

episcopacy under the leadership of the Pope) and the 'central' government of the ecclesiastical Curia. I think that this problem is going to be the main issue of the second phase of this Council, if God grants John XXIII time to bring *his* Council to an end.

Our faith is still the old 'Catholic' faith, no other. But a faith that is alive.

Four Ancient Reviews of the Wisdom of Solomon

ANSELM ATKINS, o.c.s.o.

You are a cosmopolitan citizen of the Mediterranean world (winter apartment in Alexandria) during the middle of the first century B.C. Your interests go as far as religion—scientifically considered, of course—and philosophy. Last year, in partial fulfillment of your curiosity's requirement, you walked down Crocodile Street to the Temple Beth-El bazaar and bought a handsome copy of *The Wisdom of Solomon*. It is there on your shelf now, but you haven't read it. Only the reviews. You had to confess that they left you—uncorseted, shall we say. For one thing, you didn't understand what Riphath ben Gomer meant by 'midrash' (though you had been *reading* midrashic pieces all through your Hebrew Great Books course). Secondly, the last thing you needed was a kosher potpourri.

And so we, pith-hatted finders of papyri, are so very glad that you clipped your reviews and tucked them once and for all inside the covers of that medium-quality vellum.

Anonymous, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (Alexandria, 68 B.C.); Eschol Sellers and Sons, 32 pp., 145 drachmae.

I

(Review from *The Mediterranean Monthly*, Alexandria: June 67 B.C.). A small pocket of forward-looking Jews has made another try at breaking down its separatist barriers. In spite of the inborn Hebrew leaning for historical extravaganza, churchy propaganda, and mystical hoodoo, which sport about even in this latest effort, *The Wisdom of Solomon* has several features worth paying attention to.

Some may enjoy the venture into Greek language—Greek poetry, Hebrew style. Here is a sample without comment (it is the Jewish version of 'pagan' theology). The lines are very appropriate in these days of salival gutturality and the inner stomach of the lion, where death, life, and the eating of an olive are of equal consequence:

Our birth was an afterthought,
 directly nothing more will be heard of us.
 Breath is wind trapped in the tunnels of the head,
 thought is a spark jumping between the poles of the heart
 (when it drowns out
 body goes to the ash-pile
 spirit evaporates into the hollow air).

After a while
 our names will be forgotten
 and no one will remember anything we did.

Life melts away like a wisp of marestail, disappears
 like mist chased home by the rays of the sun,
 laid low thermtically.

In this vein go nineteen chapters of respectable theses from Cosmogony I, served up on stone tablets and garnished all round with thyme. Now a Mosaic curtsy to the Porch was overdue; but who would have looked for the twenty-one Stoic attributes of God (in ch. 7) and full acceptance of *apporrhōia*-emanation? The subject of the book, you must know, is the activity of God's 'emanated' wisdom. Is this a theological capitulation? I regret that it isn't. They intend no world-*logos* as a distinct dynamic principle, but only *logos* or *sophia* as a static

function of a static godhead. That restless, shifty versatility of *sophia*—so well described in borrowed terms—is only a new way of dressing their forlorn dogma of God-jumping-in-to-help. Fine work: God saunters down and takes up with a certain Moses, gets him out of standing with the governor, has him make off with a whole nation of people, adds a dash of night in the right spots, re-routes a river or two, and never mind how many excellent families get hurt. If you agree with Anonymous that ‘God is the leader and director of the wise’, you have to bear the tale of the ‘exodus’ in chapter ten, and hear how wisdom ‘saved’ the Hebrews from Pharaoh, how it ‘entered’ Moses, how it performed with ‘wonders’ at the king’s court; a smart circus if he had left out the hornets. But judge the temporary theological collapse with the mildness you show children (they, of course, call *us* children—squarely, in chapter twelve). A touch of the transcendental remains, at least in the image-worship satire aimed to Judaize the whole North African hierarchy.

Most readers will be put off by the Jewish belief that God chose them for head position among world peoples. I counted a dozen or so references to the Hebrews as ‘God’s people’ or ‘God’s sons’. The closed hand of private salvation opens only long enough to extend a bony proselytizing finger: their God gives us time to mend our ways and repent (ch. 12); we get credit for being true seekers who want to find God (ch. 13). Such rollicking egotism is sure to offend. A few other things this reviewer found more than mildly provoking:

—gristly words are put into our mouths; ‘Crush a good man if he’s poor, don’t spare the widow or waste any concern on grayhaired old men. Let force be the rule of conduct’. (ch. 2).

—they are the just, we the irreligious.

—God is a father to the Jews, only a tyrant to us. (ch. 11).

—they call *us* the stupid ones (ch. 12).

—they flatter us too much: ‘murderers, thieves, con-men . . .’ (ch. 14).

Apart from these defects, and other negligible ones such as the Alexandrian barbarisms (*rhembasmos* in ch. 4 and *lythodes* in ch. 11 to name two), and the scandalous price asked for medium-quality vellum, the book will prove rewarding to the causal reader encountering Judaism for the first time, and a bookshelf necessity for the knowledgeable man of culture.

X.H.

(Review of the same book, from *Trend and Tradition*, Jerusalem, March 67 B.C.).

The Alexandrian community has produced a midrashic book on the Wisdom theme. The author's name does not appear.

The Wisdom of Solomon falls into three parts. In the first, life guided by Wisdom is contrasted with the foolish wickedness of pagans. Only the good are ready to receive Wisdom and only they will enjoy her blessings. The second part contains a prayer of Solomon for Wisdom, praises of Wisdom, and speculation on her nature. The third takes episodes from Israel's history and shows how the heathens were punished for their idolatrous ways, and how Wisdom protected our Fathers.

If a man is wise he follows God's law. The evildoer loses Wisdom and her gifts. How does a wise man get along? According to the author, he continues to live after death: man by nature shares the life of God (ch. 2, at the end).

God created man indestructible,

Fashioned him in the likeness of his own eternal nature.

This is one (and only one) reason why the usual Alexandrian claims for the 'inspiration' of its books are not worth considering. Live forever? no; man is the image of God because he is a live man with a heart that knows and loves—but only God and his Majesty endure through the eternal years; '... all flesh is grass'.

The just will triumph, the wicked will perish. What, for the author, constitutes justice? Principally, personal integrity, or ceremonial purity transcendently expressed in the ritual of life. Eleven different synonyms for purity are used: the 'blameless life' (ch. 2), the 'chaste and childless' (ch. 3), 'uncompromised striving' (ch. 4), the 'stainless life' that grows ripe and grey with age, and so forth. The injunction 'love justice, all you judges here on earth' (ch. 1) is to be understood as a call to interiorized purity. And just here it should be observed that it is by acquiring this inner purity (and not by having immortal kidneys) that we share God's nature; for God 'presides over the world in holiness and justice' (ch. 9).

The author understands well how God bends down to pull us out of harm's way and save us. He also knows that God will destroy the wicked utterly: 'God means safety for the good man, ruin for his

enemies' (ch. 18). When will God save us? Historically, he often has (as we read with comfort in the last chapters); and he will again someday, for good, in the eschatological 'then' (ch. 5).

The just man learns Wisdom from God, the teacher. All God's dealings with us, all his action in our lives and history, are lessons. The whole root of the law-abiding life is the desire to be taught by God (chs. 6 and 7):

Through such doings as these
You taught your people how to love their fellow men.
(ch. 12).

Even the enemies of God's people must take lessons from God, like it or not. The Egyptians found out, when God turned around and used their own instruments of sin to punish them.

Despite all this orthodox exposition, which can only be praised, unhealthy doctrinaire opinions are present, too. What of the attempted elopement with paganism—are we not satisfied to have God as our 'whole and only possession' after all? The Alexandrians will not rest till they have snipped out pages from Greek philosophy and pasted them wholesale onto Genesis, Job, and Isaiah. 'From what vantage point wast thou watching, when I laid the foundations of the earth?' (Job 38). From Ptolemy's library, of course. There, in Pindar and Euripedes, our new Solomon learned that God's creative Wisdom sits 'throne-mate' to God (ch. 9); and that God is to be pictured as Homer's 'Discord,' with his 'head touching the heavens and his feet marching on the earth' (ch. 18). Wisdom must be made into a Platonic world-soul physically penetrating the universe (chs. 1 and 7); or into the Stoic world-*logos*, with this difference, that the Alexandrian model inhabits only the good (the Alexandrians, no doubt); or into the Heraclitan 'fire' (politely called 'spirit') dancing gaily through creation.

For us, it is God himself and he alone who 'fills heaven and earth' (Jeremiah 23). The Alexandrian abdication of theological integrity will be mourned in faithful circles.

Marvellous and inexpressible are the ways of God;
which accounts for the purposeless meanderings of
souls who disdain to be learners. (ch. 17).

If only the meanderer who wrote those true lines would sit at the feet of Moses and the prophets, instead of on the steps of Athens!

RIPHATH BEN GOMER

(Third review, from *The Progressive Porch*, Athens, Autumn 67 B.C.).

Placid objectivity and release from the push-pull of emotion are conditions for serious philosophizing. Desire, the companion of the Platonic lover or mystic, is an obstacle to the scientific investigator. But what if, instead of the manifold of appearances, it is the very act of intellection, philosophical insight itself, which is desired? Pseudo-Solomon, as I shall have to call the anonymous Alexandrian thinker, defends the validity of such a desire. His arguments are arranged around the Jewish belief that God is a 'personal' being and can 'hear' and 'answer' men's petitions. He assumes throughout what I do not assume and do not grant: that God is a glorified man, that is, a 'person'. The Jew has rifled the Greek attic trunk and taken long-discarded Homer. God is a 'father' (ch. 14) who can be addressed with a human imperative, 'give' (ch. 9). He is able to 'love' men (ch. 16), or to hate them if they are enemies of the Jews (ch. 11). Since wisdom lives with God, the only teacher, it can only be obtained from him. It becomes the object of prayer, of desire. In fact, according to the author, no one gets wisdom except the man who passionately stretches out his heart's hand to God for it. Learning is no calm metaphysical vision of the inner nature of things. It is an ethical dialectic for the unsatisfied appetite: *orexis*.

Wisdom is pictured as an entity at God's side. This is only a metaphor, because in Jewish belief there is nothing divine except God himself. At the same time, the terminology of *The Wisdom of Solomon* is so consciously stoic that one who was not aware of the rigidity of Jewish monotheism would imagine himself reading a page from Zeno. Terminology, however, doesn't make the system. It would be a mistake to interpret the Alexandrian philosopher as admitting the all-pervading *logos-in-general*. Nor does he only mean to say that wisdom is an attribute of God, since that is conceded on all hands. If I am correct, he means to submit that the world principle we call '*logos-in-general*' is included in and part of God's own one being. It is a thought-provoking position. Nevertheless I must ask: how, with such a distinct metaphysical element as this in him, can God still be one?

An outstanding passage in chapter thirteen treats of our knowledge of God. Pseudo-Solomon's ascent to God is through likenesses. God is the pre-eminent model of the good things he has made. His existence

is implied in theirs, the way the shadows in the cave imply Plato's forms. A powerful God is deduced from the presence of physical power in the universe. Then come the contradictions. First, since fire, air, and water are also facts present in the cosmos, how is the Alexandrian justified in so scornfully dismissing the pre-Socratics, who were only saying the very same thing?—as if Thales thought God was your common fountain water, and not rather the ever-flowing, life-giving 'analogous' (the Jew's own term) Wetness? Again, why the attack on images of the divinity?—since (not counting the fetishes of the unenlightened) statues are only the little incarnations, likenesses if you will, of the divine fiery *Logos*? Even the City-Hall sculptor can strike enough fire for a New Kindling!

One other point before I leave this brave book to the mercy of the schools. As far as I can make out, the last half of it is an attempt to shore up a far-fetched philosophical principle by an historical potpourri the author himself can hardly be accused of believing. His principle is, the universe obeys God. The potpourri is the makeshift of yarn, wholecloth and chintz cut to show how it does it. If that is a grave thing to say about a serious work, is it less grave to say that God swabbed the Reed Sea and let Moses walk through as though it were a formal garden? Or does the author's naïveté hide a subtle point which escapes me?

At any rate the author's attitude towards nature and history are entirely consistent with the other idea of his that God is a magnified man. For only in such a framework could the words 'God' and 'obey' be meaningfully connected. I would have said, if the word 'obey' must be used at all, that God obeys nature. God is nature, and if you say there could be disharmony between them you misunderstand the terms of the proposition. 'Creation obeys you who made it' (ch. 15). The dichotomy set out here between 'maker' and 'thing made' shows how the Jewish mind has reached only the first step of the theological process. The constitutive principles of reality have been seen clearly enough, but, left in this isolation, they imply two separate realms of being, God and world. Jewish theology will reach maturity when its string of hesitant words 'maker . . . made' fuse into the firm speech of the one cosmic Word, the Making-Made, the endlessly emanating creative created World-*Logos*.

CHRYSIPPUS

(From *The New Jerusalem*), Alexandria, January, 66 B.C.).

God is our Saviour. He is our Father who loves us and snatches us from evil. Mercy and faith are the whole law. The righteous will win a kingdom, they will flicker and flash like fire running through brambles. The end-times will compensate our present misery! That is the message of Solomon. Love Wisdom and live.

God is our Saviour. He loves life, he made things to live, not to die. Death's reign on earth is forfeit. Only the wicked who advertise death and contract for her shall lie in her bed. But God is our Saviour. As he saved Adam, so he saved Cain, so he saved Noah, so he saved Abraham, so he saved Lot, so he saved Jacob, so he saved Joseph, so he saved Moses and the holy people of God. Who is God? God is Wisdom.

God is Wisdom. Wisdom stretches out from one end of the world to the other bringing order into cosmos and history. Wisdom is one, Wisdom is strong. Wisdom is merciful. Mercy is for God's elect who live by faith and love. Their God will reign king forever: fierce king for the wicked, kind Father to the wise.

Hear the Wisdom of Solomon: I loved Wisdom, from boyhood on I had her spotted for my bride. I loved her beauty as much as God did. My courtship went as follows: very early I was eaten up with a passion to sit at her feet, an honourable and upright passion. With time I came to understand her. Empathy led to love. I wanted only what she wanted. Attentiveness to her desires brought its reward. I was whisked up into her own timeless life, right up to the steps of God's palace. And now, you see, I am a prince at court, all for loving Wisdom.

The wise shall win a kingdom. Death's reign on earth is forfeit. The just man will keep living forever with his reward in the Lord's house. Jacob saw the Lord's kingdom in a dream, and it was all sweetness and light and beauty. Jacob will browse there in it like a colt in bluegrass, like a kid in greens, like a young scholar in the stacks, praising you, O Lord, because you saved him. Salvation and deathlessness: how can you separate them? Our God is a strong Saviour. He has snatched us from hurt before, and he will snatch us from it again. So listen, you pocket kings, try to be wise. The merciful God gave you your power. He is merciful because he is powerful. Mercy is the will to save; power is the power to save. God is patient . . . learn from Pharaoh . . . let my people go . . .

When all is done, Pharaoh will let my people go, the way he freed them once before. Death's kingdom on earth is forfeit, I have turned it upside down and emptied it like a woman emptying the morning's chamber. Take comfort, my people. All flesh is grass. The grass of the just man will bloom, secret like tundra, purple like maypop. The whole world, what is it? a sixteenth on the carpenter's rule. The whole law, what is it? mercy and faith. For God loves all things that are and he does not hate anything he has made. He spares all things because all things are his. Because his indestructible spirit is in all things. Death's kingdom is emptied.

APEMANTOS

The Laity in the Life of the Parish¹

DOM BENET INNES

Mgr George Talbot thought, in the last century, that the role of the layman was to hunt, fish and shoot and leave the running of the Church to the ecclesiastics. For better or for worse the laity are no longer fully occupied with these agreeable pursuits on their way to heaven and they have had to turn to more worldly affairs, acquiring on the way a variety of skills much needed in the service of the Church. At the same time, the laity have been able to measure the competence of ecclesiastics to manage worldly affairs and they have not invariably been impressed.

The clergy, used to managing all the affairs of the Church, have shown little determination to relinquish the burden and devote themselves exclusively to their spiritual vocation and office. They have, rather, seen a tide of criticism which they try to keep at bay. With the growth of an informed, educated and able middle class amongst the Catholic body in this country has also grown, then, a gulf between them and many of the more traditional clergy. In the old days the

¹A paper read to a regional conference of the Newman Association on 'The Modern Layman', at Coventry in March 1963.