

CHAPTER I

SONGS, AS DISTINCT FROM PSALMS

§ I. "Song" in the titles of the Hebrew Psalms

[3636] ¹THE title of the MS. for the discovery of which the world is indebted to Dr Rendel Harris is printed by him at the beginning of the Syriac text, and in Syriac, in such a form as to suggest that the scribe knew the MS. to contain two distinct classes of poems attributed to Solomon. But that title does not exist in the MS. Each poem, whether it belong to the so-called Odes or to the Psalms that follow, has as a title or heading a form of the Hebrew and Syriac *zmr*, which the LXX habitually renders "psalm." These separate headings Dr Harris has not printed. If they were ancient, they would be important evidence that all the poems, old and new, were regarded as of one kind. But there are no such headings in the much more ancient MS. discovered by Professor Burkitt. We may therefore put aside the separate headings that do exist, along with the initial title that does not exist, in Dr Harris' MS., and turn to other evidence as to the distinctive character of the newly discovered poems.

[3637] That evidence is partly external. The *Pistis Sophia*, which quotes the Canonical Psalms as "*Psalms*" and as "David's," quotes the newly discovered poems as

¹ On the meaning of the paragraph numbers see References and Abbreviations on pp. lxi, lxii.

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“*the Odes of Solomon.*” Lactantius also quotes a passage from them as written by “Solomon in the nineteenth Ode¹.”

¹ [3637 *a*] See R.H. 2nd ed. pp. 8—9, quoting Lact. *Div. Inst.* iv. 12 “Salomon in ode undevicesima,” and adding that “Lactantius is working from a book of Odes arranged in the same order as ours: if he had both Psalms and Odes in his collection, then the Odes preceded the Psalms. And further, since Lactantius quotes in Latin, the book was extant in a Latin translation in his time; for when Lactantius quotes Greek books, as in the case of the Sibylline verses, he quotes in Greek and does not offer a translation.” If it were true that Lactantius *never translates when he “quotes Greek books,”* the fact would be important as shewing that, in his time, there existed no Greek translation so well known and so authoritative as to induce him to quote from it. But see 3781 *f*.

[3637 *b*] There appears to be some uncertainty about the text of Lactantius, as may be gathered from R.H. 1st ed. and 2nd ed. in which I have underlined the most important expressions:—

R.H. 1st ed. “In the *Divine Institutes* (Bk iv. c. 12) we have the following passage:

‘Salomon ita dicit: *Infirmatus est uterus* Virginis et accepit foetum et gravata est, et facta est in multa miseratione mater virgo.’

“And in the *Epitome* of the *Divine Institutes* the passage is introduced by the words *Apud Salomonem* (sic) *ita scriptum est*; to this quotation there was (sic) added *in the MSS. of Lactantius*—presumably meaning the *Institutes*, not the *Epitome*—“the words *in Ode undevigesimo* (sic) or *in Psalmo undevigesimo* or *in Psalmo vigesimo*. These references *to a 19th Psalm or Ode or to a 20th Psalm* betray a knowledge....”

R.H. 2nd ed. “In the *Divine Institutes* (Bk iv. c. 12) we have the following passage:

‘Salomon in *ode undevicesima* ita dicit: *Infirmatus est uterus* Virginis [as above]...mater virgo.’

“And in the *Epitome* of the *Divine Institutes* the passage is introduced by the words *Apud Salomonem ita scriptum est*. These references *to a 19th Ode* betray a knowledge....”

A footnote in the first edition attached to “*Ode undevigesimo*,” says “So in the Cambridge MS. Gg. 4. 24; but in the MS. Kk. 4. 17 of the same University the reference is wanting.” A footnote in the 2nd ed., attached to “*ode undevicesima*,” repeats this and adds that the reference is found “in all MSS. in the apparatus of Brandt’s edition.”

A comparison of these varied statements raises a doubt as to the meaning of “*these references to a nineteenth Ode.*” Apparently there is only one reference at most. For there is none at all in the *Epitome*,

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though R.H. 1st ed. might give the reader the impression that there was one. And, as to the *Institutes*, the variations “Ode *undevigesimo*,” “ode *undevicesima*,” “*Psalmo undevigesimo*,” and “*Psalmo vigesimo*,” together with the absence of any reference at all in the MS. Kk. 4. 17, make it doubtful whether the reference (whatever it may be) proceeded from the pen of Lactantius.

The quotation from the *Institutes*, as given in T. and T. Clark’s translation (Intro. xii) “from Migne’s edition,” has “Thus Solomon speaks: ‘The womb of a virgin was *strengthened* and conceived...’” obviously reading “firmatus” instead of “infirmatus.”

[3637 c] The passage referred to by Lactantius (Ode xix. 6, an Ode not translated in this volume) deserves comment both because of its intrinsic importance and because it bears on the hypothesis of translation from the Greek.

R.H. suggests concerning “infirmatus est uterus” that it is (p. 9) “a mistake for ‘insinuatus,’” and (p. 116) “the original Greek was perhaps *ἐνεκολπίσθη* (=Aram ܩܘܠܒܐ). Flemming: er umarmte(?)” In his own text, retained in 2nd ed., R.H. has “[The Spirit] *opened* the womb of the Virgin.” But (1) “insinuatus est uterus” would make no sense. The text would require further alteration—“in uterum,” or “utero” (as is proved by Latin usage, and by Lactantius himself, quoted by R.H. p. 9 “cujus utero se insinuaret”). (2) The aorist passive *ἐνεκολπίσθη* is not recognised by Steph. *Thes.* as a form in use, and the forms *ἐγκολπίζομαι, ἐγκεκόλπισμαι* &c. (none of which occur in LXX or N.T.) mean (*ib.*) “enfold,” “include,” “embrace,” as God “embraces” or “includes” all things in Himself, or as a fisherman “includes” miscellaneous fish in a net; so that no form of the word would seem in place here. (3) *Thes.* 763—6 gives no instance in which the Syriac means “opened.”

[3637 d] These facts do not point to translation from the Greek. They point rather to some Hebrew or Aramaic word implying the “*entering-in*,” or “*overshadowing*,” of the Holy Spirit. The Syriac *Thes.* 763—6 does not give an instance of this meaning. But in Aramaic Levy *Ch.* i. 151 gives the word as derived from (*ib.*) “*wing*,” and as meaning “*embrace*.” This is in favour of the rendering of H. (“umarmen”)—but on the understanding that the word is Aramaic rather than Syriac and that it combines the thought of “*embracing*” with the thought of “*overshadowing*.” As to R.H. “*opened*,” Origen says expressly that the Spirit did *not* open the womb in the generation of the Lord (*Hom. Luc.* xiv, Lomm. v. 137).

With the above-mentioned reading of Lactantius “uterus *firmatus est*,” “the womb was *strengthened*,” we might compare Heb. xi. 11 “Sarah... received *strength* to conceive.” And an explanation might perhaps be found in the Hebrew idiom (Gesen. 528 a) “the Spirit of Jehovah *clothed itself with*,” meaning “entered into.” This, in Judg. vi. 34, 1 Chr. xii. 18

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But there are other reasons, and far more weighty, for thinking that the author of these poems would have called them “songs,” that is, poems of joy and praise, rather than “psalms”—a title that by no means connoted “joy” and a title already appropriated by the pre-existing Psalms of Solomon, many of which are of a gloomy tendency.

Every one of these poems—with the exception of one that is incomplete—ends with “Hallelujah” (3691 *p*). This fact alone would suffice to indicate that the poet is singing songs of joy and praise, and not psalms of penitence or sorrowful entreaty. The subject-matter of the poems confirms this view. So, too, does the word that he habitually uses for “sing” and “song,” which is a form of *shābach*, “praise” or “glorify,” the regular Aramaic and Syriac equivalent of the Hebrew *shîr*, “song” (the word used for the Song of Moses and for Solomon’s Song of Songs). In the first century we find Paul and Philo and Josephus in various characteristic ways distinguishing “psalms” and “hymns” and “songs”; and it would be natural for our poet to indicate, by the

is corrupted by some MSS. into “strengthened.” In Judg. vi. 34 the Targum has “the spirit of *strength* (*fortitudinis*)...clothed Gideon.” An original Hebrew phrase like “the Spirit *clothed itself with*, that is, *entered*, the womb” might naturally give rise to various interpretations, in which “put round” might be interchanged with “embrace,” and “clothe” with “strengthen.” And considerations of seemliness as well as doctrine might affect the text.

[3637 *e*] But Jerome, commenting on Is. lxvi. 7—8—about the “birth without travail,” which is also the subject of Ode xix. 6—speaks of the holy Mother, the Church, as (Ps. cxxviii. 3) “a *Vine*.” And the Syriac (*ib.*) for “*vine*” is the same (except for final *aleph*) as the Syriac word now under discussion (see *Theo.* 765). Such a rendering as “[*As*] the *Vine* [*was*] the womb of the Virgin” might be illustrated by the utterance of Wisdom in Sir. xxiv. 17—18 (Vulg.) “*As the vine* brought I forth...I am the *Mother* of fair love....” Codex N, however, has *gphth* without *aleph*. And the metaphor of the *Vine* does not occur elsewhere in the Odes. The conclusion is uncertain. For a recent explanation of “infirmatus” see 3645 *d* and 3710 *a* foll.

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word that he most frequently uses, the special nature of his utterances. Moreover, that he does not use the word "song" or "glorifying" indiscriminately to include "psalms," and "hymns," and sacred poetry of any kind, is indicated by the fact that he does occasionally use the word "psalm," or "make-psalms," but in special contexts. Such discrimination is also found in the Pauline Epistles, which twice mention "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs¹." These and other facts, which will be given later on, indicate that our poet confined his utterances almost entirely to such subjects as called for joy, exultation, and passionate gratitude or love.

[3638] Such also were the associations of the Hebrew "song" as compared with the Hebrew "psalm." In the titles of the Biblical psalms, the Hebrew "psalm" occurs about sixty times, and many of the poems thus entitled are of a very sorrowful nature. "Song" occurs in about thirty titles, and these, with one exception, introduce utterances of thankfulness and joy. The exception is the eighty-eighth psalm, one of the saddest in the Bible. This is called "A Song, a Psalm." Rashi says that the title means "sick with love" and "afflicted." "Sick with love" he takes as a quotation from the Song of Songs where the Bride says "Comfort me with apples for I am sick with love." "Afflicted" means, he says, that Israel is "afflicted with the chastisements of exile." By this he means exile from the temple, banishment from the place-of-meeting where the Bride met her Beloved—as is shewn by his comment on the Song of Songs, where he interprets the words of the Bride as meaning "Him do I thirst for in my exile²." Even if there should be found a few more exceptions to the rule that the Hebrew "song" is of a joyful character, it would be worth noting that the title of this one at least is explained by Rashi as though

¹ Eph. v. 19, Col. iii. 16, see 3645 *a* foll.

² Rashi on Cant. ii. 5.

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it were the song of a Bride—a Bride seemingly forsaken, distressed, almost in despair, but still a Bride.

[3639] The apocryphal Psalms of Solomon have been for a long time known to us in Greek. In the titles of only two of these does “song”¹ occur. Both of these titles have “Psalm with Song,” and both are prefixed to songs of thanksgiving². In the rest, where, for the most part, “psalm” without “song” is used, thanksgiving is either absent or subordinate. Having such a collection of “psalms of Solomon” before him—some of them poems of stress and national conflict, historical rather than spiritual—our poet might be all the more tempted to set forth as “songs” the more joyful aspect of national history, the union of Israel with Jehovah, developed in unexpected directions into a Wedding between the Human and the Divine, after the manner of the Wedding between the Bride and the Beloved described in “the Song of Songs which is Solomon’s.”

We shall find that the Odes, or Songs, of Solomon begin with the subject of his “crown,” and imply the subject of what Scripture calls his “espousals.” This will explain why they were placed before the Psalms. The Psalms were written perhaps more than a hundred and fifty years before the Odes. But whoever wrote the Odes, and whoever arranged them with the Psalms, would think of both, not as pseudonymous compositions written at different dates, but as spiritual poems, in which the Odes should take the first place because the Odes treated of the glorious dawn and promise of Solomon’s career, while the Psalms breathed sad suggestions of promise unfulfilled or reserved for future fulfilment.

[3640] Commenting on “the words of this song” in the title of one of David’s psalms, the Midrash remarks that a

¹ “Song,” *i.e.* Gk. *ψδῆ*.

² [3639 *a*] *Psalms of Solomon* (ed. Ryle and James) xv. tit. and xvii. tit. Note the context of “song” in xv. 5 “psalm and *praise with song in gladness of heart*.” Psalms x. and xiv. tit. have *ὑμνος*.

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“song” of this kind does not come from the mere desire to sing. But when, says the writer, one has experienced a “wonder” and sings in consequence, then a man knows that his sins are forgiven and that he is, as it were, a new creature; and so it was with Israel at the Red Sea¹. Elsewhere the Midrash says that the Holy Spirit does not “rest” upon man where there are disturbing or sorrowful emotions “but only where joy predominates².” This joyous association is etymologically natural in the Syriac word for “song,” since, as has been said above, it is simply a noun formed from the verb “glorify,” “praise,” “honour³.” Other noun-forms from this verb mean “glory,” “renown,” “praise” &c.; but this one, besides meaning “glory,” means also, in certain contexts, “a poem of glorifying.” This we may, for convenience, call “ode” hereafter when we refer to this or that particular poem, but when it occurs in the *text* of the poems we shall mostly render it “glorifying,” or “song of glorifying.” In many passages this author employs the verb “glorify,” and the

¹ [3640 a] On Ps. xviii. tit. (Wü. i. 145). It really implies, though it does not assert, that Israel was baptized (1 Cor. x. 2) and became a nation, or a new nation, in the Red Sea.

² [3640 b] Midr. on Ps. xxiv. 1 (Wü. i. 217, “nur da wo Freude herrscht”). The context makes minute distinctions, some of which are extremely fanciful, between details in the titles of the Psalms. But the necessity of “joy” is supported by (2 K. iii. 15) Elisha’s need of “a minstrel,” and by the need (Gen. xlv. 27—xlvi. 2) that Jacob’s spirit should “revive” before God “spoke to him in a vision.” “These words,” says the Midrash, “the Targumist rendered by ‘The Holy Spirit rested on him.’”

³ [3640 c] *Theo.* 4027—8. It may seem surprising at first sight that *Theo.* gives so few instances of the Syr. “glorifying” corresponding to the Heb. “song” (Ges. 1010) in the titles of the Psalms. The reason is, at all events in the early Psalms, that the Syr. often *puts aside the Heb. titles and substitutes others of a Christian tendency*. Thus Ps. xviii. tit. (Syr.) mentions “De Ascensione Christi,” xlv. tit. (Syr.) mentions “Apparitio Christi,” xlvi. tit. (Syr.) mentions “Praedicatio Apostolorum.” But in the *texts* of Ps. xxviii. 7, xxxiii. 3, xlii. 8, Heb. “song” is represented by Syr. “glorifying,” as it is generally throughout the Bible.

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noun “glory,” along with this noun, which means both “glorifying” and “song.” By retaining some form of “glory,” we shall keep before our minds two facts important for the guidance of our study of the Odes as a whole: 1st, they are songs, songs of joy and thankfulness, 2nd, they claim, by their title, a likeness of some kind to Solomon’s Song of Songs¹.

¹ [3640 *d*] We must not, however, suppose that our author does not occasionally use the word “Psalm.” It does not indeed occur as a separate heading in H.’s Index, which represents various Syriac words under “Lobgesänge, lobsinggen, preisen, Preis, Ruhm.” But among the very numerous references thus collected (where R.H. sometimes has “psalm”) are the following passages where the Syr. has some form of *zmr* meaning “psalm,” “psalmody” &c. :—

(1) vii. 19—20, 25, 26 And the Most High shall be known...to them that have [in their hearts] *psalms* (R.H. *songs*) that [tell] of the Coming of the Lord, that they may go-forth to meet Him, and may *sing-psalms* (or, *make-psalms*) to Him with joy and with a HARP of many voices.... Those shall *make-psalms* who *make-psalms-about* the grace of the Lord Most High, and they shall bring-as-an-offering their *psalmody* (R.H. *songs*)....

(2) xiv. 7—8 Teach me the *psalms* (so R.H.) of thy truth, that I may bring forth fruit in thee ; and open to me the HARP of thy Holy Spirit that with all sounds-of-melody (3741 *d*) (*Theo.* 3603) I may glorify thee, O Lord.

(3) xvi. 1—2 As the work of the husbandman is the [work of the] plough...so also [is] my work the *psalm* (so R.H., but H. *Lied*, not in Index) of the Lord. In His songs-of-glorifying [consists] my craft, and in His songs-of-glorifying my occupation consists.

(4) xxvi. 1—3, 8 I poured out a song-of-glorifying to the Lord, for I am His, and I will utter the holy *psalm* (R.H. *song*) that is His...for His HARP is in my hands and the *psalms* (R.H. *Odes*) of His rest shall not be silent....Who [is there] that can write the *psalms* (so R.H.) of the Lord, or who [is there] that can read them ?

(5) xxxvi. 2 And it (*i.e.* the Spirit) established me on my feet in the high [place] of the Lord, before His perfection and glorifying while I was glorifying [Him] by the harmonizing (or, composing) of His *psalms* (R.H. *songs*) (3792 *s*).

(6) xl. 5 So my heart gushes forth [with] the song-of-glorifying of the Lord, and my lips bring forth to Him the song-of-glorifying, and my tongue His *psalms* (so R.H.).

[3640 *e*] The reader will notice in some of these passages a mention of “*harp*” (3640 *f*) at no great interval from “psalm.” This harp is “a *harp* of many voices,” or the *harp* of God’s “Holy Spirit,” or “His *harp*.” This last expression reminds us of an expression unique in the Bible,

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§ 2. *The Song of Songs*

[3641] To this second statement some critics may be unwilling to assent. The new poems, they may think, are too beautiful to owe much, if anything, to a source where they, the critics, find no spiritual inspiration. But the question is,

Rev. xv. 2—3 “And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire ; and them that come victorious from the beast,...standing by [the brink of] the glassy sea, having *harps of God*. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb.” This passage suggests the question, “Where did the Seer find any mention of ‘harps’ in connection with the Song of Moses, since Exodus mentions no instruments except (xv. 20) ‘timbrels’ of the women?” The answer is in a Psalm that describes the procession of triumph after the passage of the Red Sea, Ps. lxxviii. 25 “The singers went before, *the minstrels* (lit. *players-on-stringed-instruments*) followed after.” The “minstrels,” said R. Jochanan (*Exod. r.* on Exod. xv. 1, Wü. pp. 178—9) were “*the angels*.” After the passage of the Red Sea they wished to sing a psalm at once, but God gave the Israelites precedence over them (so, too, Rashi on Ps. lxxviii. 25). It will be found that Ode vii. 19—26 is alluding to the Passage of the Red Sea, and is also alluding to that Psalm. But our poet, like the author of Revelation, regards the Song of Moses as merely a preparation for the Song of the Lamb. See 3781 *v* foll.

[3640 *f*] The last of the six passages above quoted is the least easy to explain as giving a distinctive meaning to “psalm”; but even in that there appears a gradation rising from the unpremeditated “song-of-glorifying” that is in the heart, to the “psalm” that is articulated by the “tongue.” In the other passages, there is either a mention of “harp” in the context, or there is something indicating more than the mere spontaneous outflow of a single voice of praise. The Ode (xxxvi. 2) that speaks of this “harmonizing” as being “in the high [place] of the Lord” suggests that the writer may have in mind those celestial harmonies which Revelation connects with “harps” and “harpers.” Only there is this difference. Revelation never mentions *one* harp. Our author does, thereby suggesting that all the melodies and harmonies of single Saints and united congregations are parts of one divine Concord.

It should also be noted that “psalm” is hardly ever mentioned without something in the context to indicate that the subject is of a joyful and not a penitential character ; so that the poem is—as some of the Hebrew titles of the Psalms say—“a psalm, *a song*.” This, in Syriac, would naturally be expressed by “a psalm, *a song-of-glorifying*.”

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not what we in the West find now, but what Jews found eighteen or nineteen centuries ago; and for that, we must go back to one of the noblest and bravest and most venerated among them, Rabbi Akiba. This is what Akiba, who is quoted approvingly by Rashi, said of the Song of Songs:—“There was no day in all the world so glorious as that on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel. For all the sacred scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies¹.” To the same effect, and almost in the same words, writes Origen:—“Whereas we have learned, through Moses, that some things are not only holy but holy of holies, and others not only sabbaths but also sabbaths of sabbaths, so now we are taught, by the writing of Solomon, that some things are not only songs but also songs of songs².”

[3642] No evidence exists that either among Jews or among Christians there was any dissent in the first century from this high estimate of Solomon’s Song. On the contrary, the early Christian doctrine about the Church as being the Bride of Christ, or else as being His body, favours the view that both Paul and the author of Revelation accepted the Song as conveying profound spiritual teaching to which they themselves were indebted. Indeed it could hardly be otherwise. For, being Jews, they could not have rejected the Song as non-scriptural; and, believing it to be scriptural, they could not have accepted it as a mere literalistic love-song³.

¹ See Rashi on Cant. i. 1, quoting *Jadaim*, 75 b.

² Origen *Hom. Cant.* i. 1 (Lomm. xiv. 237).

³ [3642 a] See Pref. p. xlvii foll. on Cant. i. 2 “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth”—taken by Origen (*ad loc.* Lomm. xiv. 240) as meaning that the Bride beseeches the Father of the Bridegroom that the Bridegroom may kiss her not through the lips of Messengers such as Angels or Prophets, but with His own lips (comp. Heb. i. 1). The “kiss,” then, is, in effect, the direct revelation of the Word of God, and so Jewish tradition understands it, though not, of course, in the Christian sense. Philo (*Quaest. Gen.* on Gen. ii. 16—17) says, about “grex,” “chorus,” “gens” &c., “haec enim omnia per multa (? permulta, *i.e.* though very many) sunt una