

An Early Christian Psalter

BY

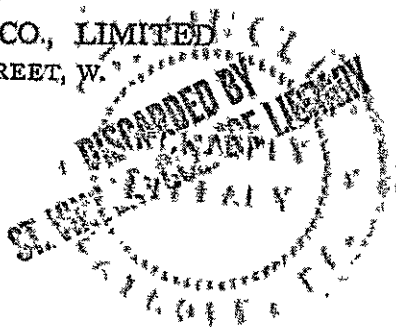
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P R E F A C E

THE little book from which the following extracts have been made was announced as forthcoming in the *Contemporary Review* for last April, when a brief account was given of its recovery, and some indication of its importance, both for the spiritual interpretation of Christianity and for the right understanding of the early Christian history and doctrine. Since then it has been published in a complete form, in the ancient Syriac version from which it was recovered, and with such annotations as are desired by scholars. It has, however, seemed to me that the book transcends in importance the field of attention of the scholar, and appeals, in its devotional interest, to the 'even Christian' of whom Shakespeare speaks—the man or woman 'in the street' of the spiritual city, the people who know how to sing, better than they understand how to translate an Eastern language or comment upon an ancient book. For them, therefore, these pages

have been prepared, on the assumption that they love the good music of the soul, and have fellowship with the saints therein.

Some omissions have been made from the recovered book of Psalms, on the ground that certain of the pieces did not harmonise with the spirit of devotion, and could not form a part of a perennial Psalter. It is even probable that they did not come from the same author, or authors, to whom the rest of the collection can be referred. It must be admitted, however, that even in modern hymn-writers we occasionally find the grotesque mingled with the sublime, and the commonplace thrust in amongst the inspired; only, when we are preparing a spiritual handbook, we naturally leave such fantastic, or unequal, or unworthy songs on one side, and go our way heavenward with the rest. It is certainly surprising how few compositions of a doubtful character, whether from the standpoint of literature or of spiritual insight, are contained in these Odes of Solomon. If we cannot say of them what John Wesley said of the collection of hymns produced by himself and his brother, that 'Here you will find nothing turgid, &c.,' we may confidently

say that we found little that was not helpful in our book, and almost nothing that had not the reek and air of Paradise. What little has been removed matters little, and this is not the place to discuss it further, nor to invite criticism upon the wisdom of the excisions. Along with the Psalms themselves—or Odes, as I think they were originally called—some brief elucidations are printed, chiefly by way of extract from the larger volume to which reference has been made. There seemed to be a necessity for some slight explanations or expansions of the sacred themes upon which the writers of the Odes were engaged; but here again the value of the compositions was seen, in that so very little sufficed by way of explanation, and that so much of what has come to us was universal Christian language and genuine mother-speech.

For the benefit of those who have not followed the earlier announcements of the book, or who may not have access to the larger volume, it may be well to state that these Odes, ascribed artificially to Solomon, have been found in a Syriac MS. in my own possession, along with an already-known collection of Psalms of Solomon. In neither case is the reference to Solomon

anything more than a transparent artifice, many instances of which occur in the Christian literature and elsewhere. In neither case are we carried back into the times of the early Jewish monarchy, for it can be shown that the Psalms of Solomon were written in Jerusalem about half a century before Christ, and I think it can also be proved that the Odes of Solomon belong to Palestine as their origin, and to a date which cannot differ much from the close of the first century after Christ. It is impossible to say whether the name 'Odes of Solomon' was attached to them by the first writer or first editor of the collection. The ascription must, however, be very early, for we find a number of the Odes quoted as from Solomon in a curious Gnostic book, which goes under the name of the *Pistis Sophia*. This strange book, so valuable to us for the precious fragments which it incorporates, cannot be dated later than the third century. The author of the book found these Odes of Solomon bound up with his Psalms of David, so the title must be very early. But neither in the case of the Odes nor of the Psalms ascribed to Solomon is the author's name to be taken seriously.

Both of the collections ascribed to Solomon are of the highest importance for the history of Messianic beliefs. In the one case you have the Messianic song before sunrise, in the other the great hope has been turned into the great reality, and 'the first low matin chirp has grown full quire.'

They are songs of the spring-time, too, as well as songs of the dark and of the dawn. When you hear them, instead of saying, 'That is the nightingale,' you will say, 'I hear a primitive Christian'—who is, indeed, the spiritual analogue of the bird that sings in the 'propitious May.' Of that song it was said that the same hath oft-times

'Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in fairy-lands forlorn.'

But these spiritual songs have the windows open for us upon our own country. Come to the casement, and you will see a land of corn and wine and oil. Here are the wide-spread joys of the kingdom of heaven. Here grow the Divine promises, by which men become holy, and here radiates Divine Grace, by which they become exultant in Christ their Lord, and rejoice in God their Saviour. Am I wrong in

hoping that this little book, unexpectedly recovered from obscurity into daylight, may be one of the means which God, in the present day, has chosen to bring to our remembrance the greatness of our calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints?

RENDEL HARRIS.

SELBY OAK, BIRMINGHAM,
November 1909,

An Early Christian Psalter

ODE I

THE Lord is on my head like a crown, and I shall not be without Him. They wove for me a crown of truth, and it caused thy branches to bud in me. For it is not like a withered crown which buddeth not: but Thou livest upon my head, and Thou hast blossomed upon my head. Thy fruits are full-grown and perfect, they are full of thy salvation.

ODE I. This Ode is not in our Syriac MS., but in the Coptic version of the *Pistis Sophia*, where it is said to be the 19th Ode of Solomon. I have identified it with the missing first Ode of our collection, on the supposition that, in the collection of Solomonian Psalms known to the author of the *Pistis Sophia*, the eighteen Psalms of Solomon stood first, and not, as in the Syriac collection, in the last place. The question is discussed, more at length, under Ode 5. The argument of the Psalm is that God is the crown of the soul, whose supreme experience is the knowledge of His truth. This crown is of the amarant variety; it fadeth not away. On the contrary, it buds and blossoms and is full of immortal fruit. The similitude is not uncommon in the book of Odes to which we have placed this Psalm as an introduction.

ODE 3. (*Beginning last*)

. . . I put on; And his members are with him. And on them do I hang, and he loves me: for I should not have known how to love the Lord, if He had not loved me. For who is able to distinguish love, except the one that is loved. I love the Beloved, and my soul loves Him; and where His rest is, there also am I; and I shall be no stranger, for with the Lord Most High and Merciful there is no grudging. I have been united to Him, because I find love to the Beloved, and because I love Him that is the Son, that I may myself be a son; for he that is joined to Him that is immortal, will also himself become immortal; and he who is accepted in the Living One, will become living. This is the Spirit of the Lord, which doth not lie, which teacheth the sons of men to know His ways. Be wise and understanding and vigilant. Hallelujah.

ODE 3. This Psalm, of which the first verses have disappeared along with the leaves that contained the first two Psalms, is evidently a Christian product; the author is a mystic with a doctrine, or rather an experience, of union with the Son. With him his whole nature has become mingled, as water is mixed with wine. In Pauline language, he has been joined to the Lord, and has become one spirit with him.

In Johannine language, because the beloved lives, he himself lives also. He has, at least in hope and faith, attained immortality through union with the Living One. The name here given to Christ is very ancient; it has been detected by the Revisers of the English New Testament in the Apocalypse ('I am the Living One'), and it is found in the opening sentences of the Sayings of Jesus, recovered in recent years from Egypt: ('these are the words . . . which Jesus the Living One spake,' etc.)

Other Johannine touches are the doctrine that 'we love Him because He first loved us.' For the Psalmist tells us that 'he should not have known how to love the Lord if the Lord had not loved him.'

ODE 4

No man, O my God, changeth thy holy place; and it is not [possible] that he should change it and put it in another place: because he hath no power over it: for thy sanctuary thou hast designed before thou didst make [other] places: that which is the elder shall not be altered by those that are younger than itself. Thou hast given thy heart, O Lord, to thy believers: never wilt thou fail, nor be without fruits: for one hour of thy Faith is more precious than all days and years. For who is there that shall put on thy grace, and be hurt? For thy seal is known: and thy creatures know it:

and thy [heavenly] hosts possess it: and the elect archangels are clad with it. Thou hast given us thy fellowship: it was not that thou wast in need of us: but that we are in need of thee: distil thy dews upon us and open thy rich fountains that pour forth to us milk and honey: for there is no repentance with thee that thou shouldest repent of anything that thou hast promised: and the end was revealed before thee: for what thou gavest, thou gavest freely: so that thou mayest not draw them back and take them again: for all was revealed before thee as God, and ordered from the beginning before thee: and thou, O God, hast made all things. Hallelujah.

ONE 4. This Psalm is one of the most important in the whole collection, on account of the historical allusion with which it commences. The reference to an unsuccessful attempt to alter the site of the Sanctuary of the Lord can only be explained by some unknown movement to carry on the Jewish worship outside the desolated and proscribed sanctuary, or by the closing of the Jewish temple at Leontopolis in Egypt, which was, perhaps, itself in the first instance built under the pressure of the situation which resulted in the desecration of the temple at Jerusalem by Antiochus Epiphanes. As the latter explanation leans on fact, rather than on hypothesis, we may accept it provisionally as the real interpretation of our Psalm, which is thus dated soon after

A.D. 73, when the temple of Onias was closed and dismantled by the Romans. The writer of the Psalm, if not of Jewish origin, is, at least, Jewish in sympathy: he holds the Jewish belief that the Sanctuary at Jerusalem was older than the world in which it stood; it was, according to Rabbinic teaching, prior to all other created things: thus we find in *Bereshith Rabbah* that 'seven things were created before the world—Thorah, Gehenna, the Garden of Eden, the Throne of Glory, the Sanctuary, Repentance and the name of Messiah.' The proofs of these pre-existent creations can easily be made from the Scriptures: e.g. 'the Lord God had planted a garden in Eden from afore-time' (Gen. ii. 8), and so on. The matter is discussed with some detail in *Pirqe Aboth* vi. 10: 'Five possessions possessed the Holy One, blessed is He, in His world: and these are they: Thorah, one possession; Heaven and Earth, one possession; Abraham, one possession; Israel, one possession; the Sanctuary, one possession.'

The Sanctuary: whence [is it proved]? Because it is written, 'The place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established (Exod. xv. 17): and it saith, And He brought them to the border of His sanctuary, even to this mountain, which His right hand had possessed (Ps. lxxviii. 54).' This Rabbinical belief has affected the mind of our Psalmist, who comments upon the fall of the Egyptian temple unsympathetically, and evidently has his heart set amongst the ruins of the Sanctuary at Jerusalem. He does not think the covenant between God and the people of Israel is annulled; all God's promises are irrevocable; his gifts and callings are without repentance on his part. But there

are no lamentations on the part of the writer over the ruins of Jerusalem; the temple which is in his thoughts has not developed a wailing-place. God has sealed His own people with the marks of His ownership. All creation, and both worlds, recognise this seal. And He is able to pour out blessings on His chosen, comparable to the dew of heaven, and the milk and honey of the earth. If we please, we may definitely call it a Judæo-Christian Psalm: and it might very well have been composed by one of the refugees at Pella. It is not easy to see how it could have been written outside Palestine, nor by a purely Jewish hand.

There are no Scripture references; perhaps the nearest parallel is Rom. xi. 29 ('the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.')

ODE 5

I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, because I love thee; O most High, thou wilt not forsake me, for thou art my hope: freely I have received thy grace, I shall live thereby. My persecutors will come and not see me: a cloud of darkness shall fall on their eyes; and an air of thick gloom shall darken them: and they shall have no light to see: that they may not take hold upon me. Let their counsel become thick darkness, and what they have cunningly devised, let it return upon their own heads: for they have devised a counsel, and it did not succeed: they have prepared

themselves for evil, and were found to be empty. For my hope is upon the Lord, and I will not fear, and because the Lord is my salvation, I will not fear; and he is as a garland on my head and I shall not be moved; even if everything should be shaken, I stand firm; and if all things visible should perish, I shall not die: because the Lord is with me and I am with Him. Hallelujah.

ODE 5. The interest of this Psalm lies in the fact that at this point we begin to strike the region of coincidences with the Gnostic book, known as the *Pistis Sophia*. The Ode has been used, apparently, in the composition of two Odes or Prophecies of Solomon, quoted respectively by Salome and the Virgin.

Salome recites nearly the whole of the Ode, with some slight variations and expansions: and it is possible that one or two clauses may be missing in the Syriac and may be capable of restoration from the Coptic.

The remaining portion of the Ode before us appears, at first sight, from the parallelism of the first sentence, to be the same as what is given in the *Pistis Sophia* as the recitation of the Virgin from the 19th Ode of Solomon. But we have suggested that the supposed 19th Ode of the Coptic writer is the first of our collection, and that it followed on the eighteen Psalms of Solomon.

Whether this fifth Ode is Christian or not, does not appear decisively at the first reading. It opens in a rather Jewish strain of praise, accompanied by prayer for the discomfiture of

enemies. If there is a definite Christian feature, perhaps it is the garland upon the singer's head, which appears in several other Odes. In the 17th Ode, for example, we get the same figure, and here the theme is the praise of the Messiah for His triumph over Hades. This must, of course, be Christian.

The crown is a crown of life—that is, a living crown or garland; and this meaning is carefully brought out in the Coptic Ode, which explains that the crown does not wither, but (like Aaron's rod), it buds and bears fruit. We have similar allusions and explanations to the crown of life in the New Testament, as in 1 Pet. v. 4—'a crown of glory, or glorious crown, which does not fade away.' The close of the Ode is a noble expression of trust in the Lord, amidst adverse circumstances, which one instinctively compares with the close of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. It may be regarded as a Christian composition, on account of its affinity with other Odes that are certainly Christian, as well as on account of its intrinsic spiritual value.

ODE 6

As the hand moves over the harp, and the strings speak, so speaks in my members the Spirit of the Lord, and I speak by His love. For He destroys everything foreign, and everything that is bitter: for thus it was from the beginning and will be to the end, that nothing should be His adversary, and nothing should stand up against Him. The Lord has multiplied the knowledge of Himself, and is zealous that

these things should be known, which by His grace have been given to us. And the praise of His name He gave us. Our spirits praise His holy Spirit. For there went forth a stream and became a river great and broad; for it flooded and broke up everything and it brought [water] to the temple: and the restrainers of the children of men were not able to restrain it, nor the arts of those whose business it is to restrain waters; for it spread over the face of the whole earth, and filled everything: and all the thirsty upon earth were given to drink of it; and thirst was relieved and quenched: for from the Most High the draught was given. Blessed then are the ministers of that draught who are intrusted with that water of His: they have assuaged the dry lips, and the will that had fainted they have raised up; and souls that were near departing they have caught back from death: and limbs that had fallen they straightened and set up: they gave strength for their feebleness and light to their eyes: for every one knew them in the Lord, and they lived by the water of life for ever. Hallelujah.

ODE 6. In this Psalm again we are fortunate in having a large part of the Coptic text preserved to us. What is described in the Psalm is 'the preaching of the Gospel which

no human effort can avail to hinder.' We must also recognise a reference to the waters in Ezekiel which go forth from the temple. But there is a suggestive difference in our Psalm from the parable in Ezekiel: in the Syriac text the stream appears to rise elsewhere than in the temple, and part of its function is to water the temple. It is a river deep and broad before it reaches the temple. If this be what is intended, then the restrainers who build dykes to keep waters out or cisterns to keep them in are very likely the temple officials themselves, who were often hard put to it to hinder the propaganda of the new religion within the limits of the Holy Place.

The writer is exultant in his universalism; the stream of living water has gone out into all the earth; thirsty souls everywhere have been refreshed by it; dying souls have been revived.

The writer is as universal as St. Paul. But he is not so detached from Judaism as not to know that the living water was connected with the temple. Perhaps, then, he is a Judaeo-Christian of an enlightened type. Some things seem to intimate the presence of Johannine phraseology and ideas. The Johannine features, however, do not appear to us to be directly due to the Gospel: if such a long composition had been under Johannine influence, it would have betrayed its ancestry more definitely. Neither here nor elsewhere does it seem possible definitely to convict the Psalms of having borrowed from St. John. On the other hand there is one expression which recalls a sentence in 1 Cor., where the writer says that God is zealous 'that those things should be known, which have been given us by His grace': this is very like 1 Cor. ii. 12, 'that we may know the things

that have been freely given us of God.' Whether the coincidence should be pressed will depend to some extent upon the existence of further and similar echoes of New Testament speech.

ODE 7

As the impulse of anger against evil, so is the impulse of joy over what is lovely, and brings in of its fruits without restraint. My joy is the Lord and my impulse is toward Him: this is my excellent path: for I have a helper, the Lord. He has caused me to know Himself, without grudging, by His simplicity: the greatness of His kindness has humbled me. He became like me, in order that I might receive Him: He was reckoned like myself in order that I might put Him on; and I trembled not when I saw Him: because He is my salvation. Like my nature He became that I might learn Him and like my form, that I might not turn back from Him: the Father of knowledge is the word of knowledge: He who created wisdom is wiser than His works; and He who created me, when yet I was not, knew what I should do when I came into being: wherefore He pitied me in His abundant grace: and granted me to ask from Him and to receive from His sacrifice: because He it is that is

incorrupt, the fulness of the ages and the Father of them.

He hath given Him to be seen of them that are His, in order that they may recognise Him that made them : and that they might not suppose that they came of themselves. For He hath appointed to knowledge its way, He hath widened it and extended it ; and brought it to all perfection ; and set over it the traces of His light, and it goeth from the beginning even to the end. For by Him it was wrought, and it was resting in the Son, and for its salvation He will take hold of everything : and the Most High shall be known in His Saints, to announce to those that have songs of the coming of the Lord ; that they may go forth to meet Him, and may sing to Him with joy and with the harp of many tones. The seers shall come before Him and they shall be seen before Him, and they shall praise the Lord for His love : because He is near and beholdeth, and hatred shall be taken from the earth, and along with jealousy it shall be drowned : for ignorance has been destroyed, because the knowledge of the Lord has arrived. They who make songs shall sing the grace of the Lord Most High ; and they shall bring their songs, and their heart shall be like the day : and

like the excellent beauty of the Lord their pleasant song. And there shall neither be anything that breathes without knowledge, nor any that is dumb: for He has given a mouth to His creation, to open the voice of the mouth towards Him, to praise Him: confess ye His power, and show forth His grace. Hallelujah.

ODE 7. In this Psalm the writer dilates joyfully on the theme of the Incarnation, and the combination of lowliness and wisdom that are involved therein. The condescension of Christ to human form is not only a sympathetic approach to human conditions, it is also a divine welcome. He says 'Come unto me' by coming unto us. 'Like my nature He became that I might learn of Him.'

But the incarnate Messiah is still the maker and sustainer of all things, in whom all things consist. The knowledge of this revelation produces praise and expectation—praise for those who sing His advent, expectation for those who look for His triumphant rule among men. All evil is to pass away, and all hate. The saints who sing are already exulting in the new life which He has bestowed upon them.

ODE 8

Open ye, open ye your hearts to the exultation of the Lord; and let your love be multiplied from the heart and even to the lips, to bring forth fruit to the Lord, living fruit, holy fruit; and to talk with

watchfulness in His light. Rise up, and stand erect, ye who sometime were brought low: tell forth, ye who were in silence, that your mouth has been opened. Ye, therefore, that were despised, be henceforth lifted up, because your righteousness has been exalted. For the right hand of the Lord is with you: and He is your helper: and peace was prepared for you, before ever your war was. Hear the word of truth, and receive the knowledge of the Most High. Your flesh has not known what I am saying to you: neither have your hearts known what I am showing to you. Keep my secret, ye who are kept by it. Keep my faith, ye who are kept by it. And understand my knowledge, ye who know me in truth. Love me with affection, ye who love: for I do not turn away my face from them that are mine; for I know them, and before they came into being, I took knowledge of them, and on their faces I set my seal; I fashioned their members: my own breasts I prepared for them that they might drink my holy milk and live thereby. I took pleasure in them and am not ashamed of them: for my workmanship are they and the strength of my thoughts: who then shall rise up against my handiwork, or who is there that is not subject to them? I willed and

fashioned mind and heart : and they are mine, and by my own right hand I set my elect ones : and if my righteousness had not been before them . . . and they shall not be deprived of my name : for it is with them. Ask and abound, and abide in the love of the Lord, and ye beloved ones in the Beloved : those who are kept, in Him that liveth : and they that are saved in Him that was saved. And ye shall be found incorrupt in all ages to the name of your Father. Hallelujah.

ODE 8. This Psalm again is Johannine in many of its ideas and expressions. But, even when this is conceded, it is difficult to prove a direct dependence on the Fourth Gospel.

The Psalm is, like a number of others, marked by a sudden transition of personality from the Psalmist or Prophet to the Lord Himself : after the writer has addressed those who have been lifted up out of affliction and have found peace after war, he suddenly, in prophetic manner, cries out, 'Hear the word of the Lord,' 'Receive the heavenly knowledge,' and then proceeds to speak in the person of the Lord. The same abrupt transitions are found in the canonical Psalter, and they appear to have characterised the Montanist inspirations. It will be remembered that Montanus describes his own spiritual exaltation in the words : 'Behold ! the man is as a lyre, and I sweep over him as the plectrum. The man sleeps and I wake. Behold ! it is the Lord, who estranges the souls of men from themselves, and gives men souls.' The same address by the Lord in the first person is in the utterance of Maximilla, the Montanist prophetess, who said, 'I am chased as a wolf from

the midst of the flock. I am no wolf; I am word, and spirit, and power.'

The language of Montanus finds a close parallel in the opening of the sixth Psalm, where the writer says, 'As the hand moves over the harp, and the strings speak, so speaks in my members the Spirit of the Lord.' This might easily be claimed as a Montanist utterance, and I can imagine that on account of these and similar sayings, the whole Psalter might be claimed as a Montanist product. But the sentiments are simply Christian, on a high experimental plane; and we must not forget that one of the chief characteristics of Montanism is its attempt to perpetuate the life of the primitive Church. Towards the end of the Psalm the prophet returns abruptly to speech in his own name. There seems to be some breach of continuity in the discourse, as well as a change of personality, and I have suggested that a sentence has dropped in the Syriac text.

I do not know whether the allusion to an actual war, from which the saints have emerged or escaped, is to be taken literally. If it be a literal, and not a spiritual reference, the choice will lie between the Jewish war under Titus or that under Hadrian; in either case we should be in Judæo-Christian circles. It is, however, quite possible that the 'war' and the 'peace' refer only to spiritual experiences.

ODE 9

Open your ears and I will speak to you. Give me your souls, that I may also give you my soul, the word of the Lord and His good pleasures, the

holy thought which He has devised concerning His Messiah. For in the will of the Lord is your salvation, and His thought is everlasting life; and your end is immortality. Be enriched in God the Father, and receive the thought of the Most High. Be strong and be redeemed by His grace. For I announce to you peace, to you His saints; that none of those who hear may fall in war, and those again who have known Him may not perish, and that those who receive may not be ashamed. An everlasting crown for ever is Truth. Blessed are they who set it on their heads. A stone of great price it is; and there have been wars on account of the crown. And righteousness hath taken it and hath given it to you. Put on the crown in the true covenant of the Lord. And all those who have conquered shall be written in His book. For their book is victory which is yours. And she, (Victory) sees you before her and wills that you shall be saved. Hallelujah.

ODE 9. This Psalm is, from a historical point of view, somewhat colourless. The only definite points are the allusions to the Lord's Messiah, or Christ; and a promise of peace and deliverance from war, which is made to the

saints. Of the first of these allusions, we may say that while it makes the Psalm a Messianic one, this does not mean that it is not Christian. The promise of everlasting life which follows must be the holy thought of God concerning the Christ. And this seems to definitely mark out the Psalm as Christian.

What, then, are we to say of the wars and victory to which the Psalm refers; are they spiritual or are they outward, or a mixture of both? We shall have the same problem before us in other Psalms. From the fact that Victory is personified and writes a book, with which we may compare Apoc. iii. 5 ('He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name from the book of life'), we may perhaps conclude that the Victory spoken of is a spiritual one. This is in harmony with the references to redemption by grace and to the will of Victory that the saints should be saved. These are Christian expressions. On the other hand, the promise that none of those who obey the Lord's word shall fall in war might have been very strikingly illustrated in the case of the Christians who escaped to Pella. But even then the Psalm is a Christian one, and it remains an open question whether outward allusions may not have been coupled with inward victories.

ODE 10

The Lord hath directed my mouth by His word:
and He hath opened my heart by His light. And
He hath caused to dwell in me His deathless life;

and gave me that I might speak the fruit of His peace : to convert the souls of them who are willing to come to Him : and to lead captive a good captivity for freedom. I was strengthened and made mighty and took the world captive ; and it became to me for the praise of the Most High, and of God my Father. And the Gentiles¹ were gathered together who were scattered abroad. And I was unpolluted by my love for them, because they confessed me in high places : and the traces of the light were set upon their heart : and they walked in life and were saved and became my people for ever and ever. Hallelujah.

ONE 10. In this vigorous little Psalm Christ must Himself be accounted the speaker through the mouth of His prophet ; unless we should prefer to say that any of the opening sentences are spoken in the Psalmist's own name, and that after them there is an abrupt alteration of personality, such as we have already referred to. It is certain, however, that the one who gathers the peoples together by his love must be the Messiah : '(unto him shall the gathering of the peoples be²).' And it can be no psalmist or prophet who declares that the Gentiles became his people for ever and ever. The one who goes forth to lead captivity captive is again the Christ : we have in the New Testament (Eph. iv. 8) the Messianic interpretation of Ps. lxxviii. 18, 'He

¹ Christ has accepted the Gentiles.

² Gen. xlix. 10.

ascended up on high, he led captivity captive'; and the same explanation underlies the Ode before us. The Ode is, therefore, a Christian one: and its soteriology is universal in character. But we are still in the region where apologetic is necessary for the reception of the Gentiles, and where it does not suffice to quote a verse of the Old Testament and say that such reception was foretold. In our Ode Christ explains that the reception of the Gentiles has not polluted Him. Such language does not belong to the Hellenic world, nor, we think, to the second century. But it is quite natural in a Judæo-Christian community in Palestine in the first century.

ODE II

My heart was cloven and its flower appeared; and grace sprang up in it: and it brought forth fruit to the Lord. For the Most High clave my heart by His Holy Spirit and searched my affection towards Him: and filled me with His love. And His opening of me became my Salvation; and I ran in His way in His peace, even in the way of truth: from the beginning and even to the end I acquired His knowledge: and I was established upon the rock of truth, where He had set me up: and speaking waters touched my lips from the fountain of the Lord without grudging: and I drank and was inebriated with the living water that doth not die; and my

inebriation was not one without knowledge, but I forsook vanity and turned to the Most High my God. And I was enriched by His bounty, and I forsook the folly which is diffused over the earth; and I stripped it off and cast it from me: and the Lord renewed me in His raiment, and possessed me by His light, and from above He gave me rest in incorruption; and I became like the land which blossoms and rejoices in its fruits; and the Lord was like the Sun shining on the face of the land; He lightened my eyes, and my face received the dew; and my nostrils enjoyed the pleasant odour of the Lord; and He carried me to His paradise; where is the abundance of the pleasure of the Lord. And I worshipped the Lord on account of His glory; and I said, Blessed, O Lord, are they who are planted in thy land! and those who have a place in thy Paradise; and they grow by the fruits of thy trees! And they have changed from darkness to light! Behold! all thy servants are fair, who do good works, and turn away from wickedness to the pleasantness that is thine. And they have turned back the bitterness of the trees from them, when they were planted in thy land; and everything became like a relic of thyself, and a memorial for ever of thy faithful works.

For there is abundant room in thy Paradise, and nothing is useless therein; I am altogether filled with fruit; glory be to Thee, O God, the delight of Paradise for ever. Hallelujah.

ODE II. This lovely Psalm is altogether personal and experimental: the writer describes the visitations of Divine Grace, which he calls the cutting open of his heart, and his establishment upon the rock of eternal truth. He is renewed by these visitations, as if he had been newly clad in light and had already reached the eternal rest. He becomes like a land that drinks in the dew of heaven, and brings forth fruit to God. He finds himself at last in the Paradise of God and amongst the fragrant trees of a new creation. He breaks out into exultant praise of the good things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

There are no scriptural references in the Psalm that can be claimed as quotations, however closely the language approximates to that of the ancient Scriptures. Perhaps the nearest parallel would be the promise in Apoc. ii, 7, that the one who overcomes, shall eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

ODE 12

He hath filled me with words of truth; that I may speak the same; and like the flow of waters flows truth from my mouth, and my lips show forth His fruit. And He has caused His knowledge to abound in me, because the mouth of the Lord is