MOYNA MCGLYNN

Divine Judgement and Divine Benevolence in the Book of Wisdom

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
139

Mohr Siebeck

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In Memory

For my parents
E. B. and M. F. Shaw

whose faith in the
brave new world
was undimmed.

Preface

This book is a revised version of my doctoral thesis, which was submitted to the University of Glasgow in August 1999. I have attempted to make this work interesting for specialists, but also to be readable and informative for those new to the world of Wisdom and the Septuagint. At the suggestion of Professor Dr. Martin Hengel, the original thesis has been enlarged by the inclusion of an Appendix which gives a brief overview of the history of the text of Wisdom and its reception in the Jewish community and the Christian Church. I hope that this additional material will provide a bridge for both beginners and informed readers which will enable them to place Wisdom in its scriptural and historical context.

In the preparation for such a work as this, many people are involved, and my thanks are due to them.

This work could not have been prepared without the financial support of the Ferguson Bequest, whose kindness and interest was both instant and constant, and who made available a generous scholarship for my use. I would also like to thank the Committee for Funding for Higher Degrees at Glasgow University for awarding me the Marion Blair Scholarship for a period of four years.

My deep gratitude is due to the Very Rev. Dr. Hugh Wyllie and the Kirk Session and congregation of the Old Parish Church of Hamilton. I was privileged to be the first beneficiary of the scholarship set up by the Church from the Miss May Orr Legacy. Throughout the whole process they encouraged and supported my family and me in many different ways. The friendships formed during that time, most especially with Dr. Wyllie, remain important for me.

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Beyond doubt, my gratitude is also due to my husband, Brian, my children, Aidan, Frances, and Ciaran, and my wider family. Their practical assistance, generosity of mind and spirit, and unconcerned and unquestioning belief in me, was in itself a good reason to begin and a

continuing inspiration throughout the entire project. My particularly deep gratitude goes to my husband, Brian, who in the final stages of preparation learned more about typesetting than he had ever wished to know, and who gave hours of his time to this project.

I am grateful to Professor Dr. Martin Hengel who read and accepted this work for publication in the WUNT II series, and to Herr Dr. Georg Siebeck and the staff of Mohr Siebeck in Tübingen for all their assistance and their patience.

Finally, I should like to register my appreciation of the unknown, fellow pilgrim, who was the writer of Wisdom of Solomon. In trying to understand his work and in the beauty of his expression, I discovered an imagination rooted in faith and hope.

Moyna McGlynn

Eastwood Manse
Glasgow, May 2001.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In short, a device was a mysterious notion, the expression of a correspondence: a poetry that did not sing but was made up of a silent figure and a motto that spoke for it to the eyes - precious in that it was imperceptible, its splendour hidden in the pearls and the diamonds it showed only bead by bead.

Umberto Eco *The Island of the Day* Before (pp.346-7)

1.1. Wisdom as a Literary Construct

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

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

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

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

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

Moreover, the way in which the justice/mercy balance is achieved, sustained and supported throughout the text, by literary structure and techniques, by narratives and dramatic tension, by vocabulary, allusion and omission, contributes to the way in which we understand Wisdom's theology. The picture of God and the creation/redemption plan which emerges cannot be divorced from the literary techniques employed, but is embedded in them and revealed as they are exposed. Accordingly, the methodology used to demonstrate this hypothesis is essentially a literary exploration of the text, i.e. a detailed examination of those techniques and their significance for individual sections and for the work as a whole. Additionally, inasmuch as Wisdom is essentially a work of literature rather than history, its impetus is also literary. Thus, in the uncovering of Wisdom's dialectic of judgement and benevolence 'bead by bead' we shall lay the text alongside other works of literature with which our author may have been familiar, or whose contents made claims which, in his eyes Judaism, and Judaism alone, was justified in making.

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

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

traditions. Finally, we need to consider the overall genre and structure of Wisdom with the implications and the responses inherent in that structure to each of the factors presented above.

1.2. The Unity of the Text and its Genre

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

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

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

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

[4] Grabbe 1997: 22.

[5] Skehan 1945: 1-12 Stich count, Wright 1976a Golden mean ratio in Wisdom's structure (see Structure below pp.22-23).

[6] Reese 1970: 1-24.

[7] Reese 1970: 124.

[8] Gilbert 1986: 90-91.

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

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

Wisdom's changes of style, and changes of principal subject, continue to cause problems for theories of the unity of the text, with more than one commentator suggesting that the unified work was finally completed by an aging author from a text he had begun in his youth.[12] This is to over-complicate the issue. If, as is the proposal of this work, Wisdom's theology and thematic unity is expressed in literary form, then the changes of style, metre, and subject have a counterpart in the aitia of Alexandrian literature, a form which also puzzled scholars by the seeming lack of thematic unity, but has lately been shown to have underlying themes and to follow concentric structuring.[13]

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

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

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

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

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

[14] Bing 1988: 50-58.

served to educate successive generations into that cultural frame of reference.

The form of an aition lay in the questions that it purported to answer. In the *Aetia* of Callimachus, a question is posed to the Charites in fragment 7.19 surrounding three local customs: the cult of Apollo at Anaphe (frag.7.19-21), and two narratives concerning Heracles, the Lindian farmer (frag.7.22-23) and the defeat of the Dryopes and Thiodamas (frag.7.24-25). Each story is recounted individually, although they have a common theme in the journey of the Argonauts,[15] and the stories can thus be said to form a cluster around the questions.

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

Wisdom, similarly, is built around a series of questions. These occur at 5.5, 5.8, 8.5-6, 9.13-17, 11.21, 11.25, 12.12 and 12.20. Some of the questions operate within the text as a pair. We see this at 5.5 where, in the second speech of the wicked, they talk of the righteous man whom they had despised:

How was he numbered among the children of God, and among the saints is his portion?

Πῶς κατελογίσθη ἐν υἱοῖς Θεοῦ, καὶ ἐν ἁγίοις ὁ κλῆρος αὐτοῦ ἐστιν; [18]

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[15] Harder 1993: 100-103.

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

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

[18] All translations throughout this work are those of the present author.

This produces, inevitably, a second question at 5.8, regarding the fate of the wicked themselves, which is a direct consequence of 5.5:

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

Τί ὠφέλησεν ἡμᾶς ἡ ὑπερηφανία; καὶ τὶ πλοῦτος μετὰ ἀλαζονείας συμβέβληται ἡμῖν·

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

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

Τίς γὰρ ἐρεῖ, τὶ ἐποίησας, ἢ τίς ἀντιστήσεται τῷ κρίματί σου; τίς δὲ ἐγκαλέσει σοι κατὰ ἐθνῶν ἀπολωλότων, ἃ σὺ ἐποίησας; ἢ τίς εἰς κατάστασιν σοι ἐλεύσεται ἔκδικος κατὰ ἀδίκων ἀνθρώπων;

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

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

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

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

These benefits are being considered from a private point of view. The alignment of Wisdom with individuals brings personal benefit. The questions represent humans in their quest for happiness, in search of the Platonic ideal of 'likeness to God'[19] and the secondary issue of whether

[19] Plato *Theaetetus* 176B.

virtue alone is sufficient for happiness or must virtue imply other benefits?[20] It is in our next cluster of questions, at 9.13 and 9.16-17, that the importance of the individual setting out upon a path of virtue is most fully endorsed, for the presence of divine wisdom brings knowledge of God and searches out the things of heaven:

For what man can know the counsels of God, or who will lay to heart what the Lord wills?

Τίς γὰρ ἄνθρωπος γνώσεται βουλὴν Θεοῦ; ἢ τίς ἐνθυμηθήσεται τί θέλει ὁ Κύριος; 9.13.

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

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

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

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

[20] This is the issue of the τέλος ἀγαθῶν or the end or purpose of goods, which is discussed more fully in Chapter 4 pp.113-114.

exhortation,[21] while Beauchamp and Gilbert have argued that the genre is an encomium.[22] The *logos protreptikos* is a lost genre which has been reconstructed from Aristotle's lost work *Protrepticus*. This form scholarship has been able to recover, though not firmly, from the fact that it is believed to be the basis of Cicero's *Hortensius*.[23] The encomium was also defined by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, and its object was to persuade the listeners into veneration of some quality or person who embodied certain qualities.

It is too simplistic to see these genre definitions as wrong and elements of both of these forms are to be found in Wisdom. As Grabbe has stated:

> By focusing on only one or other aspect of the book, one could make a case for a variety of genres within the book.[24]

The close links between the form of the encomium and the praise-poem as defined by Callimachus will be explored in Chapter 4 of this study when we come to examine the gift of wisdom and her relationship to kingship.[25] Also, Reese describes the genre of one of the smaller sections (6.12-16 + 6.21-10.21) as aporia, or problem literature,[26] whereas we note the presence of aporetic questions at 9.13-17 as an integral part of the praise-poem.[27]

Further, Reese defines 6.17-21 as sorites and the Diptychs of Chapters 11-19 as a form of syncrisis, and both of these definitions are workable and enhance our understanding of the text. Nonetheless, it would be somewhat singular to set out to write a protrepticus, according to the rules of Greek rhetoric, in which almost the first half of the work is couched in the poetic form of Hebrew parallelism. The looser form of aition, on the other hand, with its passages of narrative, its oracles, origins of festivals, its future revelations and its 'travelling' motif,[28] allows, even invites, the

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

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

[23] See Grabbe 1997: 26.

[24] Grabbe 1997: 25.

[25] See Chapter 4 of this study pp.105-108.

[26] Reese 1970: 107.

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

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

author to express his total education (*paideia*) in all its varying forms. Wisdom's author, as we shall see, is deeply concerned with traditional, Hebrew wisdom, with Isaianic material, and with the narratives of the Exodus, and is not simply emulating forms from another culture but is engaged with the creation of something new from his own cultural perspective.

If, however, we accept the definition of Wisdom as an aition in which the calling, history, and expectation of Judaism, in addition to its paradigm importance for the created order, is explained, then we also have to note our second problem. That problem is that now we have two extended aitia, Wisdom and the *Aeneid*, written in approximately the same time frame, representing two distinct nations and expressing a common interest in Alexandrian culture although in widely dissimilar ways, both of which make the claim that the destiny of humankind rests in their view of God and the world, their concepts of piety, and their institutions.[29] This may be a parallel development, or it may be that one was produced in response to the other and there is a relationship between these two texts which we should explore more carefully. This is one of the questions we will consider in our examination of the literary milieu from which Wisdom appeared. For the present, our interest in this possibility is restricted to the matter of dating and provenance, to which we will now turn our attention.

1.3. Provenance and Dating

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

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

2. The Exodus story is given prominence in Chapters 11-19. This is not, in itself, conclusive, as the Exodus is such a strong tradition for Judaism generally. However, as Collins notes, the plague cycle of the Egyptians is extended in Wisdom, whereas the sins of the Canaanites are only briefly mentioned.[31]

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

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[29] The piety of Aeneas is a constant feature of the text, e.g. I.10, III.84-89, IV.350-362. Also it is his role as a pious man which leads to, and increases, his sufferings.

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

[31] Collins 1997: 178.

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

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

The only other place which has received attention from scholars as the possible provenance of Wisdom is Syria. Both Georgi and Zimmermann have suggested this location, but for differing reasons. Georgi favours Syria because of the apocalyptic message of Wisdom, Chapters 1-5, and because he feels that apocalyptic movements were more intense in Syria.[36] Whilst this is undoubtedly true, it does not rule out any apocalyptic activity in the diaspora. Zimmermann's reason seems to be an inability to align the geography and the animal life described in Wisdom 11.17 with Egypt.[37]

Although this seems very weak, as the absence of lions and bears in Egypt does not mean that our author could not have known of them, we have to remember that Zimmermann's provenance is secondary to his theory of an Aramaic original for the text, and that this factor necessitated another location where Aramaic was the principal spoken language. Horbury's suggestion, that there was still considerable Aramaic spoken in the Egyptian diaspora as late as Roman Egypt (see page 4 above), reduces the need to find another, less suitable, location for Wisdom's origin. In

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[32] Grabbe 1997: 90.

[33] See Dillon 1977: 115.

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

[35] Cicero *Ad Fam.* i.1.3. Against this, perhaps, is the fact that Cicero does not seem to know of Eudorus.

[36] Georgi 1980: 395-396.

[37] Zimmermann 1966: 131-133.

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