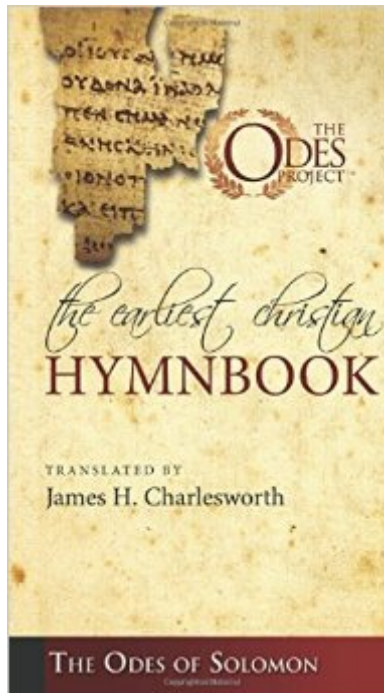


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# The Earliest Christian Hymnbook: The Odes Of Solomon



## Synopsis

Description: That the earliest followers of Jesus wrote poetry, hymns, and odes is evident already in the New Testament. This volume is a translation of *The Odes of Solomon*, a collection of early Christian hymns or odes; some are obviously Christian, others perhaps Jewish. The beauty of these poems is a tribute to the depth of spirituality in early communities of Christians, some of whom were perhaps also Jews or converted Jews. Professor Charlesworth offers an inviting introduction and a translation of this work that is both engaging and true to the original languages. The Index of Ancient Sources provides the reader access to the wide range of references in the notes.

Endorsements: "Eminent scholar James Charlesworth has provided a stunning translation of the poetic second-century Odes of Solomon. Some readers will delight in its female imagery for God; my favorite image is of our Lord as a wreathed crown on our head. The attractively designed publication is fine for scholars, wonderful for believers." --Gail Ramshaw Past President of the North American Academy of Liturgy. Author of *Treasures Old and New*, *Between Sundays*, and *God beyond Gender*. About the Contributor(s): James H. Charlesworth is George L. Collord Professor of New Testament Language and Literature and Director and Editor of the PTS Dead Sea Scrolls Project. He is author of numerous works, including *The Historical Jesus*, *Resurrection*, *Authentic Apocrypha*, and *Jesus within Judaism*. And his many edited volumes include *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.), *Jesus and Hillel*, and *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A cup of milk was offered to me, And I drank it in the sweetness of the Lord's kindness. The Son is the cup, And the Father is He who was milked; And the Holy Spirit is She who milked Him; Because His breasts were full, And it was undesirable that His milk should be ineffectually released. The Holy Spirit opened Her bosom, And mixed the milk of the two breasts of the Father. These are the first four verses of Ode 19. Sound shocking? Well, they were written in a first-century Palestinian Christian community made up primarily of converted Jews who spoke Aramaic, Jesus' own mother tongue. I have just finished the coursework for my Ph.D. in Syriac, and I can vouch for the accuracy of the above translation. So if it sounds weird beyond belief, keep in mind that these people lived in the same area where Jesus walked and taught, and they spoke his language. Some of the older members of the group may have heard Jesus himself. Very likely some of the members were the children and grandchildren of people who had personally heard and seen Jesus. What is a Christian to make of such strange-sounding words? Fortunately, James Charlesworth has prepared a first-class edition of the original texts (mostly in Syriac, with lacunae filled in from Coptic and Greek manuscripts). He has done a very understandable, accurate translation of the texts and he has added a wealth of notes that help explain some of the striking imagery such as that in the lines quoted above. (As a brief clue, "milk" was often used to represent "the Word," as in 1 Cor 3:1-2.) This book has detailed technical discussions of the manuscripts and the interpretive issues. It has untranslated quotes in Greek, Latin, French and other languages. It assumes the reader can handle the Syriac, Coptic and Greek alphabets. But even without all this technical knowledge, the general reader can benefit from the translation and the explanatory notes. So if you are ready for a trip into the deep, unimagined past of early Christianity, dive in! P.S. It is good to see an affordable reprint of this book, which has too long been out of print!

I appreciated having a recent English translation of this Early Church work - which as the title indicates is basically the Psalms / Hymns of the Early Church. A good insight not only into early worship of the Church but also into theological thoughts at that time. Admittedly some of the Odes are probably Jewish rather than Christian, that they were used as a collection shows at least that the Christian community at that stage was still "borrowing" from Judaism. These are easy to read, and whilst not of the same calibre as the Biblical Psalms, they are still quite beautiful and worth getting to know :)

Really love these poems, reflects the Hebrew roots of the faith and the true wisdom of the scriptures. One poem even prophetically mocks the modern day Christianity, clearly the modern version has

nothing to do with how the hebrews did things in the first century and what they taught the Gentiles. It also sheds some light on what some of the information the Messiah passed around was in detail. He must have directly told them in detail that there would come a knock off that would fool the entire world, the loosely translated ambiguous lines in the modern bible clearly wasn't enough of a clear warning. Wouldn't be surprised if those records were hidden away that made the picture clearer. The Dead Sea scrolls also have a few lines exposing the modern religion. The modern version of Christianity is a gentile spin.

The Odes of Solomon are beautiful--but, buyer beware! This book contains 134 pages, including the index--and they are very small pages, with lots of white space. It's deliberately padded with many pages each of which contain only a single, handwritten line of verse. (I guess they look kind of nice, but, I mean, big deal.) It's quite a pricey book, given how little it really contains. The introduction has some useful material, especially the table of which odes Charlesworth considers to be Jewish, Christian, or Gnostic in character. Unfortunately, there's not much of this useful material either. The introduction is brief, and a lot of it is more like a sermon than a piece of scholarship. Notes within the odes are minimal. A MUCH better buy is *The Gnostic Bible: Revised and Expanded Edition* by Willis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer. For about the same price, you get a comprehensive selection of Gnostic material. The Songs of Solomon, a.k.a. Odes of Solomon, take up 30 out of 860 pages! Also, the translation there is much nicer. Meyer and Barnstone are MARVELOUS translators. Charlesworth isn't bad, but he doesn't compare.

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