

THE ODES OF SOLOMON.

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AS the acquisition by the Rylands Library of an almost complete manuscript of the Odes of Solomon is one of the most important events in the recent history of the institution, it may be worth while to give a brief statement, by which the readers of the Bulletin may form an idea of the value of the document which has been annexed.

The book in question is a small volume, not many centuries old, damaged by time and perhaps by exposure to water, with two or three pages missing at the beginning and the end, and not a single headline to indicate the contents of the book. It is written in the Syriac language, and it had been lying with a heap of other stray leaves of manuscripts on the shelves of my library, without awakening any suspicion that it contained a lost hymn-book of the Early Church, of the Apostolic times, or, at the very latest, of the sub-Apostolic times, that is to say, a document contemporary, or almost so, with the New Testament itself. The statement is so surprising, and the recovery of such a book so altogether unlikely and unexpected, that it has taken a good deal of time for Christian students to make themselves familiar with their enrichment, and there is still a certain amount of incredulity and suspicion with regard to the new visitor, just as there was, for example, when the Teaching of the Apostles was published, with its unexpected illumination of some of the most difficult transitions in the organisation and belief of the early Christian churches. There can, however, be no doubt that the volume in question is the very book which is known in catalogues of early ecclesiastical literature as the Odes of Solomon, for it can be identified by actual quotations made from it by writers of the third century

and the early part of the fourth century, after which time it appears to have gone out of use, except that there are a few later traces of it in the Syrian Church. And what a lovely book it is ! utterly radiant with faith, hope and love ! shot through and through with what the New Testament calls the Joy of the Lord.

It was a wise thought on the part of the authorities of the John Rylands Library to signalise the acquisition of the book by the production of a standard edition, in which the text should be facsimiled, transcribed, translated, and commented on, with due reference to the multitude of editions and commentaries which have already appeared, not only in Germany, but in almost all leading European countries, and in the United States. The prospect of producing such an edition for the John Rylands Library is very grateful to me, and I shall do my best to discharge worthily the task which has been committed to me. Not that I have any idea (in fact I never had) of saying the last word about the book : the more I read it, the more I become sensible of the part which a whole generation of scholars will have to play in its elucidation, and of the time that will be required to settle the problems that it provokes. In order to refresh the memories and stimulate the appetites of the Rylands students, we have attached to this notice a facsimile page, and have given the sense of it, not necessarily in a final form, but as nearly as may answer the purpose of any one who approaches the subject for the first time. If we can better it in the standard edition, we shall certainly do so.

ODE 38.

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and the sufferings which are thought to be the terror of death : and I saw the corrupter in his corruption, and the bride who is corrupted and the bridegroom who corrupts and is corrupted, "both of them" adorned. And I asked the Truth, Who are these ? and he said to me, They are the deceiver and the deception ; and they are like to a lover and his bride ; and they lead astray and corrupt the whole world : and they invite many to the banquet, and give them to drink of the wine of their intoxication, and they vomit up their wisdom and knowledge, and so they make them without intelligence : and they leave them ; and then these go about madly corrupting : being without heart, and not wishing to have it.

But as for me, I was made wise so as not to fall into the hands of the Deceiver ; and I congratulated myself because the Truth was accompanying me, and I was established and saved and redeemed, and my foundations were laid on the hand of the Lord, because He had established me. For He set the root and watered it and fixed it and blessed it : and its fruits will be for ever. It struck deep and sprung up and spread out, and was full and enlarged ; and the Lord alone was glorified in His planting and in His husbandry ; by His care and by the blessing of His lips, by the beautiful planting of His right hand ; and by the glory of His planting, and by the thought of His mind.

Hallelujah.

ODE 39.

Great rivers are the power of the Lord : so that they carry away
headlong those who despise Him. * * * * *