian notion of God as *dynamis*-power in *Enn.* V 5,5; V 4,1 (see. *Wis.* 7:25). Yet in the same article Lilla mentions that Plotinus also viewed *Wisdom* as ‘hypostasis’.

One might well compare *Wisdom* 9:1 with Plotinus *Ennead* V 5, 1 (339) and Ps-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* VII, 2. From *Wisdom* 7:27 comes the idea of the One, stable and immutable, giving off its energy,⁶ with which one might compare Ps-Dionysius *De div. nom.* XI 2 and Proclus, *Elements of Theology* 112,4-5. Or again, *Wisdom* 6:16, that those who receive Wisdom receive according to their desert of her (τοὺς ἀξίους αὐτῆς) is not unlike Proclus, *Elements of Theology*⁷ and a whole stream of Neoplatonists through to Ps-Dionysius and even John Scotus Eriugena.

So is Lilla claiming that *Wisdom* actually influenced Neoplatonic philosophers who read it? Is it at least the case (as Theiler put it) that *Wisdom* was some sort of a *Vorbereitung* for Neoplatonism?⁸ Possibly: or there is more probably a common source in the Academy of Speusippus and Posidonius, from which *Wisdom* also borrowed? There is at least one other possibility, pleads Lilla: the Ammonius who influenced Plotinus was an Alexandrian Christian who knew the *Wisdom* Literature.⁹ However this thesis relies on the confusion between the Ammonius mentioned by Eusebius and the Platonist Ammonius Saccas who taught in the 230s.¹⁰

We might be on surer ground when trying to assess how the Church interpreted the book in her theology. A. Tuilier helpfully sketches the story of the fate of *Wisdom* in the early church theologians.¹¹ Mentioned only in passing by Irenaeus and all but ignored by Clement, the book was much appreciated by (Ps-)Hippolytus (early 3rd c.), who wrote of *Hermas and Wisdom* as being among those books which should be read for edification, and that they were probably both composed by Philo, (Ps-)Hippolytus thought, in honour of Solomon, hence ‘le prolongement de la tradition sapientiale authentique.’¹² Also, *Wisdom* 2:12-6 and 5:1-9 were regarded in the Hippolytan *Adversus Judeos* as prophetic oracles. C. Larcher in his 1969 work notes that even the ‘canonically strict’ Melito in his *Peri Pascha* was inspired by *Wisdom*, especially the salvation-historical part of Chapters 12-8. Origen was happy to use it in key places

⁶ ‘L’uno resta cioè sempre immutabile in se stesso nonostante la processione della sua energia’ (*ibid.*).

⁷ E.R. Dodds, *Proclus: The elements of theology; a revised text with translation, introduction and commentary* (Oxford, 1933), 273-74.

⁸ Willy Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Diss 1928; Berlin 1934; Berlin and Zürich, 1964), on the religiosity of Poseidonios, writes: ‘Der immanente Umschwung erleichtert dem orientalischen Glauben, Formulierungen griechischen Denkens zu übernehmen, ist andererseits die Vorbedingung für den schließlichen äußeren Sieg des Christentums’ (*ibid.* 153).

⁹ S. Lilla, ‘La Sapienza’ (1992), 522. See Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* VI 19,7: Ἀμμώνιος μὲν γὰρ Χριστιανὸς ἐν Χριστιανοῖς ἀνατραφεὶς γονεῦσιν.

¹⁰ See R. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church* (New York, 2011), 6.

¹¹ A. Tuilier, ‘Les livres sapientiaux et le canon de l’Ancien Testament’, in *Letture cristiane dei libri Sapienziali*, (Roma, 1992), 19-34.

¹² A. Tuilier, ‘Les livres sapientiaux’ (1992), 22.

in *De principiis*, especially where its speculative flavour seemed to aid his own flights of fancy. Now at IV, 6 of that work he admits its canonicity was contested, yet he still wants to use *Wisdom* 11:17 to argue that *hyle* never means ‘matter’ in Scripture. He repeats this discussion in his *Commentary on John XXVIII* (when discussing *Wisdom* 1:5). Larcher argues that *Wisdom* declined in influence in Origen’s Caesarean period when he was under the influence of Jewish interpretations, yet it was back in force by the end of his life in Alexandria, when he became more interested in Christian apologetic, although this change of view possibly started to occur during his time in Caesarea. Certainly in his final period he was more than ready to use *Wisdom* in battle with Celsus. R. Heine is of the opinion that Origen never thought that *Wisdom* was written by Solomon, but was inspired nonetheless.¹³

Even when ‘22’ became a magic number for the books of the OT canon and *Wisdom* was excluded by the likes of Eusebius, nevertheless Athanasius saw *Wisdom* as ‘authentic’ and as ‘containing’ God’s mind. Therefore the book was considered ἐνδιάθετος, hence ἐνδιάθηκος (belonging to the testament). In Epiphanius’s view *Sirach* and *Wisdom* were clearly deemed to lack that inspiration, but had the character of philosophical dialogue (προφορικός).¹⁴ And despite the fact that Ambrose composed homilies on the book, the Council of Carthage’s (394) determination to keep the larger canon, and Augustine and Gelasius’ support for this, Jerome’s canonical minimalism held sway until the Council of Trent in the West (1545) – at least in theory, for the Western Church quietly continued to use *Wisdom*; whereas in the East it was officially reintroduced in 692. Antiochenes no less than Cappadocians had been happy to appeal to *Wisdom*. Rufinus borrowed from Athanasius the idea of ‘ecclesiastical books’ as a way of categorising books like *Wisdom*, and Gregory the Great reintroduced the distinction between books that were canonical and those that were *ad aedificationem ecclesiae*. Officially, one was to keep it for catechumens only, or for edification, which suggests that *Wisdom* was never seen as dangerous, but perhaps just not as spiritual as the fully canonical books. Notwithstanding this it carried doctrinal clout. As Larcher puts it, it found its role in furnishing the church through the ages with timeless truths.¹⁵ If it could be read out in church then Rabanus Maurus saw no reason not to comment on it. He saw the Cross as the passion of the Wisdom of God foretold in *Wisdom* 2 (PL 109, 671), no doubt with some debt to Paul in *1 Corinthians* 2. *Wisdom* came to have ‘ecclesiastical’ authority, yet usually more by means of selected

¹³ R. Heine, *Origen* (2011), 73. My thanks to Steve Bagby for drawing my attention to Heine’s argument.

¹⁴ A. Tuilier, ‘Les livres sapientiaux’ (1992), 28: ‘qui s’applique au discours proféré dans la réflexion philosophique des anciens.’

¹⁵ C. Larcher, *Etudes sur le livre de la Sagesse* (Paris, 1969), 62: ‘Il est allégué presque toujours pour sa portée doctrinale et ce sont les mêmes textes dogmatiques qui sont cités par les Pères de toutes les époques, à travers la diversité des églises.’

texts, than as a whole book.¹⁶ In writing a complete commentary Rabanus Maurus marked a turn from the guarded patristic attitude to a more unreservedly welcoming medieval one.

2. Wisdom and its effect on Augustine's theology

For all that Larcher and Tuilier have contributed to our understanding, it is mostly the matter of the canonical *status* of *Wisdom* that has occupied them. A lot has been made about the sources of *Wisdom*, and not so much of its reception: how it served doctrine and had an impact that way. Instead, one might want to look at the *impact* of *Wisdom* on the early Church, and argue that a text has authority when it stimulates or founds a *theologoumenon* that would not have been just what it was but for that text. A.-M. La Bonnadière managed to turn to this question in the second part of her book on *Wisdom* in Augustine, and to an extent the North African tradition (largely Cyprian). Her overall thesis is that *Wisdom* supplied theological-philosophical riches which complemented and counterbalanced the late 'Augustinian predestinarianism', although on inspection to play these 'Augustines' off against each other means going against the grain of the evidence. It is true to say that the saint was interested in the early parts of the book, and was only really interested in a few verses from Chapter 11 onwards: 11:18b; 11:21; 11:25; 12:18 (against Julian); and

¹⁶ C. Larcher in his commentary (*Le livre de la sagesse, ou, la sagesse de Salomon* [Paris, 1983-1985]) assembles a gallery of commentators, which it might be useful just to summarize here. *Wisdom* featured well in the East, especially with Methodius and Chrysostom, Anastasius the Sinaite and then even more so in the *Sacra Parallela* attributed to John of Damascus. Also to be mentioned are Ps-Maximus, *Loci communes*; Antiochus of San Sabas' *Pandektes*. Ceriani's Syro-hexapla has a number of marginal explicatory notes which are like glosses. Then there was Matthew Cantacuzen (c. 1380) and the monk Malachi, the latter (Bib. Vatic. gr. 1233) much more readable than the former. In the West, Taion of Saragossa's comments are available in PL Supp IV 2, 1772-80. Apart from Rabanus Maurus' first extant commentary, written at Fulda, there was the *Glossa Ordinaria*, Peter the Chanter, Stephen Langton (2 vols.), Hugh of St Cher; Guerric of St Quentin (d. 1245), possibly Bonaventura, Eckhart, and Nicolas of Lyra. 'Mais le grand nom est celui de Robert Holkot, dominicain d'Oxford (†1349), qui inaugure, par certain traits, le genre des commentaires modernes' (a 1481 printing was reprinted up to 1689 at Cologne.) In the 'modern' period there are commentaries by Pierre Naninck of Louvain; Cornelius Jansen of Ghent; the Jesuits Lorinus and Lapede, with many reprints, but also Maldonatus, Calmet, Bossuet (in his 'Livres de Salomon') and C.F. Houbigant. However there were also Protestant commentators: Conrad Pellikan, Grotius in his *Annotationes*, and J.G. Hasse in 1785 (Jena). Stand-out contributions were those by Marc de Berulle, *L'explication selon le sens littéral des 5 livres de la Sagesse* (Grenoble, 1680), and by B. Arias Montanus Libri, 'Sapientia' in *Sacrorum Bibliorum* t. III (Anvers, 1623), 1-33. The work of F. Feldmann, *Textkritische Materialien zum Buch der Weisheit gesammelt aus der sahidischen, syrohexaplarischen und armenischen Übersetzung* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1902) provides a valuable resource.

13:5, which has echoes in *Rom.* 1:18-25. Augustine was not at all interested in *Wisdom's* account of the history of Israel.¹⁷

Of course the fact that verses from *Wisdom* often appear within florilegia or *testimonia* of biblical texts might indicate that *Wisdom* was rarely allowed to operate on its own, but its part was of an auxiliary or garnishing nature. La Bonnadière tells us that Augustine made up his own *testimonia* after the manner of Cyprian and did not just use Cyprian's. These appear mostly in polemical contexts. On inspection, the text from *Wisdom* is often ancillary or decorative, but not always. For example, at *Enarratio in Psalmos* 9, s. I,I: '*Duo etiam iudicia insinuantur per Scripturas, si quis advertat, unum occultum, alterum manifestum.*' He finds a mention of the hidden one in *1Peter* 4:17a and the manifest one in *John* 5:24. But in order to find a mention of a double judgement in the same passage, he has to turn to *Wisdom* 12. Augustine comments: 'We read about these two judgements in scripture, where it is written: because of this you have given mocking judgement as if to those who were senseless children. Those who have not been corrected by this judgement have no share in the fitting judgement of God'. Those who are not being corrected by the hidden judgement of God will most rightly be punished by that open judgement of God. This is the only place in Latin patristic literature where this verse is quoted.¹⁸

As La Bonnadière observed, the OT was used much more in Augustine's polemics just as the example here. But did *Wisdom* belong to the OT? Augustine would certainly repeat certain select verses from *Wisdom* the better to engrain them on the minds of catechisand and catechised. As he established in *civ.* XVII 20: 'However, the writings not included in the Jewish canon do not carry as much weight as the canonical books when put forward as evidence against the opposition'.¹⁹ This means in a polemical, not a pastoral context. Yet the pastoral could quickly become the polemical and vice versa, when the situation demanded. Thus, as La Bonnadière notes, *Wisdom* was used against the Manicheans and the Pelagians to safeguard divine transcendence in creation and salvation. In all these, texts from *Wisdom* are not merely illustrative. In polemical battle with heretics they were the jumping-off points. They inspired Augustine to think more loftily of God than his enemies did.²⁰ *Wisdom* 9:15

¹⁷ A.-M. La Bonnadière, *Biblia Augustiniana: AT: Le Livre de la Sagesse* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1970).

¹⁸ '*Haec duo iudicia etiam in Sapientia legimus, ubi scriptum est: Propter hoc tamquam pueris insensatis iudicium inderisum dedisti: hi autem hoc iudicio non correcti, dignum Dei iudicium experti sunt (Wis.12:25-6). Qui ergo non corriguntur isto occulto Dei iudicio, dignissime illo manifesto punientur*' (A.-M. La Bonnadière, *Le Livre de la Sagesse* [1970], 123).

¹⁹ '*Sed adversus contradictores non tanta firmitate proferuntur, quae scripta non sunt in canone Iudaeorum.*'

²⁰ 'Les polémiques ont pour point de départ un texte de l'Écriture ou prennent appui immédiatement sur elle. Les passages de la Sagesse évoqués, pour ne parler ici que de ce livre, ne sont

(‘for a perishable body weighs down the soul’) is the verse most used, to prove that evil is caused by us, not by cosmic powers. Nevertheless she thinks the most creative contribution by *Wisdom* to Augustine’s theology was that made by *Wisdom* 7:27, that *Wisdom* herself *in animas sanctas se transfert*, which is a very strong assertion of the all-sufficiency of grace for Christians. *Wisdom* is rarely quoted in chunks – the best example is *De trin.* III 10 (21) where human frailty is associated with human ignorance: this passage does not seem to be about sin, but rather about human limitation, although elsewhere (*En. Ps.* 127.16 and *Ad Simplicianum* I, qu. 1,13) *Wisdom* 9:15 is used to show how corruption is the state of fallen humankind: ‘Corpus enim quod corrumpitur aggravat animam. Per quod fit etiam saepe, ut invicte delectet quod non licet. Quam sarcinam prementem et urgentem ideo legem appellat, quia iure supplicii divino iudicio tributa et imposita est ab eo qui praemonuit hominem dicens: Qua die manducaveritis morte moriemini.’

So the fact of the matter is that for issues of doctrine and practice *Wisdom* did carry authority for Augustine in the sense that the book shaped these two. The LXX after all was the work of prophets (*civ.* XV 14), so that *Wisdom* had a *prima facie* case to be considered as having authority. No-one would have gone to the bother of making a Latin translation of some uninspired document, which was an argument that would be re-employed in the Middle Ages for the canonicity of *2Esdras*. La Bonnadière²¹ claimed that in Augustine’s hands, *Wisdom of Solomon* inspired a cosmic vision that encouraged piety, outlined a moral theology and implied a Trinity of Love. She is enamoured of the idea proposed by Larcher that *Wisdom*, which would later be personified in Christ as an incarnation of an influence, is ‘already’ in our text a hypostasis.²² Now quite how a hypostasization can be called ‘a kind of incarnation’ when its incarnation is yet to come shows us again the bewildering width of semantic range given to the term ‘hypostasis’. What can be said is that in keeping with Augustine’s view of things Christ is predicted in *Wisdom* and the Church is foretold in *Sirach*. The former was in keeping with the North African tradition of exegesis but went a step further than it, by combining *Wisdom* 2 with *Isaiah* 53.²³

pas des illustrations d’arguments théologiques, mais bien leur fondements’ (A.-M. La Bonnadière, *Le Livre de la Sagesse* [1970], 108).

²¹ A.-M. La Bonnadière, *Le Livre de la Sagesse* (1970), 386.

²² ‘Le lien entre la Sagesse qui est en Dieu et la Sagesse communiquée à l’homme et possédée par lui, c’est précisément son influence authentiquement divine qui, par certains de ses aspects, annonce déjà la réalité chrétienne de la grâce. Or la Sagesse personifiée est aussi, nous semble-t-il, une sorte d’incarnation de cette influence’ (A.-M. La Bonnadière, *Le Livre de la Sagesse* [1970], 388).

²³ A.-M. La Bonnadière, *Le Livre de la Sagesse* (1970), 190.

3. *Wisdom 13:5* in Augustine

Let us take only one small but important verse and see how it operated. *Wisdom 13: 5* reads: ἐκ γὰρ μεγέθους καλλωνῆς κτισμάτων ἀναλόγως ὁ γενεσιουργὸς αὐτῶν θεωρεῖται. From the greatness and beauty of created things the Creator of these can be seen analogically. Larcher in his commentary on *Sagesse* sees *Wisdom 13:5* as religious, not drily philosophical, and insists this verse is ‘préoccupé, non par l’existence de Dieu, mais par sa connaissance.’ Xenophon had said one gets to know the gods from their works (*Mem.* IV, III, 13-4). Beauty, majesty and power are like a ‘trampoline’ (Larcher), helping to lift oneself towards an intuitive contemplation.²⁴ Yet θεωρεῖται is an activity of the mind which judges one thing after another, or draws a conclusion from observation. The modern exegete-theologian Gilbert comments on that: when the verb θεωρεῖται is combined with ἀναλόγως it means contemplation on its sober first step, rather than an activity at the endpoint of mystical contemplation. For there is also a way of affirmation – only possible if the human mind starts out from the cosmos analogy: the Jewish mind could perceive God as ‘une présence agissante’, leaving traces as He goes.²⁵ The experience then is not one of pure negation as in Philo but a ‘being seized’ in a religious way, as one works towards the contemplation that feels like something penetrating and warm. So too the term *ho genesiourgos autôn* is found for the first time in *Wisdom*: ‘L’auteur du devenir ou de l’existence’ – he is the One with which one ends when one contemplates the universe religiously.

For Augustine the human mind is the means of knowing God: Yet Augustine has God *cognoscibiliter* in his citation, where the Greek has *analogôs*.²⁶ God can be known even though God is not measurable or proportionate to anything in creation. He cannot be an object of knowledge. What seems to result is quite another understanding, which his saturation in the Book encourages: ‘I quote this passage from the book of *Wisdom* in case any of the faithful should reckon

²⁴ C. Larcher, *Le livre de la sagesse* (1983-85), ad loc: ‘La beauté, la majesté grandiose, la puissance qui éclatent dans la nature sont pour l’esprit un tremplin naturel pour s’élever jusqu’à l’excellence et à la puissance divines. Connues d’une façon proportionnelle ou analogique, et pour rejoindre, dans une sorte de regard contemplatif ou intuitif’.

²⁵ See M. Gilbert, *La Critique des Dieux dans le livre de la Sagesse* (Sg 13-15), *Analecta Biblica* 53 (Rome, 1973), 26: it is also there in *De mundo* 399b, 19-22 (See further A.J. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste. II. Le Dieu cosmique* [Paris, 1949], 473). There are only two pre-Christian occurrences of *analogôs*, one where Philo uses the term to explain what Moses was getting at by outlawing mixing animals together *Spec. leg.* III 48. But of course the substantive *analogia* exists in Plato: it is the means by which the soul reckons from past and present into the future. Aristotle didn’t use but knew of the idea, as fragments in his *Peri philosophias* frg. 12a suggest. The Stoics did not think that analogy provided a way to know God, but that it was useful for trying to know things beyond experience.

²⁶ S. George, ‘Der Begriff *analogos* im Buch der Weisheit’, in Kurt Flasch (ed.), *PAROUSIA. FS Johann Hirschberger* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1965), 189-97.

I have been wasting time for nothing in first searching creation for signs of that supreme trinity we are looking for when we are looking for God, going step by step through various trinities of different sorts *until we eventually arrive at the mind of man*' (*De trin.* XV 3).²⁷ It does seem that for Augustine, the mind of man is as far as we get when we try to know the Trinitarian God. This is the all-important idea of *Wisdom* 13:5 picked up by Paul in *Rom.* 1:20. A few lines later, Augustine recalls that the image of God is 'man according to the mind renewed in the knowledge of God who created man for (*ad*) His image, so that the Trinity might appear in it'.²⁸ The book of *Wisdom* seems to help. In fact declares Augustine,²⁹ the whole point is to gaze (*conspicere*) on the invisible intellectual things of God by means of reflection on creation. The message is that God cannot be gazed on directly: '*Sed quia lux illa ineffabilis nostrum reverberabat obtutum et ei nondum posse contemperari nostrae mentis quodam modo convincebatur infirmitas... ad summam trinitatem quae deus est conspicuendam nos erigere volumus nec valemus.*' This describes a process in the *Christian* life, where love stirs up a desire to know directly, yet where one has to settle for mediated knowledge where the desire is diverted into love. *De trinitate* IV 20 with its idea of experimental knowledge was picked up, La Bonnadière reminds us, by Thomas.³⁰ Virtues are set in motion by infused divine love. This is not theoretical knowledge but a personal-mystical one, and a practical one.

4. *Wisdom* 13:5 in fathers other than Augustine

However it is only if there are more writers than just Augustine interested in it that we might be able to speak of *Wisdom* as exercising authority in the *Church*. In other words what La Bonnadière did for Augustine needs to be done for other fathers. Now among the versions for ἀναλόγως the Syriac has 'manifestly',³¹

²⁷ *De trin.* XV, III, 45-50; CChr.SL L^A, 462: '*Haec de libro sapientiae propterea posui ne me fidelium quispiam frustra et inaniter existimet in creatura prius per quasdam sui generis trinitates quosdam modo gradatim donec ad mentem hominis pervenirem quaesisse indicia summae illius trinitatis quam quaerimus cum deum quaerimus.*'

²⁸ *De trin.* XV, III, 108-11; CChr.SL L^A, 467: '*Universa ipsa rerum natura proclamat habere se praestantissimum conditorem qui nobis mentem rationemque naturalem dedit qua viventia non viventibus...*'

²⁹ *De trin.* XV, VI, 48-54; CChr.SL L^A, 472-3.

³⁰ Thomas, *In Sent.* Ia q. 43, art. 5, 2 and *id.*, *STh.* I 43,5: '*Filius invisibiliter...*'

³¹ 'Le Peshitta a traduit par *galio'ith*, ce qui peut se rendre en latin par *manifeste*' (M. Gilbert, *La Critique* [1973], 29). D. Winston in his *Anchor Bible Commentary* (New York, 1979), 252-6 comments how the Stoics knew things by analogy, although it was not they but the Platonists like Albinus who thought one could know God by analogy, as Philo had it: as the soul is to the world, so is God to the universe (*Abr.* 71ff.). For the author of the universe to be perceived this way means His existence is acknowledged, little more. Something of the heart in the right place is

the Armenian has ‘by mode of relation’ whereas the Latin *cognoscibiliter* was later rendered *consequenter*³² or even *intelligibiliter*.³³ As for the Church fathers, ‘les Latins ont traduit de diverses façons: *cognoscibiliter* (Vulgate et Augustin), *intelligibiliter* (Grégoire le Grand), *consequenter* (Hilaire et Jérôme), mais jamais *analogice*.’ Gilbert also mentions Bonaventure’s rather obvious-sounding statement³⁴ which is first, that contemplation is operated with the inner sense, but also that the capacity for contemplation is said to be proportional to each, which obviously has echoes of *Rom.* 12. In any case, Gilbert insists that this helps us to see that the biblical message is not about each individual not being able to reach contemplation of God (as Vasquez had interpreted *Wisdom* 9:15), but the human race as a whole, or the average human, as it were, and clearly at 9:15 it is not ‘humans at their best’ who are meant. However Vatican I would not follow Vasquez, in which Gilbert rejoices. Pius XII in *Humani generis* (DS 3875) then confirmed that humans could know the existence of God and divine things. Hans Hübner in his commentary asserts that this verse is witness to the ‘ontische Seite der Analogie’ – what he describes as an analogy of knowing persons, when God and each address the other. This might be called an *analogia cognoscendi*, which is quite removed from any analogy of being in which God gets located and assigned a place.³⁵

This article approaches its end by offering some soundings from the tradition of ‘patristic’ exegesis. Origen,³⁶ in discussing Jesus’ healing miracles, notes that catechumens come with all sorts of diseases. The blind come to see *and know Him from the great and beautiful things of creation analogically, when they see his invisible things from the creation of the cosmos*, that is, distinctly and clearly. One should note that there is no mention of *Wisdom* 13:5 in Origen’s *Romans* commentary on *Rom.* 1:20. This could be because it was a product of his Caesarean period when he seems to have held more strictly to a Jewish canon. Yet here in the *Matthew* commentary he is inspired by *Wis.* 13:5 to observe the hidden things in creation, which powerfully effect a distinct and clear knowledge of God. People can and should look to creation for ‘healing’.

echoed both in Philo (*Praem.* 43) and Augustine (*civ.* 4.31) – Varro came close to the truth, but erred on the mutability of the soul, denying the need for the Immutable God as the soul’s creator.

³² So, *Biblia Sahidica* and Hilary, *De trin.* I 7 (PL 10, 30).

³³ Gregory the Great, *Moralia* XVI 12 (PL 76, 358).

³⁴ M. Gilbert, *La critique* (1973), 29¹⁴¹: ‘BONAVENTURE explique cognoscibiliter: “non sensibiliter, id est oculo intellectuali, non sensibili.”’

³⁵ H. Hübner, *Die Weisheit Salomons* (ATD Apokryphen Bd. 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999), 168f: ‘Es ist deshalb theologisch zu reflektieren (hier kann es nur angedeutet werden), inwiefern aus der Analogie der Begegnungsfähigkeit von Gott und Mensch die Argumentation in Sap 13 in ein anderes ontologisches Koordinatensystem transferiert werden müßte und daraus, der antiken und mittelalterlichen Ontologie entnommen, ein neues, nämlich höheres Übersetzungspotential freigesetzt werden könnte. Daß [sic] bedeutet nicht die völlige Aufgabe jener alten Ontologie, sondern nur, sie in eine neue Reflexionsdimension “aufzuheben”.’

³⁶ *Comm. Matth.* 11, Ch 18 (SC 162, 376).

Eusebius in his *Commentary on Isaiah* 40:12-14 comments: ‘From the greatness and beauty of created things the Creator of these can be seen analogically, namely, He makes those things which are too great for us small through a higher arrangement, summoning us towards the idea (ἔννοιαν) of the one who sustains all things’.³⁷ Again, in his commentary on Isaiah 44:7, Eusebius links this thought in its Septuagintal form (which is distinctive over against the Masoretic text in its last five words – ‘from which he has made man forever’) with the Wisdom verse, to conclude that the proof of his being God is the lasting quality of work in everything he does.³⁸ Also, if the universe is one and united and connected in itself, the creator of this must also be one. Eusebius is keen to establish monotheism, although he then takes a next step to say that the one who acts in time is the Word, who in turn is the one that orders humans from the beginning towards the life to come. The verse is also employed in the *Praeparatio evangelica* (VII, 3, 3) to suggest that the material world cannot give a form by itself but requires human perception of some ulterior structure coming from above.

Cyril of Jerusalem in his *Catechetical Lectures* 9.2 comments: ‘From the greatness and beauty of created things the Creator of these can be seen analogically ...’³⁹ It is impossible to see the divine nature with eyes of flesh. Yet from the divine works one is able to proceed as far as an appearance of the divine power. For it does not say that the creator is seen from creatures, but adds: ‘analogically’. For God appears greater to each however great the vision from creation a human can attain. And when one is lifted up in the heart by this greater vision one gains a better perception concerning God.⁴⁰ Here the accent is on the method of knowing, which is ‘the contemplative way’. Gilbert comments that Cyril takes ‘analogically’ in his lemma here in the ‘Romans 12:2 sense’, that is, knowledge will be given proportionately to different degrees of faith.⁴¹ The talk of ‘proportionality’ has nothing to do with knowledge of divine proportions.

³⁷ *Commentary on Isaiah* 40:12-4 (‘measured the waters in the hollow of his hand’); GCS Eusebius IX, 254.

³⁸ GCS Eusebius IX, 284: »στήτω καλεσάτω καὶ ἀναγγειλάτω καὶ ἐτοιμασάτω μοι ἀφ’ οὗ ἐποίησα ἄνθρωπον εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα».

³⁹ CTP 103, 169 (PG 33, 640).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: θεῖαν τοίνυν φύσιν ἰδεῖν σαρκὸς ὄμμασιν ἀδύνατον. ἐκ δὲ τῶν ἔργων τῶν θεῶν εἰς φαντασίαν τῆς δυνάμεως ἐλθεῖν δυνατόν...Ὁὐ γὰρ εἶπεν, ὅτι ἐκ τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ γενεσιουργὸς αὐτῶν θεωρεῖται. ἀλλὰ προσέθηκεν, ὅτι ἀναλόγως. Τοσοῦτω, γὰρ μείζων ἐκάστῳ φαίνεται Θεός, ὅσω, ἂν μείζονος θεωρίας τῶν κτισμάτων ἐπιλάβηται ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Καὶ ὅταν διὰ τῆς μείζονος θεωρίας ὑψωθῆ, τῇ καρδίᾳ μείζονα καὶ περὶ Θεοῦ λαμβάνει φαντασίαν (the underlined is missing in Codd. Coisl., Coln. Grodecii ‘et omnibus editionibus ante Oxoniensem.’

⁴¹ M. Gilbert, *La Critique* (1973), 29¹⁴²: ‘On trouvera une autre interpretation, plutôt curieuse, chez Cyrille de Jérusalem, (PG 33 640B = CatLect9.2), où la capacité de contemplation est dite proportionnelle à chaque personne humaine, l’une contemplant plus et mieux que l’autre.’

To take two of the four instances where John Chrysostom cites *Wisdom* 13:5, the first is a sermon on the Devil as Tempter:

For this is as if to say that Wisdom leads us by the hand to the knowledge of God. For it enables knowledge of the Master. Shall we say that if we see something beautiful and wonderful and this becomes a reason for idolatry for many we then are to blame it? By no means, for they were not availing themselves of the necessary remedy. For how can it be a cause of idolatry when it leads us by the hand to the knowledge of God?⁴²

He then adds *Rom.* 1:20. Then again, in *On the Statues* he quotes the verse and adds:

Do you see the greatness? The amazing power of the Maker? Do you see the beauty? Be amazed at the Wisdom of the one who gave order.⁴³

Chrysostom then follows with a quotation from *Psalms* 18 (19): ‘the heavens declare the glory of God’.⁴⁴

Hilary seems to sound an almost autobiographical note:

Although my soul was filled with joy, therefore, at the contemplation of this excellent and ineffable knowledge, because it worshipped this infinity of a boundless eternity in this Father and Creator, still, by a more intensive study it sought for that form itself of its infinite and eternal Lord, so that it believed that the immeasurable immensity was clothed in some of the splendor of beautiful Wisdom. While the religious mind was held captive by the error of its own weakness, the words of the prophet impart to it this method for apprehending the knowledge of God’s supreme beauty: *For by the greatness of the work and the beauty of the creatures the creator of the generations is reasonably known [consequenter...conspicitur]*. The creator of the great belongs to the greatest and the maker of beautiful things to the most beautiful. And since the work surpasses even our comprehension, so the worker must far exceed our comprehension...should not the Lord of all this beauty itself be conceived as the most beautiful of all beauty, so that, while the form of his eternal adornment eludes the mind’s power of comprehension, the ornament (*ornatus*) is not withdrawn from the mind’s power of comprehension (*opinionem...intellegentiae sensus*)? And we must acknowledge God as the most beautiful of all in this manner, that He is not included within the thoughts that we comprehend, nor is He beyond the comprehension of our thoughts.⁴⁵

However, in what immediately follows Hilary then quickly adds that this knowledge in creation produced both an anxiety about and an expectation of

⁴² *De diabolo tentatore homiliae* 1-3; 2 (PG 49, 260-61): Τούτων γὰρ ἕκαστος ἠνίξαστο δι’ ὧν εἶπεν, ὅτι αὐτὴ πρὸς θεογονοσίαν ἡμᾶς χειραγωγεῖ. ὅτι αὐτὴ ποιεῖ ἐπιγινώσκειν τὸν Δεσπότην. Τί οὖν, ἐὰν ἴδωμεν τὴν καλὴν ταύτην καὶ θαυμαστήν, αὐτὴν γενομένην ἀσεβείας αἰτίαν πολλοῖς, αἰτιασόμεθα αὐτήν; Οὐδαμῶς, ἀλλ’ ἐκείνους τοὺς μὴ χρησαμένους εἰς δέον τῷ φαρμάκῳ. Ποῦ οὖν ἀσεβείας αἰτία αὕτη ἢ χειραγωγούσα πρὸς θεογονοσίαν;

⁴³ *De statu homiliae* 1-2 (PG 49, 105-7): Εἶδες τὸ μέγεθος; θαύμασον τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ποιήσαντος. Εἶδες τὸ κάλλος; ἐκπλάγηθι τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κοσμήσαντος.

⁴⁴ Chrysostom quotes the verse in two other places: *Expositio in Psalmos* (2) (PG 55, 48 and 144), and *In Genesis homiliae* (PG 53, 44).

⁴⁵ *De trinitate* 1,7 (FC 25, trans. by S. McKenna [Washington: CUA Press, 1954], 9).

continuing to exist, and at that point the gospel steps in to reassure humans of the celestial Fatherly care. The beauty of God is not really known in itself, quite apart from sin, just the Wisdom-impression of it has the effect that we know that God is there, beyond knowing.

Returning to later Greek authors, Didymus has: ‘*From the greatness and beauty of created things the Creator of these can be seen analogically.*’⁴⁶ Thus if one gains an image of God from the world, from the order and arrangement of providence, then the hidden side of his face is no longer hidden. The Greek philosophers also reasoned this way, deducing an image of God from creatures and their beauty.’ Didymus seems much more confident than most concerning human ability to know God in creation.

Gregory of Nyssa weaves *Wisdom* 13:5 together with *Ps.* 15(16):3 and writes: ‘*For from the greatness and beauty of created things their Creator is known by analogy*’ ... ‘We give names to the divine nature which is beyond all understanding. We do not rejoice in the names through speaking them, but in journeying through that which is spoken towards the perception (*katanoêsin*) of the hidden things.’⁴⁷ He mentions that the Psalmist rejoices inwardly before he expresses that joy, and so he, like Gregory himself, was not interested in knowledge of God located within terminology.

Theodoret cites *Wisdom* 13:5 and follows with:

The works are not equal to the Author, nor their greatness equal to his own. One sees them, one touches them, one feels them and certain flaws are associated with them. But nobody touches him, nor sees him. Nothing affects or changes him and he brooks no limits as his works do. So it is apt that he added in his text the expression ‘by analogy’. When we regard the vault of the heavens, the extent of the earth, the vastness of the sea, the brilliance of the sun or the light of the moon and all that happens upon our vision, we do not equate them with the creator, but we say that he surpasses his works by infinite greatness and beauty [*Romans* 1:20 is then cited]. So it is by the mediation of visible things that we can represent the invisible Creator to ourselves [...] Thus when we lift our eyes on creation, we are charmed by its greatness, its beauty and the benefits which flow from it: but the mind leaves all that aside and runs towards the one who has ordained it all with Wisdom.

The message is that form is what matters. Although the qualities of creation indeed reflect Him and allow humans to represent him, God draws humans through the *order* of creation, as by a higher, spiritual beauty. It seems that one of the functions that the association of *Wisdom* 13:5 with *Romans* 1:20 has is to dissociate *Romans* 1:20 from *Romans* 1:21: ‘for although they knew God they neither glorified him as God nor thanked him.’⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *On Ps.* 30:25 (PTA 8,112), trans. by S. Voicu, ACCS, *Apocrypha* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2010).

⁴⁷ *Contra Eunomium* II 154 (GNO I, 270).

⁴⁸ *Therapeutic for Hellenic Maladies*, in: *Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques* III 16-7 (translated by P. Canivet, SC 57; Paris, 1958), 174f.

5. Conclusion

After this rather cursory view of the evidence, now to state a conclusion of a general nature. For these Eastern fathers and Hilary, this text from *Wisdom* explodes in a number of directions, scattering a variety of ideas among its readers, linking itself with diverse texts and ideas, scriptural and otherwise. Therein lies its authority. It is especially interesting that in Theodoret's treatment the verse rules over *Romans* 1:20-1, so as to divide them from each other and sideline the more negative-sounding second of these two verses. It might not be surprising that it is only Hilary who wants to affix to this original knowledge the notion of anxiety and fall, and that Augustine is quite unsure about this knowledge being anything more than very partial. The other (Greek) fathers seem happier with the idea that knowledge to be gained from creation is saving knowledge, although knowledge might mean something different to each of them. As one works from Origen to Theodoret through a number of Church fathers, there seems to be a move from 'power' to 'glory' then to 'order' as that which plays a kind of mediating role in conveying something of God to human knowledge. *Wisdom* 13:5, and possibly the book as a whole seems to offer instruction more in the area of what might be termed 'Christian philosophy' than doctrinal theology. The knowledge to be gained is 'practical knowing', *sapientia*: its teaching concerns the Christian life and its ways of seeking God, without as such contributing much to what can be said about Him ('theology').