

THE SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE OF WISDOM OF SOLOMON 12:1–15:19 ON PAUL’S DISCUSSION OF IDOLATRY AND RESULTING SINFULNESS IN ROMANS 1:18–32

Introduction

This paper examines the possible influence of Wis 12:1–15:19 on Paul’s discussion of idolatry and resulting sinfulness in Rom 1:18–32. Scholars have long recognized similar language and concepts between the two passages (formal similarity),¹ and many acknowledge Paul’s awareness of the book.² Some have even noted structural parallels between the two passages, a position this paper advances.³ However, the degree of influence on the content of Paul’s argument in Rom 1:18–32 remains disputed.⁴

This paper argues that similar units of thought in Wis 12:1–15:19 and Rom 1:18–32 indicate a significant degree of influence. Not only do the same words, phrases, and common topics occur throughout both passages, but in certain places the flow of Paul’s argument

¹ See the tables of comparison in Timo Laato, *Paul and Judaism: An Anthropological Approach*, trans. T. McElwain (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 94–95; Bruce Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: OUP, 1957), 159; and William Sanday and Arthur Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 9th ed., ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904), 51–52. For a summary of the history of research through the end of the nineteenth century, see Eduard Grafe, “Das Verhältniss der paulinischen Schriften zur Sapientia Saomonis,” 253–86 in *Theologische Abhandlungen Carl von Weizsäcker zu sienem Siebzigsten Geburtstage*, ed. Adolf Harnack et al. (Freiburg: Mohr-Siebeck, 1892), 253–59. For the history of research including Grafe and beyond, see Jonathan Dodson, *The “Powers” of Personification: Rhetorical Purpose in the Book of Wisdom and the letter to the Romans*, BNAW 161 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 3–13; and E. Earle Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 77–80. Dodson’s research focuses on the use of personification in Wisdom and Romans.

² For example, Metzger, *Introduction*, 163, notes, “What one can legitimately deduce from the parallels observable between the two is that there can be little doubt that the Apostle had at one time made a close study of this Apocryphal book.”

³ See especially Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 371–78. Gerhart Herold, *Zorn und Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus: Eine Untersuchung zu Röm 1,16–18* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1973), 187–209, also goes beyond noting verbal similarities and engages in a structural comparison between the Wisdom of Solomon and Rom 1:16–18.

⁴ Metzger, *Introduction*, 163, also notes, “The manifest dissimilarities not only as regards broad content, but the different uses made of certain terms common to both authors, are deep-seated and may not be underestimated.” R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, Volume One: Apocrypha* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 526, observes, “Seeing that St. Paul nowhere quotes Wisdom by name, it is almost impossible to adduce a proof of connexion which will satisfy everybody.”

resembles that of the Wisdom of Solomon.⁵ Such clusters of like thought suggest that Paul was engaging in a conversation with the Wisdom of Solomon rather than drawing on a tradition common to both.⁶ In order to demonstrate this thesis, the paper gives particular attention to the overlapping units of thought in Wis 12:1–15:19 and Rom 1:18–32 and accounts for the similarities and differences between the two passages.

Specific Units of Agreement

The Wisdom of Solomon critiques the pagan way of life in order to commend to Gentiles the truths of Judaism.⁷ Chapters 12–15 in particular focus upon Gentile sins and the foolishness of idolatry.⁸ The author contends that idolatry is inexcusable since God can be known from his works, and that idolatry leads to all manner of vices which God will punish.⁹

⁵ This is not to dismiss the importance of formal similarity as the tables in Laato, *Paul and Judaism*, 94–95; Metzger, *Introduction*, 159; and Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 51–52 note. For common vocabulary, see Henry St. John Thackeray, *The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 226, who also notes, “The use of noncanonical Jewish literature by the Apostle has as of yet been established only in the case of one work—the Wisdom of Solomon. His knowledge of that book may now be said to have received the utmost proof which is possible in the case of a literary connexion where the actual words of an earlier book are not directly quoted” (223).

⁶ As Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 372, notes, “We shall see that it is more appropriate to speak of a Pauline *engagement* with the earlier text rather than of ‘dependence’” (emphasis original). So also Jonathan Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness in Wisdom of Solomon and Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Texts in Conversation*, NovTSup 152 (Boston: Brill, 2013), 96.

⁷ Metzger, *Introduction to the Apocrypha*, 68. Metzger also notes, “Wisdom of Solomon...is concerned to unite the conventional piety of orthodox Judaism with the Greek philosophical spirit current at that time in Alexandria” (66). For more on the Wisdom of Solomon in general, see Charles, ed., *Apocrypha*, 518–34; Craig Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 14–15; and Robert Siebeck, “The Midrash of Wisdom 10–19,” *CBQ* 22 (1960): 176–82.

⁸ Charles, *Apocrypha*, 518; Metzger, *Introduction to the Apocrypha*, 71; and David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 249, identify chs. 13–15 as an excursus on the origin and evil of idolatry. On the structure of Wisdom, esp. chs. 11–19, see Addison Wright, “The Structure of Wisdom 11–19,” *CBQ* 27 (1965): 28–34. George Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 210–11, identifies a concentric pattern to chs. 13–15, with 14:21 (giving idols God’s name) at the center. For an in-depth analysis of this section, see Moyna McGlynn, *Divine Judgment and Divine Benevolence in the Book of Wisdom*, WUNT 2:139 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 132–69.

⁹ See the summary in Metzger, *Introduction to the Apocrypha*, 71–72.

Likewise, in Rom 1:18–32, Paul demonstrates the guilt and sinfulness of people.¹⁰ Paul first argues that God justly reveals his wrath against ungodliness and wickedness because people suppress the truth about God that God has shown them (1:18–20). Paul then details how people suppress the truth and identifies the consequences that flow from such suppression (1:21–31). He concludes with a universal indictment and warning of punishment (1:32). Thus, the two passages feature an overall structural similarity. In addition, two sections from each book demonstrate agreement in the details of the argument.¹¹

Wisdom 13:1–5 and Romans 1:18–23

The first sections that demonstrate specific similarity of thought are Wis 13:1–5 and Rom 1:18–23. Wisdom 13:1 states, “For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works.”¹² Paul argues in Rom 1:19, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.” God’s “eternal power and divine nature” are “understood and seen through the things he has made” (Rom 1:20).¹³

¹⁰ The following summary of Rom 1:18–32 is based on Douglas Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 107. Whether Paul’s accusation in Rom 1:18–32 includes Jews is not essential to the main point. He indicts people in general which certainly includes Gentiles, the immediate point of correspondence with Wis 12–15.

¹¹ For similar analyses to the following, see Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness*, 97–100, and Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 372–75.

¹² Unless otherwise noted, all citations from the Wisdom of Solomon and Romans are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. M-J Lagrange, *Saint Paul Épître aux Romains* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1950), 26, notes that Wis 13:1 seems to have inspired Paul’s comments in Rom 1.

¹³ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 1:115, notes that ἀίδιος, “eternal,” is an attribute of God in Wis 2:23, and that θεϊότης first appears in biblical Greek in Wis 18:9. He also compares the idea of being “without excuse” in v. 20 to Wis 13:8 (116). Colin Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 93, notes further parallels in Greek and Jewish literature to Paul’s language in Rom 1:20.

Wisdom 13:5 also claims, “from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.” Both authors contend that God can be known by his works.¹⁴

However, despite God’s revelation in creation, humans have not come to know and worship God, a point both passages articulate next. Wisdom 13:2 reads, “But they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world.” Paul argues, “Though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened” (Rom 1:21). Paul specifies that they did this when “they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles” (Rom 1:23).

Granted, Wis 13:2 refers to the heavenly bodies whereas Rom 1:23 refers to humans and animals. However, only a few lines previously, Wis 12:24 contains the phrase, “accepting as gods those animals that even their enemies despised,” and Wis 12:27 reads, “they became incensed as those creatures that they had thought to be gods.”¹⁵ Both insist that humans have misused creation (see also Wis 13:3–5), and Paul’s specific example of worshipping animals as gods is

¹⁴ Regarding the authorship of the Wisdom of Solomon, Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 14, notes that the book claims to have been written by Solomon (7:1–14; 8:17–9:18) but is regarded as pseudepigraphal. Bruce Metzger, ed., *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* (New York: OUP, 1977), 102, argues, “Internal evidence, however, indicates that the book was composed in Greek by an unknown Hellenistic Jew, probably at Alexandria during the first part of the first century B.C.” (Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 14, gives the same assessment) Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, trans. Sophia Taylor and Peter Christie (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), div. 2, 3:234, argues Wisdom precedes Philo. There is also discussion as to whether the book was written by one author or is a composite (see Charles, ed., *Apocrypha*, 521). Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament*, 80, dates the book to AD 40 and argues that there was not enough time for it to influence Paul. Without conclusive proof for the date of Wisdom, the decision about influence will have to be settled by the content of the passages at hand.

¹⁵ Wisdom 13:10 also refers to “likenesses of animals,” Wis 13:13 refers to “the likeness of a human being,” and Wis 13:14 refers to “some worthless animal.” Wisdom 13:13 and Rom 1:23 both employ εἰκόν.

found in the near context (Rom 1:23).¹⁶ Humans have worshipped the created things rather than recognizing the Creator on the basis of the things he has made.¹⁷

Wisdom 14:9–14, 22–31 and Romans 1:18, 24–32

The next sections that demonstrate strong similarity of thought are Wis 14:9–14, 22–31 and Rom 1:18, 24–32. Wisdom 14:9 reads, “For equally hateful to God are the ungodly (ἀσεβής) and their ungodliness (ἀσέβεια).” Wisdom 14:10 promises the ungodly “will be punished,” and Wis 14:11 warns of a coming “day of visitation also upon the heathen idols.” The opening line of Rom 1:18 expresses the same thought of God’s wrath against ungodliness and idolatry: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (ἀσέβεια) and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth.”¹⁸

The similarities continue in Wis 14:12 and Rom 1:24 as the authors begin to trace how idolatry leads to further sins, particularly immorality. Wisdom 14:12 claims, “The idea of making idols was the beginning of fornication, and the invention of them was the corruption of life.” Likewise, Rom 1:24 reads, “Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves.” The “therefore” of Rom 1:24 grounds this

¹⁶ Stanley Porter, *The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary* (New Testament Monographs 37; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015), 66, notes that Paul’s “animal images draw upon the kinds of images typical in pagan worship that were created to capture the characteristics of the divine, with the last set perhaps drawing upon the use of animals in Egyptian religion that may have been imported to Rome.” An allusion to Egyptian worship would match Wis 12:23–27.

¹⁷ For common vocabulary between the two passages in this section, see Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 280, and Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 51, to which can be added the occurrence of δύναμις and νοέω in Wis 13:4 and Rom 1:20.

¹⁸ See also the conclusion of Rom 1:32, “those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who do.” That last line also resembles Wis 14:10, “for what was done will be punished together with the one who did it.”

abandonment in the idolatry of Rom 1:21–23,¹⁹ and Rom 1:25 gives the same reason: “Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.” Romans 1:26–27 repeats the main idea yet again when it analyzes how “God gave them up to degrading passions,” namely homosexuality.

After a digression on the origin of idolatry in Wis 14:15–21,²⁰ vv. 22–29 describe the sins that result from idolatry (see chart below). Verses 22–26 detail the sins, and v. 27 concludes, “For the worship of idols not to be named is the beginning and cause and end of every evil.” Verse 28 names a few more sins, and v. 29 again concludes, “for because they trust in lifeless idols they swear wicked oaths and expect to suffer no harm.”

Romans 1:28–31 follows the same pattern. Paul identifies idolatry as the root sin in v. 28 (“since they did not see fit to acknowledge God”), and then provides a vice list in vv. 29–31, naming the many kinds of wickedness that flow from God giving people up to a debased mind because of their idolatry. In fact, the ways the two authors list the resulting sins follow a remarkably similar style as the following table indicates.

¹⁹ Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 107.

²⁰ Charles, ed., *Apocrypha*, 519, and Metzger, *Introduction*, 72, note the similarity of Wisdom’s analysis of the origin of idolatry with that of the Greek writer Euhemerus (300 BC), who taught that the gods are deceased humans deified by the living.

Wisdom 14:22–29	Romans 1:28–32
<p>Then it was not enough for them to err about the knowledge of God, but through living in great strife due to ignorance, they call such great evils peace. For whether they kill children in their initiations, or celebrate secret mysteries, or hold frenzied revels with strange customs, they no longer keep either they lives or their marriages pure, but they either treacherously kill one another, or grieve one another by adultery, and all is a raging riot of blood and murder, theft and deceit, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, confusion over what is good, forgetfulness of favors, defiling of souls, sexual perversion, disorder in marriages, adultery, and debauchery. For the worship of idols not to be named is the beginning and cause and end of every evil. For their worshipers either rave in exultation, or prophesy lies, or live unrighteously, or readily commit perjury; for because they trust in lifeless idols they swear wicked oaths and expect to suffer no harm.</p>	<p>And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious towards parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.</p>

The discussion of idolatry and its resulting sinfulness then reaches the same conclusion in both passages. Wisdom 14:30 claims, “But just penalties will overtake them on two counts: because they thought wrongly about God in devoting themselves to idols, and because in deceit they swore unrighteously through contempt for holiness.” Wisdom 14:31 also promises a “just penalty for those who sin.” After the vice list of Rom 1:29–31, Paul concludes, “They know God’s decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.” The just wrath of God falls on those who commit idolatry and the sins that flow from idolatry.

These sections demonstrate not just a formal similarity and common vocabulary, but a shared method of argumentation.²¹ While similar ideas are found in the OT and rabbinic literature,²² the structural parallels of Wis 13:1–5 and 14:9–14, 22–31 with Rom 1:18–32 indicate Pauline dependence, not utilization of a common source.²³ The structural similarity suggests a significant level of Pauline indebtedness to this book from the Apocrypha.²⁴

Explanation of Differences

Many scholars acknowledge the likelihood that Paul was familiar with the Wisdom of Solomon. Bruce Metzger writes, “There is reason to think that both the Apostle Paul and the author of Hebrews had at some time read and were impressed by the Wisdom of Solomon.”²⁵

²¹ Metzger, *Introduction*, 160, notes “three similar arguments: (1) mankind knows something of the greatness of God from observing his handiwork in nature; (b) rejecting these tokens of God’s majesty, mankind turned to the worship of senseless idols made in the form of animals; and (c) as a result men have plumbed the depths of manifold crimes and immoralities.” Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 52, notes a similar correspondence: “the resemblance is so strong both as to the main lines of the argument (i. Natural religion discarded, ii. idolatry, iii. catalogue of immorality) and in the details of thought and to some extent of expression as to make it clear that at some time in his life St. Paul must have bestowed upon the Book of Wisdom a considerable amount of study.” So also Charles, ed., *Apocrypha*, 527, “after discussing the nature and folly of idol worship, both the writers of Wisdom and St. Paul dwell upon the immorality which they affirm to be the direct result of idolatry. Both give a long catalogue of vices, St. Paul 24, Wisdom 14, which naturally tally in several points.” Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 372–75, notes four parallel arguments: (1) The true God might have been known from the created order, but the opportunity has been wasted; (2) the most fundamental religious error is the manufacture and worship of idols; (3) idolatry is the root of all other evils; (4) those who commit such sins are subject to the divine punishment. See also Thackeray, *Relation of St. Paul*, 224–26, who, following Grafe, notes “the primary points of connexion” (223).

²² As argued by W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1958), 28–31.

²³ Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 372, argues that the cumulative force of the parallels make the idea of a shared tradition inadequate: “There seems no good reason to doubt that Paul is consciously basing his argument on the template provided by *Wisdom*.”

²⁴ For additional areas in which Paul appears to utilize the Wisdom of Solomon, including in Romans 9, see Metzger, *Introduction*, 160–63; Grafe, “Das Verhältniss,” 264–85; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 267–69; Thackeray, *Relation of St. Paul*, 226–30. These additional areas of similarity strengthen the idea that Paul utilized the Wisdom of Solomon.

²⁵ Metzger, *Introduction*, 158.

The introduction to the Wisdom of Solomon edited by Charles states, “St. Paul undoubtedly knew and used the book, Romans and Ephesians showing clear signs of its influence.”²⁶

However, the degree of influence on the content of Paul’s argument in Rom 1:18–32 remains disputed. Metzger, while recognizing the influence of certain expressions, yet writes, “At the same time it must be recognized that he obtained nothing further from it. The manifest dissimilarities not only as regards broad content, but the different uses made of certain terms common to both authors, are deep-seated and may not be underestimated.”²⁷ More severe is the judgment of Ellis, who writes, “There is very little unity in the essential character of the two passages,” and concludes that the similarities are due to both works depending on a common tradition rooted in the OT.²⁸

Two areas of difference incline some scholars to see more distinction than dependence between Paul and Wisdom.²⁹ The first concerns whether the pagans recognized the revelation of God in nature. Ellis claims that in Romans the heathen recognized the revelation of God in

²⁶ Charles, ed., *Apocrypha*, 519. For the similarities with Ephesians, see Charles, ed., *Apocrypha*, 527, and Metzger, *Introduction*, 65–77. Charles, ed., *Apocrypha*, 526, even claims that because of the cumulation of parallels in Rom 1:18–32, “it seems perverse to deny connexion.”

²⁷ Metzger, *Introduction*, 163.

²⁸ Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament*, 79. Ellis later writes, “In comparing Pauline correspondence with the apocryphal literature it has been the writer’s impression throughout that they pointed not so much to a direct source of influence as to current *theologumena* and traditional concepts or interpretations” (82). Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 5th ed, KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 100, also concludes that the two authors are working from a common tradition but differ in content. Hermann Gunkel, *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes nach der populären Anschauung der apostolischen Zeit und der Lehre des Apostels Paulus*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1899), 80, also judges “Die Aussagen des Paulus und der Bibel sind also keineswegs artverwandt. Daher ist ein Entleihen des Paulus aus solchen Gedanken reihen sehr unwahrscheinlich” (“The statements of Paul and the Bible are in no way related. Therefore, Paul borrowing from such lines of thought is very unlikely.”). These authors, however, do not identify the common source between Paul and Wisdom beyond the OT in general. Charles, ed., *Apocrypha*, 526, suggests both could be independently using a Stoic argument but settles strongly for a connection between Rom 1:20 and Wis 13:1. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 28–31, identifies common ideas in the rabbinic literature, but the structural parallels are absent.

²⁹ Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 372, notes, “Naturally there are differences in the way these themes are treated, and in another context a full investigation of them would be rewarding.” This paper addresses those differences.

nature but rejected it and turned to idols, whereas Wisdom describes idolatry as an ignorant (albeit genuine) attempt to find God.³⁰ In the same vein, Owen distinguishes between “a knowledge [of God] that can be, but has not been attained” (Wis 13), and “a knowledge that both can be and has been attained,” although it has been suppressed.³¹ In Wisdom, the Gentiles are moving towards God (although they do not find him), but in Romans they are moving away from God.

This objection overstates the difference between the two passages. Wisdom 13:1 does state, “they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists,” but the next line (which appears to function as in other wisdom literature like synonymous parallelism) states, “nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works.” The second line develops the first and implies a rejection of the knowledge of God, not mere ignorance.³² Wisdom 13:1–9 criticizes the Gentiles for not finding God by means of his works, a judgment consistent with Rom 1:19–21.³³

The second difference concerns how severely the authors assess nature worship. Ellis contends that in Wisdom “Worship of the creation draws only a mild rebuke,” and that “Wisdom

³⁰ Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 78–79.

³¹ H. P. Owen, “The Scope of Natural Revelation in Rom. I and Acts XVII,” *NTS* 5:2 (1959), 138. M. D. Hooker, “Adam in Romans I,” *NTS* 6:4 (1960), 299–300, follows Owen here. For a similar distinction, see Richard Bell, *No one seeks for God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 1.18–3:20*, WUNT 106 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 76–77; Günther Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 54; Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 154; and Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness*, 109–11. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 373, while acknowledging significant structural parallels between the two passages, nonetheless concedes this point.

³² *Contra* Kathy Gaca, “Paul’s Uncommon Declaration in Romans 1:18–32 and Its Problematic Legacy for Pagan and Christian Relations,” *HTR* 92:2 (1999), 165–67, who argues that Paul’s condemnation of Gentiles as apostates represents a distinct development in the polemical tradition against Gentiles.

³³ James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 91, argues that in Rom 1:19–20, “The echo of Wis. 13.1–9 is particularly strong.”

distinguishes between a better and worse type of paganism.”³⁴ Likewise, Milne writes, “The writer of Wisdom tends to exonerate men for their failure to find God through his creation and as a result the whole notion of divine punishment is very weakly presented.”³⁵ Wisdom 13:6 supposedly captures this key difference: “Yet these people are little to be blamed, for perhaps they go astray while seeking God and desiring to find him.”³⁶

However, this criticism misses what the author of Wisdom later says in the relevant passage. Wisdom 13:8–9 reads, “Yet again, not even they are to be excused; for if they had the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?” The author condemns the Gentiles for failing to find God through his works, which is the same argument Paul makes in Rom 1:19–21. Furthermore, *contra* Milne, Wis 14:10–11 promises a coming day of judgment.³⁷ The author of Wisdom knows that failing to

³⁴ Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament*, 79. Ellis argues that Wisdom judges the worship of images and animals more severely than it does worship of the created elements.

³⁵ Douglas Milne, “Genesis 3 in the Letter to the Romans.” *RTR* 39:1 (1980), 10.

³⁶ Authors such as Charles, ed., *Apocrypha*, 526–27, and Thackeray, *Relation of St. Paul*, 224–25 acknowledge Pauline dependence on Wisdom but concede that Wisdom expresses a lighter judgment on idolaters who worship natural phenomena.

³⁷ Authors like Milne, “Genesis,” 10–18; Hooker, “Adam in Romans 1,” 297–306; N. Hyldahl, “A Reminiscence of the Old Testament at Romans i. 23,” *NTS* 2:4 (1956), 285–88; and Owen, “Scope of Natural Revelation,” 133–43, argue that the biblical narrative of Adam’s fall exerts much more influence on Rom 1:18–32 than the Wisdom of Solomon. Mark Seifrid, “Romans,” 607–94 in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 607, also detects an allusion to the fall of Gen 3. However, Moo, *Romans*, 120n84, convincingly argues against a reference to the fall and concludes, “That Paul may view the ‘fall’ of individual human beings as analogous *in some ways* to the fall of the first human pair is likely, but the text does not warrant the conclusion that he is specifically describing the latter” (emphasis original). Similarly, Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 274, recognizes the allusions but argues that the view ultimately reads too much into the text. Stanley Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*, Studies in Biblical Greek (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 236, argues against a reference to the fall on the basis of the timelessness of the aorist tenses in Rom 1:18–32. For more resources for and against this position, see Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness*, 112n65. Stephen Westerholm, *Perpectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 386, best synthesizes the evidence when he describes Rom 1:18–32 as “a dramatized depiction of the human condition, recalling many a biblical account...but it is not the retelling any *one* story that Paul has read or seen” (emphasis original).

know God and engaging in idolatry brings God's wrath.³⁸ Both passages teach that idolatry leads to further sins which God punishes and will punish (Wis 14:9–14, 22–31; Rom 1:18, 24–32).³⁹ These apparent differences cannot negate the significant structural parallels that indicate engagement.⁴⁰

Difference as Further Evidence of Engagement

One final piece of evidence remains to indicate Paul's engagement with the Wisdom of Solomon, and ironically it is a passage where Paul unquestionably disagrees with the author of Wisdom. In Wis 15:2, 4, the author states, "For even if we sin we are yours, knowing your power; but we will not sin, because we know that you acknowledge us as yours." "For neither has the evil intent of human art misled us, nor the fruitless toil of painters, a figure stained with varied colors." After the survey of idolatry and its consequences among Gentiles in Wis 12–14 (the line of thinking that Paul follows in Rom 1:18–32), the author now claims that the Jewish people have not succumbed to the evils of idolatry (Wis 15).

In contrast, Paul refutes such a claim as he moves into Rom 2:1–29. Romans 2:1 announces, "Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in

³⁸ In other words, the revelation of divine wrath does not await Rom 1:18 as Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness*, 108–09, argues in his attempt to exploit differences between Wis 13–14 and Rom 1:18–32.

³⁹ Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 79, also argues that, unlike Paul, "Wisdom views God's judgment as first a child's corrective (Wis. 12.25f), which if unheeded brings greater evils and God's punishment (Wis. 14.22ff)." However, Wis 12:25–27 is not referring to Gentiles for whom punishment was reformatory, but to the Egyptians who, upon the death of their firstborn and the drowning of the Egyptian army, did acknowledge the true God (see Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 245–46). If the larger idea of Wis 12:19–27 is God's patience with idolaters, such a thought is consistent with Rom 2:4.

⁴⁰ For similar views on Paul's use of Wis 12–15 in Rom 1:18–32 to what I have articulated above, see James Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 38A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 53, 56–57; Grafe, "Das Verhältniss," 272–74; Andrew Lincoln, "From Wrath to Justification: Tradition, Gospel, and Audience in the Theology of Romans 1:18–4:25," 130–59 in *Pauline Theology, Volume III: Romans*, ed. David Hay and Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 135–39; Moo, *Romans*, 108–09; Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 371–78.

passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things.”⁴¹ The person who would condemn the sinners of Rom 1:18–32 is also in danger of God’s wrath because that human judge practices the same sins. Since Paul relativizes the position of Jews and Gentiles before God’s law in Rom 2:1–16, the Jewish people are likely included in the condemnation of 2:1.⁴² In addition, Rom 2:17–24 specifically addresses the sins of those who call themselves Jews, which includes a discussion of idolatry.⁴³ God’s patience towards the Jewish people expresses his kindness which is designed to lead them to repentance (Rom 2:4).⁴⁴ Therefore, Paul does not concur with the author of Wisdom that the Jews avoided the evils of idolatry.⁴⁵

However, this difference actually bolsters the argument for dependence by showing that Paul was intentionally correcting his Jewish heritage. If Paul was merely using the Wisdom of Solomon to bolster his point about idolatry and resulting sinfulness, he could discard it as a source. But the structural parallels continue into Rom 2: just as Rom 1:18–32 corresponds to Wis

⁴¹ D. A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 542, argues that Rom 1:18–32 follows Wis 13–14 but is “an instance of προσωποποιία, or speech-in-character,” in which Paul’s presents a Teacher’s position that he neutralizes through the presentation of his gospel. Therefore, Rom 1:18–32 accurately reflects Wis 13–14 but Paul disagrees with the content. I think the point of Paul’s disagreement is explicitly stated at Rom 2:1. Campbell places a disjunction in a passage that is held together by numerous instances of γὰρ. For more on this, see Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness*, 108–09.

⁴² Simon Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 198–99, makes this argument while referring to the Wisdom of Solomon. See also Moo, *Romans*, 138–39.

⁴³ Romans 2:22b asks, “You that boast in the law, do you rob temples?” For the various explanations of this charge, see Thielman, *Romans*, 151.

⁴⁴ On the parallels between Wis 15 and Rom 2:3–5, see the sources noted in Alec Lucas, “Reorienting the Structural Paradigm and Social Significance of Romans 1:18–32,” *JBL* 131:1 (2012), 135–36 (especially 135n38).

⁴⁵ Moo, *Romans*, 135, notes, “At one crucial point, however, Paul dissents from the Jewish view: he criticizes Jews as well as Gentiles for failing to respond appropriately to God’s self-revelation.” Likewise, Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 377, writes, “Thus, having shadowed the author of *Wisdom* so closely in Romans 1, Paul now turns to him and denounces him—or rather, he denounces the outlook that the earlier author represents. Indeed, Paul appears consciously to use the language of the other text against it.”

12–14, now Rom 2:1–29 reflects Wis 15.⁴⁶ But while Paul echoes the ideas of Wisdom in the first section regarding Gentile sinfulness,⁴⁷ he now disagrees with the author’s non-application of those truths to Jews.⁴⁸ Instead, Paul argues that all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, stand condemned before God’s law.⁴⁹ The convergence of structural similarity with a difference in content further indicates Paul’s engagement with the Wisdom of Solomon.⁵⁰

Paul engages this conversation in order to correct the Jewish assessment of the human plight. If the Jews believed that God’s kindness would shield them from judgement, then Paul must show that his people need to repent because they are guilty of the same kinds of sins (God’s kindness should lead to repentance).⁵¹ While Wis 15:1–4 claims that the Jewish people are free from idolatry, Paul argues they are guilty of the sins that flow from idolatry (Rom 1:29–31 cf. 2:17–24), and therefore they must be guilty of the same fundamental sin: a failure to know God.

⁴⁶ David Aune, “Romans as a *Logos Protreptikos*,” 278–96 in *The Romans Debate*, ed. Karl Donfried, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 291, argues that Rom 1:18–32 “exhibits no specifically Christian features, and it has well-known parallels to the Hellenistic Jewish tradition found in Wisd. 12–14.” I agree with the parallels but the statement that Rom 1:18–32 exhibits no Christian features may be too strong. At least in the overall argument Paul is bringing his Christian convictions to bear on his Jewish heritage.

⁴⁷ Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness*, 95–96, argues that Paul does not restate Wis 13–14 in Rom 1:18–32 but instead rereads Rom 1:18–32 in the light of the rhetorical turn at Rom 2:1, resulting in an alteration to the tradition of Wis 13–14 that includes Jews within Wisdom’s condemnation. The net result of our analyses is the same, but the contrast in Rom 2:1 serves as a better point of contact for engagement with Wisdom rather than retracing one’s steps through Rom 1:18–32 and rereading Wisdom. Linebaugh’s insights are valid but seem more like an implication of the overall argument rather than an intended meaning.

⁴⁸ Lucas, “Reorienting the Structural Paradigm,” 136, writes, “Paul is employing the Jewish interlocutor’s own views against him.” Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Carl Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), 114–15, argues Paul’s dependence on Wisdom 11–15 in Rom 1–2 only becomes clear when Paul challenges Wisdom in Rom 2.

⁴⁹ Paul states this emphatically in the conclusion of Rom 3:19–20.

⁵⁰ Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 372n77, insightfully notes that seeing difference “implies that ‘influence’ and ‘differences’ are mutually limiting.” “In fact...the depth of Paul’s engagement with this text is evident precisely at points where he also differs from it.”

⁵¹ On the “proof” for Paul’s claim that the judge of Rom 2:1 practices “the very same things,” Moo, *Romans*, 141, suggests, “we should look to 1:29–31 rather than to 1:20–28 for the sins Paul has in mind here in 2:1. Many of these sins—for example, pride, arrogance, gossiping, maligning others, and lack of affection—are as prevalent in the Jewish as in the Gentile world. In fact, Paul will accuse the Jews of some of these same sins in vv. 17–24.” Watson notes the similar vocabulary in Wis 12:23; 15:1 and Rom 2:4.

As a skilled teacher, Paul first appeals to an idea held in common (Gentile idolatry) before showing that its implications also apply to his target audience (Jews are sinful as well).⁵² Paul echoes and engages with the Wisdom of Solomon to advance this overall argument (1:18–3:20).⁵³

The clear disagreement of Rom 2:1–29 also supports our previous explanation of the apparent differences between Wis 12–14 and Rom 1:18–32. Paul utilizes Wisdom because it criticizes Gentile idolatry and resulting sinfulness, a criticism he then deploys against the Jews in Rom 2:1–29. If Wisdom was soft on Gentile idolatry, it would be a poor choice of a source to utilize against the covenant people.⁵⁴ Paul’s disagreement with the Wisdom of Solomon does not occur at the level of Gentile idolatry and its consequences but rather at the level of Jewish culpability of the same.⁵⁵

Lastly, Paul’s disagreement with the Wisdom of Solomon indicates he did not regard the apocryphal book as authoritative.⁵⁶ Throughout Romans, Paul labors to show how the OT

⁵² Lincoln, “From Wrath to Justification,” 135, notes that Paul “makes his case for humanity’s plight from within the parameters of assumptions his Jewish Christian addressees would already have held as Jews.”

⁵³ Regarding Paul’s reassessment of the human plight, N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 250, argues, “Paul moved, in other words, from his original understanding of ‘the plight’ to a ‘solution’ which revealed the full dimensions of the original ‘plight’” (for the full discussion, see 247–50). Similarly, Moo, *Romans*, 103, writes, “His sudden and unexpected confrontation with Christ on the Damascus Road dramatically revealed God’s plan for humanity’s deliverance. It was from that insight that Paul then had to rethink everything—including the depth of humanity’s plight.”

⁵⁴ Another argument against the leniency of the Wisdom of Solomon is that it makes little sense for the author to gently criticize Gentiles but then claim that Jews are morally superior.

⁵⁵ Again, Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 372, notes that an explanation of the apparent differences is a desideratum.

⁵⁶ Grafe, “Das Verhältniss,” 253, notes that the Catholic church regards Paul’s use of the Apocrypha as certain. If such use is meant to imply that the Apocrypha is authoritative, my conclusion would argue against the implications of that argument. Paul utilized the book but did not accept all of its ideas as authoritative.

scriptures anticipate the gospel and are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.⁵⁷ Paul does not disagree with the OT but shows his readers how to read the OT in light of the work of Christ.⁵⁸ When it comes to the Wisdom of Solomon, however, Paul subverts its conclusion about Jewish non-involvement in idolatry in order to show the universal need and availability of the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁵⁹

Conclusion

Paul registers no disagreement with the Wisdom of Solomon on the evils of idolatry. In fact, he utilizes Wisdom's argument to structure his own discussion of idolatry and resulting sinfulness in Rom 1:18–32. The similarities are not only formal and conceptual, but follow a similar structure of argument. They agree in key content such as the failure of humans to know God by his works, the foolishness of idolatry, the immorality that flows from idolatry, and God's judgment upon those who practice such things. When Paul departs from the Wisdom of Solomon, he does so in order to correct it, which indicates a continued engagement with the apocryphal work.

⁵⁷ Seifrid, "Romans," 607, argues that Romans is "nothing more than a proclamation of the Scriptures that have been fulfilled in the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ."

⁵⁸ Richard Hays, "Adam, Israel, Christ: The Question of Covenant in the Theology of Romans: A Response to Leander E. Keck and N. T. Wright," 68–86 in *Pauline Theology, Volume III*, 85–86, argues that Paul's hermeneutical strategy in using the OT is at the heart of what makes Romans tick. So also Seifrid, "Romans," 607, "As the apostle makes clear at decisive points in his argument (1:1–7); 10:1–4; 15:4; 16:25–27), the letter is a lesson in hermeneutics for his readers."

⁵⁹ Walter Dunnett, "The Hermeneutics of Jude and 2 Peter: The Use of Ancient Jewish Traditions," *JETS* 31:3 (1988), 288, reaches a similar conclusion in his study of Jude and 2 Peter: "there is the lack of citations from apocryphal literature in Jewish and Christian sources between the second century B.C. and the first century A.D. The NT reflects a more or less limited canon, although the precise contents cannot be determined."

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