

The headings of the Psalms in the two Syriac versions of the commentary of Athanasius¹

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ABSTRACT

There are two Syriac versions of the commentary of Athanasius on the Psalms, a longer and a shorter one. This study deals with the headings of the Psalms in the two Syriac versions, in comparison with the headings in the original Greek commentary and in the Syro-Hexapla. The summaries at the beginning of the different Psalms are related in a linear fashion. The shorter commentary depends on the longer one and the longer one on a Greek original. The headings in the Greek commentary are those of the Septuagint, with a few variants. Most of these variants agree with variants given in the edition of Rahlfs. The Syriac headings of the shorter commentary are usually in agreement with that of the Syro-Hexapla. Many of the differences between the longer commentary on the one hand and the other two are related to the fact that the longer commentary ascribes all twenty-eight Psalms discussed in this article to David. The headings in the longer commentary are not just translations from a Greek original, but are the work of the translator.

A INTRODUCTION

In 1977 R W Thomson published two versions of the commentary of Athanasius on the Psalms in Syriac, a shorter version and a longer version (Thomson 1977a and 1977b). The longer version is contained in manuscript British Museum Additional Manuscript 14568. This manuscript dates from 597. It is damaged and a large part of the commentary has been lost (Thomson 1977a:IX-X). The shorter version is contained in British Museum Additional Manuscript 12168. This manuscript dates from the eighth or ninth century (Thomson 1977a:IX). The headings of these manuscripts are important for the study of Psalm headings in the different Syriac traditions, where a large variety exists.

In the Peshitta the headings of the Masoretic text were not retained, while the headings in the Syro-Hexapla are related to the headings of the Septuagint. With

¹ This article is dedicated to Professor Wouter van Wyk, who is one of the persons who did the most to set the Old Testament Society of South Africa on a good foundation and in this way assisted many scholars of a younger generation. The article is a revised version of a paper read at the meeting of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies in Basel in 2001.

regard to the headings of the Psalms in Peshitta manuscripts, some manuscripts do not have any headings at all. With regard to the manuscripts where headings do occur, Bloemendaal (1960:2-3) distinguished four groups of manuscripts or editions. These groups are the headings in the East Syrian Church (which are related to the summaries of the Psalms in the commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia), titles dependent on the *codex ambrosianus*, the titles in the editions of Sionita and Lee and in the polyglotts and a mixed group. With regard to the second group, Brock (1995:xxi) states that there are some links between these headings and the commentary on the Psalms by Daniel of Salach. This group is not as consistent as the first group, with much more variety in the headings. This is for example clear in the following headings for Psalm 7 in three different manuscripts. The *codex ambrosianus* has the following heading:

אָהַבְתִּי לַיהוָה בְּגִישׁ מִמָּוֶת יְהוָה מִבְּרַח אֲבִישָׁלֹם בְּיָמָיו
 (Spoken by David when he was fleeing before his son Absalom).

The heading in 9t3² is related to this, but not identical:

אָהַבְתִּי לַיהוָה בְּגִישׁ מִבְּרַח אֲבִישָׁלֹם מִלְּפָנָיו מִבְּרַח אֲבִישָׁלֹם לְחַיָּתוֹ
 (Spoken by David when Absalom sent a large army against him to pursue him).

The heading in 9t2 connects this Psalm to David's flight before Absalom as well, but inserts a reference to Kush:

אָהַבְתִּי לַיהוָה
 בְּבִרְחוֹתֵי אֲבִישָׁלֹם בְּיָמָיו מִבְּרַח אֲבִישָׁלֹם בְּיָמָיו
 (Spoken by David about Kush the Ethiopian, when the Benjaminite fled before Abishalom his son).

There are instances where manuscripts contain headings that are totally unrelated, as in the case of Psalm 142. The *codex ambrosianus* has the following heading:

הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהֵי אֲדָמָה בְּיָמָיו מִבְּרַח אֲבִישָׁלֹם בְּיָמָיו
 לְבָרְחוֹתֵי אֲבִישָׁלֹם מִלְּפָנָיו מִבְּרַח אֲבִישָׁלֹם לְחַיָּתוֹ

(Psalm 142. Spoken by David, when he was speaking to the Edomites who were coming against him on account of king Hadadezer).

9t2 has a heading similar to some East Syrian headings, connecting the Psalm to the Maccabees:

אָהַבְתִּי לַיהוָה בְּגִישׁ מִבְּרַח אֲבִישָׁלֹם בְּיָמָיו
 (Spoken by David about the prayer of the Maccabees in the time of their calamity).

9t3 links the Psalm to an attempt of Saul to kill David:

אָהַבְתִּי לַיהוָה בְּגִישׁ מִבְּרַח אֲבִישָׁלֹם
 (Spoken by David when Saul sent [men] to kill him).

The connection to the commentary of Daniel of Salach, as mentioned by Brock, needs further investigation. Dietrich published Daniel's homilies on the first two Psalms. The headings of these two homilies contain only a few minor variants to the headings in the *codex ambrosianus*, and the headings are closely related to Daniel's exegesis contained in the two homilies (Dietrich 1901:131 and 149).

In any study of the relationship of different traditions of the Psalms, the headings deserve separate attention (cf Pietersma 2000:21 and Hiebert 2000: 131-132). Athanasius used the Septuagint for his commentary and the headings are closely related to that of the Septuagint as well, with some variety. It is interesting to note that Rahlfs did not use Athanasius in his critical apparatus to his edition of the Psalms (cf Rahlfs 1967:19-21 for the fathers he does refer to; cf also Pietersma 2002:22). The headings are usually followed by an argumentum or summary in his commentary. The headings and the argumenta are translated in the two Syriac versions of the commentary as well, again with some variations. In addition to this, the shorter version of the commentary has marginal readings added to most of the Psalms, describing the kind of Psalm.

This paper makes a study of all those Psalms where headings and summaries are attested in the longer Syriac version (28 in total) and compare them with the headings and summaries in the shorter Syriac version of the commentary, the

² . The notation 9t3 is according to the system used for the edition of the Peshitta of the Old Testament. The number at the beginning refers to the century of origin of the manuscript, the letter in the middle to the kind of manuscript and the final number to different manuscripts of the same kind from the same century. 9t3 refers to the third Psalms manuscript from the ninth century on the list of manuscripts kept at the Peshitta Institute in Leiden.

Psalm 18	
A1 ⁴	לעלמא תחזיא נהגה ללא
SH	בעלמא תחזיא נהגה
A2	בעלמא תחזיא נהגה
Psalm 21	
A1	לעלמא שטלא ⁵ פילא. תחזיא נהגה
SH	בעלמא שלפ שטלא פילא. תחזיא נהגה
A2	בעלמא שלפ שטלא פילא. תחזיא נהגה
Psalm 23	
A1	תחזיא נהגה. נהגה צבא
SH	תחזיא נהגה. נהגה צבא
A2	תחזיא נהגה. נהגה צבא
Psalm 24	
A1	תחזיא נהגה
SH	תחזיא נהגה
A2	תחזיא נהגה
Psalm 25	

⁴ A1 refers to the longer commentary of Athanasius, SH to the Syro-Hexapla and A2 to the shorter commentary. The text of the Syro-Hexapla is taken from Hiebert, 1989. He has the text of the *codex ambrosianus* as his basic text, with variants from other manuscripts in the footnotes. References to manuscripts of the Syro-Hexapla follow the notation used by Hiebert.

⁵ The text has an error here, but it has been corrected according to the proposal of Thomson (1977a:118 n 6).

A1	נהגה
SH	נהגה
A2	תחזיא נהגה
Psalm 35	
A1	בעלמא לבגומ תחזיא נהגה
SH	בעלמא לבגומ תחזיא נהגה
A2	בעלמא לבגומ תחזיא נהגה
Psalm 40	
A1	בעלמא תחזיא נהגה
SH	בעלמא תחזיא נהגה
A2	בעלמא תחזיא נהגה
Psalm 48	
A1	בעלמא נהגה נבא תחזיא
SH	בעלמא לבתרא נהגה תחזיא
A2	בעלמא לבתרא נהגה תחזיא
Psalm 58	
A1	בעלמא לא אשט נהגה לבתרא נהגה. נהגה צבא. נהגה צבא. נהגה צבא
SH	בעלמא לא אשט נהגה. נהגה צבא. נהגה צבא. נהגה צבא
A2	בעלמא לא אשט נהגה. נהגה צבא. נהגה צבא. נהגה צבא

the songs of David end here, as is usually the case in manuscripts of the Septuagint.

In some instances Athanasius shows minor deviations from the text in Rahlfs, but with support amongst the variants referred to by Rahlfs. Athanasius adds 'A Psalm' to the end of the heading of Psalm 68, agreeing with a number of Lucianic manuscripts. In Psalm 76 Athanasius switches 'Of Asaph' and 'A Psalm', as do the Latin of R, Augustine, the Lucianic tradition, Theodoret and 55. In Psalm 102 it inserts 'A Psalm' at the beginning, agreeing with the Latin of G, the majority of Lucianic manuscripts and Theodoret. In Psalm 108 Athanasius switches 'Of David' and 'A Psalm', agreeing with the majority of witnesses to the Septuagint, including A, 1219, 55, Rahlfs's western text, the majority of Lucianic texts and Theodoret.

In a number of instances Athanasius has a longer heading than the Septuagint, although the heading of Athanasius agrees with some of the notes in Rahlfs. Psalm 25 has the following heading:

Εἰς τὸ τέλος ψαλμος τῷ Δαυιδ.

Rahlfs only has the reference to David. The addition of 'A Psalm' occurs in a number of witnesses. The heading of Athanasius as a whole agrees with the Vulgate. In Psalm 71 Athanasius has Εἰς τὸ τέλος ψαλμος τῷ Δαυιδ εἰς Σαλομῶνα. This heading agrees with the heading in a number of Lucianic manuscripts, although the spelling of the name of Solomon is unique. In Psalm 103 Athanasius has

Τοῦ Δαυιδ ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως. Ἀνεπίγραφος παρ' Ἑβραίους.

With regard to Του it agrees with A. The reference to the creation of the world following on 'Of David' agrees with a large number of Lucianic manuscripts and the reference that it does not have a heading in the Hebrew occurs in a number of Lucianic manuscripts.

Unique variants occur in Psalm 23, 111 and 117 in the Greek commentary. Psalm 23 has the following heading:

Εἰς τέλος ψαλμος τῷ Δαυιδ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων.

The addition of Εἰς τέλος at the beginning is unique, while τῇ μιᾷ occurs in U and τῶν before σαββάτων in U, a number of Lucianic manuscripts, Theodoret and R^c. In Psalm 111 Athanasius has a long heading:

Ἀλληλουια. Τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς Ἀγγαίου καὶ Σαξαρίου. ΨΑΛΜΟΣ.

Rahlfs only has the first word. 'A Psalm' is unique to Athanasius. The rest of the heading occurs in Rahlfs' western text, the Gallicanum and a number of Lucianic texts. Athanasius adds ΨΑΛΜΟΣ to Psalm 117 as well, another unique reading.

F THE HEADINGS OF THE PSALMS IN THE SYRO-HEXAPLA AND THE TWO SYRIAC VERSIONS OF THE COMMENTARY

In the case of the three Syriac versions, four possibilities occur: all three versions are the same (five Psalms), all three differ (five Psalms), the Syro-Hexapla and the shorter version of the commentary agree against the longer version (seventeen Psalms), and the two versions of the commentary agree against the Syro-Hexapla (one Psalm). These four groups will be discussed separately.

There are five Psalms where all three the Syriac versions have the same heading: Psalms 23 (with an orthographic variant), 40, 100, 102 and 108. Psalm 23 is one of the instances where the Greek version of Athanasius has a unique variant. This is not reflected in the Syriac. In the case of Psalms 40, 100 and 102 the Syriac headings agree with the Greek Athanasius and the Septuagint as well. In the case of Psalm 108 the Syriac heading has the same word order as the Greek commentary and a large group of witnesses of the Septuagint.

In seventeen Psalms the shorter version of the commentary and the Syro-Hexapla have the same heading: Psalms 18, 21, 24, 48, 58, 68, 72, 76, 104, 105, 107, 111, 112, 113, 116, 149 and 150. In the case of Psalm 72, the shorter version of the commentary has the note about the end of the hymns of David at the beginning of the heading, while the Syro-Hexapla has it at the end of Psalm 71.

In many of these instances the difference between the reading of the Syro-Hexapla and the short version of the commentary on the one hand and the longer version on the other is the fact that the longer version ascribes the Psalm to David. In fact, it ascribes all the extant Psalms to David. In Psalm 48, the Syro-Hexapla and the shorter version ascribes the Psalm to the sons of Korah, while the longer version ascribes it to David, the prophet. It is quite interesting to note that the same happens in the *Codex Alexandrinus*, although the wording is not exactly the same. In Psalms 72 and 76 the longer version has David for Asaph. In Psalm 104 the longer version has 'Of David' before Hallelujah. 'Of David' follows the Hallelujah in Psalms 113 and 116. In Psalm 105 the shorter version of the commentary and the Syro-Hexapla have Hallelujah twice. The longer commentary has it once, followed by 'Of David'. In Psalms 149 and 150 the longer commentary has 'Of David' preceding one Hallelujah, and not two as in the other two versions. Psalm 111 is linked to the blessed prophet David in the longer version and to Haggai and Zechariah in the other two versions, agreeing with many witnesses to the Septuagint. The longer version adds a reference to the prophet David. Of all these instances, a Davidic heading is only found for Psalm 149 in the Latin of manuscript G and for Psalm 48 in the *Codex Alexandrinus*. Of

the five headings discussed below, where all three the Syriac versions are different, the longer version of the commentary has the connection with David in disagreement with the other two versions in Psalms 71, 101 and 117.

Some of the variants are related to the use of prepositions and ܐ. The longer version of the commentary prefers ܐܘܘܪܝܢܐ and ܐܘܘܪܝܢܐ, while the Syro-Hexapla and the shorter version prefers ܐܘܪܝܢܐ and ܐܘܘܪܝܢܐ, for example in Psalms 18, 21, 24, 72, 104, 107, 111, 112, 113, 117, 149 and 150.

In Psalm 18, the longer version of the commentary adds 'Prophet' to the name of David. This is a unique addition. In the case of Psalm 21 the variants mentioned in the previous paragraph occur, as well as two different translations of the same Greek heading. In Psalm 58 the longer version of the commentary shows a number of differences from the heading in the other two versions, but they are all related to different translations of the same underlying Greek. In Psalm 68 the longer version has ܐܘܪܝܢܐ against the ܐܘܪܝܢܐ of the other two versions. This reading of the longer version is the preferred translation for the Greek participle in the Philoxenian version, and normally in the Syro-Hexapla as well (cf Hiebert 2000:252) In Psalm 107 the Syro-Hexapla and the shorter commentary inserts 'Hallelujah' at the beginning of the heading.

There are seven headings where the shorter version of the commentary and the Syro-Hexapla do not have the same heading. In six of them (Psalms 25, 71, 101, 103, 105 and 117) the three texts are different, while the two versions of the commentary agree as far as the heading of Psalm 35 is concerned. In Psalm 25 the longer version of the commentary has ܐܘܪܝܢܐ, while the Syro-Hexapla has ܐܘܪܝܢܐ. The shorter version of the commentary has the preposition as well in this instance, but inserts ܐܘܪܝܢܐ before 'Of David'. This agrees with a large number of witnesses to the Septuagint (U-1221, the Latin of G, a number of Lucianic manuscripts, Hesych and the correction in R). The heading of Psalm 71 has already been mentioned in connection with the tendency in the longer version of the commentary to link more Psalms to David. The other two versions differ only in minor detail. The Syro-Hexapla has the preposition ܐ before the name of Solomon, while the shorter version of the commentary uses the relative. This is the reading in manuscripts e and f of the Syro-Hexapla as well.

The headings of Psalm 101 in the different versions are quite interesting. The Greek of Athanasius agrees with the text of Rahlfs. The longer version of the commentary links this Psalm to David as well. The shorter version of the

commentary and the Syro-Hexapla are quite similar, with only two variants, namely, that the commentary does not have ܐܘܪܝܢܐ after the participle and that it does not have ܐ before ܐܘܪܝܢܐ, but before ܐܘܪܝܢܐ. This second variant agrees with the other version of the commentary as well as the Septuagint. According to Rahlfs this second variant is unique to the Syro-Hexapla. Manuscripts e, h and j of the Syro-Hexapla disagree with the other manuscript by having the 'and' in the same place as the Septuagint and the two commentaries.

The heading of Psalm 103 is also very important. The Greek Athanasius has Τοῦ Δαυὶδ. Ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως. Ἀνεπιγραφὸς παρ' Ἑβραίων. With regard to Τοῦ it agrees with A. The reference to the creation of the world agrees with a large number of Lucianic manuscripts and the observation that it does not have a heading in the Hebrew occurs in a number of Lucianic manuscripts. Rahlfs also says that the Syro-Hexapla adds, after the reference to the creation of the world, οὗτα ὑμῖν ἐποίησα. The codex latinizans 156 adds οὗτα ἡμῖν ἐποίησεν. The three Syriac headings show many similarities, but important differences as well. It can be seen from the translation of the headings as well:

- A1: On the origin of the world, that he made these things for us, by David.
- SH: By David, on the creation of the world, concerning the things I made for you, which has no title among the Hebrews.
- A2: By David, concerning the creation of the world, which has no title among the Hebrews.

The longer commentary agrees with Hesych by inserting the reference to the creation of the world before 'Of David'. The other part of the addition agrees with the western text *codex latinizans* 156. The shorter commentary does not have the reference to 'the things made for you'. The heading in the shorter commentary agrees with the Greek commentary, as well as with a number of Lucianic texts. The longer commentary does not have the reference to the Hebrew lacking a heading. It is clearly independent of the two later versions and must go back not to the Greek commentary, but to an unknown Septuagint or Syriac text.

In Psalm 117 the Greek commentary adds ψάλλμοϛ, a unique reading, to Hallelujah. The Syro-Hexapla follows the Septuagint by reading Hallelujah. The shorter commentary has no heading, while the longer one adds a reference to David.

There is only one Psalm where the Syro-Hexapla and the longer commentary agree against the shorter commentary. That is in Psalm 35, where the three

headings are the same, except that the shorter commentary omits the preposition before David.

G CONCLUSIONS

The marginal notes to the headings in the shorter version of the commentary are clearly related to the description of the different kinds of Psalms in the letter of Athanasius to Marcellinus. The descriptions do not correspond exactly to the descriptions in the Greek version of the letter. This letter was translated into Syriac, as can be seen from the fragment published by Thomson (1977a) at the end of the longer commentary. That these descriptions were known in a wider circle can be seen from their appearance in the manuscript 12t4.

The summaries at the beginning of the different Psalms are related in a linear fashion. The shorter commentary depends on the longer one and the longer one on a Greek original.

With regard to the headings proper, the headings in the Greek commentary are those of the Septuagint, with a few variants. Most of these variants agree with variants given in the edition of Rahlfs, in most cases including Lucianic witnesses.

The Syriac headings of the shorter commentary are usually in agreement with that of the Syro-Hexapla (twenty-two out of twenty-eight examples). Many of the differences between the longer commentary on the one hand and the other two are related to the fact that the longer commentary ascribes all twenty-eight Psalms to David. This is related to a tendency in this regard in the East and West Syrian traditions. The headings in the longer commentary are not just translations from a Greek original, but are the work of the translator. While the summaries of the shorter commentary are related to those of the longer commentary, the same is not true of the headings proper. The latter are dependent on the Syro-Hexapla, with some minor variants.

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