

Concordia Theological Seminary

THE ODES OF SOLOMON
AS AN EXAMPLE OF JEWISH-CHRISTIANITY

AN INSTRUMENT FOR FURTHER STUDY

(WITH A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PERTINENT RESOURCES)

A Research Report

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No one yet knows the name of their writer, but he was a mystic, deeply aware of the presence of God. He was a poet who loved his language and his Lord. He was a prophet and priest who cherished his heritage and knew the changes that Jesus the Christ made in it. He was a liturgist who showed how to sing praises to God.

Reading the Odes is a look into the first century, into Christian Syria in a time before dogma was set, in a place where Greek and Syriac learning mingled and before the great churches of Africa and Rome flourished. It is a look into the community of the Essenes, the churches of Antioch and Edessa and the fellowship of John the Apostle.

(David C. Anderson, "The Odes of Solomon")

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1. INTRODUCTION

The original intention of this project, as the title of the report still suggests, was to consider the Odes of Solomon as an example of Jewish-Christianity. It became apparent rather quickly, however, that such ambitions would require extensive research far beyond the scope of the assignment at hand. Because, if nothing else, the Odes of Solomon and Jewish-Christianity have at least this much in common: the scholarship of each is marked by ambiguity, uncertainty, and a wide divergence of opinion. First of all, no one seems to know precisely what is meant by the term, "Jewish-Christianity," though it is frequently invoked.¹ Thus, before the Odes of Solomon could be considered as an example of Jewish-Christianity, an entire project could easily be spent on issues of prolegomena. Similarly, the Odes of Solomon themselves have been subject to an incredible amount of scholarly speculation. The bibliography of resources included with this report gives evidence to a vast amount of scholarship connected with the Odes, but there are virtually as many opinions about this ancient psalter as there are entries in the bibliography. Here again, the prolegomena required for an adequate treatment of the Odes as an example of Jewish-Christianity (or as an example of anything else, for that matter) would exhaust the project before it began. In actual fact, that is basically what happened. The present report is essentially an instrument for further study. It attempts to establish the parameters within which the Odes of Solomon must surely fall, on the basis of the various opinions that abound among scholars of these texts. As such, it does not seek to give a definitive answer, although a tentative conclusion is provided. With respect to the original question, it is clear that the Odes of Solomon bear many distinctively "Jewish" characteristics, and that in their present form they consciously intend to be "Christian." Thus, however simplistic the statement might be, the Odes of Solomon certainly are an example of "Jewish-Christianity." Determining precisely what that means will require additional research.

¹ *cf.*, e.g., RAYMOND E. BROWN, "Not Jewish and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 (1983); A. F. J. KLIJN, "The Study of Jewish Christianity," in *New Testament Studies* 20 (1974); and STANLEY K. RIEGEL, "Jewish Christianity: Definitions and Terminology," in *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978).

2. ISSUES AND PARAMETERS

2.1. Early Attestation / "Identification"

Essentially, there are four early witnesses to the psalter identified as the "Odes of Solomon."²

These are as follows:

- The complete text of Odes 1, 5, 6, 22, and 25 (in Coptic) is cited as Scripture in the Gnostic document known as the *Pistis Sophia* (ca. 3rd century).
- Lactantius includes a single quotation of Ode 19:6 (in Latin) in his *Divinarum Institutionum* (ca. 4th century).
- The Odes of Solomon are mentioned in the listing of the Pseudo–Athanasian *Synopsis Sacrae Scriptura* (ca. 6th century) as one of the non–Canonical books of the Old Testament that were being read to the catechumens.
- The *Stichometry* of Nicephorus (ca. 9th century) includes a similar listing of the Odes.

It has been suggested that such a paucity of witnesses to the Odes of Solomon is due to their condemnation, along with other "suspect" books and psalms, by the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 363). Origen, for example, while not mentioning the Odes by name, argues rather forcefully that the only genuine Solomonic song is the Song of Songs (*i.e.*, the Old Testament book of Canticles). His comments seem to imply that other books (and specifically song–books) were being ascribed to Solomon, and that these should be rejected. In Origen's day, such pseudepigraphal works would almost have had to include the Psalms and Odes of Solomon. (*cf.* Charlesworth, Thesis: 10, 20ff.)

² *cf.* JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH, *A Critical Examination of the Odes of Solomon*, Ph.D. Thesis, Duke University (1967): 13–17. [Hereafter cited in–line, according to the format: (Charlesworth, Thesis: 13–17).]

2.2. Discovery of the Odes and the History of their Scholarship

The scholar, J. Rendel Harris, first discovered the Odes of Solomon in 1905, in a Syriac manuscript (*ca.* 15th century) that he had obtained some years earlier in the vicinity of the Tigris, and which had been lying on a shelf in his study ever since. James H. Charlesworth includes an excerpt from the account that Harris provides concerning this discovery. It is worth repeating here, not only for its anecdotal value, but also for the information it supplies. Harris writes,

On the 4th of January last, having a little leisure time, I thought I would devote it to sorting and identifying a heap of torn and stained paper leaves written in the Syriac language, which had been lying on my shelves for a long time, waiting for attention and not finding it. Amongst them was a bunch of leaves which I took to be a late copy of the conventional Syriac Psalter. It was divided by rubrics, which numbered a series of psalms, such as *Psalms four*, *Psalms five* and so on, down to *Psalms sixty*. The conventional Psalter was suggested by the fact that a number of them were marked for choral use by the addition of the first letter of the word Hallelujah to the successive stanzas. This is not uncommon feature in Syriac Psalters. Without any suspicion of anything out of the common, I began to examine the text in a leisurely manner, and was presently surprised to find that it was not our regular Hebrew Psalter, but something quite different. One psalm in particular caught my eye. It began like this:

‘Why sittest thou, O wicked man, in the Congregation,
and thy heart is far from the Lord?’

I thought I remembered something like that, and took down the Psalter of Solomon, as edited by Ryle and James, for the purpose of enquiry. And I found the words at the beginning of the fourth psalm in their collection. Further examination showed that the whole of their Psalter of Solomon stood at the end of my manuscript. So here was the lost Syriac version of the *Psalms of Solomon*, whose discovery Ryle and James had desired. Examination also showed that at the beginning of the new book could be found every one of the passages which had been quoted in the Coptic book of *Faith-Wisdom*. Further examination showed the very psalm or ode quoted by Lactantius. And since the whole book, with the exception of slight mutilations at the beginning and ending, represented a collection of sixty or sixty-one psalms, it was evident that between two and three times as much Solomonic matter was now to hand as we possessed formerly.³

Harris first published the Odes in 1909. Numerous other editions and several translations have been issued since then.

³ J. R. Harris, "An Early Christian Hymn-Book," *Contemporary Review* 95 (1909): 420f. Cited in Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon: The Syriac Texts* (1977): 4-5.

F. C. Burkitt discovered a second manuscript (*ca.* 10th century) in 1912, also in Syriac, in the holdings of the British Museum.

The Odes of Solomon have undergone basically two phases of scholarship. The first phase began with the discovery of the Odes in 1905, and it continued until the discoveries of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts (1945) and the Qumran Scrolls (1947), and the acquisition of Papyrus Bodmer XI (1955–56). The second phase began with these discoveries. However, a glance at the bibliography of this report will show that scholarship was most intense from the first publication of the Odes in 1909, up until the 1920's, was relatively sparse from then until the 1950's, and has since continued steadily unto the present day.

James H. Charlesworth, who earned his Ph.D. from Duke University with a Thesis on the Odes of Solomon, is the "current authority" on the Odes. Among his many writings on the topic, he has provided a critical edition of the Syriac text along with a translation into English.⁴

According to Charlesworth, the Odes are "an enigma to Biblical critics. They have been placed in such mutually exclusive categories as the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (O. Eissfeldt), the New Testament Apocrypha (E. Hennecke), and the patristic literature (C. K. Barrett and C. H. Dodd). It is safe to say that no other book so disarrays the authorities" (Charlesworth, Thesis: iii). "There is no critical consensus regarding the Odes of Solomon. No agreement exists regarding the date of composition, nor concerning the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the composition, nor what is the original language, nor what particular milieu is represented by the Odes of Solomon. If consensus exists, it is the general appreciation for the poetic, mystical beauty of these spontaneous expressions from one who experiences anew the contemporaneity of God" (Charlesworth, Thesis: x).

⁴ *cf.* JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH, *The Odes of Solomon: The Syriac Texts* (1977). [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (Charlesworth, *Syriac*: ##).]

2.3. Extant Texts ⁵

Apparently, there were 42 Odes altogether, of which all but the second are preserved. They are extant in the following manuscripts:

- The *Harris Manuscript* [H], ca. 15th century, containing Odes 3:1(?) – 42:20 (in Syriac)
- The *Codex Nitriensis* [N], ca. 10th century, containing Odes 17:7 – 42:20 (in Syriac)
- The *Bodmer Papyrus XI* [G], ca. 3rd century, containing Ode 11:1–24 (in Greek)
- The *Codex Askewianus* [C], ca. 4th century, containing the *Pistis Sophia*, which preserves Odes 5:1–11, 1:1–5, 6:8–18, 25:1–12, 22:1–12 (in Coptic)

2.4. Original Language, Date of Composition, Provenance, and Authorship

The closest thing to a scholarly "consensus" regarding the original language of the Odes of Solomon is that they originated in Syriac–Aramaic. Among other indications, "major textual variants can be directly traced to confusion originating only in or with a Syriac–Aramaic manuscript, and the intrinsic qualities of the extant Syriac Odes witness to original, spontaneous expression, and to cogitated stylistic constructions" (Charlesworth, Thesis: iv).⁶

It is true that some — especially the earlier scholars — have argued for a Greek origination of the Odes. But the discovery of Papyrus Bodmer XI, with the inclusion of Ode 11 in Greek, has permitted a side-by-side study of the Greek and Syriac texts. And while such comparison has not resulted in any unilateral consensus regarding the original language, J. A. Emerton has provided a thorough discussion of the Greek text of Ode 11 in relation to the Syriac. His studied conclusion is as follows:

⁵ Facsimiles of all extant texts of the Odes of Solomon are available in JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH (Editor), *Papyri and Leather Manuscripts of the Odes of Solomon* (1981). For a discussion of these texts, cf. Charlesworth, *Syriac*: 1–14.

⁶ cf. JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH, "Paronomasia and Assonance in the Syriac Text of the Odes of Solomon," in *Semitics* 1 (1970): 12–26.

It is probable that the Greek is not original. That leaves the possibility that the Odes were composed either in Syriac or in some other Semitic dialect. Two considerations favour the originality of the Syriac. First, the Greek in verses 21 f. can be explained as a mistranslation of the Syriac. Second, we actually have a Syriac text, which contains examples of the word-play that is characteristic of the Odes, whereas there is no clear evidence for the existence of the Odes in any other Semitic language. The most probably conclusion to be drawn is that the Odes of Solomon were composed in Syriac.⁷

Alternatively, J. Carmignac and others have argued that the Odes were first written in some form of Hebrew. However, there seems to be no compelling reason to make such a move.

The Odes of Solomon are usually dated within the range of A.D. 30 – A.D. 200, but most likely around the turn of the first century. Most scholars maintain an homogeneity of composition for the Odes, which are typically ascribed to a single Christian author. Others, however, believe that they were originally of Jewish composition, and that they were reworked by Christians around A.D. 100.⁸ Those who argue for a pre-Christian origination obviously tend to date the Odes much earlier. Thus, for example, L. Gordon Rylands dates the Odes between 80 B.C. and the Birth of Christ.⁹

As for the provenance of the Odes, Edessa and/or Antioch in Syria are far and away the most likely candidates.¹⁰ Ephesus has been suggested, no doubt largely due to the apparent relationship of the Odes to the Gospel of St. John. Likewise, Alexandria has been suggested, probably on

⁷ cf. J. A. EMERTON, "Notes on Some Passages in the Odes of Solomon," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 28 (1977): 512–514. [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (Emerton, "Notes": 512–514).]

⁸ e.g., Harnack, *et al.*

⁹ cf. L. GORDON RYLANDS, *The Beginnings of Gnostic Christianity* (1940): 44–48. [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (Rylands: 44–48).]

¹⁰ cf. L. W. BARNARD, "The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the First Two Centuries A.D.," in *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (1968): 161–175.

account of the supposed Gnostic elements in the Odes of Solomon. Finally, Galilee has also been suggested tentatively as the geographical provenance of the Odes. James H. Charlesworth identifies three indications of this possibility: (1.) the dialect of the poetry in the Odes is similar to the poetry in some Words of Jesus, (2.) "the unusual surrogate for the divine name, 'Power,' is probably a Galilean idiom," and (3.) "the title 'Lord' may have originated in the Galilean Church" (Charlesworth, Thesis: 183f.).

2.5. The Connection to "Solomon" ¹¹

Numerous theories have been offered for the attribution of the Odes to Solomon. The simplest, and therefore one of the most attractive solutions, is that the Odes were ascribed to King Solomon because they were attached to the *Psalms of Solomon* from a very early date. Of course, this theory begs the question as to why and when the Odes were first attached to the Solomonic Psalms.

Another theory suggests that Solomon's reputation as a poet made him the likely choice for pseudepigraphal authorship of the Odes. In a similar vein, others have maintained that the Odes represent a logical extension of the Wisdom Literature associated with Solomon, most especially Canticles (*e.g.*, in the frequency of references to the "Beloved") and the Wisdom of Solomon. Bernard suggests a connection between the "seal of Solomon" and what he perceives to be a pervasive Baptismal imagery in the Odes.

¹¹ *cf.* HAN J. W. DRIJVERS, "Solomon as Teacher: Early Syriac Didactic Poetry," in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (1987): 123–134.

Majella Franzmann suggests that the concept of "rest" is so important to the Odes that a connection was made to I CHRONICLES 22:9–10, where Solomon is called a "man of rest."¹² Perhaps this solution is the most satisfying, though several factors might have been involved.

2.6. Obvious "Jewish" Nature

The Odes of Solomon clearly are Jewish in their tone and perspective. Such features are easily attributed to the strong Hebrew influence in Syrian Christianity, and yet, they are strong enough to convince a number of scholars that the Odes are purely Jewish in their original form.¹³

The linguistic idiom of the Odes is strongly reminiscent of the Old Testament; they make frequent use of *parallelismus membrorum*, parables, and figures of speech. In particular, they have strong ties of style and language to the Canonical Psalms, which the Odist apparently knew in both Hebrew and Greek.¹⁴ The Odes also contain motifs similar to those found in the clearly Jewish *Psalms of Solomon*, to which the Odes were attached at a very early date. In fact, those who argue for a pre-Christian authorship of the Odes have suggested the possibility of interplay in the composition of the Odes and the Psalms (*cf.* Rylands: 44*ff.*).

L. Gordon Rylands gives impressive evidence of the Odist's dependence upon Jewish Wisdom literature. In parallel columns, he lines up excerpts from the Odes alongside related passages from

¹² *cf.* MAJELLA FRANZMANN, "The Odes of Solomon, Man of Rest," in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 51 (1985): 408–421; *cf.* also, FRANZMANN, "Portrait of a Poet: Reflections on 'The Poet' in the *Odes of Solomon*," in *Perspectives on Language and Text* (1987): 315–326.

¹³ *e.g., cf.* GORDON RYLANDS, *The Beginnings Gnostic Christianity* (1940): 23–36. [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (Rylands: 23–36).]

¹⁴ The Odes have relied on the Septuagint version of at least two Psalms. "Odes 7:10 and 9:8*f.* are apparently based on the Septuagint of Psalms 50:3 [H 51:1] and 20:4 [H 21:3]." JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH, "Odes of Solomon," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Volume Two (1985): 726. [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (Charlesworth, "Odes" [1986]: 726).]

the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, *et al.* (*cf.* Rylands: 27–33). His concluding observation is appropriate:

The Odist hardly ever quotes. His mind was saturated with the knowledge of certain books of the Old Testament, and he brings out that knowledge in his own manner, freely paraphrasing, and expressing his own ideas in language which in its original context may have had a different meaning. In some cases the resemblance is slight, and if the resemblances had been few they might be thought to be accidental. But the very large number of them puts coincidence quite out of the question. (Rylands: 33)

The Odes of Solomon exhibit similarities to the *Hodayoth* (a.k.a. the "Thanksgiving Hymns") of Qumran; *e.g.*, they are an "highly poetic record of deeply personal religious experience, centered on the themes of election and salvation, a poetic structure of loose *parallelismus membrorum*, and some figures of style and some unusual metaphors (the firm foundation, the trees planted by God, the lifting to the heights)." ¹⁵

One final observation in this section: While strongly maintaining the Jewishness of the Odes, Rylands also discusses what he calls their "anti-Judaic" character. By this he has in mind an aversion to the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament, in contrast to an heavy reliance on the Poetic books. Also, the Odes clearly present a universalistic character of salvation, which knows of no inherent advantage of the Jews over the Gentiles. Hence, there is an avoidance of such terms as "Covenant," "Law," "Israel," *etc.* Interestingly, Rylands presents these anti-Judaic elements as evidence of Gnosticism. (*cf.* Rylands: 42–44)

2.7. Clearly "Christian" Elements

Most scholars, including Charlesworth, consider the Odes of Solomon to be a Christian psalter. The Odes include references to the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, the Cross, the Descent into Hell,

¹⁵ J. LICHT, "Solomon, Odes of," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Volume 15 (1971): 115. [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (Encyclopedia Judaica: 115).]

and the Resurrection. It should be noted, however, that others disagree about the presence of these doctrines.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the *Encyclopedia Judaica* assesses the Odes of Solomon as follows: Fifteen of the Odes are "unmistakably" Christian, eleven are "probably" Christian, and fourteen are "not necessarily" Christian. While the "doctrinal type" of Christianity is not easily classified, none of the Odes "contains positive Jewish material" (*Encyclopedia Judaica*: 114). Though written against a Jewish background, the Odes attempt to express a new and greater reality in the wake of the Incarnation.

J. H. Bernard considers the Odes to be an hymnal of the neophytes, *i.e.*, the newly baptized.¹⁷ Certainly, it is quite easy to find extensive baptismal imagery throughout (*cf.* Odes 6, 11, and 39). By the same token, the Odes are written in such a way that one's presuppositions will determine to a large extent the way the Odes come across. Those who look for Baptism find Baptism; those who look for Gnosticism find Gnosticism; those who look for Judaism find Judaism; those who look for Christianity find Christianity. It's *all* there for those who want to find it. Nevertheless, Bernard's emphasis on Baptism is well-taken. Trinitarian references are integral to many of the Odes, and Baptismal images are pervasive. Those who suggest that Baptism is not mentioned *at all* are clearly further from the truth than Bernard, even if he does overstate his case.¹⁸

¹⁶ *e.g.*, *cf.* ROBERT M. GRANT, "The Odes of Solomon and the Church of Antioch," in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63 (1944): 364ff. [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (Grant, "Odes": 364ff.).]

¹⁷ *cf.* J. H. BERNARD, "The Odes of Solomon," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 12 (1910): 1-31.

¹⁸ For example, consider the following remarks by Robert M. Grant:
As for doctrines more specifically Christian, [the Odes of Solomon] do not speak of resurrection and ascension (though they may be implied in Christ's victory), nor of baptism and the Eucharist. They mention water, even living water, and milk and honey; but they never name the rites in which these elements were used. (Grant, "Odes": 364)

We are basically safe in assuming that the Odes of Solomon — in their present form, even if not from the start — are an example of early Christian hymnary, or what is often translated as "spiritual songs" (*cf.* COLOSSIANS 3:16). Here, the designation of "hymn" does not imply a "metrical lyric arranged in stanzas and set to music," but simply "a verbal praise to God which flows in a definite rhythm and parallelistic pattern" (Charlesworth, Thesis: 6). With this definition in mind, it is not surprising that the texts include no musical notation.¹⁹

The Odes of Solomon were clearly intended for the worship-life of the *community*, rather than for the personal piety of individuals. Community usage is indicated by the frequent use of plural forms and by the "Hallelujah" that is found at the conclusion of each Ode.

2.8. Relationship to the Gospel of St. John and the Epistles of St. Ignatius

The existence of some relationship between the Gospel of St. John and the Odes of Solomon is generally acknowledged as a given.²⁰ One primary piece of evidence for this connection is that, among other similarities, the divine "Word" plays a prominent role in the Odes. However, the Odists employ two distinct Syriac words for the "Word," one feminine and the other masculine: *ml'*, emphatic *mlt'*, and *ptgm*, emphatic *ptgm'*. Thankfully, Jack T. Sanders has identified the distinctive characteristics of these two "Words" as they are used in the Odes of Solomon. He writes,

We have here two distinct entities. The *mlt'* is usually an instrument of God's action and thus falls into the line of feminine hypostases in Judaism, headed by Wisdom, who are pre-existent

¹⁹ Besides, quite apart from the Odes of Solomon, "we have only one ancient example, a papyrus fragment, which includes a musical setting." ROBERT C. STROUD, "The Odes of Solomon: The Earliest Collection of Christian Hymns," in *The Hymn* 31 (1980): 271.

²⁰ *cf.* JAMES BROWNSON, "The Odes of Solomon and the Johannine Tradition," in *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 2 (1988): 49–69; JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH and R. A. CULPEPPER, "The Odes of Solomon and the Gospel of John," in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 35 (1973): 298–322; and, JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH, "Qumran, John and the Odes of Solomon," in *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1972): 107–136.

with God and who assist him at creation and in the further carrying out of his will. The *mlt'* is demiurge (OdesSol 16:19), revealer (OdesSol 41:14), and savior (OdesSol 15:9; 29:10).

The *ptgm'*, however, the masculine word for Word, is a rather different character. Whereas *mlt'*, for example, is never associated with truth and knowledge, *ptgm'* regularly is and seems indeed to be equated with Truth. When the *ptgm'* emanates from Truth, it emanates from itself (OdesSol 32:2), and OdesSol 12:3 refers to the "true *ptgm'*." OdesSol 7:7, furthermore, equates the Father with the *ptgm'*. Such lofty statements are never made in the Odes of Solomon regarding the *mlt'*. OdesSol 12:5 refers to the swiftness of the *ptgm'*, and when 37:3 says that the *ptgm'* "came toward me," i.e., toward the odist, we see that there seems to exist for the writer or writers of the Odes of Solomon an understanding of the *ptgm'* as an entity capable of having a more direct or personal relation with the individual worshipper than is the case with the *mlt'*. It appears that the *ptgm'* bridges the gap between divine and human in a way that the *mlt'* does not, being equated with the divine, on the one hand (OdesSol 7:7), and coming to and dwelling within human beings on the other (OdesSol 12:12).²¹

All such differences notwithstanding, the Odes of Solomon might well have been used in the very community associated with the Apostle John. More than likely, the Odes and the Gospel were produced independently, but they probably did originate in a similar (if not the same) environment. Thus, several scholars, including Rudolph Bultmann, have used the Odes of Solomon to help develop their understanding of the Gospel.

The Odes of Solomon also contain at least three clear parallels to the Epistles of St. Ignatius:— Ode 38:8 – *Trallians* 6:2, Ode 11:6 – *Romans* 7:2, and Ode 7:24 – *Ephesians* 19:3.²² While these parallels, and especially the first two, can readily be explained without an appeal to literary interdependence, Robert Grant concludes that Ignatius probably knew at least the Seventh Ode of Solomon, or something very close to it (*cf.* Grant, "Odes": 370–372). If nothing else, the parallels between the Odes of Solomon and the Epistles of Ignatius suggest that they stem from the same spiritual environment (in some way related to Antioch in Syria).

²¹ JACK T. SANDERS, "Nag Hammadi, Odes of Solomon, and NT Christological Hymns," in *Gnosticism & the Early Christian World* (1990): 57.

²² The Ignatian parallels have been included in footnotes under the appropriate passages from the Odes of Solomon in the Appendix to this report.

2.9. Apparent "Gnostic" Character

Many scholars have identified the Odes of Solomon as a Gnostic psalter.²³ Indeed, the Gnostics are known to have composed a great number of metrical hymns, and of course, there is the fact that five complete Odes are quoted as Scripture in the Gnostic document known as the *Pistis Sophia*.²⁴ What is more, the Odes exhibit certain docetic qualities, which some have interpreted as a Gnostic tendency. They tend to avoid the concrete, the physical, and the particular. There are pervasive "mystic" qualities, as well; in fact, the Odes breathe throughout the spirit of exalted mysticism, which has also been seen as a mark of Gnosticism. (*cf.* Rylands: 36–44)

Charlesworth forcefully denies that the Odes are Gnostic, although he too recognizes that they do contain ideas that were systematically developed and refined by the Gnostics. He argues that the terms, "Gnostic" and "Gnosticism," only have meaning if they are used precisely, and that they are usually understood as referring to particular developments of the Second Century. The Odes of Solomon do not bear the primary, identifying features of these second-century developments, including "the idea of salvation through a comprehension of the nature of the soul's heavenly origin, subsequent imprisonment in the world of matter, and possible ascension to its native abode" (Charlesworth, "Not Gnostic": 361). Some Gnostic ideas might be present, but the Odes lack the

²³ James H. Charlesworth writes,

As early as 1910 H. Gunkel presented the thesis that the Odes are a gnostic hymnbook of the second century A.D.; shortly thereafter numerous scholars defended his hypothesis. In the last two decades [*i.e.*, the 1950's and 60's] such distinguished scholars as H. M. Schenke, R. M. Grant, S. Schulz, F. M. Braun, and H. Jonas have argued for the similarity between the Odes and gnostic literature, especially the Gospel of Truth and the Hymn of the Pearl. Recently K. Rudolph attempted to show why the Odes are gnostic.

JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH, "The Odes of Solomon—Not Gnostic," in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (1969): 357–358. [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (Charlesworth, "Not Gnostic": 357–358).]

²⁴ *cf.* MICHAEL LATTKE, "The Odes of Solomon in Pistis Sophia: An Example of Gnostic 'Exegesis'," in *The East Asia Journal of Theology* 1 (1983): 58–69.

characteristic mark of Gnostic dualism. Thus, Charlesworth believes that it is misleading to label the Odes as Gnostic. He reaches the following conclusion:

It is safe to say that the Odes of Solomon are not gnostic. In prospect it appears probable that the Odes are a tributary to Gnosticism which flows from Jewish apocalyptic mysticism to the full-blown Gnosticism of the second century. The Odes are not "heretical"—such a word is anachronistic at this time in the development of Christian thought—but rather a Jewish-Christian hymnbook of the first century. (Charlesworth, "Not Gnostic": 369)

Assuming for the sake of argument that the Odes do exhibit some early "Gnostic" tendencies, the question remains as to whether these stem from Greek philosophy or more from the traditions of Jewish Wisdom literature, or both. Thus, for example, L. Gordon Rylands, who is adamant about the Gnostic designation of the Odes, insists that they are purely Jewish in their origination. He goes so far as to say that "no doctrine is discoverable [in the Odes] which could not have been derived from the Wisdom literature, the Psalms, and Isaiah" (Rylands: 27). To make his case, Rylands lines up approximately two dozen passages from the Odes side-by-side with thematically similar passages from these Jewish sources (*cf.* Rylands: 27–33). In any case, it does seem clear, as also Charlesworth indicates above, that the proto-gnostic ideology contained in some of the Odes flows out of the influence of late Biblical Jewish mysticism.

2.10. The Theological Content / Themes

It would be difficult to summarize completely the manifold images and themes that flow through the Odes of Solomon. Like any hymnal, the Odes reflect the myriad facets of their author's piety. Thus, there is surely no substitute for a reading of the Odes themselves, if one wishes to capture an

accurate sense of their theological content. We also might add that such a reading ought to be done in the original language.²⁵

All disclaimers notwithstanding, it is still possible to highlight the primary theological themes that are found in the Odes of Solomon. Chief among these themes would have to be the joy of the Odist at the *present* experience of salvation, the "paradise" of eternal life, and the divine love.²⁶ Along these same lines, the Odes include a pervasive emphasis on salvation as *immortality* through Christ. Another prominent feature is an awareness of the intimate relationship between Christ and His disciples.²⁷ And of course, as mentioned above, there is also an apparent stress on Baptism (even if overly-exaggerated by Bernard).²⁸

Charlesworth provides a concise discussion of the key theological themes of the Odes in the introduction to his translation of the Odes in the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (cf. Charlesworth, "Odes" [1986]: 728-731). Even more concise, however, is the summary of Henry Chadwick, which is worth repeating in part:

If the enthusiasm and exuberant language of the Odes are stripped away and the underlying thought is examined, it is impossible to find anything incompatible with an orthodox estimate of the nature and destiny of man. We are told that the omniscient and omnipotent Creator (16,8ff.) created the world in an overflow of ungrudging love (3,6 etc.). God has no need of his creatures, but they need him (4,9). He is responsible for all the world (4,15; 16,14ff.), and all the powers, including sun and stars, are subject to his word (16,14-19). The lower world reflects the pattern of the celestial order (34,4-5).

²⁵ Regrettably, the author of this report is himself unable to read Syriac.

²⁶ cf. HAMILTON HESS, "Salvation Motifs in the Odes of Solomon," in *Studia Patristica* 20 (1989): 182-190.

²⁷ cf. BRIAN MCNEIL, "Suffering and Martyrdom in the Odes of Solomon," in *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament* (1981): 136-142.

²⁸ cf. J. H. BERNARD, "The Odes of Solomon," in *Text and Studies* 8 (1912); also, K. A. AYTOUN, "The Mysteries of Baptism by Moses bar Kepha Compared with the Odes of Solomon," in *Studies on Syrian Baptismal Rites* (1973): 1-15.

God is Father, Son, and Spirit (19,1ff.; 23,22). The Spirit descends like a dove (24,1; 28,1) and inspires the Odist's efforts (6,1ff.; 12,1-3, etc.) in an indwelling that removes all ill health from his body (18,1ff.; 21,4; 25,9).

The divine Word is swift and incomprehensible (12,5-7). By him the silent aeons acquired speech (11,8). He controls the concord of the aeons (12,4 and 10; cf. 16,14f.). To the soul he is the sun (15,2; cf. 36,3), and the »door of light« (12,3). Accordingly he has acted in redemption: he lessened his greatness to descend to human level, and »became like me that I might receive him« (7,3-4). The doctrine of the incarnation is tersely formulated as being that »the Son of Man is the Son of God« (36,3). The Messiah is foreknown before all the creation (41,15), and is prior to and superior to all the powers opposing him (28,17-18). The elect he delivers from death and error and from the evil one (23, etc.), conferring light, joy, immortality, and the resurrection of the body (22,8-11). This new life may be expressed as a putting off of the coats of skins which Adam and Eve made after their fall (25,8) and the putting on of a garment of light (21,3). The gift of new life is water sweeter than honey (30,1) or milk (8,16; 19; 35,5). The elect so attain to the peace and rest of paradise (11,16ff.; 20,7).

Redemption is the work of the Creator of this present world (4,15, cf. 16,14ff.). Christ redeemed his people to keep his promises to the patriarchs (31,13). Prophetic seers pass before him in procession (7,18). There is only one Christ (41,15). The stream of the gospel has swelled into a flood carrying away the old temple (6,8ff. — possibly the earliest interpretation of the temple flood, in which Ezekiel found himself out of his depth, ch. xlvi, to mean the spread of the gospel to all nations?). The Lord has gathered the Gentiles scattered through the world (10,5)....

The redemption achieved by Christ consists in a conquest of death and the powers of evil (see Odes 17; 22; 24; 31). The crucifixion was not play-acting and was not »docetic« (31,10f.; cf. 27; and perhaps 42,1-2). On the cross Christ stretched out his arms (27 and 42,1-2). But his birth and death were a divine act. The Blessed Virgin bore him painlessly and without a midwife (19). He was anointed as Messiah (36,6). The harrowing of Hades was the decisive moment in the redemptive process....

The redeemer is Son of Man (36,3), subject to creaturely weakness. By being redeemed himself, he becomes redeemer of others (8,22 and Ode 17). The Father brings Christ down from heaven, up from Hades, and gathers the things that are in the middle (22,1-2). So Christ is head of the Church (17,15-16), the bridegroom to his bride (42,8), the one to whom the believing soul is united as lover and beloved (3,7f.). No sword or scimitar can divide the soul from him (28,4).

Praise is the soul's joyful duty (16,1). The soul trusts in him in simple undoubting confidence (34,1-3), like that of a child (35,5; 41,1). God is the mirror of the soul and by introspection can be seen in reflection within (13,1).

The inward experience of the believer is described in enthusiastic and impassioned terms of palpable feeling. Joy and rest are especially prominent. »In loving the Son I become a son.« (3,7f.) In one brief passage there is some allusion to the existence of ethical demands (20,4-6), but it stands in curious isolation. The Odist was not particularly interested in virtue, moral conflict, or training of character. He knew himself (or perhaps the church) to be in possession of sinless perfection in union with the Lord. But his inward mysticism was not an entirely private and esoteric affair. In Ode 33,9-11, the pure virgin (wisdom?) calls all mankind to renounce the devil and escape judgement and destruction.²⁹

²⁹ HENRY CHADWICK, "Some Reflections on the Character and Theology of the Odes of Solomon," in *Kyriakon*, Volume One (1970): 268-269.

3. TENTATIVE CONCLUSION

To throw yet another log on the fire, we offer the following as our own tentative conclusion: The Odes of Solomon represent the hymnary of an early (late-first-/early-second-century) Christian community, in the vicinity of Antioch (but perhaps closer to Edessa) in Syria. They stem from a group that was heavily influenced by Jewish wisdom literature (both Canonical and non-Canonical, *e.g.*, Canticles and the Wisdom of Solomon). The Odes are similar to, and perhaps representative of, the sort of Jewish-docetic heresy that is refuted by St. John (especially in his Epistles) and by St. Ignatius. Their parallels to the Fourth Gospel may therefore be explained as the product of a common environment, but not of a common theology. That is to say, in the words of the Apostle: "They went out from us, but they were not really of us" (1 JOHN 2:19).

APPENDIX: EXCERPTS FROM THE ODES OF SOLOMON ³⁰

Ode 1

- 1 The Lord is on my head like a crown,
and I shall never be without him.
- 2 Plaited for me is the crown of truth,
and it caused your branches to blossom in me.
- 3 For it is not like a parched crown that blossoms not;
4 But you lived upon my head,
and have blossomed upon me.
- 5 Your fruits are full and complete;
they are full of your salvation.

Ode 4

- 1 No man can pervert your holy place, O my God;
nor can he change it, and put it in another place.
- 2 Because (he has) no power over it;
for your sanctuary you designed before you made special places.
- 3 The ancient one shall not be perverted by those which are inferior to it.
You have given your heart, O Lord, to your faithful ones. ³¹
- 4 Never will you be idle,
nor will you be without fruits;
- 5 For one hour of your faith
is more excellent than all days and years.
- 6 For who shall put on your grace and be rejected?
7 Because your seal is known;
and your creatures are known to it.
- 8 And your hosts possess it,
and the elect archangels are clothed with it.
- 9 You have given to us your fellowship,
not that you were in need of us,
but that we are always in need of you.
- 10 Sprinkle upon us your sprinklings,
and open your bountiful springs which abundantly supply us with milk and honey.
- 11 For there is no regret with you;
that you should regret anything which you have promised;
- 12 Since the end was manifest to you.
- 13 For that which you gave, you gave freely,

³⁰ Taken from Charlesworth, "Odes of Solomon," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Volume Two (1985): 735ff. These particular excerpts were chosen, somewhat arbitrarily, in order to provide a cross-sectional view of the Odes. They include references to the Gentiles, the Temple, the Cross, the Living Waters, the Virgin, the Messiah, the Name of the Trinity, etc. In particular, they include the five complete Odes that are preserved in the *Pistis Sophia* (i.e. Odes 1, 5, 6, 22, and 25) and the Eleventh Ode, which is the only one extant in the Greek.

³¹ cf. P. CAMERON, "The 'Sanctuary' in the Fourth *Ode of Solomon*," in *Templum Amicitiae* (1991).

so that no longer will you draw back and take them again.
14 For all was manifest to you as God,
and was set in order from the beginning before you.
15 And you, O Lord, have made all.

Ode 5

1 I praise you, O Lord,
because I love you.
2 O Most High, abandon me not,
for you are my hope.
3 Freely did I receive your grace,
may I live by it.
4 My persecutors will come but let them not see me.
5 Let a cloud of darkness fall upon their eyes;
and let an air of thick darkness obscure them.
6 And let them have no light to see,
so that they cannot seize me.
7 Let their counsel become dull,
so that whatever they have conspired will return upon their own heads.
8 For they have devised a counsel,
but it was not for them.
(And they have vanquished although they were powerful.)³²
9 They prepared themselves maliciously,
but they were found to be impotent.
10 Indeed my hope is upon the Lord,
and I shall not fear.
11 And because the Lord is my salvation,
I shall not fear.
12 And he is as a crown upon my head,
and I shall not be disturbed.
13 Even if everything should be shaken,
I shall stand firm.
14 And though all things visible should perish,
I shall not die;
15 Because the Lord is with me,
and I with him.

Ode 6

6 The Lord has multiplied his knowledge,
and he was zealous that those things should be known which through his grace have been
given to us.
7 And his praise he gave us on account of his name;

³² This line is extant only in the Coptic. Charlesworth believes it to be spurious.

our spirits praise his Holy Spirit.
8 For there went forth a stream, and it became a river great and broad;
indeed it carried away everything, and it shattered and brought (it) to the Temple. ³³
9 And the restraints of men were not able to restrain it,
nor even the arts of them who habitually restrain water.
10 For it spread over the face of all the earth,
and it filled everything.
11 Then all the thirsty upon the earth drank,
and thirst was relieved and quenched;
12 For from the Most High the drink was given,
13 Blessed, therefore, are the ministers of that drink,
who have been entrusted with his water.

Ode 7

2 My joy is the Lord and my course is toward him,
this way of mine is beautiful.
3 For there is a Helper for me, the Lord.
He has generously shown himself to me in his simplicity,
because his kindness has diminished his grandeur, ³⁴
4 He became like me, that I might receive him.
In form he was considered like me, that I might put him on.
5 And I trembled not when I saw him,
because he was gracious to me.
6 Like my nature he became, that I might understand him.
And like my form, that I might not turn away from him.
. . . .
22 Let the Singers sing the grace of the Lord Most High,
and let them offer their songs.
23 And let their heart be like the day,
and their gentle voices like the majestic beauty of the Lord.
24 And let there not be any person
that is without knowledge or voice. ³⁵
25 For he gave a mouth to his creation:
to open the voice of the mouth toward him,

³³ Or, "Indeed it carried away everything, and it shattered and carried away the Temple." *cf.* Emerton, "Notes": 507-512.

³⁴ *cf.* G. R. DRIVER, "Notes on Two Passages in the Odes of Solomon," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (1974): 434-436. [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (Driver: 434-436).]

³⁵ Or, "Ignorance has been dissipated because the knowledge of the Lord has arrived." *cp.* Ignatius, EPHES 19:3a. Consequently all magic and every kind of spell were dissolved, the ignorance so characteristic of wickedness vanished, and the ancient kingdom was abolished, when God appeared in human form to bring the newness of eternal life.

J. B. LIGHTFOOT and J. R. HARMER (Translators), *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, edited and revised by Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992): 149. [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (Lightfoot: 149).]

and to praise him.
26 Praise his power
and declare his grace.

Ode 10

(Christ speaks)

4 I took courage and became strong and captured the world,
and it became mine for the glory of the Most High, and of God my Father.
5 And the gentiles who had been scattered were gathered together,
but I was not defiled by my love (for them),
because they had praised me in high places.
6 And the traces of light were set upon their heart,
and they walked according to my life and were saved,
and they became my people for ever and ever.

Ode 11

1 My heart was pruned and its flower appeared,
then grace sprang up in it,
and it produced fruits for the Lord.
2 For the Most High circumcised me by his Holy Spirit,
then he uncovered my inward being toward him,
and filled me with his love.
3 And his circumcising became my salvation,
and I ran in the Way in his peace,
in the Way of truth.
4 From the beginning until the end
I received his knowledge.
5 And I was established upon the rock of truth,
where he had set me.
6 And speaking waters touched my lips
from the springs of the Lord generously.³⁶
7 And so I drank and became intoxicated,
from the living water that does not die.
8 And my intoxication was not with ignorance;
but I abandoned vanity;
9 And turned toward the Most High, my God,
and was enriched by his favors.
10 And I abandoned the folly cast upon the earth,
and stripped it off and cast it from me.
11 And the Lord renewed me with his garment,

³⁶ *cp.* Ignatius, ROMANS 7:2c.

My passionate love has been crucified and there is no fire of material longing within me, but only water living and speaking in me, saying within me, "Come to the Father." (Lightfoot: 175)

- and possessed me by his light.
- 12 And from above he gave me immortal rest;
and I became like the land which blossoms and rejoices in its fruits.
- 13 And the Lord (is) like the sun
upon the face of the land.
- 14 My eyes were enlightened,
and my face received the dew;³⁷
- 15 And my breath was refreshed
by the pleasant fragrance of the Lord.
- 16 And he took me to his Paradise,
wherein is the wealth of the Lord's pleasure.
- 16a ((I contemplated blooming and fruit-bearing trees,
and self-grown was their crown.
- 16b Their branches were flourishing
and their fruits were shining;
their roots (were) from an immortal land.
- 16c And a river of gladness was irrigating them,
and the region round about them in the land of eternal life.))³⁸
- 17 Then I adored the Lord because of his magnificence.
- 18 And I said, blessed, O Lord, are they
who are planted in your land,
and who have a place in your Paradise;
- 19 And who grow in the growth of your trees,
and have passed from darkness into light.
- 20 Behold, all your laborers are fair,
they who work good works,
and turn from wickedness to your kindness.
- 21 For they turned away from themselves the bitterness of the trees,
when they were planted in your land.
- 22 And everyone was like your remnant.
((Blessed are the workers of your water,))³⁹
and the eternal memorial of your faithful servants.
- 23 Indeed, there is much room in your Paradise.
And there is nothing in it which is barren,
but everything is filled with fruit.
- 24 Praise be to you, O God, the delight of Paradise for ever.⁴⁰

³⁷ cf. Emerton, "Notes": 514-516; also, W. BAARS, "A Note on Ode of Solomon XI 14," in *Vetus Testamentum* 12 (1962): 196.

³⁸ Verses 16a-16c are found only in the Greek.

³⁹ This line is extant only in the Greek.

⁴⁰ cf. WILLIAM R. SCHOEDEL, "Some Readings in the Greek Ode of Solomon (Ode XI)," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982): 175-182.

Ode 13

- 1 Behold, the Lord is our mirror.
Open (your) eyes and see them in him.
2 And learn the manner of your face,
then announce praises to his Spirit.
3 And wipe the paint from your face,
and love his holiness and put it on. ⁴¹
4 Then you will be unblemished at all times with him.

Ode 16

- 8 For the Word of the Lord investigates that which is invisible,
and perceives his thought. ⁴²
9 For the eye sees his works,
and the ear hears his thought.
10 It is he who spread out the earth,
and placed the waters in the sea.
11 He expanded the heaven,
and set the stars.
12 And he set the creation and aroused it,
then he rested from his works.
13 And created things run according to their courses,
and work their works,
and they are not able to cease and be idle.
14 And the hosts are subject to his Word.
15 The reservoir of light is the sun,
and the reservoir of darkness is the night.
16 For he made the sun for the day so that it will be light;
but night brings darkness over the face of the earth.
17 And (by) their acceptance one from another
they complete the beauty of God. ⁴³
18 And there is nothing outside of the Lord,
because he was before anything came to be.
19 And the worlds are by his Word,
and by the thought of his heart.
20 Praise and honor to his name.

⁴¹ cf. MAJELLA FRANZMANN, "»Wipe the harlotry from your faces«: A Brief Note on Ode of Solomon 13 3," in *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77 (1986): 282–283.

⁴² cf. JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH, "Haplography and Philology: A Study of Ode of Solomon 16:8," in *New Testament Studies* 25 (1979): 221–227.

⁴³ cf. Emerton, "Notes": 516–519

Ode 18

- 8 You are my God, falsehood and death are not in your mouth;
only perfection is your will.
- 9 And vanity you knew not,
because neither does it know you.
- 10 And you knew not error;
because neither does it know you.
- 11 And ignorance appeared like dust,
and like the foam of the sea.
- 12 And vain people thought that it was great,
and they became like its form and were impoverished.
- 13 But the wise understood and contemplated,
and were not polluted by their thoughts;
- 14 Because they were in the mind of the Most High,
and mocked those who were walking in error.
- 15 Then they spoke the truth,
from the breath which the Most High breathed into them.

Ode 19

- 1 A cup of milk was offered to me,
and I drank in the sweetness of the Lord's kindness.
- 2 The Son is the cup,
and the Father is he who was milked;
and the Holy Spirit is she who milked him;
- 3 Because his breasts were full,
and it was undesirable that his milk should be released without purpose.
- 4 The Holy Spirit opened her bosom,
and mixed the milk of the two breasts of the Father.⁴⁴
- 5 Then she gave the mixture to the generation without their knowing,
and those who have received (it) are in the perfection of the right hand.
- 6 The womb of the Virgin took (it),
and she received conception and gave birth.⁴⁵
- 7 So the Virgin became a mother with great mercies.
- 8 And she labored and bore the Son but without pain,
because it did not occur without purpose.
- 9 And she did not seek a midwife,
because he caused her to give life.
- 10 She bore as a strong man with desire,

⁴⁴ Although the language and imagery of Ode 19 are certainly graphic and explicit, the author of this report was still surprised by the number of scholars who mentioned the "grotesqueness" of this Ode. It seems like an honest attempt on the part of an early Christian to grapple with the Mysteries of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of the Son, even if the images he has chosen are somewhat less than appropriate.

⁴⁵ cf. PETER CAMERON, "The Crux in Ode of Solomon 1:6: A New Solution," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991): 588-596.

and she bore according to the manifestation,
and possessed with great power.
11 And she loved with salvation,
and guarded with kindness,
and declared with greatness. ⁴⁶

Ode 22

(Christ speaks)

1 He who caused me to descend from on high,
and to ascend from the regions below;
2 And he who gathers what is in the middle,
and throws them to me;
3 He who scattered my enemies,
and my adversaries;
4 He who gave me authority over chains,
so that I might loosen them;
5 He who overthrew by my hands the dragon with seven heads,
and placed me at his roots that I might destroy his seed;
6 You were there and helped me,
and in every place your name surrounded me.
7 Your right hand destroyed the evil poison,
and your hand leveled the way for those who believe in you.
8 And it chose them from the graves,
and it separated them from the dead one.
9 And it took dead bones
and covered them with flesh.
10 But they were motionless,
so it gave (them) energy for life.
11 Incorruptible was your way and your face;
you have brought your world to corruption,
that everything might be broken and renewed.
12 And the foundation of everything is your rock.
And upon it you have built your kingdom,
and it became the dwelling place of the holy ones.

Ode 23

11 But a wheel received it [*i. e.*, the letter of the Lord],
and it (the letter) came over it.
12 And with it was a sign,
of the Kingdom and of providence.
13 And everything which was disturbing to the wheel,

⁴⁶ cf. HAN J. W. DRIVERS, "The 19th Ode of Solomon: Its Interpretation and Place in Syrian Christianity," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 31 (1980): 337-355.

it mowed it and cut it down.
14 And it restrained a multitude of adversaries;
and bridged rivers.
15 And it crossed over (and) uprooted many forests,
and made a wide way.
16 The head went down to the feet,
because unto the feet ran the wheel,
and whatever had come upon it. ⁴⁷
17 The letter was one of command,
and hence all regions were gathered together.
18 And there appeared at its head, the Head which was revealed,
even the Son of Truth from the Most High Father.
19 And he inherited and possessed everything,
and then the scheming of the many ceased.
20 Then all the seducers became headstrong and fled;
and the persecutors became extinct and were blotted out. ⁴⁸
21 And the letter became a large volume,
which was entirely written by the finger of God.
22 And the name of the Father was upon it;
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
to rule for ever and ever.

Ode 25

1 I was rescued from my chains,
and I fled unto you, O my God.
2 Because you are the right hand of salvation,
and my Helper.
3 You have restrained those who rise up against me,
and they did not appear again.
4 Because your face was with me,
which saved me by your grace.
5 But I was despised and rejected in the eyes of many,
and I was in their eyes like lead.
6 And I acquired strength from you,
and help.
7 A lamp you set for me both on my right and on my left,
so that there might not be in me anything that is not light.
8 And I was covered with the covering of your spirit,
and I removed from me my garments of skin.
9 Because your right hand raised me,

⁴⁷ cf. MAJELLA FRANZMANN, "The Wheel in Proverbs XX 26 and Ode of Solomon XXIII 11–16," in *Vetus Testamentum* 16 (1991): 121–122.

⁴⁸ cf. J. A. EMERTON and R. P. GORDON, "A Problem in the Odes of Solomon XXIII. 20," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (1981): 443–447.

and caused sickness to pass from me.
10 And I became mighty in your truth,
and holy in your righteousness.
11 And all my adversaries were afraid of me,
and I became the Lord's by the name of the Lord.
12 And I was justified by his kindness,
and his rest is for ever and ever.

Ode 27

1 I extended my hands
and hallowed my Lord;
2 For the expansion of my hands
is his sign.
3 And my extension
is the upright cross.⁴⁹

Ode 29

1 The Lord is my hope,
and I shall not be ashamed in him.
2 For according to his praise he made me,
and according to his grace even so he gave to me.
3 And according to his mercies he raised me,
and according to his great honor he lifted me up.
4 And he caused me to ascend from the depths of Sheol,
and from the mouth of Death he drew me.
5 And I humbled my enemies,
and he justified me by his grace.
6 For I believed in the Lord's Messiah,
and I considered that he is the Lord.
7 And he declared to me his sign,
and he led me by his light.
8 And he gave me the scepter of his power,
that I might subdue the thoughts of the gentiles,
and humble the strength of the mighty.
9 To make war by his word,
and to take victory by his power.
10 And the Lord overthrew my enemy by his word,
and he became like the dust which a breeze carries off.
11 And I gave praise to the Most High,
because he has magnified his servant and the son of his maidservant.

⁴⁹ cf. BRIAN MCNEIL, "A Liturgical Source in Acts of Peter 38," in *Vigiliae Christianae* 33 (1979): 342–346. [Hereafter cited in-line, according to the format: (McNeil, "Liturgical": 342–346).]

Ode 31

(Christ speaks)

- 6 Come forth, you who have been afflicted,
and receive joy.
- 7 And possess yourselves through grace,
and take unto you immortal life.
- 8 And they condemned me when I stood up,
me who had not been condemned.
- 9 Then they divided my spoil,
though nothing was owed them.
- 10 But I endured and held my peace and was silent,
that I might not be disturbed by them.
- 11 But I stood undisturbed like a solid rock,
which is continuously pounded by columns of waves and endures.⁵⁰
- 12 And I bore their bitterness because of humility;
that I might save my nation and instruct it.
- 13 And that I might not nullify the promise to the patriarchs,
to whom I was promised for the salvation of their offspring.

Ode 32

- 1 To the blessed ones the joy is from their heart,
and light from him who dwells in them;
- 2 And the Word from the truth who is self-originate,
- 3 Because he has been strengthened by the holy power of the Most High;
and he is unshaken for ever and ever.

Ode 35

- 1 The sprinkling of the Lord overshadowed me with serenity,
and it caused a cloud of peace to stand over my head;
- 2 That it might guard me at all times.
And it became salvation to me.
-
- 6 And I grew strong in his favor,
and rested in his perfection.
- 7 And I extended my hands in the ascent of myself,
and I directed myself near the Most High,
and I was saved near him.⁵¹

⁵⁰ cf. Driver: 436-437

⁵¹ cf. McNeil, "Liturgical": 342-346

Ode 36

1 I rested on the Spirit of the Lord
and she raised me up to heaven;
2 And caused me to stand on my feet in the Lord's high place,
before his perfection and his glory,
where I continued praising (him) by the composition of his odes.

(Christ speaks)

3 (The Spirit) brought me forth before the Lord's face,
and because I was the Son of Man,
I was named the Light, the Son of God;
4 Because I was most praised among the praised;
and the greatest among the great ones.
5 For according to the greatness of the Most High, so she made me;
and according to his newness he renewed me.
6 And he anointed me with his perfection;
and I became one of those who are near him.
7 And my mouth was opened like a cloud of dew,
and my heart gushed forth (like) a gusher of righteousness.
8 And my approach was in peace,
and I was established in the spirit of providence.

Ode 38

7 But Truth was proceeding on the upright way,
and whatever I did not understand he declared to me:
8 All the drugs of error,
and pains of death which are considered sweetness.⁵²
9 And the corrupting of the Corruptor,
I saw when the Bride who was corrupting was adorned,
and the Bridegroom who corrupts and is corrupted.
10 And I asked the Truth, Who are these?
And he said to me: This is the Deceiver and the Error.
11 And they imitate the Beloved and his Bride,
and they cause the world to err and corrupt it.
12 And they invite many to the wedding feast,
and allowed them to drink the wine of their intoxication;
13 So they cause them to vomit up their wisdom and their knowledge,
and make them senseless.
. . . .
16 But I have been made wise so as not to fall into the hands of the deceivers,

⁵² *cp.* Ignatius, TRALLIANS 6:2.

These people, while pretending to be trustworthy, mix Jesus Christ with poison — like those who administer a deadly drug with honeyed wine, which the unsuspecting victim accepts without fear, and so with fatal pleasure drinks down death. (Lightfoot: 163)

- and I myself rejoiced because the Truth had gone with me.
17 For I was established and lived and was saved,
and my foundations were laid on account of the Lord's hand;
because he has planted me.
18 For he set the root,
and watered it and adapted it and blessed it,
and its fruits will be forever.
19 It penetrated deeply and sprang up and spread out,
and it was full and was enlarged.⁵³

Ode 39

- 1 Raging rivers (are like) the power of the Lord;
they bring headlong those who despise him.
2 And entangle their paths,
and destroy their crossings.
3 And catch their bodies,
and corrupt their natures.
4 For they are more swift than lightnings,
even more rapid.
5 But those who cross them in faith
shall not be disturbed.
6 And those who walk on them faultlessly
shall not be shaken.
7 Because the sign on them is the Lord,
and the sign is the Way for those who cross in the name of the Lord.
8 Therefore, put on the name of the Most High and know him,
and you shall cross without danger;
because the rivers shall be obedient to you.
9 The Lord has bridged them by his Word,
and he walked and crossed them on foot.
10 And his footsteps were standing firm upon the waters, and were not destroyed;
but they are like a cross (of wood) that is constructed on truth.
11 On this side and on that the waves were lifted up,
but the footsteps of our Lord Messiah were standing firm.
12 And they are neither blotted out,
nor destroyed.
13 And the Way has been appointed for those who cross over after him,
and for those who adhere to the path of his faith;
and who adore his name.

⁵³ cf. RICHARD BAUCKHAM, "The Parable of the Vine: Rediscovering a Lost Parable of Jesus," in *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987): 84-101; and MAJELLA FRANZMANN, "The Parable of the Vine in *Odes of Solomon* 38.17-19? A Response to Richard Bauckham," in *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 604-608.

Ode 41

- 11 And his Word is with us in all our way,
the Savior who gives life and does not reject ourselves.
12 The Man who humbled himself,
but was raised up because of his own righteousness.
13 The Son of the Most High appeared
in the perfection of his Father.
14 And light dawned from the Word
that was before time in him.
15 The Messiah is truth in one.
And he was known before the foundations of the world,
that he might give life to persons forever by the truth of his name.
16 A new chant (is) for the Lord from them that love him.

Ode 42

- 1 I extended my hands and approached my Lord,
because the stretching out of my hands is his sign.
2 And my extension is the common cross,
that was lifted up on the way of the Righteous One. ⁵⁴
- (Christ speaks)*
- 3 And I became useless to those who knew me [not],
because I shall hide myself from those who possessed me not.
4 And I will be with those
who love me.
5 All my persecutors have died,
and they who trusted in me sought me, because I am living.
6 Then I arose and am with them,
and will speak by their mouths.
7 For they have rejected those who persecute them;
and I threw over them the yoke of my love.
8 Like the arm of the bridegroom over the bride,
so is my yoke over those who know me.
9 And as the bridal feast is spread out by the bridal pair's home,
so is my love by those who believe in me.
10 I was not rejected although I was considered to be so,
and I did not perish although they thought it of me.
11 Sheol saw me and was shattered,
and Death ejected me and many with me.
12 I have been vinegar and bitterness to it,
and I went down with it as far as its depth.
13 Then the feet and the head it released,
because it was not able to endure my face.

⁵⁴ cf. McNeil, "Liturgical": 342-346

- 14 And I made a congregation of living among his dead;
 and I spoke with them by living lips;
 in order that my word may not fail.
- 15 And those who had died ran toward me;
 and they cried out and said, "Son of God, have pity on us,
- 16 And deal with us according to your kindness,
 and bring us out from the chains of darkness.
- 17 And open for us the door
 by which we may go forth to you,
 for we perceive that our death does not approach you.
- 18 May we also be saved with you,
 because you are our Savior."
- 19 Then I heard their voice,
 and placed their faith in my heart.
- 20 And I placed my name upon their head,
 because they are free and they are mine.

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