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### THE ODES AND PHILO.

It was certainly a *dies faustus*, when Dr. Rendel Harris discovered the Syriac MS., containing the only known copy of the Odes of Solomon. The place of the discovery is described with charming indefiniteness as "the neighbourhood of the Tigris"; but evidently we are not allowed to know any more at present. As to the value of the find, scholarship enthusiastically endorses the estimate of Dr. Harnack, that "since the discovery of the Didaché, now almost thirty years ago, we have recovered nothing equally valuable; and in many respects the new find is the more important of the two." Already a small library of dissertations and discussions has sprung up around the Odes, and many experts have made valuable contributions, showing similarities of thought and diction between the Odes and other religious literature.

As for the title, it is uncertain whether it was given by the author or at some later date. In either case, it would seem to have been given at a time when "the Song of Solomon" was interpreted mystically; and when "the Song" is thus interpreted, there are many features of resemblance between it and the Odes; and as there were already in existence the "Psalms of Solomon" and "the Song," it was natural that these should be designated "the Odes of Solomon."

Research as to the *religious* character of the Odes has taken two directions, backward and forward, earlier and later, but chiefly the latter. The worthy discoverer and first editor adduced important coincidences between the

Odes and early—though subsequent—Patristic and Apocryphal literature. Harnack has worked in the same field, and made further contributions of the same kind. He emphasises the affinities between the Odes and the Fourth Gospel, and speaks of the Odes as “the quarry from which the Johannine blocks were hewn.” Professor Strachan, following up this hint of Harnack’s, has elaborated in detail the coincidences of thought and phrase between the Odes and the Gospel of John, especially in their conception of the Person of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Preuschen promises to prove that some of the Odes are identical with “the Psalms” used by the Gnostic Valentinus;<sup>2</sup> while Dean Bernard, disregarding Harnack’s statement that there is no reference to Baptism in the Odes, has sought to prove that we have here a collection of cryptic hymns, designed for the use of Christians who had recently been baptized; and that Baptism is mysteriously concealed in almost every Ode.<sup>3</sup> All these scholars recognise that there are Biblical elements in the Odes, both Jewish and Christian; but beyond that, their investigations have led them to connect the Odes with *later* Christian literature.

The only scholar who has, so far as I know, sought to account for the genesis of the Odes by the assimilation of prior non-Christian elements, is Gunkel, who made a valuable contribution to the subject in an article which appeared in Preuschen’s *Zeitschrift* for October, 1910. Gunkel is fully in agreement with Harnack that the Odes present many features which are unique. Harnack holds that the main body of the work is Jewish, but that this has been extensively interpolated by a Christian; and still he exclaims of the Christian elements: “I know no Christianity like

<sup>1</sup> *Expository Times*, October, 1910.

<sup>2</sup> Preuschen’s *Zeitschrift*, October, 1910.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of Theological Studies*, October, 1910.

this"; and the Jewish author is equally peculiar, for his "songs manifest no connexion with the national Jewish life." He ignores the whole Jewish ceremonial; and he says just as little of the Law and its commandments as of Moses, David and Israel.<sup>1</sup> And still Harnack makes no serious attempt to analyse the unique phenomenon. He pronounces emphatically that the Jewish author was "no Pharisee, no Essene, no syncretist Gnostic." "We seek him in vain," he says, "among such men as Epiphanius, Philo or Josephus"; but he *may* have belonged to the sect of the Therapeutæ, if such men as Philo describes in his *Vita Contemplativa* really existed in the age of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Gunkel, however, is very dubious as to Harnack's Interpolation theory. "The Odes," he says, "have a great deal in common. They impress us at the first blush as a Unity. Ought not, then, our first work to be to examine the sense of the Odes by careful study of the context and by comparison of the Odes with one another and with well-chosen parallels?" Questions of integrity, as those of date and place, should be "curæ posteriores." Gunkel prefers to explain the phenomena by assuming one many-sided author rather than many authors. The author in his judgment was a Jew and a Christian, but not a Jewish-Christian; nor does he belong to the great Church of History. We must rather seek him in "one of the many syncretist offshoots of Christianity during the first century."

If we would understand early Christianity, we must always bear in mind that the Gospel did not fall on virgin soil. Men were not able to divest themselves of their past when they embraced the new faith. Of course, they laid aside what was grossly inconsistent and contradictory; but individuals would certainly differ as to what of the old was incompatible with the new. In process of time the

<sup>1</sup> *Pealmbuch*, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 105 f.

consensus of the Church would settle this matter ; but for a while there would of necessity be much diversity of view. Gunkel holds that the author was a syncretist—an eclectic. The Odes failed to pass into the general current of Church History, because, if we may so describe it, the author took too heavy a cargo on board of non-Christian similes and metaphors. He did not realise any incongruity with the new faith in the allusions, which are really polytheistic, to the divine and anti-divine pair of Æons in Ode 38 ; the varied dangers threatening the ascent of the soul in Ode 22, and the new birth of the Christ in the presence of God in Ode 36—all of which our author seriously attempted to spiritualise. The legends of “speaking water” (11<sup>6</sup>), “foot-prints left on water” (39<sup>6</sup>), and a “letter from heaven” (23<sup>5</sup>) are similarly used. Thus Gunkel finds in the Odes the speculations of Hellenic mysteries, and not a little incipient Gnosticism, into which the powerful fluid conceptions of Christianity ran, freely modifying and spiritualising them.

No one, however, so far as I know, has sought to connect the Odes with Philo of Alexandria ; but the contribution I wish to make is to show the resemblances of thought and diction between many of the Odes and the religious beliefs of Philo. The author of the Odes was, as I believe, “a prophet and a mystic,” one who sought in many fields for satisfaction for his religious aspirations. A Jew by birth, familiar with the Psalmists and Prophets of Israel ; a Christian by conversion, but not a Jewish-Christian, as that term is understood in Church History. He was a Jew of the type of Philo ; and being an intensely religious man he was concerned to extract the religion, the piety, the mysticism from Christianity, Gnosticism and Philonism alike ; paying little heed to the history, the doctrine or the outward form in which each was presented. I confine myself to affinities with Philo.

I. First, we would call attention to the importance which the Odists and Philo attached to the composition of sacred hymns. We quote the following from the Odes :—

- 16<sup>1</sup> As the work of the farmer is (to drive) the plough,  
 And the work of the steersman is to steer the ship ;  
<sup>2</sup> So my work is the song of the Lord in His praises,  
 My craft and my work (consist) in His praises.
- 14<sup>7</sup> Teach me the songs of Thy truth,  
 Let me bring forth fruit through Thee.  
<sup>8</sup> Open to me the harp of Thy holy Spirit,  
 That with all its tones, I may praise Thee, O Lord.
- 26<sup>1</sup> I poured forth praise unto the Lord, for I am His.  
<sup>3</sup> His harp is in my hands  
 And songs of His rest shall not be silent.  
<sup>5</sup> From East to West, thanksgiving is due to Him.  
<sup>6</sup> From South to North, confession is His due.  
<sup>8</sup> Who can write the Psalms of the Lord, and who can read  
 them ?
- 36<sup>2</sup> [The Spirit] placed me on my feet on the Height of the Lord,  
 While I gave praise, in the composition of His songs.

Now in all this we are quite on a line with Philo. In his *Vita Contemplativa* Philo expresses great admiration for the Jewish sect of the Therapeutæ of whom he says that they were enthusiasts, transported by heavenly love. In their yearning for the immortal and blessed life they looked on this mortal life as already done with. They therefore made over their property to their relatives and withdrew into deserts, where they lived in small communities with others of kindred mind. Six days in the week they philosophised, each in his lonely cell. On the seventh day they assembled for praise and worship. The President explained the Scriptures by mystic allegories. Then some one would rise and sing a hymn, either *one he had composed himself* or some ancient hymn by one of the old poets ; or the assembly would sing hymns to the praise of God in various metres and to various tunes.”<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Philo himself

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Contemp.* 3 and 10. (The numbers of the Sections given throughout are those found in the *text* of Cohn and Wendland's edition of Philo ; and also in Bohn's English translation of “ Philo Judæus.”)

repeatedly extols praise and hymnody as the noblest occupation in which a godly man can be engaged. "There is really only one way," he says, "in which we can suitably honour God, and that is by thanksgiving. Let us practise this always and everywhere, by voice and by elegant writings. Let us never cease composing eulogies and poems."<sup>1</sup> "Every one ought to make grateful acknowledgment to God, according to his ability; the clever man presenting as a gift (*ἀνάθημα*) his skill and wisdom; the eloquent man consecrating all his excellences by means of odes and eulogies of the Divine Being."<sup>2</sup> Again he speaks of "engraving sacred hymns on slabs, that one may not only speak fluently, but also sing musically the praises of Jehovah."<sup>3</sup> If, as we opine, our Odist was a disciple of Philo, he learned his Master's lesson well, in making hymnody his life-work.

II. The author of our Odes was, we say, a Mystic; and as such he was more attracted by Philo's religion than by his philosophy; but he was not quite indifferent to Philo's philosophy or to his theology. The basis of Philo's system of thought was the sharp antithesis between spirit and matter; or rather, between God and the spiritual world on the one hand, and this world of sinful existence on the other. He believed with Plato in an intelligible world, i.e. a world knowable only by the intellect of the wise and godly man, where are to be found the eternal archetypes of things which exist on earth. "The beautiful things in this world," Philo says, "would never have been such as they are, if they had not been modelled in accordance with an archetype, truly beautiful, ungenerate, imperishable."<sup>4</sup> "When God resolved to create this visible world, He first outlined the intelligible world, that, using the incorporeal and divine model (*παραδείγματι*) he might make this corporeal world

<sup>1</sup> *De plantatione Noë*, 31.

<sup>2</sup> *De somniis*, i. 43.

<sup>3</sup> *De mutatis nom.* 39.

<sup>4</sup> *De Cherubim*, 6.

a younger copy of the elder creation.”<sup>1</sup> In poetry, so pre-eminently religious as the Odes are, we cannot expect much philosophy; but there are a few intimations. The two worlds are beautifully distinguished—the other world as “that which is invisible,” and our present world as “that which reveals God’s thought” (16<sup>7</sup>); and the Platonic theory of the other world is briefly but clearly expressed in 34<sup>5</sup>: “The image (*d’muth*) of that which is here below is that which is above.” When in Ode 34 our author goes on to say:

That which is above is everything,  
That which is below is nothing but the *Opinion* of those who have  
no knowledge,

he is expressing the same view as appears in Philo in the *Allegories*, ii. 21: “The highest genus is God, the second is the Word. Other things exist only in name: in reality they are equivalent to the non-existent”; and in another place he says: “God alone exists in essence; because of this, God says of Himself: ‘I am He who is (ὁ ὄν)’; as though those who were after Him did not exist essentially, but in *opinion* only were thought to exist.”<sup>2</sup> There is another passage in the Odes which is to be interpreted in the light of Platonism, though I have not yet met with the identical similes:

11<sup>19</sup> Everything is a *relic* (or, remnant) of Thee,  
An eternal *memorial* of Thy faithful works.

<sup>20</sup> For there is abundant room in Thy Paradise,  
And there is nothing useless therein.

We pass now to the theology. Philo’s fundamental position is that God is essentially unknowable. The following passages represent his views: “When the soul that loves God seeks to know what the Divine Being is *κατ’ οὐσίαν*, he enters on an obscure and dark inquiry, from which the greatest benefit that arises is to comprehend that

<sup>1</sup> *De opif. mundi*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Quad. det. pot.* 44.



God, according to His essence, is incomprehensible to all and also to see that He is invisible.”<sup>1</sup> [Note the oxymoron as in Heb. xi. 25.] “It is wholly impossible for any creature to comprehend God according to His essence. It is *enough* for man’s reason to advance so far as to learn that the Cause of all is and subsists (ἔστι τε καὶ ὑπάρχει); but to be eager to proceed further, to investigate concerning His essence or quality, is Ogygian folly.”<sup>2</sup> “We have no organ in ourselves by which to form a phantasm of Him, nor any faculty of perception or thought (adequate to it).”<sup>3</sup> “Though we cannot attain to a distinct phantasm of Him who truly is, still we ought not to renounce the task of investigating the divine character.”<sup>4</sup> “One must first *become* God—which is impossible—in order to be able to comprehend God.”<sup>5</sup> These sayings correspond exactly to—

25<sup>11</sup> Who can interpret the marvels of the Lord ?

He who could interpret would be dissolved,  
And *become* that which is interpreted.

<sup>13</sup> It is *enough* to know (that He is) and be at rest.

Philo did not, however, rest here. Though he believed Deity to be inaccessible, he believed that there are potencies which proceed from God, and which are really Divine, but not God (ὁ θεός). These He called indiscriminately “Powers” (δυνάμεις) and “Logoi” (an expression borrowed from the Stoics). “God has about Him,” Philo says, “an unspeakable number of Powers—all defenders and saviours of that which is created.”<sup>6</sup> And again, “God not deigning to come within the range of perception, sends His own Logoi to give assistance to those who love virtue.”<sup>7</sup> “God is near and yet afar. He is near by His Powers, which are creative and punitive. He is afar off, according to His essence, so that we cannot reach Him, even by the unalloyed

<sup>1</sup> *De posteritate Caini*, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 48.

<sup>3</sup> *De mutatis nom.* 2.

<sup>4</sup> *De monarchia*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Mangey*, ii. 654.

<sup>6</sup> *De conf. ling.* 34.

<sup>7</sup> *De somniis*, i. 12.

and incorporeal efforts of our understanding.”<sup>1</sup> Now the Odes often speak of “the Word”; but, in the plural, to express the sense of *δυνάμεις* and *λόγοι*, they use the Syriac equivalent of *αἰῶνες*, “Æons.” There is a strikingly pregnant expression in Ode 7. 13:—

Because it is He who is imperishable,  
The *fulness* of the Æons, and the *Father* of them.

There is no reason for doubt that the Greek original had the word *πλήρωμα* for “fulness”; and to say that God is “the *πλήρωμα* of the Æons,” or “Powers,” expresses most succinctly what Dr Drummond says of the relation between God and the Powers in his admirable work *Philo Judæus*. “The Powers do not exhaust God,” we are told. “They are only a partial expression of the infinite fulness of God.” “As the supremely beautiful, and the only source whence beauty could flow, God may be called the Archetype of Beauty; but, in truth, the archetypal idea was only one mode of the Eternal Thought and was included with other ideas in that supernal Unity which is inapprehensible by the human mind.”<sup>2</sup> “God is above the Powers as the unknown Unity which comprehends them all.”<sup>3</sup> This is all condensed in the Odist’s brief expression: “The *πλήρωμα* of the Æons.” But the Odist also says that God is “the *Father* of the Æons,” or “Powers,” and this is a matter which gives Dr. Drummond no little trouble on page 100. Philo expressly says that the Powers act “according to the command of *their Father*,”<sup>4</sup> and this seems to imply personality, whereas the Powers are usually uncreated expansions of the Divine to reach human imperfections. The inconsistency, whether real or apparent, does not concern us. Philo does speak of God as “*Father* of the Powers.”

Far more frequently than not, Philo assigns the media-

<sup>1</sup> *De posteritate Caini*, 6.

<sup>2</sup> P. 82.

<sup>3</sup> P. 121.

<sup>4</sup> *De Cherubim*, 31.

torial agency between God and man to *one* potency or personality, "the Logos." The relation between the Logos, the Logoi and the Powers is the most abstruse, not to say inconsistent, part of Philo's theology. Happily it does not concern us now. We wish to speak of the help given to man by the mediator, or mediators. The same *ministry* is, by Philo, assigned to all three alike; and we wish to show that this coincides with the ministry of "the Æons" and of "the Word" or "Thought" of God, in the Odes. (Dr. Drummond correctly says that "the nearest parallel which English affords to Philo's Logos is 'Thought,' " vol. ii. 159.)

There is in Ode 12 a remarkable string of attributes, or functions, assigned to the Æons.

- (a) The interpreters of His beauty.
- (b) The narrators of His glory.
- (c) The revealers of His purposes.
- (d) The preachers of His thought.
- (e) The purifiers of His servants.

Now for the Philonic parallels. (a) Philo speaks of "the Powers" as "His interpreters" in *De somniis*, i. 33—as the association with attendant angels indicates; and the "Logos" is also called "the Interpreter," as when Philo says: "His Word, which is the Interpreter of His will, must be God (*θεός*) to us imperfect beings."<sup>1</sup> (b) The second clause is probably taken from Psalm xix. 1. Again, is it too much to say that (c) (d) and (e) are all alluded to in the following passage: "As for those who are still being washed, and have not yet entirely cleansed themselves from the life that defiles and is weighed down by heavy bodies, angels, the divine Logoi 'walk in them' (Lev. xxvi. 12), *purifying them by most excellent doctrines?*"<sup>2</sup>

We adduce other allusions to the Word:

12<sup>5</sup> The swiftness of the Word is indescribable.

According to the narrative, so is its swiftness and sharpness.

<sup>1</sup> *De mutatis nom.* 3.

<sup>2</sup> *De somniis*, i. 23.

The Odist seems to refer to the narrative of the Cherubim which guarded the entrance to Paradise. "The 'flaming sword' was understood by Philo," says Drummond, "to symbolise the *swift*, hot and fiery Logos." In *Cherubim*, 9, Philo says: "Thought (λόγος) is swift and hot, and especially the thought of God, because it has outstripped (φθάσαν) and passed by everything"; and the Odist's reference to the "*sharpness*" of the Word finds its parallel in Philo: "The Word cuts through everything, and being sharpened to the finest possible edge never ceases dividing."<sup>1</sup>

A similar passage in the Odes, "The Word of the Lord *scrutinises* that which is invisible and that which reveals His thought" (16<sup>9</sup>) is genuinely Philonic; as, e.g. where we are told that Phinehas "had as his coadjutor the well-sharpened sharp-edged Word which is competent to examine and search everything thoroughly."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Rendel Harris renders 26<sup>19</sup>, "The thought of the Most High cannot be anticipated." The literal meaning would be "cannot be outstripped"; and a Philonic parallel is this: "The Word of the Uncreated One outruns that of Creation and is carried along most swiftly on the clouds. The Divine Word can outstrip (ἐφθακότος) and overtake everything."<sup>3</sup>

We will now place together a few passages from the Odes and briefly adduce parallels from the works of Philo:—

- (a) 12<sup>11</sup> The dwelling place of the Word is man.
- (b) 12<sup>13</sup> Blessed are they who by Him (the Word) know everything.
- (c) 16<sup>20</sup> The worlds through the Word came into being
- (d) 41<sup>11</sup> His Word was with us all our way.
- (e) 21<sup>11</sup> Very helpful to me was the Thought of the Lord.

(a) "What sort of a habitation ought we to prepare for the King of kings? The invisible soul is the terrestrial habitation of the invisible God. Such a house being pre-

<sup>1</sup> *Quis div. heres*, 26.    <sup>2</sup> *De mutatis nom.* 18.    <sup>3</sup> *Sacrif. Abel*, 18.

pared, let us be filled with good hopes, awaiting the descent of the *Powers* of God,"<sup>1</sup>

(b) "To the Prophet *nothing is unknown*, having within himself a noëtic sun and shadowless rays, for the most accurate apprehension of those things which are invisible to sensuous perception, but apprehensible by the understanding."<sup>2</sup>

(c) Speaking of Bezaleel, the builder of the Tabernacle, he says that the word means "In the shadow of God." Then at once he passes on to say: "The shadow of God is His Word, which He used as an instrument when He was making the world."<sup>3</sup> Such passages are numerous.<sup>4</sup>

(d) "The Divine Word appearing suddenly imparts an unexpected joy, inasmuch as He is about to travel in company with the solitary soul."<sup>5</sup> "The man who follows God has necessarily, as his fellow-travellers, the Logoi, who are attendants of God." "Until the soul is perfected, it uses the Divine Word as its guide."<sup>6</sup>

(e) "I will look on everything as proceeding from the only wise God, who extends His beneficent Powers in every direction, and through them benefits me."<sup>7</sup> "God sends His own Logoi for the assistance of virtue-loving souls."<sup>8</sup>

III. The chief interest of the Odes centres in their *Mysticism*. Perhaps it is not generally known to what an extent Philo was a mystic. He is well known as an extravagant allegorist and an elaborator of the doctrine of the Logos, but his affinities with Mysticism are not so well understood. There are, however, three or four works to which I am indebted and which I would commend to those who wish to understand the inwardness of Philo. (1) *Die Frommigkeit Philôs*, by H. Windisch. (2) A delightful article of 64 pages,

<sup>1</sup> *De Cherubim*, 29-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Leg. alleg.* iii. 31.

<sup>5</sup> *De somniis*, i. 12.

<sup>7</sup> *De ebrietate*, 27.

<sup>2</sup> *De magistratibus*, 8.

<sup>4</sup> *De migratione Abr.* 1.

<sup>6</sup> *De migr. Abr.* 31.

<sup>8</sup> *De somniis*, i. 12.

by Claude Montefiore, in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* for July, 1895, entitled "Florilegium Philonis." (3) The last chapter in Drummond's *Philo Judæus*, entitled "Higher Anthropology" <sup>1</sup>; and (4) the chapter on Philo in Bousset's *Die Religion des Judentums*. Drummond speaks of "the glow of devout fervour with which Philo's discourses are irradiated" <sup>1</sup>; and Montefiore says: "Professor Jowett has said that 'no one can understand Plato who has not some affinities with Mysticism.' Now the same warning applies to Philo. In spite of his lack of poetic sensibility and proportion, Philo is deeply imbued with the characteristic yearnings and qualities of the Mystic." <sup>2</sup>

There are a few passages in Philo when he becomes autobiographical, giving his own religious experience: e.g. in one passage he says: "There was once a time when devoting my leisure to philosophy . . . I appeared to be raised aloft by a certain inspiration of soul . . . and then looking down from above from the ether, and straining the eye of the mind, as from a watchtower I surveyed the undescribable spectacle of things on earth, and congratulated myself on having escaped the fates which occur in human life. . . . I floated above the troubled waves, *soaring* as it were in the air. . . . I opened the eyes of my soul . . . and was *irradiated* with the light of wisdom." <sup>3</sup> Here is another passage: "Sometimes when I come empty, I suddenly become full. Ideas are visibly *showered* on me, and *planted* in me *from above*, so that by a divine possession I am *filled* with enthusiasm and forget everything—the place, those about me, what is said, what is written; for I have a *stream* [Var. Rg. *ῥέδισω*] of interpretation, an enjoyment of life, and a most distinct view of the subjects treated." <sup>4</sup> Any one who has even read the Odes will, in the words italicised,

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. 283.

<sup>2</sup> *J.Q.R.* vii. 482.

<sup>3</sup> *De special. Legibus*, iii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *De migratione: Abr.* 7.

recognise their regular vocabulary. But I anticipate. I simply wished to show that Philo was a Mystic.

Such men are always few and find their satisfaction in meeting with a few kindred spirits in small assemblies. This is what the German scholar Bousset says of Philo: "Again and again, in most of his writings Philo emphasises that he speaks only for a circle of *initiated* ones."<sup>1</sup> Connect this with what Gunkel says of the Odist: "He manifestly speaks only for *the initiated*. Others cannot and are not meant to understand." And again: "There must have been a secret society of initiated ones to whom he speaks, and on whose understanding he can reckon. This is clear from the fact that he, in the name of Christ, gives the warning to his own: 'Guard my secret.'"<sup>2</sup> Harnack says the same about the author of the Odes: "He stands within a circle, and cares for the faithful. He wishes to guide, comfort and stimulate them by the recital of his own experiences."<sup>3</sup>

There is another coincidence here too. Bousset says of Philo: "His writings, with few exceptions, lack everything actual—all practical reference to everyday life";<sup>4</sup> and Harnack makes the very same complaint of the Odist: "What the author lacks is the categorical imperative, the bitter earnestness for the good and for self-discipline. The Odes leave behind them nothing we miss so much as a strong ethical impression. Social instincts and a strong sympathy with the needs and sufferings of others are almost absent. With the communal life—to say nothing of the national, the Odes have no concern."<sup>5</sup>

J. T. MARSHALL.

(To be continued.)

<sup>1</sup> *Religion des Judentums*, 426.

<sup>2</sup> Preuschen's *Zeitschrift*, October, 1910.

<sup>3</sup> *Psalmbuch*, 114.

<sup>4</sup> *Relig. d. Jud.* 413.

<sup>5</sup> *Psalmbuch*, 114.