

BRIAN MCNEIL

## The Odes of Solomon and the Scriptures

The intention of this study is to present evidence that will help to identify the provenance of the Odes of Solomon, the earliest surviving Christian Syriac texts. I shall discuss first, the poet's use of the Old Testament; second, his relationship to the canonical Johannine literature; and third, his knowledge of the logia of Jesus. I shall seek to establish patterns in this poet's relationship to scripture which identify his Christian background, while avoiding making too high claims for any *one* relationship as the definitive clue to the provenance of the hymns.

### I

The odist never quotes from the Old Testament, but in numerous passages his language is highly reminiscent of Old Testament texts, especially from the Psalter. It is not possible to argue that he is aligned especially with any of the versions, MT, LXX, Peshitta, or Targumim, against the others; and it is difficult to discern any consistent pattern in the odist's employment of these scriptural reminiscences, such that we could obtain with any objectivity redaction-critical criteria of his use of sources<sup>1</sup>.

In the majority of these passages, we have to do with stylistic features like *parallelismus membrorum*, the choice of vocabulary, and themes like that of trust in the Lord, which are ultimately derived from the Old Testament. These passages give no useful clue to the provenance of the Odes of Solomon. In some passages, however, the odist is not simply expressing the commonplaces of Jewish and Christian piety, but makes important christological statements in Old Testament language. As with the commonplaces, when we compare his language with the versions, we find no exact quotation. But, unlike the commonplaces, these passages do help to locate the provenance of the Odes.

<sup>1</sup> See discussion by J. Rendel Harris and A. Mingana, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon II* (London, 1920), pp. 110-25. In this article, I cite the Odes in the enumeration of James Hamilton Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (Oxford, 1973); translations are my own.



First, ode xxviii. 14. Here the Saviour speaks of his persecutors :

'And they surrounded me like mad dogs,  
those who in ignorance attack their masters'.

This image is ultimately traceable to Ps. xxii. 16, 'Dogs are round about me; a company of evildoers encircle me'. With Ode xxviii. 14 we must consider xxviii. 18, where the Saviour says,

'And in vain did they cast lots against me'.

Again, this image is ultimately traceable to Ps. xxii. 18, 'They divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots', a verse which may be echoed remotely at Ode xxxi. 9, where the Saviour says,

'And they divided my spoil'.

Christian christological use of this psalm is very early : apart from its use in passion narratives (Matt. xxvii. 35, 39, 43, 46; Mk. xv. 24, 29, 34; Lk. xliii. 34f.; Jn. xix. 24; Gospel of Peter IV 12, V 19), cf. Heb. ii. 12, 1 Clement xvi. 5f., Barnabas v. 13, vi. 6, Justin, I *Apol.* xxxv, xxxviii, *Dial.* xcvi-cvi, Irenaeus, *Dem.* lxxix-lxxx, *Adv. Haer.* IV xx. 8, xxxiii. 12.

Second, Ode xxviii. 9. In this passage, referring to the astonishment which his vindication caused, the Saviour says,

'Those who saw me were amazed,  
because I was persecuted'.

The same thought is expressed at xvii. 6,

'And all who saw me wondered,  
and I seemed to them like a stranger'.

With these two passages, we should compare Isa. lii. 14f., 'As many were astonished at him, his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men — so shall he startle many'. This verse is little used in early Christian literature, but the three texts in which it occurs in second-century literature (Justin, I *Apol.* 1, *Dial.* xiii; Irenaeus, *Dem.* lxviii) quote it in the course of more extensive citation from this Servant Song, which was very frequently employed christologically : cf. Lk. xxii. 37, Acts viii. 32-35, 1 Pet. ii. 22-25, 1 Clement xvi. 3-16, Barnabas v. 2, Melito, *Hom.* iv, vi, viii, lxiv, lxvii, lxix, lxxi, Acts of Peter xxiv, and numerous passages in Justin and Irenaeus<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> I *Apol.* 1-li; *Dial.* xii, xiv, xvii, xxxii, xxxvi, xlii, xliii, xlix, lxiii, lxviii, lxxii, lxxvi, lxxxv, lxxxviii, lxxxix, c, cv, cvii, c, cii, cx, cxi, cxiv, cxviii, cxxi, cxxvi, cxxxvii; *Dem.* lxviii-lxx; *Adv. Haer.* II xxviii. 5, III v. 1, xi. 8, xii. 8, xix. 2, IV xx. 2, xxiii. 2, xxxiii. 1, 11, 12, V xiv. 3).



In these cases, the odist uses language to speak of the sufferings of the Saviour, the ultimate literary sources of which are Old Testament passages frequently used by early Christian writers to speak of the sufferings of Jesus. A third case in which the odist's language is paralleled in early Christian writers is Ode xxxviii. 9, when, in the course of his description of the heretic and his 'bride', he says,

'And the corruptor of the corruptor  
I saw when the bride who is corrupted was adorned,  
and [I saw] the bridegroom who corrupts and [in his turn] is corrupted.  
And I asked Truth, "Who are these?"  
And he said to me, "These are the deceiver and the error,  
and they imitate the Beloved and his bride.  
And they lead the world astray and corrupt it,  
and they invite many to the wedding-feast  
and they give them wine to drink that causes their intoxication"'

(vv. 9-12). The narrative seems to speak of the Saviour, who is the 'corruptor' (مفسد) of the heresiarch, who is himself the 'corruptor' (مفسد) of his bride<sup>3</sup>. Ps. xlv. 10ff. was applied to the Church, considered as the bride of Christ, by several second-century writers: cf. Justin, *Dial.* lxiii, Clement, *Strom.* VI xcii. 1, and the epitaph of Avircius<sup>4</sup>; it is arguable that the odist's use of the words مفسد من مفسدين is ultimately to be traced to the influence of Ps. xlv. 13f. A link with Isa. lxi. 10 is also possible: cf. Hermas, *Vis.* IV ii. 1, and the words of Marcus, *apud* Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I xiii. 3. Here in Ode xxxviii. 9b, the odist's language about the heretical community as 'adorned' in the presence of her husband is precisely similar to the use of Ps. xlv by second-century Christian authors.

To these passages, we should add Ode xvii. 10,

'I shattered the bars of iron',

reminiscent of Ps. cvii. 16, 'For he shatters the doors of bronze, and cuts in two the bars of iron'<sup>5</sup>. It is possible to read Ode xvii either as a description of the harrowing of hell or as an extended metaphor describing the sending of the Saviour to earth from the Father's side to redeem men who are spiritually dead. This is unimportant here, since whatever the odist means

3 I prefer the reading مفسد of MS. H to the مفسد of MS. N at v. 9b. If the false community is a full counterfeit of the true, then we should expect that as the true bridegroom had saved his bride, so the false bridegroom had corrupted his bride — only then may the false bride herself corrupt (cf. v. 11b).

4 See my discussion in 'Avircius and the Song of Songs', *VigChr* xxxi (1977), pp. 23-34.

5 Cf. also Isa. xlv. 2, 'I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut asunder the bars of iron'. At Barnabas xi. 4 this text is taken as a prophecy of baptism.



by this language, it is highly probable that he is drawing on an image associated with the descensus of Jesus. The earliest uses of this image in speaking of the descensus are in the Teaching of Silvanus (CG VII 110,14-22) and Tertullian, *De Resurrectione* xlv. 7. We should note also the suggestion by Robert Murray that when Tatian rendered the πύλαι Ἀδου of Matt. xvi. 18 by ܣܠܥܝ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ (rather than by ܣܠܥܝ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ), 'he intended an allusion to Christ's victory over death, shared in by the Church', in the light of Ps. cvii<sup>6</sup>.

Fifth, Ode xix. 10. Here, speaking of the virgin who gives birth to the Son, the odist writes,

ܣܠܥܝ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ

The obscurity of this line is diminished if we compare it with Ps. xix. 5, where we are told of the sun that 'it comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a strong man runs its course with joy', and note that this verse was regarded by two second-century writers as a prophecy of the Incarnation of Jesus :cf. Justin, *I Apol.* liv, *Dial.* lxiv, lxix, and Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV xxxiii. 13. Gospel of Thomas 104 has the logion found at Mk. ii. 19 and parallels in a form that shows influence from Ps xix. 5. If the suggestion of W. Emery Barnes that we read ܣܠܥܝ instead of ܡܪܝܬܐ in Ode xix. 10 be accepted<sup>7</sup>, we may render this line, 'She brought [him]<sup>8</sup> forth like a strong man by the will [of the Father]'. If it is correct to interpret this verse in the light of an incarnational understanding of Ps. xix, it is interesting to note that whereas for Justin and Irenaeus the bridal-chamber is heaven, for the odist it must be the womb of the virgin herself: this would be the earliest example of such an interpretation of Ps. xix. 5<sup>9</sup>.

6 *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 327.

7 'The Text of the Odes of Solomon', *JThS* xi (1910), pp. 573-75. Both Syriac MSS. read ܡܪܝܬܐ in v. 10a, but the two nouns are so close in sound that the proposed emendation is very slight. Cf. also Ode xv. 1 where the Lord is compared to the sun.

8 The object of the verbs in vv. 10f. is the same as in v. 8a, 'the Son'.

9 The 'bridal-chamber' is frequently found as a symbol of heaven in second-century Christian literature : cf. the exegesis of Matt. xxv. 1-13 in *Epistula Apostolorum* xlv-xlv; the teaching of the Valentinians (*apud* Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I vii. 1, and Clement, *Exc. Theod.* lxiii. 1-lxv. 2); the teaching of the Naassenes (*apud* Hippolytus, *Ref.* V viii. 44); Gospel of Thomas 75 (see W. R. Schoedel, 'Naassene Themes in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas', *VigChr* xiv [1960], pp. 225-34); Gospel of Philip 82, 95; the epitaph of Flavia Sophe (see G. Quispel, 'L'inscription de Flavia Sophe', in : *Mélanges Joseph de Ghellinck, S.J.* I [Gembloux, 1951] pp. 201-14). There is an interesting Jewish parallel at Joseph and Asenath xv. 7, where we are told of Metanoia : τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτὴν ἡτοίμασε νυμφῶνα οὐράνιον (or, take God as subject and refer αὐτὴν to Metanoia). This may indicate that the image is originally Jewish, but in view of the extreme difficulty in dating this work we must consider the possibility that the novelist uses an image that is originally Christian. At Ode xlii. 9, the 'bridal-chamber' is used as a metaphor of Christ's love for those he redeems : against this background, it may perhaps be seen as an example of realised eschatology. The inter-



As with the commonplaces, it may simply be the case that the odist has so 'internalised' the words of the Old Testament that he reproduces them unconsciously in his christological passages. But, when we compare the abundance of parallels in second-century Christian literature, it becomes highly implausible to maintain that there is no connection between these other writers and the odist, who purely fortuitously hits on the same scriptural texts<sup>10</sup>. This need not imply that the odist consciously makes use of the Old Testament texts in the way that Justin or Irenaeus does; but at any rate, some kind of control is operating to select texts. If this control is not the deliberate theological purpose of the odist, it must be the kerygma proclaimed to him and his community: a kerygma which included not only a recital of the events which brought salvation, but also the scriptural texts which those events were believed to have fulfilled, and in the light of which the events were to be interpreted. The evidence presented here suggests that the Odes 'fit' well in the second century; in the next part of this study, I shall attempt to define their date more closely.

## II

A recent article by J. H. Charlesworth and R. A. Culpepper gives twenty-six examples of verbal similarities between the Odes of Solomon and the Johannine literature<sup>11</sup>. Their list is not intended to be exhaustive: as they note, other scholars have suggested the identification of further parallels<sup>12</sup>.

pretation of Ps. xix. 5 as speaking of the birth of Christ from Mary is found, e.g., in the Advent hymn:

*Vergente mundi vespere,  
uti sponsus de thalamo  
egressus honestissima  
Virginis matris clausula.*

We should note also the description of the Church in *Hermas*, *Vis.* IV ii. 1, as κεκοσμημένη ὡς ἐκ νυμφῶνος πορευομένη. The background to this use of the image may be wider than Ps. xix. 5 and include the image of Joel ii, 16 (cf. also 3 Maccabees i. 18f.).

<sup>10</sup> It is possible that other christologically-significant allusions to the Old Testament are present in the Odes. When the Saviour says, 'My fetters (*literally*, my iron) grew hot and melted before me' (xvii. 10b), there may be a remote allusion to the story of Samson: cf. Judg. xv. 14, 'The ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands'. More interesting is a comparison of Ode xlii. 11f. with Isa. xiv. 9. In neither case is there sufficiently early evidence of the christological use of these texts to provide useful parallels to the Odes.

<sup>11</sup> 'The Odes of Solomon and the Gospel of John', *CBQ* (= Catholic biblical quarterly) xxxv (1973), pp. 298-322.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., H. Gressmann, 'Die Oden Salomos', in: E. Hennecke (ed.), *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (Tübingen, <sup>2</sup>1924), pp. 437-72; Edouard Massaux, *Influence de l'évangile de saint Matthieu sur la littérature chrétienne avant saint Irénée* (Universitas Catholica Lovaniensis, 2nd ser. 42, Louvain, 1950), pp. 209-14.



None of these verbal parallels has by itself a probative character : frequently, one may account for the similarity in expression by postulating a shared background. For example, the discussion by Charlesworth and Culpepper of the concept of 'living water' (Odes xii. 2, xxxvi. 7; Jn. iv. 10f., vii. 38) does not take sufficient account of the use of this symbol in the Old Testament which both writers had in common (cf. Jer. ii. 13, xvii. 13, Zech. xiv. 8; note also 1QH VIII,16).

More important is what Charlesworth and Culpepper call 'evidence of a conceptual relationship' between the odist and John. The principal piece of evidence for such a relationship is the concept of the 'Word'.

In the Odes, the nouns **ܠܡܢܐ** and **ܠܡܢܐ** are used interchangeably to signify both the spoken word (**ܠܡܢܐ** at viii. 8, ix. 3, xviii. 4, xxiv. 9, and xlii. 12; **ܠܡܢܐ** at x. 1, xii. 8, xv. 9, and xxix. 9f.) and the hypostatized Word of God. It is clear from the *parallelismus membrorum* of xli. 11 that this Word, 'who was at the first' in 'his Father' (vv. 13f.), is the Saviour :

'And his Word is with us on all our way,  
the Saviour who gives life and does not reject us'.

The ideas in this passage, of the Word who was in the Father **ܡܠܟܐ**, from whom light shone, who is the Saviour who gives life 'by the truth of his name', are highly reminiscent of the ideas in the Johannine Prologue of the Word who was in God  $\epsilon\nu\ \alpha\rho\chi\eta$ , in whom was light that shines in the darkness, and who made those who believed in his name children of God (Jn. i. 1, 4f., 13). A further parallel to the ideas of the Johannine Prologue is Ode xii. 2,

**ܐܡ ܠܡܢܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܐܡ ܠܡܢܐ ܝܠܕ ܠܡܢܐ ܝܠܕ ܠܡܢܐ**  
'For the dwelling-place, of the Word is man (or, is a man),  
and his truth is love'.

This is reminiscent of Jn. i. 14,  $\delta\ \Lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma\ \varsigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\ \epsilon\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron$ ,  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\varsigma\kappa\eta\eta\nu\omega\varsigma\epsilon\nu\ \epsilon\nu\ \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu\ \dots\ \pi\lambda\acute{\eta}\rho\eta\varsigma\ \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ . Neither Ode xli nor Ode xii provides an exact parallel to the language of the Prologue, but the parallel in christological conceptions is very close. Ode xii contains further conceptual parallels to the Johannine Prologue: the odist speaks of the role of the Word in giving light to men (vv. 3, 7), and his role in creation may be signified in v. 10. A third Ode provides a parallel to the Prologue: vii. 7, 'The Father of knowledge is the Word of knowledge', seems to express the same idea as Jn i. 1,  $\theta\epsilon\omicron\delta\ \eta\nu\ \delta\ \Lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ .

The 'Word' of Ode xli is undeniably a word-made-man; similarly, at xxxix. 9, **ܡܠܟܐ** most probably refers to Jesus in his walking on the water. The reference to the 'Word' (**ܠܡܢܐ**) at xxxii. 2 seems best interpreted



as a reference to the Saviour<sup>13</sup>. This is not an especially prominent christological idea in the Odes of Solomon; but it is important in the attempt to determine their provenance, for the only significant parallel to this christological idea is in the Prologue to the fourth gospel<sup>14</sup>.

The second important parallel to Johannine ideas is in Ode 3:

'... and he loves me.

For I should not have known how to love the Lord had he not loved me ...

and where his rest is, there also am I ...

For he who is joined to him who is immortal

shall also become immortal,

and he who delights in the Life

will become living.

This is the Spirit of the Lord without deceit,

who teaches the sons of men to know his ways'

(vv. 2b-3, 5b, 8-10)<sup>15</sup>. Charlesworth and Culpepper note the following Johannine parallels:

to vv 2b-3: 1 Jn. iv. 19'(+ Jn. xiv. 21, 1 Jn. iv. 10, Jn. xv. 16);

to v. 5b: Jn. xiv. 2f., xvii. 24;

to v. 9: Jn. xi. 25 (+ i. 4, v. 26, 40, x. 10, 28, xiv. 6);

to v. 10: Jn. xiv. 17, xv. 26, xiv. 26.

Although it may be argued that the metaphor of the odist is more directly sexual than that of John, and although some of the proposed parallels are rather tenuous, it may be admitted that here we find a cluster of ideas which are found similarly clustered in the Johannine literature. As with the 'Word'-passages in the Odes, we find no passages which could establish that one author is dependent on the other; but we do find a similarity that requires some explanation.

The existence of these parallels may be accounted for in three ways. First, one may argue that the Odes and John are not directly related, but are epiphenomena of the same currents in piety and theology. Second, one may argue that the formulation in the Odes of the shared concepts is less developed than their formulation in John, and hence that the Odes are earlier and are

13 The precise meaning of this verse is unclear, but the Ode as a whole seems to refer to Jesus: with v. 3a cf. x. 4a, and with v. 3b cf. xxxi. 11, both passages *ex ore Christi* which employ the same verbs.

14 The idea of the Word become flesh in a man who is the Saviour is not found earlier than the Prologue to John (I prescind entirely from the questions of whether and to what extent the Prologue as we now have it is the reworking of a Christian or pre-Christian hymn).

15 I should prefer to omit the Seyame points in v. 9a, and so establish a parallel between the Saviour ('the living one', cf. Rev. i. 18, Gospel of Thomas 1) and the believer ('living') like the parallels in vv. 7-8. Here, however, I follow the MS. reading with Charlesworth and Culpepper.



to be understood as an influence on John<sup>16</sup>. Third, one may argue that the Odes are, in a qualified sense, dependent on John: that is to say, that the odist's ideas may ultimately be traced to the Johannine literature, whether we speak of direct knowledge of the text of the gospel or of its conjectured sources, or speak of the diffusion of 'Johannine' patterns of catechesis. Since a number of second-century Christian authors bear the same relationship to the Johannine literature as the odist, and in their cases neither of the first two hypotheses is a plausible statement of the relationship since they are too late to be contemporary or source of John, the third hypothesis seems to me the most probable. The texts in question are the Acts of John, the *Shepherd* of Hermas, the Epistle to Diognetus, the Epistle of Polycarp, and the writings of Justin.

Chs. lxxxix-xc of the Acts of John contain three close parallels to the fourth gospel. In ch. lxxxix, John says of Jesus, ἐμὲ ἐπὶ τὰ ἴδια στήθη ἐδέχεται: cf. Jn xiii. 23, ἣν ἀνακείμενος εἰς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, and xxi. 20, ὃς καὶ ἀνέπεσεν ἐν τῷ δείπνῳ ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ. In ch. xc occur the words, ἐπειδὴ ἐφίλει με: cf. Jn. xx. 2, τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς, and passages in which the verb ἀγαπᾶν is used (xiii. 23, xix. 26, xxi. 7, 20). When Jesus rebuffs John's attempt to discover whether he is truly human (Acts of John xc), he says, Ἰωάννης, μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός καὶ μὴ παρέργος: cf. Jesus' words to Thomas, μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός (Jn. xx. 27). It is difficult to deny the influence of John on this passage of the Acts of John, but the evidence does not permit us to say positively that the author knew the fourth gospel: the first parallel is conceptual rather than verbal, the second uses the rarer verb, and the third (though admittedly in a similar context) has transferred and lengthened Jesus' rebuke to Thomas. The identification of the Beloved Disciple with John goes further than anything explicit in the gospel<sup>17</sup>. The author makes no use anywhere of Johannine theological ideas, and it is arguable that he did not know the gospel, but picked up details about the Beloved Disciple transmitted orally<sup>18</sup>. As with the Odes, we cannot define with precision

16 This is the thesis of Adolf Harnack, *Ein jüdisch-christliches Psalmbuch aus dem ersten Jahrhundert* (TU 35/4, Leipzig, 1910); see also Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (E.T., Oxford, 1971).

17 This identification may be facilitated by Jn. xxi (cf. vv. 2, 7).

18 There is some evidence of such an oral tradition: cf. the references to John's leaning on Jesus' breast and to his wearing priestly vestments in the letter of Polycrates to Victor (*apud* Eusebius, *H.E.* V xxiv. 3), and to John's encountering Cerinthus at the baths (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III iii. 4). At *Quis Dives Salvetur?* 42, Clement says explicitly that he is quoting a story handed down orally. Oral tradition may be the source of the allusions to John's discovery of the unreality of the flesh of Jesus in the *Adumbrationes* of Clement on 1 Jn. i. 1, and of his allusion in the *Hypotyposeis* to the story of the baptism of the apostles (*apud* John Moschus, *Pratum Spirituale* 176 [PG 87,3: 3045]).



the relationship of the author of the Acts of John to the canonical Johannine literature.

Braun has proposed the identification of a number of parallels in *Hermas* to John<sup>19</sup>, the most striking of which come in *Sim.* IX xii. 1 ff. The Shepherd shows Hermas a rock and a gate, which are the Son of God: those who wish to enter the kingdom of God must pass through this gate. ἡ δὲ πύλη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν· αὕτη μία εἰσοδος ἐστι πρὸς τὸν κύριον. ἄλλως οὖν οὐδεὶς εἰσελεύσεται πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰ μὴ διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (v. 6). Apart from the concept of Jesus as πύλη, comparable to that of Jesus as Θύρα (Jn. x. 9; Ignatius, *Philad.* ix. 1), the soteriological concept of the one entrance to the Father (*Sim.* IX xii. 3, 6) is very close to that of Jn. xiv. 6, ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ὁδός... οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα εἰ μὴ δι' ἐμοῦ (cf. also Jn. x. 9). It is not impossible that *Hermas* is directly influenced by the fourth gospel<sup>20</sup>, but again, as in the Odes and the Acts of John, we find a very close conceptual parallel which is not so close verbally as to *imply* literary dependence.

Ode iii. 3,

Δ καὶ οὐκ ᾔδειν πῶς ἀγαπήσω τὸν κύριον  
 'For I should not have known how to love the Lord

had he not loved me',

is strongly reminiscent of 1 Jn. iv. 19, ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν, ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς. The Epistle to Diognetus expresses the same sentiment: ἢ πῶς ἀγαπήσεις τὸν οὕτως προαγαπήσαντά σε; (x. 3). Both the odist and the apologist express the same idea, that since God has taken the initiative in loving and saving man, we respond by loving him. Such an idea may at first sight appear too banal to require us to postulate some relationship between 1 Jn. iv. 19 and the odist and the apologist: but in fact the formulation of this idea at 1 Jn. iv. 19 is without precise parallel elsewhere. The closest to it are passages that speak of mutual love, Cant. ii. 16a, vi. 3a, and Prov. viii. 17; but there is no evidence of the paraenetic use of these texts earlier than Clement of Alexandria (cf. *Strom.* II lxiii. 2, quoting Prov.

19 F.-M. Braun, *Jean le Théologien et son Évangile dans l'Église Ancienne* (Paris, 1959), pp. 160-70. Pp. 69-296 of this book present the fullest discussion of second-century use of John. This study is in part a reaction against J. N. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1943), but Braun is aware of the danger of placing too much weight on tenuous evidence (see, e.g., his remarks on p. 173).

20 There is no reason to doubt the statement of the Muratorian Canon that the *Shepherd* was written at Rome in the pontificate of Pius (i.e., in the 140's); I prescind here from discussion of the suggestion by S. Giet, *Hermas et les Pasteurs* (Paris, 1963), of a process of redaction which has incorporated originally separate works into the book as we now have it. A Roman provenance does not imply theological isolation: cf., e.g., Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (E.T., London, 1964), pp. 36-39; nor need a Roman provenance at such an early date imply ignorance of John: cf. Braun, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-80.



viii. 17, and his allusion to Cant. ii. 9 in *Paed.* I v). Here again, therefore, we find a Christian writer of the second century displaying the same sort of relationship to John as the odist, employing a concept that is distinctively Johannine but not employing Johannine vocabulary. It is quite possible that all three authors depend on a lost written source, or that this idea was widely diffused as a moral axiom; but in the present state of knowledge, the best explanation of this parallel seems to me that the odist and the apologist depend ultimately on 1 John.

In his epistle to the Philippians, Polycarp warns them against docetism: *πᾶς γὰρ ὃς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι, ἀντιχριστός ἐστιν· καὶ ὃς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν* (vii. 1). This passage is reminiscent of two Johannine texts, 1 Jn. iv. 2, *πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἐστίν· καὶ τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ τοῦ ἀντίχριστου*, and 2 Jn. 7, *πολλοὶ πλάνοι ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος*. Again, we have no direct quotation. Two points must be made about Polycarp's knowledge of the New Testament, before we can judge whether this passage is significantly parallel to the others that have been briefly discussed. First, Polycarp clearly possesses written versions of New Testament writings. The closeness of his allusions varies; but he alludes to written letters at *Phil.* iii. 2 and xi. 3, thus making it improbable that the same sort of oral diffusion of patterns of catechesis based on Paul or 1 Peter can be invoked to explain the parallels to those writers as can be invoked to explain the parallels to the Johannine literature in early second-century authors. Second, Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III iii. 4, and his letters to Florinus and to Victor, *apud* Eusebius, *H.E.* V xx. 4ff., xxiv. 14ff.), and while the attribution to the Apostle of the gospel and epistles is at the least highly doubtful<sup>21</sup>, the possibility cannot be excluded that John and his circle were in some way connected with these writings and hence that Polycarp may have known them directly. However, Polycarp nowhere quotes from the fourth gospel<sup>22</sup>, and the balance of the evidence

21 This attribution is first found in Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III i. 1, and in the Muratorian Canon. A brief survey of the modern discussion is given by Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I* (London, 1971), pp. LXXXVII-CIV.

22 It has been suggested, both by Sanders (*op. cit.*, p. 14) and by Braun (*op. cit.*, pp. 284-85), that *Phil.* v. 2 alludes to Jn. v. 21, 25, vi. 44; Braun sees further allusions, at *Phil.* i. 2 and xii. 3 to Jn. xv. 5, and at *Phil.* ii. 2 to Jn. xiv. 21, 31, xv. 10. He admits, however, that the evidence of literary dependence is insufficiently strong (*op. cit.*, p. 285). In my judgment, these proposed parallels are less significant for this discussion than is the consideration of *Phil.* vii. 1.



does not seem to me to rule out the possibility that *Phil.* vii. 1 bears the same sort of indirect relationship to the epistles of John as the other texts considered here bear to the canonical Johannine literature.

Fifth, the writings of Justin display a number of interesting parallels to John. At *I Apol.* xxxii, discussing Gen. xlix. 10, he writes, ἡ δὲ πρώτη δύναμις μετὰ τὸν πατέρα πάντων καὶ δεσπότην θεὸν καὶ υἱὸς ὁ λόγος ἐστίν· ὃς τίνα τρόπον σαρκοποιηθεὶς ἄνθρωπος γέγονεν: cf. the Johannine Prologue, especially v. 14. A similar resemblance to the language of the Prologue is found at *Dial.* lxiii: ὡς τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρωπίου σπέρματος γεγεννημένου ἀλλ' ἐκ θελήματος θεοῦ. Cf. Jn. i. 13, οἱ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν. In neither passage does Justin use precisely the language of the Prologue, but he is undoubtedly using the same christological vocabulary<sup>23</sup>. In two passages, he refers to logia of Jesus that are found only in John: at *Dial.* xci, to the lifting-up of the serpent as figure of the cross (cf. Jn. iii. 14f.), and at *I Apol.* lxi: καὶ γὰρ ὁ χριστὸς εἶπεν· "Ὁ μὴ ἀναγεννηθῆτε, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃτε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν. ὅτι δὲ καὶ ἀδύνατον εἰς τὰς μήτρας τῶν τεκουσῶν τοὺς ἅπαξ γεννωμένους ἐμβῆναι, φανερόν πᾶσιν ἐστί. This is conceptually, though not verbally, extremely close to the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus: Ἀμην ἀμην λέγω σοι· ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. λέγει πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ Νικόδημος· πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος γεννηθῆναι, γέρων ὢν; μὴ δύναται εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ δευτέρον εἰσελθεῖν καὶ γεννηθῆναι; (Jn. iii. 3f.). The closeness of these parallels to Jn. i and Jn. iii is striking, but again, the evidence does not necessarily imply that Justin knew the text of the fourth gospel as we have it. It remains possible that Justin's relationship to the fourth gospel is at one remove distant from direct literary dependence: as with the other four authors, we may plausibly attribute the parallels to an orally-diffused catechesis. One other parallel reinforces the need for caution: at *Dial.* lxxxviii, Justin quotes John the Baptist's denial that he is the Christ: Οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ Χριστός, ἀλλὰ φωνὴ βοῶντος. We may compare Jn. i. 20, 23. This passage, however, cannot simply be attributed (at whatever level of knowledge) to the influence of the fourth gospel: we have the extra-canonical tradition of the fire kindled

23 No Greek manuscript has a singular verb in Jn. i. 13. Irenaeus may have known a text with a singular verb (cf. *Adv. Haer.* III xvi. 2, xix. 2, V i. 3), but since he does not claim to be quoting the scriptures in these three passages, it is perhaps more likely that he has deliberately altered the Johannine text for christological purposes. Similarly, if we judge it probable that Justin knew the text of John, we must leave open the question of which verb he read. On the importance of the concept of the *logos* for Justin, see most recently Eric Francis Osborn, *Justin Martyr* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 47, Tübingen, 1973).



in the Jordan, a quotation from Ps. ii. 7, and a reminiscence in the Baptist's speech of Matt. iii. 11 (and Mk. i. 7, Lk. iii. 16). The influence of oral traditions about Jesus cannot be ruled out.

It is, of course, very difficult to discern from these five authors (and the Odes) what patterns an orally-diffused catechesis of 'Johannine' type may have taken; to some extent, we might account for the divergences from the fourth gospel by speaking of 'floating' logia which have found their way in variant forms both into the gospel and into these writings<sup>24</sup>. Where, however, it is in terms of theological concepts rather than in terms of dominical logia that these mid-second-century authors come very close to the Johannine literature, without coming so close verbally that we are obliged to speak of dependence, the possibility of the existence of such types of catechesis must be acknowledged. The simplest account of the relationship of the odist to John is to say that his work is best understood in the same light as that of the author of the Acts of John, of Hermas, of the author of the Epistle to Diognetus, of Polycarp, and of Justin. The question of precisely what channel(s) transmitted these ideas to the odist must be left open: the evidence would permit us to conclude either that the Odes bear the marks of a relationship ultimately with the documents as we now have them, or with the written sources incorporated by processes of redaction into the finished Johannine texts we have. Granted, therefore, that we cannot answer all the questions my analysis prompts, I suggest that it is only in the framework of this understanding of the relationship between the Odes and John that the significance of individual parallels the existence of which has been proposed by scholars may be assessed.

One formal parallel between the Odes of Solomon and the fourth gospel should be discussed briefly: that between the discourses *ex ore Christi* in the Odes and the first-person discourses of Jesus in John. No consensus exists among scholars about the sources of these discourses, and I prescind here from this question; it suffices to say that there is general agreement that in these discourses we do not have the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. In what sense may it be claimed that these are a precedent for the passages *ex ore Christi* in the Odes?

24 A parallel would be logia which are found both in the synoptic gospels and in John (cf. Jn. xiii. 16 and Matt. x. 24, Lk. vi. 40; Jn. xiii. 20 and Matt. x. 40), or both in the synoptic gospels and in the Gospel of Thomas (this seems to me better explained by 'floating' traditions than by direct use of the gospels by the redactor of Thomas). P. Egerton 2 may provide some evidence for the 'floating' of logia found in John, but the precise relationship of this text to the canonical gospels is difficult to determine: see G. Mayeda, *Das Leben-Jesu Fragment: Papyrus Egerton 2 und seine Stellung in der christlichen Literaturgeschichte* (Berne, 1946). The occurrence of such 'floating' logia implies no literary connection between the texts which quote them.



This would be a significant piece of evidence of Johannine influence; to establish the claim, however, it would be necessary to show that when the odist composed his discourses he was aware of the Johannine parallel<sup>25</sup>. It has been argued here that we do not have sufficient evidence to permit us to say that the odist did know John. Besides this, we have second-century parallels to his discourses *ex ore Christi* in a liturgical context. The climax of the *Homily* of Melito of Sardis (chs. cii-ciii) is a first-person passage which begins, ἐγώ, φησὶν, ὁ Χριστός, ἐγὼ ὁ καταλύσας τὸν Θάνατον ... We may compare also the Hymn of the Pearl. I prescind here from any discussion of the provenance of this highly obscure poem: I simply note that it is formally parallel to the discourses *ex ore Christi* in the Odes, in that it is an account in the first person singular by a figure who descends and ascends; its poetic form suggests some kind of liturgical context. Other discourses *ex ore Christi* in second-century writings (e.g., in the Acts of John, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the *Shepherd* of Hermas, or the Apocryphal Letter of James) are not delivered in a liturgical context, and so are not formally parallel to the passages in the Odes: nevertheless, they form part of the background against which such passages as Odes xxviii and xlii could be composed and used in the liturgy. We need not look directly to the model of the fourth gospel to explain this.

### III

The passage in the Odes which is closest to a passage in the synoptic gospels is xxii. 11f.<sup>26</sup>,

'Without corruption was thy way and thy face :  
 thou hast brought thy world to corruption,  
 that everything might be dissolved and renewed,  
 and that the foundation of everything might be thy rock :  
 and upon it thou hast built thy kingdom,  
 and it became the dwelling-place of the saints'.

25 It would not be necessary to show that he was aware that the Johannine discourses were not the *ipsissima verba Jesu*: his discourses might be modelled on them taken as genuine words of the Lord.

26 The passage presents slight ambiguities. It seems better to take the verb of v. 12a as governed by the Dalath which governs the two verbs in v. 11c, and so as part of the same purpose-clause. In v. 12c, the second person singular verb of MS. H seems to fit the context of vv. 11f. less well than MS. N's third person feminine singular, which makes the 'rock' the dwelling-place of the saints. The Coptic reads 'thy light' in v. 12a: there is no reason to prefer this reading to the Syriac of both MSS.



Several commentators have seen in this an allusion to Matt. xvi. 18, 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my church'<sup>27</sup>. The parallels between the two are undeniably striking: we have the same verb ('build'), and the same basic metaphor ('rock'), and if we extend the Matthaean text to v. 19, we find the same idea ('kingdom') as in Ode xxii. 12b. The authenticity and the interpretation of Matt. xvi. 18f. are much disputed<sup>28</sup>; but the general meaning of the text as it stands in Matthew is sufficiently clear to permit us to compare the two passages. The 'rock' of Matthew xvi. 18 on which the church is built is either Peter or his faith that Jesus is the Messiah. It is not clear what the 'rock' of Ode xxii. 12 signifies. Nothing in the context positively favours the interpretation of the 'rock' as a metaphor for the faith of the community, or for the leader of the community, and it makes better sense in context to take it as an evocation of solidity, like the 'rock' on which the odist is established at xi. 5 (cf., e.g., Ps. lxi. 2), and not try to identify a more precise signification<sup>29</sup>.

A second difference between Ode xxii and Matt. xvi is that in Matthew the church is built upon the rock, while in Ode xxii it is the kingdom that is built upon the rock. This may be due to a wholly realised eschatology, but since the odist nowhere else uses the concept of the kingdom to speak of his community (cf. xviii. 3, xxiii. 12), there are insufficient grounds for suggesting that here he has consciously altered a traditional logion. The initial plausibility of the suggestion that the odist does allude here to Matt. xvi. 18 seems to me to be weakened by these considerations; while we cannot rule out the possibility that the ~~word~~ of Ode xxii. 12a is meant to make us think of the Cephas of the gospel story, I would conclude that there is no weighty reason to suppose it to mean anything more than the ~~name~~ of xi. 5.

In a few passages, the details given by the poet of the Saviour's career are found in other writers. At xix. 9, we are told that the virgin 'did not require a midwife'. This tradition is found also at Ascension of Isaiah xi. 7-14, Protevangelium of James xix. 1-3, and Acts of Peter xxiv<sup>30</sup>. At Ode xxxi. 10, the Saviour says, 'I endured and held my peace and was silent, that I might

27 E.g., J. Rendel Harris in the *editio princeps*, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon* (Cambridge, 1909), *ad loc.*; Massaux, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

28 A brief survey of the problems, which are too complex to be discussed here, is presented by Raymond E. Brown *et al.* (eds.), *Peter in the New Testament* (London, 1974), pp. 83-101.

29 Cf. the use of the same metaphor at IQH VI,22-29. Again, there is ambiguity in the context: is the Teacher himself the 'rock', or does he say no more than that the foundations of his community are solidly established by God as on a rock? On the relationship of this passage to the concept at Matt. xvi. 18, see Otto Betz, 'Felsenmann und Felsengemeinde', *ZNW* xlviii (1957), pp. 44-77.

30 Dr J. C. O'Neill has suggested to me that this 'tradition' is created on the basis of Isa. lxvi. 7, 'Before she was in labour she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she was delivered of a son'.



not be disturbed by them'. At Gospel of Peter IV 11, we are told of Jesus that 'he was silent, like one who feels no pain'; cf. also Orac. Sib. VIII 292f., where we are told of Jesus that he kept silence during his passion lest his persecutors should discover his true origin. At least to some extent, we are dealing here with floating traditions: there is no reason to suggest that the odist depends on these other writers. It has been suggested that the details of the allusion to the baptism in Ode xxiv. 1-3 may be traced to a gospel other than the canonical four<sup>31</sup>. While this cannot be ruled out, I should prefer to attribute the parallels to the use of common traditions.

In one passage, the language of the odist is reminiscent of a logion of Jesus found in a number of second-century texts. With Ode xxxiv. 4,

'The likeness of that which is below  
is that which is above',

may be compared 2 Clement xii. 2, Gospel of Thomas 22, Gospel of the Egyptians (*apud* Clement, *Strom.* III xci), Gospel of Philip 69, and Acts of Peter xxxviii<sup>32</sup>. The fullest versions of this agraphon are those in the Gospel of Thomas and the Acts of Peter. The former reads<sup>33</sup>,

'Jesus said to them, "When (ὅταν) you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below, and so (ἵνα) make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female (not) be female, when (ὅταν) you make eyes in the place of an eye, and a hand in the place of a hand, and a foot in the place of a foot, an image (εἰκὼν) in the place of an image (εἰκὼν), then (τότε) you shall enter [the kingdom]"'.

In the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of the Egyptians, this logion is a powerful statement of sexual encratism: the division of mankind into male and female must be removed before the kingdom can come<sup>34</sup>. This inter-

31 This was first suggested by Harris, *editio princeps*, pp. 124-25; see also Hugo Duensing, 'Zur vierundzwanzigsten der Oden Salomos', *ZNW* xii (1911), pp. 86-87, and James H. Charlesworth, 'Tatian's Dependence upon Apocryphal Traditions', *Heythrop Journal* xv (1974), pp. 5-17; Stephen Gero, 'The Spirit as a Dove at the Baptism of Jesus', *Novum Testamentum* xviii (1976), pp. 17-35.

32 Later forms of this agraphon are found in Acts of Thomas 147 and Acts of Philip 140; see also Aelred Baker, 'The "Gospel of Thomas" and the Syriac "Liber Graduum"', *NTS* (= New Testament studies) xii (1965-66), pp. 49-55.

33 Cf. the form in the Gospel of the Egyptians: 'When Salome asked when what she enquired about would be known, the Lord said, "When you have trampled on the garment of shame and when the two become one and the male with the female neither male nor female"'. Cf. also Gospel of Thomas 37.

34 On the encratism of the Gospel of Thomas, see H.C. Kee, "'Becoming a Child" in the



pretation of the logion is rejected by Clement of Alexandria, who does not reject the logion itself (though cautioning that it is not handed down in the four Gospels), but says that those who take it to speak of human sexuality have failed to see that when the Lord speaks of 'male and female' he is speaking of wrath and lust: nevertheless, his association of the female with 'lust' is itself an indication of how firmly-rooted the sexual interpretation of this logion was. A more thorough-going edulcoration is found in 2 Clement xii. 2-6: the  $\xi\xi\omega$  and the  $\xi\sigma\omega$ , which the authors of the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of the Egyptians take to mean the sexual organs, are 'spiritualised' to mean the body and the soul, which must be made one by abolishing hypocrisy. The encratism of the logion is not altogether removed, however.

There is no encratism in the version of the agraphon found in Acts of Peter xxxviii. Peter, on the cross, speaks of Adam's fall and the restitution in Christ:

'The first man, whose race I bear in my appearance ... established all this dispensation ... in which he showed the things of the right as left and the things of the left as right, and changed all the marks of their nature, so that men would take what was not good to be good, and what was in reality evil to be good. Concerning this, the Lord said in a mystery, "Unless you make the right as the left and the left as the right, and the upper as the lower, and that which is behind as that which is in front, you shall not know the kingdom".'

Peter here speaks of the radical remaking of man and the world accomplished in Christ<sup>35</sup>. The language here is not encratite; but given that we have in this passage a different analysis of anthropology and soteriology from that in the Gospel of Thomas, we have a picture of a transformation no less complete. For this author, the fall is the birth of Adam head-downwards; which establishes a mirror-world in which nothing is what it seems to be. The redemption is the setting-upright in the cross of Christ of this upside-down world, so that things can be seen to be what they are in truth.

Gospel of Thomas', *Journal of Biblical Literature* lxxxii (1963), pp. 307-14. Gospel of Philip 69 is extremely obscure, because lacunae in the MS. make the sense of the whole impossible to follow. It is not possible to say anything with confidence about how those whom the author refutes here took the agraphon; in the context of his own theology, it is highly probable that he interpreted it in an encratite sense.

<sup>35</sup> See Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Birth Upside Down or Right Side Up?', *History of Religions* ix (1969-70), pp. 281-303. It is probable that Peter speaks here in some sense with the voice of Christ, so that he can say that in his own being crucified upside-down, the fall of Adam is reversed: as in the Acts of Thomas, characteristics properly belonging to the redeemer can be attributed to the apostle (see Rudolf Bultmann, 'Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums', *ZNW* xxiv [1925], pp. 100-46).



Underlying both theologies is the idea of Christ as second Adam. Each uses the agraphon of Jesus to make its point.

Of these five variants of the agraphon, three speak of making the upper as the lower: the forms in the Gospel of Thomas, the Acts of Peter, and the Gospel of Philip. This detail is found also in Acts of Philip 140, but in dependence on the Acts of Peter. It is difficult to determine whether these words form part of the original agraphon: it may be that the shorter form attested in 2 Clement and the Gospel of the Egyptians is closer to the original form<sup>36</sup>. The original meaning of the agraphon concerns the abolition of sexuality as a precondition of entry into the kingdom, but this meaning could be toned down, as in 2 Clement and by Clement of Alexandria, or simply ignored, as in the Acts of Peter.

What, then, of Ode xxxiv. 4? There is no hint in this Ode of sexual encratism: the tone is set in v. 1a,

'There is not a hard way where there is a simple heart', and is continued to v. 6:

'Grace has been revealed for your salvation.  
Believe and live and be saved'.

V. 4 is set in the description of the man of 'simple heart', who is contrasted with those who lack knowledge:

'Where the good man is surrounded on every side,  
there is nothing divided in him.  
The likeness of that which is below  
is that which is above.  
For everything is above,  
and there is nothing below;  
but it is supposed to be so by those in whom there is no knowledge'

(vv. 3-5). The words **לֵב חֹסֵד וְפָלִי** (v. 3b) seem an indication of a genuine link with the agraphon, which spoke of making the two one in the removal of sexual differentiation. Here, the odist speaks of a single-mindedness which will not be distracted from that which is above, i.e., the things of God who surrounds the odist<sup>37</sup>, by that which is below, i.e., earthly things which have no real significance. The true significance is not to be found in the world, as the ignorant think (v. 5c), but in the revelation of grace (v. 6). There is no sign here that the odist is writing polemically

36 The most recent discussion of this is by Karl Paul Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity* (Suppl. to *Novum Testamentum* 38, Leiden, 1974), pp. 75-77, 152-54. If his dating in the first century is correct, 2 Clement xii. 2 is the earliest attestation of this logion.

37 The passive in v. 3a is a so-called 'divine passive'; cf. Ps. cxxv. 2.



against a false interpretation of the words of the Saviour, as were the authors of 2 Clement and the Gospel of Philip, and Clement of Alexandria; the contrast is simply between 'the enlightened thought' (v. 2) and 'those in whom there is no knowledge'.

The link between the language of Ode xxxiv and the agraphon of Jesus was first suggested by W. C. van Unnik, who interpreted the contrast between the things below and the things above in the light of Platonism<sup>38</sup>. It seems to me preferable to make the link in the light of the pervasive second-century Christian concern for oneness<sup>39</sup>. If the suggestion is correct, we may note that the reminiscence of the agraphon functions in the same way as the reminiscences of christologically-significant Old Testament passages discussed in part I of this study. These reminiscences are so worked into the texture of the Odes that they do not interrupt the poems in any way. Talk of the sufferings of the Saviour suggests certain Old Testament passages, and talk of single-mindedness suggests the words about the necessity of overcoming the division in man. This reminiscence is unparalleled elsewhere in the Odes, and this isolation suggests some caution in identifying the source of the image in xxxiv. 4 as the agraphon of Jesus. Yet the parallel language of second-century writers who do use this agraphon, and in particular the parallel of 2 Clement xii where it is made the basis of paraenesis, seem to me to lend weight to van Unnik's suggestion.

There is, therefore, some evidence that the odist knows extra-canonical traditions about Jesus, and it is possible that unparalleled details such as those in Odes xxiv and xlii are similarly derived<sup>40</sup>. It is more likely, however, that these details, like the meditations in Odes x, xvii, xxv, xxviii, xxxi, and xxxv (if this is written *ex ore Christi*), are the creation of the poet himself as he reflects on the basic kerygmatic account of the career of the Saviour.

The Odes of Solomon offer us no internal clues to their provenance; failing new discoveries, the only method of identifying the period of their origin is to demonstrate the clustering of significant parallels to the technique or language of the poet. The results of this study may be summed up as follows: the Odes of Solomon bear the same relationship to the canonical Johannine literature as five writers from the first half of the second century, showing influence in terms of theological concepts but not in terms of

38 'A Note on Ode of Solomon XXXIV,4', *JThS* xxxvii (1936), pp. 172-75.

39 See my 'Le Christ en vérité est Un', *Irénikon* li (1978), pp. 198-202.

40 It is possible that the obscurity of Ode xxviii. 16, 'But I was carrying water in my right hand', may be lessened by a comparison with Epistula Apostolorum 27, in which Jesus seems to say that he descended into Sheol to baptise the dead with the water of his right hand (the text is obscure, with variants, but cf. the later Testament of the Lord in Galilee, *PO IX* pp. 209f.); cf. also the reference in Hermas, *Sim.* IX vi. 1-7, to the descent of the apostles to baptise the dead in Sheol.



literary dependence. Further, the pattern of the poet's christological use of the Old Testament resembles the use made by second-century writers; and there is evidence of his acquaintance with extra-canonical traditions about Jesus. The first half of the second century is too dimly-lit for us to pin down with precision the provenance of the Odes within it; I conclude with the more modest hope that my discussion has shown that this is nevertheless the period within which their provenance is to be located.