

Toland and the Traité des trois imposteurs c1709-1718

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As the natural body of a Christian or a saint can be no other, for the frame, than such as hath been the natural body of an Israelite or of a heathen; so the political bodies or civil governments of Christians or saints can be no other, for the frame, than such as have been the political bodies or civil governments of the Israelites or of the heathens.¹

I

In 1719 the first printed edition of the *Traité des trois imposteurs* was published at The Hague by Charles Levier under the title of *La Vie et L'Esprit de Spinoza*. As the forensic researches of historians like Silvia Berti, Francois Charles-Daubert and Miguel Benitez have indicated this act of publication masked a complex process of manuscript traditions, literary shadowplay and intellectual conversation. Identifying the intellectual relationship between the printed version and the variant manuscript traditions has been a profoundly difficult business.² Establishing precisely who was responsible for the construction of the clandestine work, and who transformed it into a public text has been the subject of much historical debate. The pre-history of the 1719 publication was punctuated by a series of literary dissertations promoting or disclaiming the existence of such a text. Detecting the cabal of men who were involved in this print culture and who may have been responsible for either the manuscript variants or the publication has involved historians examining many different sources and approaches. Margaret Jacob, some years ago, advanced the suggestion that the work was the product of a masonic group 'The Knights of the Jubilation', and consequently was part of a radical, materialist and republican assault upon the shibboleths of the *ancien regime*.³ More recently, Silvia Berti's research, exploring the circle of men like Charles Levier, Rousset de Missy and Jean Aymon, proposed a minor Dutch diplomat Jan Vroesen as the original compiler of the text.⁴ Ploughing some of the same terrain, Miguel Benitez has also advanced the candidature of John Toland as a man intimately involved, almost certainly with the literary dissertations that pre-dated the publication of 1719, if not with the text itself.⁵

While many of these scholars have paid very close attention to the intellectual sources that were appropriated to make the printed text, Francois Charles-Daubert has devoted specific thoroughness in attempting to design an historical taxonomy for the variant manuscript versions of the work. Indeed it has been established that

¹ J. Harrington *Aphorisms political* (1659) § CV in J.G.A. Pocock (ed) *The Political Works of James Harrington* (Cambridge, 1977) 776.

² The standard work of reference must now be S.Berti, F. Charles-Daubert, R.H. Popkin (eds) *Heterodoxy, Spinozism, and Freethought in early eighteenth century Europe. Studies on the Traite des trois imposteurs* (Klewer, 1996).

³ See M. Jacob *The Radical Enlightenment* (1981) and her response to criticism of this thesis, 'The Knights of Jubilation - Masonic and Libertine. A Reply' *Quaerendo* 14 (1984) 63-75.

⁴ See S. Berti 'The first edition of the *Traite des trois imposteurs*, and its debt to Spinoza's *Ethics*' in M. Hunter, D. Wootton (eds) *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1992) 183-220.

⁵ See M. Benitez 'La coterie hollandaise et la reponse a m. de la monnoye sur la Traite des trois imposteurs' *Lias* 21 (1994) 71-94.

there were at least three distinct types of manuscript tradition independent of the printed edition.⁶ Substantiating the inter-relations of text, distribution and chronology between these works is a profoundly complicated business. Surveying the structure of manuscripts from the earliest dated (1709: Sloane 2039) to those originating from the library of Eugene of Savoy (dated variously 1712-18) Charles-Daubert has shown that one of the ways in which the different traditions can be teased apart is by examining, in particular, the considerable variations in the nature of the account of Moses. As she writes, 'les sections consacrées à Moïse varient considérablement d'une copie à l'autre, et constituent la partie mobile du traité'.⁷ Indeed the latest development of the *Traité*, identified under the title of *Le fameux livre des trois imposteurs* (c1712-1718), was marked by a large expansion in the account of Moses' life and conduct, rather than the simply critical libertinism of the earlier version. These new additions changed the emphasis of the assault of the *Traité*, advancing a desacralising critique of the supposed miracles of Moses. As Charles-Daubert has indicated copies of *Le fameux livre des trois imposteurs* are closely associated with the library and intellectual connection of Prince Eugene and the Baron d'Hohendorf.⁸ As Benitez has noted the intellectual sources and originators of these expansions 'restent encore en général inconnues'.⁹ By exploring some of these suggestions - in particular the precise nature of the expansions in the account of Moses, and the involvement of Toland in the circle associated with the diverse versions of the *Traité* - it may be possible to establish some foundations for understanding a context for these developments.

II

Toland's connection with the *Traité* can be established in two ways: first, by his intimacy with the individuals already identified as central figures in the production of the work, and second, by establishing a literary connection between his work and the language of the clandestine text. Toland's connections with heterodox circles on the continent were manifold. Early in his career he had spent time in the Low Countries, especially Leiden studying at the University, which had brought him into contact with important people like Benjamin Furley, from whose library it is known that Charles Levier made a copy of the *Traité* in 1711. Later in his career, while undertaking various diplomatic duties, Toland travelled throughout France and Germany: it was during these visits that he became friendly with, first, the Baron d'Hohendorf and then Prince Eugene of Savoy. The period 1708-10 seems to have been an especially important time in Toland's career in this clandestine Republic of Letters. It was at this time that he established contact with the controversial figure of Jean Aymon.¹⁰ As Berti has suggested, following the account of Prosper Marchand, Aymon is most likely to have had a hand in revising the *Traité* in collaboration with Rousset de Missy

⁶ See F. Charles-Daubert 'Les Traités des trois imposteurs aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles' in G. Canziani (ed) *Filosofia e religione nella letteratura clandestina secoli XVII e XVIII* (Milan, 1994) 291-336; idem 'Les principales sources de L'Esprit de Spinoza' in *Groupe de recherches spinozistes. Travaux et documents 1* (Paris, 1989) 61-107; idem 'L'Esprit de Spinoza et les Traités des trois imposteurs: rappel des différentes familles et de leurs principales caractéristiques' in Berti, Charles-Daubert, Popkin (eds) *Heterodoxy* 131-189.

⁷ Charles-Daubert 'Les principales sources de L'Esprit de Spinoza' 82.

⁸ See Charles-Daubert 'L'Esprit' 138, 153, 174, 179; idem 'Les Traités des trois imposteurs aux XVIIe et XVIIIe' 319, 320-21; idem 'Les principales sources' 83-4.

⁹ M. Benitez 'Une histoire interminable: origines et développement du *Traité des trois imposteurs*' in Berti, Charles-Daubert, Popkin (eds) *Heterodoxy* 53-74.

¹⁰ On Aymon see A. Goldgar *Impolite Learning. Conduct and community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1730* (Yale, 1995) 174-76.

before publication in 1719.¹¹ Toland had dealings with Aymon when the latter was attempting to sell the various manuscripts he had liberated from the French Royal Library. Toland undertook a sort of sales-catalogue describing the various manuscripts for Humphrey Wanley: it was through this connection that Toland had a sight of the source (the *Codex Armachanus*) upon which he based the second part of his *Nazarenus* (1718).¹² Aymon was also an important connection for Toland's dealings with the other possible co-editor and co-printer of the 1719 text, the Scottish bookseller who lived and traded at The Hague, Thomas Johnson. Aymon was an 'intimate friend' of Johnson who at different times attempted to collaborate in publications with the Scotsman. Johnson was a significant, if much under-studied, figure in the clandestine Republic of Letters. Based in The Hague and then Rotterdam, Johnson was involved in the publication and distribution of a range of mainstream and more contentious literature. He was publisher of the *Journal Littéraire* (1713-22) and the *Mecure Galant*. He published works by Anthony Collins, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury¹³ and the Duke of Buckingham as well as Colerus' *Vie de Spinoza*. A pioneer of publishing small editions of single Shakespeare plays he was a member of 'the association of booksellers at the Hague' and collaborated in joint ventures with publishers in England like Bernard Lintott. As a *libraire* he also had contacts in England with men like Anthony Collins, to whom he sent packages of books.¹⁴ Johnson was an associate of John Toland. The latter used his bookshop as a postal address in 1708 when writing to Leibnitz. In 1709, Johnson published (at The Hague) one of Toland's most radical works the Latin *Adeisdaemon* and *Origines Judicae*. He was still in contact with Toland in 1715 when a second edition of the same work was announced in the *Nouvelles littéraires*.¹⁵ Toland was then intimate with many of the key figures surrounding the production of either the manuscript or printed *Traité*.

Toland was not merely a hanger-on in this world of clandestine letters but made his own contributions. That Toland focused his efforts upon the Eugene/d'Hohendorf circle is clear from the survival of a collection of his 'Dissertations diverse' composed between 1708 and 1710 in the Viennese National Library. Dedicated to Eugene, and copied for d'Hohendorf, this bundle of material laid the seeds for important later work which was published in less obviously subversive form. So for example, the first draft of *Nazarenus* and *Hodegus* were produced for this intellectual connection: as will be shown much of this work was concerned with the nature of religious imposture in general, and the *respublica mosaica* in particular. Toland was also involved in generating interest in a new edition of Giordano Bruno's *Spaccio*, writing to Leibnitz

¹¹ P. Marchand 'Impostoribus' in Berti, Charles-Daubert, Popkin (eds) *Heterodoxy* 510.

¹² See P.L. Heyworth (ed) *The Letters of Humphrey Wanley* (Oxford, 1989) 265-7, 275-8, 429-30.

¹³ Marchand owned a copy of Shaftesbury's *Lettre sur l'entousiasme* (The Hague, 1709) published by Johnson: see C. Berkvens-Stevalinck *Catalogue du Manuscrits de la Collection Prosper Marchand* (Leiden 1988) 126.

¹⁴ On Johnson see J. O'Higgins *Anthony Collins. The man and his works* (The Hague, 1970) 25, 211, 226; J. Amalgor *Pierre Des Maizeaux (1673-1745), Journalist and English Correspondent* (Amsterdam, 1989) 249; Berti 194, 205; H.L. Ford *Shakespeare 1700-1740* (Oxford, 1935) 46-49; J. Feather 'English books in the Netherlands in the eighteenth century: reprints of piracies?' in C. Berkvens-Stevalinck, H. Bots, P.G. Hoftijzer, O.S. Lankhorst (eds) *Le magasin de l'univers. The Dutch Republic as a centre of the European Book Trade* (Brill, 1992) at 151-54. For his involvement with the *Journal Littéraire* see C. Berkvens-Stevalinck 'Les Chevaliers de la Jubilation: maconerie ou libertinage?' *Quaerendo* 13 (1983) 50-73, 124-48 at 136-38; also idem *Catalogue du Manuscrits de la Collection Prosper Marchand* (Leiden 1988) passim. There are some important references to Johnson as an intimate of Marchand in C. Berkvens-Stevalinck *Prosper Marchand. La vie et l'oeuvre (1678-1756)* (Brill, 1987) 126.

¹⁵ See Carabelli 'Toland e Leibnitz' 417; idem *Tolandiana* 194.

and others with a specimen of his intentions. Importantly, in trying to prompt interest in Bruno's work, Toland connected it with the tradition of imposture epitomized in the *Traité*: in 1711 M. de la Croze, reporting a conversation he had with Toland in 1702, commented that 'Monsieur Toland, qui a ses raisons pour faire beaucoup de cas de cet ouvrage, croit que c'est celui qui est si fameux dans la monde, sous le titre de *Traité des trois imposteurs*'.¹⁶ That Toland was deliberately attempting to pass off Bruno's work as the *Traité*, a work which presumably he had not seen, is confirmed by another letter written in 1709 (from Amsterdam) by John Bagford 'the book-hunter' and antiquary about Toland.¹⁷ Writing to his correspondent Bagford insisted that the attribution of a book 'intituled the three Grand impostores' to Toland was incorrect, indeed he continued 'nor dou I knowe thare is any book in the World which bare that Title'. On the other hand Bagford recognised Bruno's *Spaccio* as the work which Toland had 'occasion' to pass off as the *Traité*. Bagford, who had read the *Spaccio* in Toland's company (and hoped to do so again), added the comment that when he first read the volume he too thought that it was 'the book ment by the title of the three Impostors'. Although Bruno's work scarcely mentioned 'Mouse Christ or Mahomet' the work was still impious because it treated 'all the authores of all revealed Religion whatsoever, as Impostour'.¹⁸ Toland was clearly aware of the reputation, if not of the text, of the *Traité*: it was typical of his desire to be at the vanguard of radicalism that he was claiming privileged knowledge of the work. Indeed both in the literary material added to the *Traité*, and in the later commentary of Prosper Marchand, Toland is implicated in the context to the work. As Benitez has shown the *Reponse* too drew attention in its fictional account of the discovery of the *Traité* by Tausendorf to the relationship between Bruno's *Spaccio* and the clandestine text. Indeed these two works were complimented by a third that seems to have been intended to imply a Ciceronian work. Toland published a work, *Cicero Illustratus* (1712), intended as an advertisement for a complete edition of the Roman's works replete with critical historical and philological apparatus: importantly, it was dedicated to both Eugene and d'Hohendorf. In his extensive and important article on the *Traité*, Prosper Marchand also rehearsed these same discussions about 'the famous' Toland's role in the confusion of the *Spaccio* and the *Traité*, and also noted that as author of *Nazarenus* Toland was skilled at constructing fake literary lineages for supposedly ancient texts.¹⁹

Toland was then intimate with many of the central figures involved in the production and circulation of the clandestine work. He knew at least one of the printers (Johnson) and one of the co-editors (Aymon): he certainly was involved in the broader group identified with the 'Knights of the Jubilation' and the *Journal Littéraire*. Given our interest in the development and circulation of variant editions of the manuscript from 1711, it is also significant that Toland was on intimate intellectual terms with Eugene of Savoy and Baron d'Hohendorf: presumably both contributing too, and using, the important collection of *libertin* and freethinking literature (printed and manuscript) available in the Viennese library.²⁰ By exploring Toland's works composed published and circulated in manuscript during this critical period it will be possible to reconstruct his attitudes, in particular, to Moses and Judaism.

¹⁶ See Carabelli *Tolandiana* 154.

¹⁷ See P.L. Heyworth (ed) *The Letters of Humphrey Wanley* (Oxford, 1989) for an account of Bagford.

¹⁸ G. Aquilecchia 'Nota su John Toland traduttore di Giordano Bruno' *English Miscellany* 9 (1958) 77-86 at 85-6.

¹⁹ Marchand 'Impostoribus' 494, 499.

²⁰ On the library at Vienna and its holdings see G. Ricuperati 'Libertinismo e deismo a Vienna: Spinoza, Toland e il Tregno' *Rivista Storica Italiana* 79 (1967) 628-95.

III

The suggestion that Moses was a political legislator rather than a religious patriarch was unacceptable to Christian orthodoxy. Machiavelli, both in the *Prince* and the *Discourses*, had treated Moses as a legislator with the same skills and 'virtu' as Numa, Solon and Lycurgus.²¹ Such an account was considered atheistical: the Mosaic legation was the prophetic foundation of Christianity by orthodox believers. Although Christian theologians insisted Christ had perfected the Mosaic dispensation as a type of pre-figuration of the true faith, Judaism was treated as a Godly model. As the researches of many historians have shown, throughout the early modern period Christian scholarship became increasingly knowledgeable about the historical nature of the *republica hebraeorum*. While the primary document for exploring the Hebrew republic was the Old Testament, historical scholarship became much more sophisticated in its exploration of the rites, ceremonies and practices of the ancient Jews, as philological and linguistic developments opened up new rabbinical and classical sources. Whether Catholic or Protestant, the writings of men like Carlo Sigonio, the Buxtorfs and Cunaeus, provided detailed accounts of Jewish antiquity.²² Although much of this work was driven by Christian imperatives (either conversionist or purely to establish the theological priority of Christ) it still valued the sacred meaning of the Jewish state. As Ligota has written 'l'institution mosäique relève d'une volonté divine qui prend effet dans la profanité de l'histoire humaine'.²³ The epitome of this tradition, written in popular form, was Jacques Basnage *Histoire des Juifs* (1706) which drew elegantly upon the corpus of Hebrew scholarship built up in the previous decades to give a providential account of the meaning of Jewish history. As Thomas Taylor, the English translator of Basnage, commented one of the 'chiefest designs' of the work was to convince 'atheists, deists, and apostates' of the divinity of providence: it was 'a standing evidence of Divine vengeance upon unbelief, and an indelible monument of the truth of Christianity'.²⁴ Writing the history of Moses ought to have been, *au fond*, an apologetic exercise.

One of the most obvious hints that Toland held unusual views about Moses can be seen in the frontispiece to his edition of James Harrington's *Works* (1700) where Moses is depicted as the first in the line of great legislators that include successively Solon, Confucius, Lycurgus and Numa. That Toland was intrigued by the

²¹ For an important discussion of Machiavelli and Moses see A. Brown 'Savonarola, Machiavelli and Moses. A changing model' in A. Brown *The Medici in Florence. The exercise of language and power* (Florence, 1992) 263-279. See also N. Wood 'Machiavelli's concept of virtu reconsidered' *Political Studies* 15 (1967) 159-172 at 162, 168.

²² For the best general introduction see Manuel *The Broken Staff*; A. Katchen *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis* (Harvard, 1984); P. Van Rooden *Theology Biblical Scholarship and Rabbinical Studies in the seventeenth century* (Leiden, 1989) and idem 'Conceptions of Judaism as a religion in the seventeenth century' *Studies in Church History* 29 (1992) 299-308; E. Horowitz 'A different mode of civility: Lancelot Addison on the Jews of Barbary' *Studies in Church History* 29 (1992) 309-25.

²³ C. Ligota 'Histoire à fondement théologique: La République du Hebreux' in *L'Écriture Sainte au temps de Spinoza et dans le système Spinoziste* (Paris, 1992) 149-167 at 158.

²⁴ Cited in L.A. Segal 'Jacques Basnage de Beauval's L'Histoire des Juifs: Christian historiographical perceptions of Jewry and Judaism on the eve of the Enlightenment' *Hebrew Union College Annual* 54 (1983) 303-324 at 317; see also J.M. Elkin 'Jacques Basnage and the History of the Jews: anti-Catholic polemic and historiographical allegory in the Republic of Letters' *Journal of History of Ideas* 53 (1992) 603-30. For a detailed study see G. Cerny *Theology, Politics and Letters at the crossroads of European Civilisation. Jacques Basnage and the Baylean Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic* (Kluwer, 1987).

significance of potential meanings of Moses' legacy is indicated in his repeatedly announced intention of publishing a major analytical study called 'Respublica Mosaica'. His first indication of these intentions was in the private manuscript written for Prince Eugene of Savoy, circulated between 1708-1710: 'vous savez que j'ai déjà promis au public LA REPUBLIQUE de MOYSE, laquelle de toutes les formes de gouvernement j'estime avoir été la plus excellente et parfaite'. In this study, he continued, 'je donnerai une face et un tour si nouveau (pourtant sincère et naturel) non seulement au système politique entier et à la plus grande partie des lois particulières de cet incomparable Législateur: mais aussi à un si grand nombre des circonstances et incidents historiques qui se trouvent dans la relation fort defectueuse et très-abrégée du Pentateuque'.²⁵ Toland promised then a full blown 'political' reading of Moses. Lamentably this work does not appear to be extant, even though Toland expressed the hope that it 'seroit un ouvrage que je pretendois faire vivre après moi, sans craindre de passer pour fan faron'. The work was not conceived simply as an historical work but also for 'le temps présent, auquel (comme j'ai lieu de l'espérer) il pourra n'être pas inutile à plusieurs égards'.²⁶ Although the major work remains elusive Toland did disseminate fragments and essays towards this larger study from which it is possible to reconstruct some of his intentions. The first of these to be published was his Latin *Origines Judicae* (The Hague, 1709). At about the same time Toland had composed a couple of shorter pieces in French ('échantillon' was Toland's word) for private circulation. The longer of these, the 'Projet d'une Dissertation sur la Colonne de feu et de Nuee des Israelites: dans une Lettre à Megalonymus', was also circulated in an English translation in the 1700s, and eventually published in 1720 as *Hodegus, or the Pillar of Cloud and Fire*.²⁷ The second shorter piece 'Deux Problèmes Historiques, Théologiques & Politiques' was originally included in the collection of 'Dissertations diverses' sent to Prince Eugene and Baron d'Hohendorf, and was eventually published as an appendix to Toland's controversial study in comparative biblical criticism *Nazarenus* (1718).

Origines Judicae was a full blown assault upon orthodox Christian understandings of Moses as the *vir archetypus*. The classic statement of Christian orthodoxy was the massive *Demonstratio Evangelica* (1679) of Pierre-Daniel Huet, Bishop of Avranches, which took as its motif the Mosaic origins of all philosophical and ethical learning. As Paolo Rossi has so elegantly explained, the purpose of works like Huet's was to safeguard the universality of the sacred history of the Old Testament and 'to draw all of profane history together into the single course of sacred history and to state that all peoples knew the teachings of the prophets'.²⁸ Similar metahistorical arguments had been advanced in Anglo-phone writings like Edward Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae* (1662 and many subsequent editions), which had aroused, for example a furious debate in the 1680s and 1690s about the relative historical priority of Egyptian and Hebrew learning.²⁹ Toland intended to replace this

²⁵ See 'Projet d'une Dissertation sur la Colonne de feu et de Nuee des Israelites: dans une Lettre à Megalonymus' ONB 10325 pages 4-5. Toland re-iterated his intention of publishing such a work in *Nazarenus* (1718) Appendix 2, and in *Tetradymus* (1720).

²⁶ Projet 5.

²⁷ Toland lent a copy of this work, under the title 'The Cloud & Pillar', to Lord Castleton: see Champion *Pillars* 150 citing Toland's list of 'manuscripts of mine abroad'.

²⁸ See P. Rossi *The Dark Abyss of Time. The History of the earth and the history of nations from Hooke to Vico* (Chicago, 1987) esp 152-57.

²⁹ See S. Hutton 'Edward Stillingfleet, Henry More, and the decline of Moses Atticus: a note on seventeenth century Anglican apologetics' in R. Kroll et al (eds) *Philosophy, science, and religion in England 1640-1700* (Cambridge, 1992) 68-84; for a general discussion of this context see Champion *Pillars* 154-58.

Christian *philosophia mosaica* with a civic *respublica mosaica*.³⁰ Notice of his views had been indicated in his first anonymous publication where he had described Moses as 'without dispute ... one of the greatest and wisest Legislators that ever appeared in the world, not excepting, Solon, or Lycurgus or Numa'.³¹ *Origines Judicae*, published with a dissertation in defence of Titus Livy from the charge of superstition,³² opened with a unequivocal assertion (borrowed from Cicero) that religion was 'a mere ingine of state policy ... that a belief in the immortal Gods was an invention contrived by wise and profound legislators for the general benefit of the commonwealth, in order that those whom reason could not influence, might be trained to their duty by a sense of religion'.³³ Arguing against the candour of Huet's use of classical sources to claim that Moses was the archetype of all learning, Toland pointed out that one of the Bishop of Avranches sources - Strabo - 'compares Moses with Minos, Lycurgus, Zamolxis and many others of the same description, without any distinction, and what is more, that he has given an account of the Jewish religion, the origin of that nation, and of Moses himself, totally different from that which we find in the Pentateuch'.³⁴ As Toland made plain, Huet had 'distorted' and falsified his sources in trying to 'demonstrate' Moses as the originator of pagan mythology. Huet's work was composed of 'frivolous and empty trifles'.³⁵ Having illustrated how Huet had mis-interpreted Diodorus Siculus, Toland concentrated upon his business of giving an exegesis of Strabo's account of Moses and the Jews found in the *Geography* Book XVI chapter 2 §34-39. For Strabo, as understood by Toland, Moses was 'unequivocally ... a pantheist, or as we in these modern times, would style him, a Spinozist'. Moses maintained that 'no divinity exists separate from the universal frame of nature, and that the universe is the supreme and only God, whose parts you may call creatures, and himself the great creator of all'.³⁶

The main argument of Toland's work was structured around an exegesis of Strabo's commentary which he reproduced in its entirety in order to compare it with the (in his view faulty) account given in the Pentateuch.³⁷ The difference between the two accounts of the fertility of Judea and the Pentateuch's description of it as 'flowing with milk and honey' was attributed to Moses' 'pardonable stratagem' of providing a stimulus 'to keep up the spirits of the wandering Tribes of Israel'.³⁸ Aware, as he must have been of the orthodox concern to distance the tribes of Israel from Egyptian foundations Toland continued to approve of Strabo's suggestions: indeed he commented, 'Moses himself, when he fled into the land of the Midianites was immediately taken for an Egyptian'.³⁹ Exploring the question of the racial identity of the Israelites, Toland further muddled the matter by claiming 'that they were a mixt race': consequently 'they are blindly prejudiced therefore who obstinately maintain that all the Jews were the undoubted offspring of Abraham or Jacob, without any

³⁰ See D.B. Sailor 'Moses and Atomism' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25 (1964) 3-16 for the persistence of the orthodox veneration of Moses in the eighteenth century.

³¹ See *Two Essays sent in a letter from Oxford* (1695) 15.

³² *Adeisdaemon* (The Hague, 1709)

³³ I have used the eighteenth century manuscript English translation of *Adeisdaemon* and *Origines Judicae* located in John Ryland's Library call mark 3 f 38. Since this manuscript is not paginated or foliated I have used a combination of page openings and paragraph numbers.

OJ Dedication 2. § 1.

³⁴ OJ 5 § 2.

³⁵ OJ 11 § 5.

³⁶ OJ 16 § 6.

³⁷ OJ 18-26 § 7-9.

³⁸ OJ 28 § 10.

³⁹ OJ 32 § 12. At 35 §12 Toland noted 'in my own private opinion' Jews could be regarded as Egyptians.

admixture of foreign blood'.⁴⁰ Tacitus was correct to claim that the Jews were emigrants from Assyria to Egypt. Citing Diodorus Siculus, Toland pointed out that Moses himself was 'an Egyptian Priest, and a Nomarch, or Governor of a Province'.⁴¹ Moses was 'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians' which indicated his 'priesthood and temporal dignity' and 'not his skill in magic and miracles'.⁴² Indeed Moses instituted a simple non-ceremonial religion that upheld the injunctions of natural religion. Most of the rites and ceremonies of Judaism were introduced by post-Mosaic figures 'from superstitious motives'.⁴³

The broader theme of *Origines Judicae* was the denial of the providential or revealed nature of the history of Hebrew religion. Toland neatly substituted non-Judaeo-Christian sources like Strabo, Tacitus and Diodorus Siculus to give an historically contextualised account of Moses and the Israelites. The refrain of his writing was that the historical account could be constantly contrasted with the evidence of the Pentateuch: the unstated implication being that the latter was thus considered defective. Indeed in the middle of the work Toland inserted an extended consideration of the nature of divine prophecy dismissing it as the false and fraudulent impositions of dreamers and seducers. He robustly concluded that 'no intimation is ever conveyed to men by God, by means of dreams or visions'.⁴⁴ Works like Huet's were pious frauds compared with the candour of Strabo's account.⁴⁵ Toland simply wished to let history speak for itself. This inter-related technique of establishing the historical context of Biblical history, and then giving a political account of Moses' *res gestae* was given even more detailed treatment in the text *Hodegus*, a work originally circulated to a private audience from 1708, but which in a much expanded form, was published in 1720.⁴⁶ Importantly, unlike *Origines Judicae* where absorption of the subversive ideas were restricted to those who could read Latin, the later work was written originally in French and then published in English. As the text was transformed from clandestine manuscript to published form the blunt heterodoxy of the first was modulated and masked by a veneer of scholarly investigation.⁴⁷ Toland's starting point was an insistence that studying the history of the Jewish nation was to be wrested from the monopoly of the Church. The history of the Hebrew antiquity was as important if not more so than that of the Greeks and Romans. Toland's own researches led him to a higher veneration for Moses and the

⁴⁰ OJ 37 § 13.

⁴¹ OJ 39 § 14.

⁴² OJ 42 § 14.

⁴³ OJ 52 § 18.

⁴⁴ OJ 63 § 21.

⁴⁵ OJ 76 § 24.

⁴⁶ See A. Rosenburg (ed) *Simon Tyssot de Patot. Voyages et aventures de Jaques Masse* (Paris, 1993) 91-2 'On a oui parler d'un savant Anglois qui a fait une dissertation depuis peu, ou il entreprend de prouver qu'il'y a eu rien de miraculeux ni meme d'extraordinaire dans cette Colonne de feu qui conduisoit les Israelites dans le desert; & de faire voir par les meilleurs Auteurs anciens & modernes que ce c'a été toujours la coutume dans ces sortes de Deserts, de se servir de feu pour diriger la marche des Armees, ou des Multitudes, en faisant porter devant elles par les Guides, de maniere que toute la troupe en put voir la fume pendant le jour, & la flamme pendant la nuit: il pretend que celui qui a eu la direction de ce feu, & qui a servi de Guide aux Israelites, n'etoit autre chose que Hobab, le beau-pere de Moise; ce qu'il tache prouver par les versets 29 & 30 du chapitre des Nombres, & par plusieurs autres passages de l'Ecriture Sainte'. Thomas Johnson was most likely the publisher of Tyssot de Patot's work, see Jacob *Radical Enlightenment* 195. For a transcription of the 'Projet' see Appendix 1 below.

⁴⁷ Toland was a master of this sort of communicative exercise, deploying the rhetoric of scholarship as an instrument for insinuating more subversive discussions: see Champion (ed) *Nazareus* (Voltaire Foundation, 1998) 'Introduction' for a discussion of his techniques and their effectiveness.

Hebrew republic: 'wherefore my design in this publication, is to make Moses better understood, and consequently more easily believed'.⁴⁸ The premise of Toland's argument was that the account given in the Old Testament was incomplete and abridged: indeed, even the 'hyperbolical' language of Scripture was problematic and prone to allegory and 'inpenetrable absurdity' in the hands of priestly exegetes. The principal head of his case was that the Pentateuch did not record the achievements of providence and that 'several transactions generally understood to be miraculous, were in reality very natural'.⁴⁹

In *Hodegus* Toland attempted to substitute the orthodox miraculous understanding of an episode from *Exodus* (XIII 21) where Moses and the Israelites were guided by a pillar of cloud and fire through the deserts with a non-providential historical account. Using a collection of classical sources like Quintus Curtius, Herodotus and Xenophon to establish a correspondence between the practices of Moses and Alexander and the Persians, Toland argued that the 'cloud and pillar' was no miraculous manifestation of God but a form of 'ambulatory beacon' which directed the Israelites 'with the cloud of its smoke by day, and with the light of its fire by night'. There was no prodigy but 'mere human contrivance'.⁵⁰ Drawing together, and comparing, the descriptions scattered throughout *Exodus* and *Numbers*, Toland hoped that 'I have set in the clearest light the nature and use of the Pillar of Cloud and Fire, directing the marches and stations of the Israelites in the Wilderness; in such a light, I say, that no man of good understanding, or void of superstition, will any longer think it a miracle'.⁵¹ To re-inforce the human quality of the episode Toland continued to argue that the Biblical description of the Israelites being guided by the 'Angel of the Lord' was again no providential manifestation, even though Christian commentators had interpreted it so, but simply a reference to 'a mere mortal man, the overseer or director or the portable fire, and the guide of the Israelites in the wilderness'.⁵² Contrary to the allegorising interpretations of the Church fathers and following some suggestions advanced by Hobbes,⁵³ Toland examined the Hebrew usage of the word to conclude that the 'word Angel of itself imports nothing extraordinary, much less supernatural'. 'Angel' was simply a Hebrew word for messenger or ambassador. Using the minor Roman military author Vegetius to contextualise the meaning of descriptions given in *Numbers* Toland identified this 'guide and director' as Hobab 'the brother in law of Moses' who since he was born and bred in the wilderness was 'consequently well acquainted with the several parts of it'.⁵⁴ While Toland was at pains to indicate that the evidence of the Pentateuch was not good enough to establish, without doubt, that the guide at that particular time was Hobab since it was not possible to be accurate about the precise affinity of Hobab to Jethro and Moses, he was confident that the 'angel' was simply a local guide. The point of Toland's dissertation was to establish, by exploring the historical 'circumstances' of the Israelites, that Moses had acted like any other general or legislator in exploiting the military and logistic traditions of his time.⁵⁵

Toland's re-reading of Moses as a political legislator and of Judaism as a religion adapted to civic circumstances was reviewed in brief in his 'Two Problems', originally

⁴⁸ See 'Projet' 1-2, 3; the manuscript passages were translated and expanded in passages in *Tetradymus* (1720) Preface i-ii; and *Hodegus* 3-4.

⁴⁹ *Tetradymus* ii; *Hodegus* 4-5; 'Projet' 3-4.

⁵⁰ *Hodegus* 6-7.

⁵¹ *Hodegus* 27.

⁵² *Hodegus* 46.

⁵³ See T. Hobbes *Leviathan* (1651) ed R. Tuck (Cambridge, 1989) 276.

⁵⁴ *Hodegus* 48, 50-1.

⁵⁵ *Hodegus* 14.

included in the collection of clandestine manuscripts circulated on the continent post-1708 but published as an appendix to his controversial *Nazarenus* (1718). Toland claimed that he was half a year away from completing his *respublica mosaica*: it would surpass the volumes of Sigonius and Cunaeus. Moses' 'plan' of government, if it had been successfully established in Judea 'cou'd never have been afterwards destroy'd., either by the internal sedition of subjects, or the external violence of enemies, but should have lasted as long as mankind; which is to make a Government Immortal, tho it be reckon'd one of the things in nature the most subject to revolutions'. Toland proposed to discuss whether this immutability was based on 'any promise and miraculous concurrence of God; or on the intrinsic nature and constitution of the form itself' by posing two questions about the nature of Judaism. The first question inquired why, given that the ancient institutions of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks and Romans had disintegrated long ago, had the Jews 'preserved themselves a distinct people with all their ancient rites'? Secondly, why, after the collapse of their republic had they persisted in their hostility towards idolatrous practices? Toland encouraged answers that did not have 'recourse to miracles, or to promises drawn from the Old Testament'. In his own view Moses' system was to be explained by using Cicero's *de Republica* rather than providential arguments: such an achievement meant that it was necessary to 'allow MOSES a rank in the politics farr superior to SALEUCAS, CHARONDAS, SOLON, LYCURGUS, ROMULUS, NUMA, or any other Legislator'.⁵⁶ As Toland concluded, indicating that he always contrived some practical implication from his intellectual speculations, such was the 'original purity' of the Mosaic republic, that if the Jews ever happened to be 'resettl'd in Palestine upon their original foundation, which is not at all impossible; they will then, by reason of their excellent constitution, be much more populous, rich and powerful than any other nation now in the world'.⁵⁷

It was apparent from the reception of this corpus of works upon Moses that Toland's attitudes were regarded by contemporaries as dangerously perfidious towards Christian observance.⁵⁸ Erudite scholars like Leibnitz, who corresponded with Toland about *Origines Judicae*, were unhappy with his use of classical sources like Strabo to explain the Mosaic republic.⁵⁹ Indeed Leibnitz painstakingly listed the faults derived from Strabo's account encouraging Toland to adapt his own work. Toland sternly defended both himself and his sources confirming that he would not 'make the least alteration' in the projected second edition.⁶⁰ Pierre-Daniel Huet was less restrained in his attack, ridiculing Toland's rustic Latin and faulty attempt at a display of classical learning. Toland was an atheist who had falsely attributed pantheistical opinions to Moses: 'il est assez grossier pour s'imaginer que nous jugions de la doctrine de Moyse sur la temoignage de Strabon, et non pas de la doctrine de Strabon sur la temoignage de Moyse'. Toland made Moses a Spinozist and denied his authorship of the Pentateuch: similarly he objected to Toland's description of 'la republique de Moyse n'a point ete instituee de Dieu: c'est l'ouvrage de la politique de cet homme avise'.⁶¹ In the *Journal Litteraire* (1714) Toland's work was reviewed as advancing the following principles 'que la Sainte Ecriture n'est qu'une production de l'esprit humain; que la Republique des Juifs n'est que 'effet de la politique de Moise, et c'est

⁵⁶ *Nazarenus* (1718) Appendix 1 2-3, 4-5, 6-7.

⁵⁷ *Nazarenus* (1718) Appendix 1 8.

⁵⁸ For a full bibliography of the responses to *Origines Judicae* see G. Carabelli *Tolandiana* (Florence, 1975).

⁵⁹ The Toland - Leibnitz correspondence is conveniently published in G. Carabelli 'John Toland e G.W. Leibnitz: Otto Lettere' *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 31 (1976) 412-31.

⁶⁰ Carabelli 'John Toland e G.W. Leibnitz' 421. Leibnitz' precis of Strabo is at 428.

⁶¹ See 'Lettre de Mr Morin' in *Memoires pour l'histoire des sciences et des beaux arts a Trevoux* (1709) September 1588-1618 at 1589-90, 1591, 1601, 1604, 1611-12, 1618. .

a tort qu'on lui a donne le nom de Theocratie; que l'inspiration des prophetes ne differoit en rien des songes ordinaire'. The reviewer rather tartly noted that Toland acknowledged the dangerous consequences of such positions with audacity.⁶² In the English language reviews Toland got a similarly jaundiced reception. Samuel Parker decried the fact that Toland had put 'Moses in company with Lycurgus and Minos' describing *Origines Judicae* as 'such an outrageous libel upon God's word, prophets and people'. Parker was astonished at Toland's relation of Moses: 'one would think, it might have satisfy'd Mr Toland to transform him into an Egyptian priest, without loading his memory so far as to tell us again and again, that with some people he pass'd for a Pantheist or Spinozist, in plainer words, a downright Atheist'. For Parker, as long as the Bible existed Toland's absurdities could be refuted for 'twill be impossible for him to persuade us the Word of God is a system of Atheism'. Point by point the reviewer challenged each of the claims Toland had derived from Strabo by contrasting them with the statements of scripture.⁶³ As Carabelli's bibliographical study shows, as well as receiving extensive reviews in the major journals of the Republic of Letters, *Origines Judicae* also was the subject of intensive and lengthy rejoinders in larger theological works and academic disputations published in the Low Countries, Germany and France. *Hodegus* did not generate quite so much attention either on the continent or in England, although it was reprinted in 1732 and 1753. The one substantial reply to the work *Hodegus Confuted* (1721) rejected Toland's political account of Moses: the redemption of 'the Jews from the Egyptian slavery was to be unto all ages a spiritual figure of the manumission of true Christians from the yoke and bondage of sin by the guidance of Messiah the eternal Son of God'. Contrary to Toland's assertion that the Cloud and pillar described in *Exodus* was a 'machine on a pole' the author simply asserted that 'it was the Angel of God's presence'. In an exceptionally confident piece of work the evidence of Scripture was simply contrasted with Toland's odd claims. The Word of God was of more value than the errors of *Hodegus*: the Holy book contained an 'unalterable meaning'.⁶⁴ The point by now should be clear. Toland, although without doubt fascinated by the example of Moses and the origins of the Hebrew state, could not (and cannot) be regarded as having an orthodox (in any sense of the word) appreciation of Judaism.

IV

In order to explore the possible affinities between Toland's oeuvre on the *respublica mosaica* and the variant traditions of the *Traité* it will be necessary to give a close reading of the language of these works. Charles-Daubert has usefully given a tabular representation of the key evolutions of the manuscript traditions the discussion below is indebted to the clarity of her research.⁶⁵ The earliest form of the account of Moses can be found in Sloane 2039 dated 1709: importantly this text was reproduced with minor variations in the 1719 printed edition. This representation of Moses actions was short and to the point. Derived from a series of classical and renaissance sources, possibly lifted from the clandestine manuscript *Theophrastus Redivivus*

⁶² *Journal Litteraire* (1714) Iv (The Hague, 1732) 250-53.

⁶³ S. Parker *Censura Temporum* 2 volumes (London, 1708-9) 547-64 cited at 548, 559, 560-3. For further English reviews see *The History of the Works of the Learned XI* (1709) 376-78.

⁶⁴ See *Hodegus Confuted. In a plain demonstration that the Pillar of a cloud and fire which led the Israelites thro the wilderness; was not, as Mr Toland vainly imagines a fire of human preparation* (London, 1721) 7, 18, 42, 46.

⁶⁵ See Charles-Daubert 'Les Traités des trois imposteurs aux XVIIe et XVIIIe' 331-336.

which included a section on 'de Mosaic religione',⁶⁶ Moses was introduced as a 'magician', an imposter adroit in the manipulation of a credulous and ignorant people. Invoking obligation by the use of prodigies and pretended miracles he convinced the Israelites 'de sa mission divine'. Having established his authority 'il songea a la perpetuer; & sous pretexte d'etablir un Culte Supreme, pour servir le Dieu, dont il se disoit le Lieutenant, il fit Aaron, son frere, et ses enfans Chefs du Palais Royal'. Using 'ruse Politique', Moses joined the force of arms with imposture to confirm his 'Autorite Souveraine' against those who 's'appercevoir de ses Artifices, & assez courageux pour lui reprocher'. He became 'moins leur Pere que leur Tyran' of the Israelites, and under cover of 'de Vengeances Divines, il vecut toujours absolu'.⁶⁷ This exposition of Moses as a manipulator and tyrant dominating an ignorant and credulous people⁶⁸ is negative and rather insubstantial. Although Moses showed skill in creating religious observance like keeping the 'sabbath' as the premise of political order, he is portrayed as a deviant model rather than a positive one. These outlines of an account were filled in with more historical detail in succeeding variants of the manuscript.

Between 1709 and 1716 this account of Moses underwent significant expansion: it is arguable that the meaning of the section also changed. As Charles-Daubert has indicated there appear to have been two stages of inflation in the sections devoted to Moses: the manuscripts originating from the Eugene/d'Hohendorf circle appear to include both stages of development.⁶⁹ The first stage of elaboration of the section was the most influential in the sense that it was the version that became the standard text for the later printed editions of the eighteenth century.⁷⁰ In this version much more attention was given to the historical circumstances of the Mosaic 'revolution'. Using a much broader base of historical sources that importantly combined the scriptural account of *Exodus* with pagan histories like Diodorus Siculus and Strabo, Moses was located within an Egyptian context. Describing the Israelites

⁶⁶ See G. Canziani, G. Paganini (eds) *Theophrastus Redivivus* 2 volumes (Florence, 1981) Part 3 Chapter 5 430-457 which indicates that the author compiled his account from the full range of classical sources which included all of the central works; Josephus *Contra Apion* and *Antiquitates Iudicae*, Tacitus *Historiae* Book V, Diodorus Siculus, Herodotus, Clement Alexandrinus, and Justinus.

⁶⁷ See Berti (ed) *Trattato dei tre impostori* 110, 112, 114.

⁶⁸ Interestingly, Sloane 2039 refers the Israelites not as 'sujets' (Berti 112) but as 'idiots'.

⁶⁹ I have had opportunity to examine three French versions of these later manuscripts: BL Add Mss 12064 'Le fameux livre des Trois Imposteurs traduit du Latin en Francais' which has marginal comments that show it was collated with an earlier copy of *La Vie et d'esprit de Spinoza* (the description seems to conform to the text of Sloane 2039 '1709' or the version eventually published in 1719 by Levier). The person responsible for the collation adds a comment (folio 68) 'J'ai vue une copie mss de l'ouvrage de Monsr. Le Comte de Boullainvillier touchant le doctrine de Spinoza faite sur l'original des autheur au mois d'aoust 1712 in 4^o'. Also examined were UCL Add 197, copied from Eugene's library and dated 1718, and UCL 217, which was also collated with *La Vie* (folio 18) and copied from the same library but dated 1716. In addition the three English manuscript translations have been consulted: BL Stowe 47; Cincinnati Bamberger 669; and Glasgow UL General 1185. Again all three of these manuscripts were noted as copied 'with permission' from Eugene's library. See appendix for a collation of the 'Moses' section of the first and third of these versions.

⁷⁰ See P. Retat (ed) *Traité des trois imposteurs 1777* (Saint Etienne, 1973) 40-51. For an English translation of this text for comparison with the Appendix below see, A. Anderson (ed) *The Treatise of the Three impostors and the Enlightenment* (1997) 18-22. Later variants of the political account of Moses are discussed in J. Spink *French Freethought from Gassendi to Voltaire* (1960) 68; and idem 'La diffusion des idees materialistes et anti religieuses au debut du XVIIIe siecle: le *Theophrastus redivivus*' *Revue d'histoire litteraire de la France* 44 (1937) 248-55 especially 250-51 on the *Opinions des anciens sur les Juifs* (1769). For later manuscript accounts see Wade *Clandestine* 136-38.

as a pastoral nation integrated with the Arabian tribes of Goshen and wider Egypt, originally tolerated by Orus I, but then persecuted by Memnon II, the text described the 'state of bondage' into which Moses was born. Rescued and adopted by Queen Thermutis, daughter and successor of the cruel Orus II, Moses was educated 'in the right way to acquire the utmost knowledge of the Egyptians'. Thus Moses became the 'profoundest politician, the best naturalist, and the most knowing magician of his time'. A 'deep politician' Moses, under the patronage of Thermutis, became nomarch of Goshen. While in Egypt 'he had leisure and sufficient opportunity to study, as well the manners, as the genius and disposition both of the Egyptians and of those of his own nation': here the schemes for his 'revolution' were made. Upon the demise of Thermutis 'a violent persecution of the Hebrews was renew'd', and Moses 'no longer protected, and apprehensive he should not be able to justify certain murders by him committed, betook himself to flight'. Retiring to Arabia Petrea, Moses took the opportunity of collaborating with Jethro of Midian, marrying his daughter: as the text commented, 'and here it may not be amiss to remark, that Moses was then so very indifferent a Jew and knew at the time so little of the tremendous God he afterwards imag'd out, that he readily espous'd a damsel who worship'd Idols and did not even once think of circumcising his children'.

Conspiring with Jethro of Midian, Moses plotted military revenge, and 'lay'd a vast plan, and knew how to employ against Egypt all the science which he had learned of the Egyptians'. His strategy was to prompt a popular revolt against the Egyptians by cultivating in the populace a belief that he was sent by God to save them. Using his skills and talents 'he accordingly soon brought them to a belief that his God who he sometimes called an Angel of the Lord, the God of his fathers, the God of the Almighty had appear'd to him, that it was by his express order he took upon him the care and trouble of conducting them'. Such pretended prodigies 'bedazzled' the Israelites. Interestingly, lengthy treatment was given to the methods Moses took 'to induce this populace to submit to his jurisdiction': especially his manipulation of the episode of the cloud and pillar described in *Exodus* and *Numbers*. Undoubtedly this was the 'grossest of all cheats and impositions of this impostor'. Learning from his experience in the deserts of Arabia he noticed how 'customary' it was for travellers to use 'flaming lanterns' and 'smoak which issued from the same lanterns' as guides. Moses made such natural skills 'pass for a miracle and a token of his God's favour and protection'. Moses exhorted Hobab, his wife's brother, 'by the most pressing motive of interest' because of his experience of the countryside 'to undertake the office of being their conductor'. The credulous populace 'believed that the Almighty was actually and personally present in that Fire and in that Smoke'. This expansion, then, gave a far more historical or 'circumstantial' account of Moses than that given in the 1709/1719 version. By using both classical sources and scripture the text now gave a more forensic picture of precisely how Moses established his imposture. It emphasised the 'Egyptian' origins of both Moses and the Israelites, but also by implication undermined the 'miraculous' nature of events reported in the Old Testament.

The second series of expansions developed these points in greater detail by including passages that Charles-Daubert has conveniently termed the 'episode des phosphores' (addition 1) and the 'episode des espions' (addition 2). In the first addition much more attention was given to exposing the 'imaginary prodigies or miraculous operations' that Moses employed. Taking the opportunity to explain how using 'natural magick' Moses 'so dazzled even the most clear sighted of the Hebrews' the author berated too Christian commentators who insisted on such impostures as the grounds of 'the grandest of mysteries of Christianity'. Examining passages in Maccabees and elsewhere, where mysterious lights were interpreted as

the manifestations of God, the author suggested that Moses and his confederates had used chemical phosphorus to create a 'pretended celestial light'.⁷¹ Such tricks were readily available and exploited by Moses. Like the vulgar of the eighteenth century, 'those poor silly wretches were seduced and led astray by means of these subtil pranks ... which they believed real miracles, for want of knowing the natural causes of such fallacious appearance'. As the addition continued, Moses performed many other tricks with snakes and lice to seduce the credulous Jews. The thrust of this addition was to both expose Moses' fraud but also the ignorance of the vulgar: an ignorance that was still perpetuated by a stupid veneration for miraculous understandings of scriptural accounts. The second addition was designed to underscore 'the iniquity, the fallacy, and injustice of Moses' in his treatment of the Israelites. Again appropriating scriptural passages from *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*, the text described Moses 'tyrannical' treatment of the twelve tribes of Israel in general and of those who opposed him.

The combination of these two expansions introduced into the manuscript between 1709 and 1716 significantly revised the intellectual thrust of the section on Moses. It seems sensible to argue that the first expansion is the critical one, upon which the passages on phosphorus and spies was grafted. As the researches of Charles-Daubert, Berti and Schwarzbach have established the early versions of the 'Moses' section was compiled from a series of classical and early modern sources (possibly lifted *en masse* from *Theophrastus Redivivus*): the text itself acknowledges Justin's *Epitome Trogedus* but other sources included readily available works by Tacitus, Josephus, Philo, Clement of Alexandria and later early modern works by Vanini, Pomponatius, and Naudé. The first expansion employed at least two more sources that can be readily identified: Diodorus Siculus and Toland's *Hodegus*. Diodorus is clearly the source used to expand the life of Moses as Egyptian politician and nomarch: again his text was readily available and indeed used by other *libertin* texts.⁷² The source for the interpretation of the episode of the 'Cloud and Pillar' on the other hand does not seem to be traceable to classical origins: the political and anti-providential interpretation of the incident in *Exodus* seems to be derived originally from Toland's work.⁷³ As indicated above, Toland's essay was initially circulated in manuscript form (in French) from as early as 1708 in The Hague; by 1710 it was in the possession of Eugene and D'Hohendorf. At some point from 1708 it was also distributed in an English manuscript before being published in a collection of works in 1720. Although there is no direct evidence to hand (yet) on purely textual evidence it is arguable that Toland's work has an intimate connection with the developing manuscript history of the *Traité*. What is unclear is whether those who copied and distributed such manuscripts included Toland himself, or whether they merely took the opportunity of exploiting Toland's work. The addition of the 'cloud and pillar' was not reproduced in the 1719 printed edition possibly because those involved in the publication (Johnson at least?) also knew that Toland was imminently to publish his own essay in England. By 1719 Toland's reputation in relation to his account of Moses had already been compromised by the critical reception of *Origines Judicae*. Given the careful attention paid by all the participants to covering up the historical origins and authorship of the *Traité* inclusion of such an easily

⁷¹ On Moses' magical knowledge see T. Jobe 'The devil in Restoration science' *Isis* (1981) 343-57. For a useful account of the popular use and understanding of phosphorus, see J.V. Golinski 'A noble spectacle. Phosphorus and the public culture of science in the early Royal Society' *Isis* 80 (1989) 11-39 especially at 27-8 on 'chymical mountebanks' and the magical uses of the chemical.

⁷² See for example, Theophrastus 435 citing Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* 1.28.2-3.

⁷³ This was indicated in Champion 'Legislators, impostors and politic origins' 352-3.

recognisable extract would have prompted much finger pointing from Christian critics.

It seems likely then, from a comparison between Toland's essays towards his larger study on Moses (and in particular the essay on the 'Cloud and Pillar') and the first expansion that his work may have been the source or inspiration for such revisions. As indicated above Toland was intimate with the circle that drafted the first versions, and also with the circle responsible for the dissemination of the second and third versions. It is worth rehearsing these connections again. Toland in *Origines Judicae* described Moses as an Egyptian Nomarch, learned in the arcana of natural magic, who established a political religion upon pantheistic foundations. The publisher of this work, Thomas Johnson, was an intimate of Aymon (who was also known to Toland), and probable co-editor of the 1719 edition. Between 1708 and 1710 Toland also distributed copies of his dissertations on Moses to Prince Eugene and d'Hohendorf that contained his discussion of the 'Cloud and Pillar'. It was from the Viennese connection that versions of the *Traité* with such discussions originated. These circumstantial matters at the minimum point to some sort of relationship between Toland and the *Traité*, especially when connected to his known interest in such ideas as displayed in the confusion about mis-identification of Bruno's *Spaccio* as the *Traité*. What is not clear is whether this connection tells us more about Toland's thought, or about the nature of the *Traité*.

V

It is obviously with a great deal of caution that this connection between Toland and the *Traité* should be explored. The key piece of evidence about the origins of the 'Hobab' passages in the *Traité*, although it did become a part of the later eighteenth century printed text, is a fragile connection. As already suggested the material may have been adopted without Toland's involvement. Alternatively, Toland may have taken a prompt for his own essays from reading a very early version of the *Traité*.⁷⁴ One of the fundamental problems suggested by this connection is the different thrust of the meanings of the accounts of Moses in the *Traité* and in the broader context of Toland's writings. As we have seen the *Traité* gave a negative and hostile account of the Hebrew legislator which can be contrasted quite definitely with Toland's admiration. The implication of the *Traité* is that Moses exemplified tyranny, while Toland's account lays much more stress upon Moses competence as a legislator. It may be tenable to suggest that Toland, bound by the Straussian imperatives of censorship, simply adopted different attitudes in public and private. More subtly it may be possible to argue that the way Toland wrote in public was related to his intentions as a political author rather than a way of disguising more fundamentally subversive purposes. There is little doubt that the social context for reading a manuscript of the *Traité* was distinct from the audience that encountered a printed edition of Toland's writings. As I have discussed elsewhere Toland had a skilled and complex attitude to the power of public texts as persuasive devices for under-cutting the shibboleths of Judaeo-Christian belief. Much of his rhetorical strategy as a public author was premised upon attempting to appropriate orthodox commonplaces to his own political (republican) agenda. Although intellectually familiar and comfortable with the language of civic republicanism through his own editorial efforts, Toland

⁷⁴ This alternative does seem unlikely since Toland's manuscript was circulated in 1708: there seems little evidence that a version of the *Traité*, with such additions, exists from prior to this date.

understood the priority of a commonwealthsman's approach to political reform to lie in the establishment of civic virtue: by necessity, given the confessional basis of political authority, this involved him in a consistent and profound assault upon the religious *status quo*. Put in the simple terms that Toland used, 'Civil liberty and Religious Toleration, ...[are] the most desirable things in this world, the most conducing to peace, plenty, knowledge, and every kind of happiness, [and] have been the two main objects of all my writing'.⁷⁵ By exploring Toland's attitude to Moses in light of his broader republican objectives may throw more light not only on his thought but also on the difference between English and continental political contexts at the time.

One of the first points to make is that Toland was by no means unique as a republican in drawing significance from the Mosaic model. Importantly, James Harrington, whose works Toland collected and edited in 1700, as Pocock has explained, represented a key moment in the republican development of a political account of the Mosaic theocracy. Drawing specific significance from the collaboration between the heathen Jethro of Midian and Moses, Harrington argued that human and divine prudence was 'first discovered unto mankind by God himself in the fabric of the Commonwealth of Israel'.⁷⁶ Moses had his 'education by the daughter of Pharaoh' and acquired political wisdom through a combination of prophetic understanding and an appreciation of ancient prudence. The perfection of Israel was achieved by the institution of a holy popular commonwealth: the degeneration of such theocracy was prompted by a crisis of republican virtue and the rise of priestcraft.⁷⁷ For Harrington the Mosaic commonwealth was both a *regnum christi* and a human contrivance: indeed 'the history of true religion and the history of republican citizenship are nearly inseparable' in his thought.⁷⁸ Such was Harrington's conviction that divine and rational prudence were complicit in Moses' commonwealth that he denied the irreligious implications of comparing it with the achievements of Numa, Solon and Lycurgus. This was the point of the scriptural elision of the commonwealths of Midian and Israel: 'How then cometh it', he continued, 'to be irreverent or atheistical, as some say, in politicians ...to compare (though but by way of illustration) other legislators or politicians, as Lycurgus, Solon, with Moses, or other commonwealths, as Rome and Venice, with that of Israel?'.⁷⁹ Human prudence was the 'creature of God', thus there were proper commonwealths before that of the Mosaic theocracy and might be afterwards.⁸⁰

Unlike the more Godly accounts of the Hebrew commonwealth written by men like Cunaeus, Harrington's work embraced the republican reading of Moses as a legislator that had its roots in Machiavelli's *Discorsi*. For Harrington this was not to deny the theocratic nature of the *respublica mosaica* but to elevate the status of commonwealth politics to divinity. Following Moses' and Jethro's injunctions, the true commonwealth was popular and anti-hierocratic: importantly this implied that the programme for political reform by necessity invoked both civic and religious renewal for both tyranny and priestcraft were iniquitous. Later republicans like Henry Neville and Algernon Sidney echoed Harrington in applauding the Hebrew state as a 'model fit to be imitated by all nations'.⁸¹ Unlike Machiavelli, Harrington constructed his

⁷⁵ See *Tetradymus* (1720) 223.

⁷⁶ J.G.A. Pocock (ed) *The Political Works of James Harrington* (Cambridge, 1977) 161.

⁷⁷ Pocock 'Introduction' 92.

⁷⁸ Pocock 95.

⁷⁹ Pocock 629.

⁸⁰ Pocock 616-17.

⁸¹ See B. Worden 'Republicanism and the Restoration' in D. Wootton (ed) *Republicanism, Liberty and Commercial Society 1649-1776* (Stanford, 1994) 162. Rousseau continued this

account of Moses from almost comprehensively scriptural sources: much of the defence of his position against the attacks of contemporary clergy rested upon his ability to establish his position from biblical material. So although Harrington undertook an unorthodox description of the Hebrew commonwealth it was not contrived as an underhand assault upon the integrity of Scripture: indeed the persuasive authority of his argument was intended to derive public credibility because it was composed as a biblical interpretation.

A far less orthodox account of Moses as a political legislator can be seen in the fragment written by the radical republican and deist Charles Blount addressed to 'the deservedly Honoured and most ingenious Major A. concerning the Original of the Jews' in 1692. Blount, a member of the radical Green Ribbon Club was a skilled polemicist responsible for publicising and translating the ideas and texts of Hobbes, Spinoza, Herbert of Cherbury, Richard Simon and many more *libertin erudit* works. He published in a variety of print formats ranging from cheap penny ballads to scholarly and erudite Latin folios. A correspondent with many leading Restoration figures, Blount was also responsible for the circulation and distribution of clandestine and subversive texts like Henry Stubbe's *Account of the rise and progress of Mahometanism*.⁸² Familiar with the works of figures like Machiavelli, Pomponazzi, Vanini, Campanella and Naudé, political accounts of religion littered his works. An author with eclectic tastes and an elusive textual identity Blount was a skilled manipulator of other authors' texts invariably manipulating their meaning to underscore any latent heterodoxy, while seemingly leaving this appreciation to the reader's understanding. Blount devoted particular attention to Moses in his translations of Thomas Burnet's *Archaologia Philosophia* contextualising the Pentateuch with other pagan sources to suggest that the Hexameron was a partial and fabulous account accommodated to the 'capacity of the vulgar'.⁸³ Moses was not the author of divine revelation but a legislator who expounded 'the first originals of things after such a method as might breed in the minds of men piety, and a worshiping of the true God'.⁸⁴ In his letter to 'Major A' he touched more specifically upon the classical accounts for the origin of Judaism. Blount objected to the edition of Tacitus' *Histories* undertaken by Sir Henry Saville because it had omitted Book V. To correct this censorship Blount translated the offending portion from Tacitus, *en passant* recommending as a parallel the narrative of Trogus Pompeius epitomized by Justin, and the accounts of Egyptian writers like Manethon, Chaeremon, Lysimachus, and Appion.⁸⁵ Commenting on Moses passing the Red Sea, Blount noted (following Memphite tradition) that the legislator was 'well acquainted with the condition of the place, observed the flux and ⁸⁶reflux of the waters, and so brought over his army by dry land'. Alexander of Macedon had experienced the same sort of episode in his passage through the Pamphylian Ocean. Both Abraham and Moses 'were well skill'd in Egyptian learning' and (following Herodotus) this explained why certain of their customs such as circumcision were adopted from Egyptian practice. Judaism upheld the principal tenets of natural religion in the 'practices of Virtue and Goodness'. The laws, rites and ceremonies of Judaism far from being particular

republican regard for Moses as a great legislator: see 'Des Juifs' in *Oeuvres Completes* III (Paris, 1964) 499.

⁸² For his role in distribution of deistical manuscripts see his letter to Dr Sydnham, May 1686: 'it was your request that I would help you to a sight of the Deists arguments, which I told you, I had sometimes by me, but then had lent them out, they are now return'd me again, and according to my promise I have herewith sent them to you'. *Oracles* 87.

⁸³ Blount *Oracles* 68, 69.

⁸⁴ Blount *Oracles* 75.

⁸⁵ See *Oracles* 127-30.

⁸⁶ *Oracles* 131.

divine revelation 'were practised among the Gentiles indifferently, or at least did not much vary from them, as the diligent searchers into Antiquity well know'.⁸⁷ Unlike Harrington's more positive explication of the significance of the Mosaic commonwealth for contemporary politics, Blount's arguments simply indicated that Moses was as much a legislator as any other figure in antiquity, the point being that most religion (beyond the rational injunctions of natural religion) was a heuristic device either for civic measures, or twisted to deviant purposes by a corrupt and self interested priesthood. The point to be made here is that there was a readily available public discourse articulated by English republicans from the 1650s to the 1700s which paid close conceptual and historical attention to the nature and import of the *respublica mosaica*. As the difference between Harrington and Blount illustrates there were different emphases deduced from the Mosaic pattern but a common theme was the description of Moses as a legislator in the lineage of Lycurgus, Solon and Numa Pompilius. Toland's relation of Moses in *Origines Judicae* and cognate works was not a work of individual innovation in genre but drew upon a well established tradition. The fact that Toland was intimate with Harrington's writings as editor of his works (1700), and certainly had knowledge of Blount's collected works, suggests that he was cognisant of these writings and perhaps even took his cue from their discussions.

VI

Toland's understanding of Moses was not simply a historical argument contrived to destabilize orthodox interpretations but acted as the premise for his arguments directed to changing the social policy of the early eighteenth century state. It was from his 'political' reading of the significance of Moses the 'legislator' that Toland advanced arguments in favour of ameliorating the conditions of Jews in English society. In October 1714, the printer Bernard Lintott, drew up an agreement with the Irishman John Toland: he had already given Toland ten guineas 'for a copy entitul'd Reasons for Naturalising the Jews in Great Britain & Ireland etc'. He also promised to pay a further sum when the first print run of two thousand copies 'are sold off'.⁸⁸ Unusually for Toland's work only one reply was published the following year even though as one historian writes, it was a deliberately provocative work.⁸⁹ To many contemporaries Toland was a dangerous and subversive figure: a violent 'Republican Atheist' whose politics and religion were profoundly heterodox.⁹⁰ The little attention that has been paid to Toland's contribution to the debate about Jewish disabilities has been found in works devoted to the history of the Jewish community in England rather than in studies of Toland himself. Indeed the place of Toland's *Reasons for Naturalising the Jews* in this historiography is interesting: although there is little effort made to contextualise the work, either with the rest of Toland's writings or with contemporary debates, it is regarded as a key conceptual contribution in the evolution of theories of Jewish emancipation. Ettinger regarded Toland's work as isolated but proleptic of more liberal dispositions towards the Jewish religion.⁹¹

⁸⁷ *Oracles* 133.

⁸⁸ See BL Add Mss 4295 f 26. October 28 1714. The irony of course is that only two copies of the work now survive. There are however two modern editions. See P. Radin (ed) *Pamphlets relating to the Jews in England in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (California State Library, 1939) and H. Mainusch (ed) *Grunde fur die Einburgerung der Juden in Grossbritannien und Ireland* (Stuttgart, 1965). All references will be to the latter edition.

⁸⁹ See D. Statt *Foreigners and Englishmen. The controversy over immigration and population, 1660-1760* (Delaware, 1995) who comments (at 195) that the 'tract, though enlightened in its arguments, represents little more than a gesture of provocation'.

⁹⁰ See S. Parker *Censura Temporum* (1709) 564.

⁹¹ See S. Ettinger 'The beginning of the change in attitude of European society towards the Jews' *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 7 (1961) 193-219, discussion of Toland 216-19.

Mayer, in his survey of Enlightenment attitudes towards Jews, complimented Toland's work: his 'pamphlet was the first to go beyond mere toleration of the Jews by urging a decisive improvement in their civil status'. Unlike many of the later polemicists like Voltaire and d'Holbach who reviled Judaism as a model of intolerance and dogmatism Toland laid the groundwork for the liberal writings of men like Christian Döhmer and Abbé Henri Gregoire.⁹² Jacob Katz placed Toland at the intellectual origins of Jewish emancipation: in the *Reasons* Toland 'applied a central principle of European rationalism - the essential oneness of all human nature - to the case of the Jews. This principle later became the cornerstone in the ideology of Jewish integration'.⁹³ In broader studies of Toland's intellectual relationship with Judaism historians like Max Wiener have indicated the Irishman's intimacy with Jewish intellectual and theological sources.⁹⁴ More recently it has been argued that immersed as he was in Jewish culture Toland's philosemitism was key to his critique of organised (and deviant) Christianity: again in Enlightenment coterie Toland's attitudes to Judaism was 'a real exception to the rule'.⁹⁵

Indicating the broad intentions of his work, Toland's *Reasons* contained also 'A defence of the Jews against all vulgar prejudices in all countries'. Reiterating this eirenic theme, immediately beneath this on the title page, was displayed a citation from Malachi 1. 10 'Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every one with his neighbour?'. Dedicated to the reverend leaders of the Church, Toland, appealing to the learning and piety of the Archbishops and Bishops, hoped that he 'espous'd a righteous interest'. Drawing a distinction between such Godly men, and the 'pernicious maxims of those Priests your predecessors; who, in the following piece, appear to have been the implacable enemies of the Jews, as their superstition made them adversaries to true Religion', Toland encouraged them to use 'your power in the Church, your authority in the Senate, and your influence upon all the people' to be 'friends and protectors [of the Jews] in the British Parliament'.⁹⁶ Re-inforcing the Jewish origins of Christianity Toland intended to encourage 'affection' for the 'Jewish Nation', after all as he pointed out, 'By them you are undeniably come to the knowledge of one God, from them you have receiv'd the holy Scriptures, of them is descended Moses and the Prophets, with Jesus and all the Apostles'.⁹⁷ Carefully, Toland attempted to premise the frame of his arguments on religious grounds: the history of the Jewish nation was also the history of Christianity. The bulk of his text, however, eschewed theological arguments in favour of more civil or political reasonings.

What Toland wished to establish were the 'common principles' in favour of a 'General Naturalisation'. These 'common reasons for a General Naturalisation, are as strong in behalf of the Jews, as of any other people whatsoever'. Toland briefly rehearsed his commitment to such policy in particular his 'share with others, in

⁹² See P. H. Mayer 'The attitude of the Enlightenment towards the Jew' *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 26 (1963) 1161-1205 at 1165. Mayer's contribution is a valuable survey, although he mis-characterised Toland as a devout Dissenter reverent of all Scripture and especially the Old Testament.

⁹³ See J. Katz 'The term "Jewish Emancipation": its origin and historical impact' in *Emancipation and Assimilation. Studies in Modern Jewish History* (1972) 21-46, on Toland see 28-9. Many thanks to David Feldman for drawing my attention to this work.

⁹⁴ See M. Wiener 'John Toland and Judaism' *Hebrew Union College Annual* 16 (1941) 215-42.

⁹⁵ See S. Berti 'At the roots of unbelief' *Journal of History of Ideas* 56 (1995) 555-573 especially at 567-73.

⁹⁶ Toland *Reasons* 36, 38.

⁹⁷ Toland *Reasons* 36.

persuading and convincing some persons to embrace the right side of the question' and enabling the 'publick law' (of 1709). Lamenting the injurious repeal of the statute, Toland optimistically insisted that this at least provided opportunity to reform some of the defects of the original provisions by including within its remit 'those who wou'd not only be good subjects, but who wou'd also be as useful and advantageous to the public weal, as any of those Protestant Churches'. Well aware that his proposal would not be popular he counter-argued that 'I may propose to serve my country ... [and] the most effectual way to do so, is the promoting of humanity, and the doing good to all mankind'.⁹⁸ The first thrust of Toland's defence of these principles was to argue that encouraging secure Jewish settlement in England would not compromise either religion or the economic welfare of the state. Countering Tory insistence that naturalisation would pollute Christianity and the established Church he asserted that, 'no body needs be afraid that any religious party in the nation will thereby be weaken'd or enforc'd'. Jews would make no claims on ecclesiastical benefices or other Church resources. Neither would they ally against either dissenting or established churchmen: 'they'll never join with any party in Civil Affairs, but that which patronises liberty of Conscience and the Naturalisation, which will ever be the side of Liberty and the Constitution'. Jews would make good citizens: far from being 'ill subjects, and a dangerous people on any account, ... they are as obedient, peaceable, useful, and advantageous as any; and even more so than many others'. Since the Jews had no country of their own they would bring no foreign 'intanglements', but devote themselves to the defence of their adopted country.⁹⁹

The Jewish community also promised economic benefits: a 'confluence of strangers' far from bringing unfair competition for bread as the 'Vulgar' feared would be the 'true cause of the land's felicity'. The influx of more traders, artisans, and brokers would expand production: 'this one rule of *More*, and *Better*, and *Cheaper*, will ever carry the market against all expedients and devices'.¹⁰⁰ For Toland, opportunity was all. The fact that the Jewish nation 'do now almost entirely betake themselves to business of exchange, insurances, and improving of money upon security' was the result of 'necessity' rather than 'any National Institution or Inclination'. Excluded and disabled from handicrafts, public employment, and ownership of property forced them to 'trade and usury, since otherwise they could not possibly live'. Toland argued that given the equal footing with others 'not only for buying and selling, for security and protection to their goods and persons; but likewise for arts and handicrafts, for purchasing and inheriting of estates in lands and houses ... then I doubt not, but they'll insensibly betake themselves to Building, Farming, and all sorts of Improvement like other people'.¹⁰¹ Jews too could be shepherds, seamen and soldiers. Vulgar prejudice about the 'prevailing notion of a certain genius, or bent of mind, reigning in a certain Family or Nation' should be abandoned. Such 'byass' proceeded 'from Accident, and not from Nature'. Government and environment determined such characteristics: 'The ordinary sentiments and manners of the Portuguese or Italian Jews, differ not from those of the other Portuguese or Italians'.¹⁰² Prejudices about Jewish personal characteristics were 'silly ... exciting at once laughter, scorn and pity'. For Toland, naturalisation was just because Jews were simply like other people: some were 'sordid wretches, sharpers, extortioners, villains of all sorts and degrees' but others were 'men of probity and worth, persons of courage and conduct, of liberal and generous spirits'. Jews as humans deserved to be regarded 'under the common circumstances of human nature' and as

⁹⁸ Toland *Reasons* 52, 46, 44.

⁹⁹ Toland *Reasons* 52, 54.

¹⁰⁰ 82, 84

¹⁰¹ 56.

¹⁰² 60.

'creatures of the same species'. The diversity of manners 'and especially contrary rites or doctrines in religion' led to hatred, cruel persecution and murder.¹⁰³ The Jews' misfortune, simply because of their religious ceremonies which by their nature were matters indifferent, was to have 'had all nations therefore as their enemies'.¹⁰⁴

The sad experience of the Jews and the concomittant necessity for naturalisation was not the result of accident but the design of Priests who acted like 'ravenous wolves'. In the middle section of his work Toland turned to history to explain how the Jewish nation had suffered. Importantly although he exploited the learning of the historian Jaques Basnage and his massive *Histoire des Juives* (1706) to provide the 'matters of fact' he did not use the providentialist arguments embedded in his source to explain Jewish sufferings. 'Their most inveterate enemies were the Priests' who conspired with rapacious Princes to plunder Jewish property, 'but also to acquire the reputation of zeal and sanctity among the credulous vulgar'. The Priests contrived false accounts of Jews and their religion to cultivate popular anxieties about Jewish sorcery and child crucifixion. Such was the fostering of hatred 'that their condition under Christian princes was farr worse than that of their forefathers under Pharaoh'. Although concerned to document the tragedies of Jewish suffering Toland was also keen to establish the causes: 'so dangerous and destructive a monster is superstition, when rid by the Mob, and driven by the Priests'.¹⁰⁵ Recommending Basnage's general work for those who wanted to investigate the histories of other nations, Toland turned to concentrate on the annals of English history from the time of William the Conqueror to the eighteenth century. William saw the political benefits of protecting the Jewish community, especially for the revenues he could derive from them in return for protection. 'Political reasons' that William Rufus and Henry I and Henry II adopted too. The first brutality 'chiefly at the instigation of the clergy' was established in the reign of Richard I and continue by John and Henry III. The nadir was achieved by the policy of Edward I, who 'after inhumanities not to be mention'd without horror, ... banish'd 'em quite out of the Kingdom in the year 1290'. The theme of Toland's history was that the Jewish community had continually suffered the most atrocious treatment under the specious motivation of false piety and the 'incessant bawling of the Priests'. It was only with the rule of Oliver Cromwell that Jews were readmitted to England. Since then they had been 'conniv'd at and tolerated, but not authoriz'd by Charter or Act of Parliament'.¹⁰⁶

Toland rejoiced that England had been 'long since devested of such barbarous and bloody practises'. Abandoning 'narrow and bigotted principles' the promotion of 'common humanity and genuine religion' was now a possibility which would benefit both 'private and public interest'.¹⁰⁷ Toland was aware that many critics would claim that he was blind to the dangers of Jewish religion, but he noted that he had taken 'no inconsiderable pains' to investigate their rites and ceremonies. Indeed, in the latter part of his text, Toland picking up on the theme of 'genuine religion' advanced the suggestion that Judaism was a tolerable and natural religion. Contrary to commonplace Christian accounts, Toland (exploiting certain Jewish authors) insisted that the rites and ceremonies of that religion were 'solely calculated for their own Nation and Republic'. Jews did not wish to convert Christians but simply 'are every where enjoin'd to magnify to all the world the divine goodness, wisdom, and power, with those duties of men, and other attributes of God, which constitute Natural

¹⁰³ 62.

¹⁰⁴ 64.

¹⁰⁵ 68.

¹⁰⁶ 82, 80.

¹⁰⁷ 82.

Religion'.¹⁰⁸ Jews, unlike Christians had no 'Damning Theology' that restrained 'salvation in effect, tho not in words, to the few elect of their own cant and livery'. Naomi would not have encouraged her daughter in law Ruth to return to her 'own people and Gods, had she been persuaded there was no salvation out of the Jewish Church'.¹⁰⁹ Jewish religion, as presented by Toland, was the benign inverse of corrupt Priestly Christianity, in its tolerance and morality. As he continued, the Jews expected 'no more from the rest of mankind living out of Judea, than, avoiding and detesting the worship of dead men, with all other sorts of Idolatry, to acknowledge and honor one supreme Being, or First Cause, and to obey the Law of Nature, as the adequate rule of their life and manners'. Commanded by Moses 'not to revile the Gods of other nations (Exod.22.28)', Judaism became the normative model of tolerance.¹¹⁰ Toland simply rebutted the charge of 'Judaizing'.

For Toland, then, Jewish ceremony was irrelevant to the question of tolerance or naturalisation. As humans, like others, Jews were 'safe and sociable'.¹¹¹ Religious ceremony, as long as it did not prompt execrable persecution like priestly Christianity, was immaterial to the status of individuals in a civic sense. Although Toland had included a very positive account of Jewish religion his defence of toleration was premised not upon this theological credibility but upon his understanding of the relationship between the individual (qua human) and civil society. Toland had opened his work with the assertion that it was his duty to defend naturalisation because it was every person's obligation 'to promote the good of ... [their] country'. Human society was structured by 'ties of kindred, acquaintance, friendship, or confederacy'. Because human beings took longer to rear than other species they were 'absolutely incapable to subsist afterwards without the company of other men'. The web of dependent relations was intimate and social, initial with family relations and then 'in process of time forms notions of acquaintance, neighbourhood, friendship, affinity, association, confederacy, subjection and superiority'. All individuals then attracted three forms of related obligation: to domestic community, to the welfare of the whole species, and thirdly 'in a special manner to the safe and flourishing condition of that country or society to which he immediately belongs'. These obligations were to be achieved by diligent industry and would thus benefit both public and private interests.¹¹² It was for these reasons, since Jews ought to be treated in the 'common circumstances of human nature', that naturalisation was a rational injunction. Consequently, Toland argued that not only should Jews be given security of citizenship in matters of property ownership and livelihood, but also be allowed to hold political, civil, military or local office 'which may indifferently be held by men of all religions'.¹¹³ The Jews should be naturalised 'as, like the Quakers, to be incapacitated in nothing, but where they incapacitate themselves'. Toland's defence of naturalisation was very much in terms, then, of the advantages of social policy rather than any particular theological position.

VII

Toland's work was reviled as 'impious, dangerous and subtle'.¹¹⁴ Given the antipathetic reaction to Toland's *Reasons*, coupled with his own expressed doubts about the sort of reception his work would encounter, it is perhaps important to ask

¹⁰⁸ 96.

¹⁰⁹ 98, citing Ruth 1.15.

¹¹⁰ 100.

¹¹¹ 100.

¹¹² 42.

¹¹³ 88-90.

¹¹⁴ *A Confutation* 1.

what was his purpose in publishing the work and how does it relate to his understanding of Moses? There is no doubt that Toland had a sincere concern for the plight of contemporary Jews: whether this consideration was premised upon a devout theological affinity or upon a more heterodox and deistical understanding of the nature of religion is debatable. One of the pieces of evidence that historians have used to indicate Toland's intimacy with Jewish culture is his use of Jewish sources in both the *Reasons* and his other work. In particular the point has been made that Toland made explicit use of one identifiable Jewish work by Simone Luzzatto *Discorso circa il stato de gl'Hebrei* (Venice, 1638). Toland's use of this source will also, perhaps, indicate how he made the conceptual link between a political defence of eighteenth century Jews with a political understanding of Moses.

Toland made no secret of his interest in this work which he commented had 'an intention near a kin to mine'. Such was his consideration of the book that he announced he intended to 'in convenient time publish the translation'. Luzzatto was a 'man of extraordinary learning and judgement, very acute and not meanly eloquent'. As Barzilay has shown much of the argument in defence of Jewish religion was taken from Luzzatto's work.¹¹⁵ The final paragraph of *Reasons* concluded with a positive recommendation of Luzzatto's work as 'much the handsomest and most reasonable discourse, that ever I read on the subject'.¹¹⁶ The significance of Toland's regard for Luzzatto's work was more complicated than has been previously appreciated. Most accounts of this intellectual relationship have assumed that Toland was simply borrowing from a relatively uncontroversial (if Jewish) source: in the case of Luzzatto the imputation of orthodoxy was far from the truth. Luzzatto (d. 1663) was a rabbi in Venice. His written corpus is small, consisting of the *Discorso* (1638) and a philosophical work *Socrate* (1651), both written in Italian, clearly for a non-Jewish audience.¹¹⁷ As Ruderman has established, the later philosophical work *Socrate* is a profoundly sceptical and erudite text that avoided any account of revelation in its discussion of intellectual discourse: it can hardly be described as orthodox in either Jewish or Christian terms. This ambiguity of theological correctness is also evident in the text Toland had access to. The *Discorso* is more than a work of Jewish apologetic: in the course of defending the Jewish community of Venice, Luzzatto contrived arguments from a number of different intellectual positions. His work was divided into two parts: the first section offered a defence of the role the Jewish community played in the economy of Venice. It was from these sections that Toland drew much of his material. The second section was a more explicit defence of the Jewish religion and the loyalty of the community conceived specifically to rebut the charges Tacitus had laid against them in Book V of his *Histories*. It was in these chapters that Luzzatto contrived a very unorthodox description of the nature of religion and its relationship with the state.¹¹⁸ Here is not the place to give a detailed exposition of Luzzatto's work but simply to underscore two related themes.¹¹⁹ As Melamed points out Luzzatto was one of the first Jewish

¹¹⁵ I. E. Barzilay 'John Toland's borrowings from Simone Luzzatto' *Jewish Social Studies* 31 (1969) 75-81.

¹¹⁶ *Reasons* 102.

¹¹⁷ The best account of Luzzatto is D. Ruderman 'Science and skepticism. Simone Luzzatto on perceiving the natural world' in *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (Yale, 1995) 153-84.

¹¹⁸ The best introduction to Luzzatto's text is B. Ravid *Economics and Toleration in sixteenth century Venice. The background and context of the Discorso of Simone Luzzatto* (Jerusalem, 1978) especially 19-22 which outlines the structure of the work.

¹¹⁹ The following paragraphs draw upon the work of B. Septimus 'Biblical religion and political rationality in Simone Luzzatto, Maimonides and Spinoza' in I. Twersky (ed) *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* (Harvard, 1979) 399-434, and A. Melamed 'Simone Luzzatto on Tacitus: Apologetica and ragione di stato' in I. Twersky (ed) *Studies in Medieval*

thinkers to answer the charges laid against the Jewish community by Tacitus in his *Histories*: the latter had reviled the Jews as both superstitious and politically subversive. In his response Luzzatto made a distinction between Tacitus as a political thinker and him as an anti-Jewish polemicist: as Melamed comments 'Luzzatto come to bury Tacitus the antisemite by means of praising Tacitus the master of reason of state'.¹²⁰ Jewish religion was not politically disruptive but originally adapted to accommodate reasons of state. Luzzatto exploited Machiavellian notions of 'prudenza', 'fortezza' and 'virtu' to establish a 'political' reading of the function of religion in the state. The theology constructed by the legislator Moses was 'a political governance patterned after the divine governance of nature'.¹²¹ This Mosaic foundation was calculated to promote a religion that was importantly both rational, and therefore anti-superstitious, and also politically convenient. For Luzzatto the description of Moses as a legislator did not imply an ungodly motive: Moses promulgated 'the law of God ... [which] provided and cared for the good of our entire species'.¹²² Legislators embraced political and moral ambitions: the Jewish example, contrary to Tacitus, established a virtuous, in both the political and religious sense, republic. Judaism as conceived by Moses was a powerful civic theology effective at protecting the interests of nation and state: such religion cultivated a vigorous patriotism and 'rendered the faithful people more lively in its own belief and more militant in defence of its native rites'.¹²³ Many of the rites and ceremonies which Tacitus objected to had been calculated for such civil objectives. Mosaic injunctions about the sabbath and the prohibition on the consumption of pork had 'politicamente' origins either to induce a process of obligation or to encourage military participation. As a consistent part of Luzzatto's argument, in defence of Jewish practices, was his method of establishing a comparison between such manners and Roman equivalents.¹²⁴ These related themes, of Moses as a legislator and of Judaism as a rational political religion, were an important influence on Toland's intellectual understanding of Judaism.¹²⁵ Importantly, as both Septimus and Melamed have established Luzzatto's arguments about the nature of Mosaic religion in the *Discorso* also exercised a critical influence on the writings of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico Politicus* (1670) and James Harrington's *Oceana* (1656), texts with which Toland was very intimate.¹²⁶

VIII

From late 1709 Toland, as discussed above, entertained the reputation of a man who had given an highly unorthodox account of the political significance of the *respublica mosaica*. By researching in the historical materials beyond the Pentateuch, including classical and contemporary works, Toland had inscribed an interpretation of Moses as a great pantheistic legislator. Reconstructing the historical circumstances of the Hebrew commonwealth from a synthesis of pagan sources like Strabo, Tacitus, Diodorus Siculus and Herodotus as well as more contemporary

Jewish History and Literature 2 (Harvard, 1984) 143-170. I am grateful to the latter for electronic discussions on the subject.

¹²⁰ Melamed 158.

¹²¹ Cited in Septimus 411.

¹²² Cited in Septimus 425-26.

¹²³ Cited in Septimus 423.

¹²⁴ See Septimus 422; Melamed 164.

¹²⁵ That Toland was aware of these themes is indicated in the *Reasons* 94 where he commented on Luzzatto's defence 'against the calumnies of the celebrated historian, Cornelius Tacitus'.

¹²⁶ For Harrington see especially A. Melamed 'English travellers and Venetian Jewish scholars. The case of Simone Luzzatto and James Harrington' in G. Cozzi (ed) *Gli Ebrei e Venezia secoli XIV-XVIII* (Milan, 1987) 507-26

accounts like Harrington and Luzzatto, Toland had described Moses as an Egyptian trained nomarch, expert in magic and reason of state, who designed a political institution premised upon a non-idolatrous civic religion. Toland's intentions in carefully constructing this representation was twofold: he was both making a point about the historical nature of Biblical evidence and providing a prescriptive model for the relationship between religion and the state. As he repeatedly insisted the Old Testament, as an historical source, was partial and abridged: it could claim no special evidential status as revealed material but had to be contextualised with other pagan sources. In a more positive mode Toland advanced a veneration of the Mosaic institution as a prescriptive model for political and religious reform. How far this admiration for the Hebrew commonwealth can be described as 'religious' is open to debate. It is possible to suggest that Toland's applause for Moses was part of a public strategy for rendering republican institutions more readily accommodated to the prevalent Judaeo-Christian discourses of his time. If Moses could be shown to be a republican pantheist who designed a rational religion for political purposes then Toland's arguments were less exposed to vilification as irreligious. This, of course, poses the question of how sincere Toland's public promotion of Moses' institutions was in the private intimacy of his own intellectual circle. The co-incidence and difference between Toland's ideas and texts and the diverse manuscript traditions of the *Traité* is intriguing and tantalising. Ultimately it points to the different public contexts for the reception of the works. One last point may be made underscoring this difference. It is possible, by contextualising it with his work on the *respublica mosaica*, to argue that Toland's *Nazarenus* (1718) was an English 'version' of the *Traité*. Toland's *Nazarenus* using the language of biblical criticism projected an account of religion that synchronised the claims of Judaism, Christianity and Islam: all good religion was natural and civic, all bad religion was priestly and tyrannical. The historical differences between Judaism, Christianity and Islam were the product of diverse historical and cultural circumstance rather than acts of revelation or providence. Embedded in the work was a profound plea for the toleration of all religions and the concomitant denigration of political and religious tyranny. Infused with anticlericalism, Toland indicted the established account of Christian orthodoxy. *Nazarenus* attracted a massive and hostile critical reception both in England and throughout the continent. This work originated in the same intellectual context that produced *Origines Judicae* and *Hodegus*, being circulated in manuscript from 1709. The publication of 1718, in a similar manner to the *Traité* was accompanied by additional dissertations. Just as the manuscripts of the *Traité* were rhetorically authenticated by literary essays that established its historical provenance and attempted to identify its author, so *Nazarenus* was presented as merely an account of an ancient codex. Importantly, Toland implicated the Eugene/d'Hohendorf circle in the publication by appending an extract from La Monnoye's *Menagiana* giving an account of the provenance of his source material. Just as post-1712 copies of the *Traité* were identified as coming from this connection, so too were they distributed with material responding to La Monnoye's original essay on the existence of the *Traité*. These structural similarities do, when examined in context with the other personal intimacies Toland had with the production of the *Traité*, provoke some reconsideration of the differing intentions of continental and English freethinkers. As was indicated above Toland's work on Moses was conducted from within a republican idiom: it was not calculated simply to corrode Christian certainties but also was the premise for his advocacy of reforms of the confessional structure of politics in his time. Because Toland wrote for a public audience who were generally predisposed to reject such revisions of the status quo, it was essential for him, if he was to be an effective polemicist, to accommodate his ideas to the discourses of the time. The compilers of the *Traité*, possibly because the work had a different (possibly more receptive and less orthodox) audience did not operate under such constraints.

Appendix: the 'Life of Moses' from Toland's 'Projet' to the *Traité des trois imposteurs*.

Here transcribed are copies of John Toland's 'Projet' from the 'Dissertations Diverse' written for Prince Eugene and Baron d'Hohendorf. For comparison with the 'Projet' the variant sections of the life of Moses from two English manuscript translations of the the *Traité* have been included. Both these manuscripts (British Library, Stowe 47 and Glasgow University Library, General 1185) included notes to the effect that they were copied from Eugene's library by permission of d'Hohendorf.

In the transcription of the 'Projet' I have included all marginal references in the main text. Footnotes have been indicated and included. Folio breaks are identified by <1 ...>.

<1>

PROJET
d'une dissertation
Sur la colonne de feu et de nuée des Israelites:
dans une lettre à Megalonymus

Embasticoetas praeferabat facem petroni

Monsieur,

Je me suis souvent etonné pour quoi plusieurs personnes, celebres à juste titre tant par leur literature que par leur politesses, ont negligé (comme à dessein) l'histoire de la tres ancienne nation Judaique, pendant que d'ailleurs ils se sont donné beaucoup de peine, et n'ont pas montré moins de peneration, dans leurs recherches des antiquités Grecques et Romaines. La raison de cela m'a d'abord paru etre, le peu d'entendu du territoire des Juifs, la sterilité de leurs exploits militaires, et la <2>grossiereté de leurs moeurs: sujets tres-ingrats pour instruire ou pour plaise. Mais queque juste que soit cette censure à l'egard des Juifs en particulier, neanmoins leurs affaires ont eté de tout temps intimement enchainées et entremelées avec celles des Egyptiens, ou des Assyriens, ou des Perses; qui etoient des nations dont les unes ne cedoient point aux Grecs dans les sciences, les autres egaloient les Romains en faits d'armes, et les unes et les autres surpassoient de beaucoup les Grecs et les Romains par leur antiquité. Enfin, l'experience m'a enseigné que si la Judée a eté ainsi negligée par les laiques, la vraie raison en est, que les Ecclesiastiques se sont entirement appropriés cette province, à la culture de laquelle ils n'ont pourtant apporté jusqu'ici ni assez de defence ni assez de travail: ce qui a fait paroître tres-sterile un terroir, qui dailleurs est suffisamment fertile, pour y pouvoir cueillir de quoi recompenser l'industrie d'un critique judicieux. Mais comme quesques nations, pour le mieux conserver leurs mines d'or et d'argent ont debité qu'elles etoient hantées par les dragons effroyables, ou infectées par des vapeurs nuisibles; ainsi le Clergé n'a pas mis en pratiques ni moins d'art, ni usé de moindre violence, pour detourner tous les autres de l'etude des anciens livres juifs. Ils ont fait passer pour sacrileges, que d'y regarder seulement <3>sans leur permission. Ils ont publié que leur lecture tourneroit la cervelle aux gens, et la rempliroit d'étranges

chimeres: personne meme n'ignore, qu'ils les avoient entierelement arraché des mains des laiques, pendant queques certaines d'années. Il est vray, que depuis Luther ceux des regions septentrionales les ont recouvrés par pure force pour l'usage commun d'un chacun; cependant ils ne peuvent les lire encore qu'avec les lunettes de leurs propres pretres, etant obligés de deviner leur sens par des regles de la façon de ces memes pretres (à leur profit indubitablement) et que nous nommons Systemes, Formulaires, et Confessions de foi, auxquelles toutes choses doivent etre necessairement reduites et accomodées, tant pour la matiere que pour les expressions. Voici d'excellans expediens pour mediter sans idées, pour parler sans penser, et pour scavoit tout ce qu'il y a dans la Bible sans en lire un seul mot. Mais rien n'a tant contribué à donner de l'aversion aux esprits genereux pour l'etude du Vieux Testament (comme se nomme communement le recueil entier des restes Judaiques) qu'un persuasion que ce n'est dans toute son etendue qu'une scene de choses incomprehensibles, et un systeme complet de prodiges et de miracles; ce qui n'estiment <4>pas propres pour etre le sujet de la Critique ou des recherches des belles lettres. C'est un chose merveilleuse que la force de l'education en ceci. Des miracles sans doute y sont rapportes: mais comparativement en fort petit nombre. Je parle bien modestement, quand je n'admets pas pour miracles la troisieme partie de ceux qui sont estimés tels dans le Pentateuch (par exemple) et ainsi dans les autres livres à proportion. Pour eviter toute logomachie, je veux dire que les ecrivains de ces livres n'ont jamais donne ces choses pour miracles eux-memes, ni pretendu que les autres les deussent croire tels.

Je m'attends, Monsieur, que vous allez d'abord demander des exemples, comme les seules preuves qui soient propres à cette assertion. La demande est extremement raisonnable, et je reconnois sans hesiter que je suis tenu d'y repondre. Vous scavez que j'ai deja promis au public LA REPUBLIQUE DE MOYSE, laquelle de toutes les formes de government j'estime avoir eté la plus excellente et parfaite. Mais je donneray une face et un tour si nouveau (pourtant sincere et naturel) non seulement au systeme politique entier et à la plus grande partie des loix particulieres de cet incomparable Legislatteur: mais <5>aussi à un si grand nombre des circonstances et incidens historiques qui se trouvent dans la relation fort reffectueuser et tres-abregée du Pentateuque: que je trouve infiniment necessaire de publier par avance queque petit echantillon de mon entreprises, ne fut ce que pour accoutumer queques-uns de mes lecteurs à ces sortes d'explications. Vous pouvez vous ressouvenir peut-etre, m'avoir entendu dire plusieurs fois, que La Republique Mosaïque seroit un ouvrage que je pretendois faire vivre apres moi, sans craindre de passer pour fan faron: mais je vous dis presentement de plus, qu'il contiendra un plan bien plus etendu que le titre ne semble promettre; et peut-etre ne concernant pas plus le passé que le temps present, auquel (comme j'ay lieu de l'esperer) il pourra n'etre pas inutile à plusieurs egards. Vous conterez pour deux gros paradoxes, que je soutiens le government donné par Moyse n'avoir eté jamais actuellement etable dans la Judée; et que quand il l'auroit eté une fois, il ne pourroit jamais se detruire apres, ni parla sedition interieure ni par la force exterieure, mais auroit duré aussi long-temps que le genre humain.

En attendant cet ouvrage, vous remarquerez que le sujet de mon echantillon n'est que <6>circonstanciel, et regarde La Colonne de Feu et de Nuée. Je me flatte que cette Dissertation, qui sera en Latin, satisfaira en partie votre demande. J'y prouve par des raisons et des faits incontestables, que c'etoit un colomns de fumée et non pas de nuée, qui guidoit les Israelites dans le desert; et que ce n'etoit pas deux colomnes (comme on croit communement) mais un seule et la meme, qui pendant le jour les guidoit par la nuée de sa fumée, et par la clarte de sa flame pendant la nuit. Ensuite, je fais voir manifestement qu'il n'y avoit nul prodige en tout ceci, et qu'un tel

feu alloit ordinairement devant les armées des autres nations orientales; non pas qu'il se mut miraculeusement de lui meme comme nous le croyons follement) mais il estoit porte dans le machines faites exprés, qui bien qu'elles servissent toutes au meme dessein, cependant estoient nommées differement, selon ce qu'on les consideroit ou simplement ou superstitieusement: ainsi les uns les nommoient foyers portables, et les autres autels sacres; tout de meme que nos Presbyteriens appellent sans façon Table de la communion, ce que les Episcopaux sanctifient de nom d'autel. Mais autels ou <7>foyers, je ne veux jamais disputer pour un nom, et serois encore content si quequ'un les appelloit des fanaux ambulatoires. La raison des ces machines estoit par tout la meme. C'est celle-ci. Dans des pais bien peuples la route des armées (queque etendu que soit leur front, pour la commodité des fourages ou des chemins) est marquée par des villes, des villages, chateaux, et autres lieux remarquables; si bien qu'elles sçavent jusque ou elles doivent s'entendre et ensuite se refferrer, pour formir un seul corps ou un meme camp. Mais dans un desert vaste et abandonné, sans avoir des collines notables, des frequentes rivieres, ou meme des ruines d'anciens batiments, il falloit là de necessaire un guide visible qui precedoit le principal corps, à fin que les ailes pûssent regler leur marche et observer leur terrain, ou distance, pour ne pas l'egarer ou se perdre, et pour sçavoir dans un instant quand l'armée faisoit alte ou campoit. Or il n'y à point de signe muet dans le monde qui peut servir à ceci que le feu seul, puis que la nuée que cause sa fumée se voit en plein jour de fort loin, comme la clarté de sa flame n'est <8>pas moins apparente la nuit. C'est ce que personne n'ignore.

J'ai plusieurs bonnes et suffisantes autorites pour mettre hors de toute question cette coutume des anciens; quoiqu'on se sert presentement de la boussole pour les memes fins dans les memes lieux, selon le rapport de tous les voyageurs: mais, en attendant La Dissertation, l'exemple suivant peut servir de preuve, tire du troisieme livre de Quinte Curce [Cap. 3], ou il decrit la marche de Darius contre Alexandre. Ca été une coutume (dit-il) transmise aux Perses pars leurs ancetres, de commencer leur marche apres le lever de soleil. Lors que le jour le perfectionnoit, le signal le donnoit par une trompette qui sonnoit à la tente de Roy. Au haut de cette tente l'image du soleil, renfermée dans un crystal, donnoit un eclat qui pouvoit etre veu de tout le camp. L'ordre de l'armée estoit en cette maniere. <9> Le feu, qu'ils nommoient sacre et eternel, precedoit sur des autels d'argent. Ensuite venoient les mages, chantants un hymne selon la coutume de leur pais. Apres les mages suivoient 365 jeunes hommes, vetus de robes d'ecarlatte; etants egaux en nombre aux jours de l'année, car l'année est pareillement divisée en autant de jours chez les Perses. Puis marchoit le chariote de Jupiter, attelé de chevaux blancs. Ceux-ci estoient suivis par un autre d'une faille extraordinaire, qu'on nommoit le cheval du soleil.⁽¹⁾ C'est assez de cet auteur, dans lequel vous pouvez lire le reste de la procession.

Je n'avois besoin que de produire seulement une petite partie de ce passage, pour prouver le feu portatif; mais j'ay produit le surplus, pour vous convaincre (monsieur) que la marche des Israelites estoit fort semblable à celle des Perses, ou plutot la meme chose. Le signa; à toutes les deux se donnoit par une trompette du pavillon royal; car ce que nous lisons dans l'écriture Tabernacle, devoit avoir été traduit Tente ou pavillon, comme queque <10>fois il est rendu la Tente du temoignage [Num.9.15. &c]. En effet, c'étoit la Tente dans laquelle JEHOVAS, le Roy des Israelites, estoit present par les types et par ses ministres. Des grands feux estoient portés devant ces deux nations, lesquels feux bien que reconnus par toutes les deux pour symboles de la Divinité (car l'une et l'autre gardoit le feu perpetuellement sans le laisser etiendre dans leurs saints lieux, et pretendoit qu'il estoit originellement

⁽¹⁾ This text was reproduced in Latin.

allumé du⁽²⁾ ciel) ne leur servoient pas moins de guide dans leurs marches, qu'en d'autres temps pour appreter leur nourriture, ou pour se chauffer. Mais lequel des deux peuples à emprunté cet usage de l'autre, vous l'apprendre dans le corps de l'ouvrage. Les pretres et les Levites marchaient immediatement apres ce feu parmi les Israelites (je veux dire une partie, et apres leur institution au mont Sinai) comme les Mages et leur suite observoient le meme rang parmi les perses. Ceux-ci dans les deux nations, etant le meme ordre des gens sous differents noms, chantoient des certaines hymnes propres à l'occasion: je rapporterai celles des Israelites dans leur Republique. Le chariot de Jehovas etoit quequefois tiré par des boeufs (bien que dans le ceremoniel ordinaire il soit ordonné que l'arche fut portée par des hommes sur leurs epautes) ainsi que le chariot de Jupiter etoit tiré par des chevaux blancs chez les Perses. Comme l'image du soleil brilloit sur <11>le plus haut du pavillon royal parmi les perses, de meme parmi les Israelites le feu etoit allume au haut de la principale Tente ou Tabernacle, [Num. 7. 15, 16. 17 &c] tout le temps qu'ils devoient demeurer dans un meme lieu; auquel il ne falloit pas plus d'artifice qu'il en faut pour chaque fanal, comme par une campe, placée dans une lanterne de crystal ou de verre, le semblable se faisoit chez le Perses. Lorsque le feu des Israelites etoit oté du haut du pavillon, [Ibid. voyez aussi Exod. 40. 36. 37. 38 &c] aussi-tot ils se preparoient pour la marche, et suivoiy sa flamme ou sa fumée jusqu'a ce qu'on le remit sur le haut du Tabernacle, ce qui etoit comme le mot donné pour faire halte. Il est vrai qu'il est dit [Num. 9. 23], qu'au commandement du seigneur ils marchent, et qu'à l'on commandement ils campent: mais il est pareillement ajouté au meme endroit, que ce commandement de L'eternel venoit par les mains de Moyses, ce que je pense n'avoir pas besoin presentement d'une plus exemple explication. J'ajouteray seulement, que, quand dans le chapitre suivant il est dit [cap. 10v. 12,13], que les enfans d' Israel partirent du de desert de Sinai, et que la nuée s'arreta au desert de Paran, ou qu'ils camperent la; il est incontinent ajouté, qu'ils partirent pour la premiere fois par le commandement de L'eternel, qu'ils receurent par Moyses: signe certain qu'il dispoit de la nuée comme <12> Generalissime, quiconque en eut la direction immediate. Mais les Juifs et les Chretiens lisant continuellement que le feu alloit devant, venoit derriere, et s'arretoit dessus ou devant le Tabernacle, ont cru qu'il faisoit ces mouvements de lui-meme; parement parce-que les circonstances de cette maniere d'agir sont omises dans le Pentateuque, qui n'est (comme j'ai deja dit) qu'un extrait peu exact et tres imparfait de l'histoire des Juifs. Des personnes d'un sçavoir immense, et la plupart Theologiens de proffession, ont invinciblement prouve que c'est seulement un abregé de queque histoire beaucoup plus etendue: mais dans un autre occasion j'ajouterai à leurs arguments des autres qui seront encore plus forts. Cependant, je ne puis pas m'empecher d'observer avec Ammianus⁽³⁾ Marcellinus, que quiconque affecte trop de brievité en rapportant des choses inconnues, ne considere pas tant les choses les plus remarquables qu'il devroit raconter, que celle qui veut passer sous silence: observation qui n'a jamais été mieux verifiée, que dans les livres historiques du vieux Testament.

Je montreray dans la dissertation plusieurs autres conformites entre les juifs et les Perses, comme d'autres ont deja fait entre eux et les Egyptiens; dont j'alleguerai des raisons, que je n'oserois mes promettre quelles puissent plaire à tout le monde: <13>car les juifs, meme avant la captivité, ne sacrifioient pas seulement comme les

⁽²⁾ Foruntque magi (si gestum est credi) etiam ignem coelitus lapsum apud se sempiternus foculis custodiri. Ammian Marcellin L. 23. C. 6. Et il sortoit un feu de devant l'eternel, et consumpit sur l'autel le holcauste et la graisse. Levit.9.28. voir aussi Deut.18.78. & 2 Chron. 7. 1. & Macchab Lib 2. Cap 2 v. 10.11.

⁽³⁾ Quisquis enim adfectat nimiam brevitatem, ubi narrantur incognita non quid signantius explicit, sed quid debeat praeterire, serutatur. L, 23.c. 6.

Perses sur les hauts lieux, mais ils avoient aussi les chevaux consacrés et le chariot du soleil, pour lesquelles choses les Commentateurs ne donnent nulle raison satisfaisante. Vous conviendrez, Monsieur, que je suis obligé de resoudre toutes les objections qu'on pourroit faire contre mon explication de la nuée, et dont plusieurs, qui m'ont été faites en conversation, sont tres-frivoles et impertinentes: mais l'exemple que je donnerai presentement paroître d'abord être le plus difficile de tous, ou (si vous le voulez ainsi) le plus miraculeux. Lorsque les Israelites dans leur fuites eurent atteint jusqu'à Pihahirors du côté de la mer rouge, et que les Egyptiens qui poursuivoient les serroient de près sur la nuit, étant fort superieurs tant à l'égard de leur nombre que de tons les autres avantages; les Israelites étoient dans un extreme consternation, ayants la mer devant et les ennemis derriere, ce qui les faisoit desesperer, non seulement parce qu'ils se croyoient perdus aussi-tot que les jour viendroit à paroître, mais ils tenoient pour certain qu'ils seroient attaqués et entierement defaits cette meme nuit. Vous avez les particularités dans le quatorzieme chapitre de L'Exode, où <14>il est dit de plus, que L'ange de Dieu, qui marchoit devant le camp de Israel, partit, et s'en alla derriere eux; et la Colonne de nuée partit de devant eux, et se tint derriere eux: et elle vint entre le camp des Egyptiens et le camp des Israelites, et elle étoit aux uns nuée et obscurité et pour les autres elle eclairoit la nuit; et ils ne s'approcherent point le uns les autres de toute la nuit. L'ange de Dieu dont il est fait ici mention, et au sujet duquel tous les Theologiens Chretiens de toutes les nations sont devises (queques-uns soutenant qu'il étoit le premier de la hierarchie celeste, mais la plus grande partie qu'il n'étoit pas un moindre personnage que Christ lui-meme) je demontre n'avoir été autre qu'un simple homme mortel, le guide des Israelites dans le desert, et l'inspecteur or directeur du feu portable, comme partie de sa charge particuliere ou office. Je promets de vous dire le nom de cet Ange, et pour lui faire honneur de donner le meme nom à la Dissertation: oui monsieur; je veux être si obligeant que de vous apprendre sa famille, ce que je crois être un secret au sujet des Anges que vous ne connutes jamais encore. Vous pouvez vous représenter donc, combien de certaines de Traités vont devenir papier de se but, combien de belles allegories et d'observations lyriques se vont absolument si cette notion est prouvée tout de bon; et par consequent quel vacarme tragique va s'exiter par <15>tout, car le passage de Strabon (expliqué dans mon Adeisdemon) ne sera conte que j'eu d'enfants au prix de celui-ci.

Quant au mouvement de feu d'un lieu dans un autre (que est le point dont il s'agit presentement) je montre que ce n'a été qu'un stratageme ordinaire dans ces temps et lieux-la, aussi bien que souvent ailleurs; et entre autres preuves je produis ce passages de la Cyropédie, comme un parallele exact. Quand Cyrus et Cyaxares, à la tête d'une armée de Medes et de Perses, campoient dans le pais ennemi, l'armée des Babylo niens, Lydiens, et Egyptiens, de beaucoup superiere en nombres, vint finalement sur eux; surquoi (dit ⁽⁴⁾ Xenophon [lib 4]) ils n'allumerent point le feu de nuit au milieu du camp mais au frint, à fin que si quequ'un des ennemis se remnoit pendant la nuit, ils pussent des voir et n'être pas veus par eux: pareillement ils placerent le feu souvent derriere le camp pour tromper l'ennemi, ce qui donna lieu à leur patronille de tomber dans les gardes avancées; rarée que le feu étoit derriere le camp, au lieu qu'ils se croyoient en être suffisamment éloignés, le supposant au centre sa place ordinarie.

@16>

J'ay noté encore un semblable passage dans le meme Xenophon, et bien d'avantage dans les autres historiens des affaires de l'orient.

⁽⁴⁾ The passage cited is reproduced in Greek.

Vous voyez donc ici le feu changeant d'un lieu à un autre, quelquefois devant et quelquefois derrière le campe; mais gouverné en telle manière, qu'il servoit de clarté de de guide aux Perses, en même temps qu'il servoit à tromper les Assyriens et leur étoit tenebres. L'unique différence entre l'autel du Pentateuque et celui de la consigne, en ce que ce dernière d'écrit comment ceci se faisoit, ce que le premier ne fait point, étant accoutumé d'émettre les circonstances de choses en mille autres occasions. Je ne donnerai qu'un seul exemple de telles omissions. Quand des personnes d'esprit et d'un jugement solide lisent, que pendant les quarante années que les Israelites errerent [Deut. 29. 5] dans le desert, leurs souliers ni leurs habits ne s'userent ni vieillirent; ils sçavent que la raison en est, qu'ils y suppleoient par les laines et les cuirs des troupeaux nombreux qu'ils avoient avec eux: et de plus, que des tisserans, des tailleurs, et des cordonniers (non plus que d'autres artisans, comme charpentiers, architectes, orsevres, et jouailliers) ne pouvoient pas manquer de se trouver en grand nombre parmi une multitude <17>de six cent mille personnes, sans compter les femmes et les enfans. Et, en effet, nous trouvons qu'ils avoient tous ces ouvriers dans le desert, à la construction du Tabernacle. Mais cette particularité n'étant pas mentionnée dans le Deuteronomie (car quel est le bon auteur qui rapporte les choses, qu'on doit naturellement supposer?) vous savez quels nombres prodigieux ont soutenus, que leurs habits et leurs souliers étoient si éloignés de vieillir, qu'ils devenoient larges et longs à proportion de l'accroissement de leurs membres. Voilà bien de mystères, parce qu'un écrivain n'a pas dit en termes précis, que rien ne manquoit aux Israelites dans le desert: de sorte que les figures de rhetoriques sont facilement changées en miracles, et que des omissions naissent des monstres tout comme le monde fut créé du néant. Nulle autre creature mortelle, hormis un pere Chretien credule et enthousiaste, instruit par un Rabbin juif menteur et visionnaire, ne peut être capable de concevoir ou d'avancer des semblables absurdités. Mais la mode de chimeres s'étend bien loin. Chaque'un est prevenu et entêté du merveilleux, de l'extraordinaire, et du je ne sçai quoi, dans sa religion aussi bien que dans sa maîtresse. Comme l'une et l'autre doit être <18> sans pareille en son espece, de même leur adorateur fait profession d'être toujours prêt à combattre ou à souffrir pour toutes les deux, quelques redoutables que soient les Rivaux. Ni l'une ni l'autre n'ont jamais tort, ou l'ayant, ne veut jamais être contrariée: et celui-là passe pour un homme méchant ou insensé, qui ne se joint avec lui à chanter les louanges de l'une et de l'autre. Ça sont ici, en un mot, des pontilles d'honneur fort chatoilleux, ou l'on ne doit jamais écouter la saine raison, ce qui suffiroit pour refroidir une passion Romaine, et pour empêcher une impertinente opiniâtreté de passer pour la vertu de la fidélité ou de la persévérance. Le parallèle est juste à tous égards, et tiendroit bon jusqu'au bout: car les chevaliers errants sont également ridicules, soit qu'ils deviennent Bretteurs ou par la Religion ou pour les Dames.

Vous trouverez dans la Dissertation même des réponses distinctes aux autres objections qui peuvent être faites des endroits de la Bible où il est fait mention de cette nuée, ou de quelque autres confonduë avec celle-ci. Mais pour ne pas trop anticiper votre curiosité (Monsieur) j'ajouterai <19>seulement encore un exemple. C'est une notion ordinaire, fondée sur ce que la nuée étoit regardée comme un symbole de la Divinite, que quoiqu'il ne soit pas fait mention qu'elle guidoit les Israelites, quand une fois ils eurent quitté le desert: et vivrent dans les pais cultivés de l'autre cotes du Jourdain: que cependant elle subsistoit en suite parmi eux comme un miracle continuel, premièrement dans le Tabernacle, [Exod. 30. 20. Levit. 16.2] et ensuite dans le Temple. C'étoit dans cette nuée (permanente selon eux) que Dieu promit de se trouver avec Aaron et ses successeurs les grands Pretres, et de communiquer avec eux [Exod. 25. 22 & 29. 42 &c 30. 36. Num. 17. 4. & 7.89.]: car Dieu dit, comme le remarque Solomon, qu'ils habiteroit dans les paisse obscurité. La manière de cette apparition de Dieu se nommoit par les Juifs Sechinah [1 Rois, 8.

12. 2 Chron. 6.1], sur lesquelles les Chrétiens (aussi bien qu'eux) se sont jettes dans des contestations infinies, et desquelles nous ne dirons rien à present; quoique nous pourrions tres facilement donner l'explication de ce mystere, par le moyen du Vieux Testament meme. Le lieu de la nuée etoit sur le propitiatoire, entre les deux Cherubins dans le saint des saints, ou le grand sacrificateur entroit seul <20>une fois l'année, afin d'y faire une expiation extraordinaire pour tout les peuple. Le temps et la maniere de ce sacrifice expiatoire sont particulièrement decrites dans le Levitique [cap. 16.2], ou il est rapporté, que L'eternal dit à Moysse, parle à son frere Aaron, et lui dis, qu'il ne vienne pas en tout temps dans le lieu saint au dedans du voile, devant le propitiatoire qui est sur l'arche; de peur qu'il ne meure; car j'apparoitray dans la nuée sur le Propitiatoire. Voici la nuée miraculeuses disent-ils. Or, que celle-ci n'etoit pas la nuée qui conduisoit dans le desert, mais une autre de la propre facon des sacrificateurs, je m'en vai non seulement vous le montrer, mais aussi de vous en donner la recette. Une regle generale etant (comme nous avons veu) ainsi prescrite au grand Pretre dans le commencement du chapitre, la matiere du sacrifice qu'il devoit offrir dans le sanctuaire suit immediatement, et apres viennent les habits qu'il falloit porter dans cette occasion solennelle, avec le rituel de son administration. Ensuite il est dit [Ver. 12,13], Il prendra un encensoir plein de charbons allumes de l'autel devant L'eternel, et sa main pleine d'encens odoriferant, pille menu, et le portera or dans le voile; et il mettra l'encens sur le feu <21>devant L'eternel, afin que la nuée de l'encens couvre le Propitiatoire qui est sur le Temoignage, de peur qu'il ne meure. Ici vous pouvez voir clairement, monsieur, que c'etoit une nuée de la propre façon du grand sacrificateur, comme je l'ai deja dit, et comment est ce qu'il la faisoit aussi. C'est pourquoi on pouvoit proprement dire, que Dieu habitoit dans les epaisses tenebres, puisqu'il n'y avoit du tout aucune fenetre dans le sanctuaire, par le moyen de laquelle le pretre pût voir qui etoit celui qui lui parloit; et il n'y avoit la aucun autre jour, à moins que ce ne fut peut etre quelques foibles rayons qui penetraient au travers le voile, des ces lampes qui bruloient sur la Sable par dehors, ou dans l'antichambre de Jehovas. Cette obscurité etoit rendue (pour ainsi dire) encore plus obscure par la nuée de fumée: mais quoique le sacrificateur put entendre ou fut capable de voir dans ce lieu-la, ce n'est pas mon affaire de l'examiner presentement. Pourtant si vous voulez scavoit ce qu c'etoit que cet encens phoriferant que vous lisez dans la recette pour faire la nuée, vous en avez un description particuliere selon l'art de l'apoticaire, pour le service <22>du Tabernacle, dans le treisieme chapitre de L'Exode [ver. 34, 35, 36, 37, 38]; mais avec une sevre defence de n'en faire aucun pour l'usage commun, ou pour un parfum ordinaire. Il est donc tres-evident, que la nuée dans l'oracle, ou le lieu tres-saint (soit du Temple ou du Tabernacle) n'etoit ni la nuée qui guidoit les Isrealites dans le desert, ni nullement miraculeuse de sa nature; ainsi qu'il n'y à rien là de contraire à mon sentiment, mais que tout y est entierement conforme, et sert manifestement à le confirmer.

Vous voyez qu'en niant ces miracles, je ne m'ecarte pas le moins du monde du sens literal. Mais que ceci suffise pour le projet, s'il ne repond pas deja à toutes les fins de la Dissertation pour un esprits eclaire et penetrant comme le votre. Toutefois ce n'est rien d'avantage que le plan d'un echantillon etant par consequent destitue non seulement de tous des ornemens, mais aussi de quelques-unes des parties les plus essentielles. Agreez-le tel qu'il est: et souvenez-vous de ne le comuniques qu'à ce peu de gens, de la fidelité desquels vous ne douteri non plus que de leur Discretion. Je suis à travers le feu et le flame,
Monsieur votre tres fidelle et tres
Oct 1710.

The Famous Book entitled De Tribus Impostoribus

British Library, Stowe 47 collated with Glasgow University Library, General 1185

Chapter the 5th OF Moses

The celebrated Moses grandson of a great magician according to the testimony of Justin Martyr enjoyed all the advantages proper to make him the person he became afterwards. It is universally known, that the Hebrew people were a family of sheperds admitted by King Pharaoh (Orus I) into his dominions in consideration of signal services done him by Joseph one of them, during a time of horrid famine, and that this monarch gave them certain lands towards the East part of Egypt a country abounding in pasture ground and consequently very proper for their flocks and droves of Cattle.

In the intervall of less than two hundred years, they were multiplied very considerably, whether it was that being looked upon as strangers, they were not compelled to serve in the Egyptian armies, or whether, on account of the many immunities granted them by Orus some of the natives incorporated with them, or lastly, whether any of the Arabian tribes had joined them as their brethren; they being in effect all one race: howsoever it was, I say, they multiplied within, that space of time to such a degree, that, the land of Goshen, no longer sufficing to contain or subsist them, they spread themselves over all Egypt, and gave King Pharaoh (Memnon II) just cause to apprehend they might be capable of making some dangerous attempts, in case Egypt should happen to be attacked, (as was not unusual) by the Ethiopians, her declared and most inveterate enemies. Thus policy and reason of state obliged that Prince to recall their privileges, and seek means to weaken them, by changing their former freedom into subjection and vassalage.

Pharoah (Orus II) who succeeded Memnon surnamed Basiris for his cruelty, followed his plan, with regard to the Jews, and, desirous of eternising his memory by erecting stately pyramids, as also by founding the noble city Thebes, he arbitrarily constrained the Hebrews to hard labour in furnishing bricks for his building; their country being withall very proper for that manufacture.

During this their state of bondage, the famous Moses was born, and in the very hear when their monarch had ordained by proclamation that all the Hebrew male children should be thrown into the Nile, judging that to be the surest method he could take to extirpate those swarms of strangers: so Moses was exposed to perish in the said river, naked in a basket, which his mother (having first well besmeared it with bitumen) thrust it among the flags and reeds growing on its border. Chance would have, it that Thormutis daughter of King Orus, came that way to recreate herself with walking, when hearing the cries of that Child, compassion so natural to her sex on such encounters inspired her with a resolution to save its life. Orus dying not long after, and Thormutis succeeding, Moses was presented to her by those who had taken care of him by her order, and she commanded his future education should be such as became the adopted son of a Queen then reigning over the politest and most learned nation in the universe. In a word, to say, that Moses was brought up in the right way to acquire the utmost knowledge of the Egyptians is saying all and representing him as the profoundest Politician, the best naturalist, and the most knowing magician of his time, to which add, that there is no small appearance of his having been admitted into the order of priests, who were in Egypt the same as the Druids in Gaul; saying which we say.

Neither can we nor need we advance more in this particular concerning that memorable personage. Such as are unacquainted with the state or condition of Egypt, at that juncture will not be displeased at being informed, that the several

renowned dynasties of Independent Princes being ended, and the whole country become subject to one sole sovereign, this monarchy was divided into divers provinces, which were not of a very large extent. The governors of these provinces were called Nomarchs and were commonly chosen out of the too powerful order of priests, who possessed very near a third of all Egypt. The King nominated whom he pleased to these nomarchates or governments, and if credit may be given to those authors who treat of Moses, by comparing what they advance on the matter with what he himself has written, we may conclude him to have been nomarch, Vice Roy or Governor of the Province of Goshen and that he owed his advancement, as he did his life to Queen Thormutis.

Such then was Moses while in Egypt where he had leisure and sufficient opportunity to study, as well the manners, as the genius and disposition both of the Egyptians and of those of his own nation (A people whose passions were always predominant) as likewise to lay his schemes for the Revolution which he afterwards brought about.

On the demise of Thormutis a violent persecution of the Hebrews was renew'd by her successor; when Moses, no longer protected, and apprehensive he should not be able to justify certain murders by him committed, betook himself to Flight, and retired into Arabia Petrea, which borders on Egypt. Chance having conducted him to the tent of Jethro a chief of one of the many Arab tribes inhabiting that country where he found entertainment; and it was not long before his services, with the great talents which he was observed to possess, procur'd him his patron's good graces, together with one of his daughters in marriage. And here it may not be amiss to remark, that Moses was then so very indifferent a Jew and knew at that time so little of the tremendous God he afterwards imag'd out, that he readily espous'd a dmasel who worship'd Idols and did not even once think of circumcising his children (see Exod LII civ).

It was amidst the desarts of this part of Arabia while he was pasturing the cattle of his wife's father and brother that he finished forming the already conceived design of revenging himself for those injuries which he pretended had been unjustly done him by the king of Egypt by exciting sedition in the heart of the monarch's territories, wherein he flattered himself he might succeed without much difficulty, as well from a consciousness of his superior talents and abilities, as from the disposition in which he was sure to find those of his own nation, already incensed against the Egyptian government, by reason of the heavy oppressions they laboured under.

By the History of this revolution, left us by himself, or at least by the authors of those books which are ascribed to him, it appears, that Jethro, his father in Law, was in the conspiracy, as well as his own brother Aaron, and Mary their sister who stayed behind in Egypt, with whom he very possibly held a correspondence.

Howsoever this was, the execution makes it evident, that, like a deep politician, he had lay'd a vast plan, and knew how to employ against Egypt all the science which he had learned of the Egyptians, I mean his pretended magic wherein he far exceeded all those who made profession of that jugling art, Those Igerdmain Turns and tricks, in the Court of Pharaoh. It was by these fancied prodigies, that he gained credit from those of his nation, so far as to bring them to a generall insurrection, with whom also joined a great number of mutineers or malcontents, between Egyptians, Ethiopians and Arabs with their flocks and herds

In short, by dint of all of this, and by trumpeting out the omnipotence of his God, boasting of the frequent conferences he had with him, and introducing him into all the measures which he concerted with the principal revolters, he wrought upon so effectually, that they followed him, to the number of 600,000 men able to bear arms, exclusive of women, children, and others, thro the Arabian desarts, with every part of which he had made himself perfectly well acquainted

After six days toilsome march, he enjoined his people to consecrate the seventh to his God, by a general repose, in order to induce them to believe that for so doing, the deity would favour and protect them, that he approv'd his method of governing them, and would punish such as were so audacious as to contradict any of his decrees

Never were any people more ignorant than these, and so by consequence none more credulous. To be convinced of their profound ignorance, we need only recollect their state and condition in Egypt at the time when Moses made them revolt despised by the Egyptians on account of their profession as shepherds and prosecuted by their sovereign, who held them employed in the basest offices

With such a herd, such a populace, it was no difficult task for a man like Moses to make advantage of his Art and superior Talents. He accordingly soon brought them to a belief that his God who he sometimes called an Angel of the Lord, the God of his fathers, the God of the almighty had appear'd to him, that it was by his express order he took upon him the care and trouble of

conducting them: that he had selected him to be their ruler, and that they should be the chosen, favourite people of this God, provided they gave intire credit to what he should tell them, in this name so his exhortations in the name of his god, he join'd his subtil Trick and slights of hand, together with his great fund of knowledge in Nature's secrets and confirm'd his sayings with what they call prodigies, which (ridiculous and contemptible as they are) are always sure of making impression upon the vulgar.

We must also more particularly call to mind the most prevalent method he took to induce this populace to submit to his jurisdiction; which was his making them believe that God himself was his conductor, by day in a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire, but we can withal readily prove that idle tale to be the grossest of all the cheats and impositions of this impostor: it is proper to observe here that he had lived some years in Arabia and there had seen often enough how customary it was for those, who in companies travers'd the vast uninhabited desarts of that country to make use of experienced guides, who conducted them by night with flaming lanterns and by day with the smoak which issued from the same lanterns both which were easily discernable by all those of the caravan - how numerous soever, and consequently were not in danger of going astray - the same method was practis'd likewise among the Medes Assyrians and is at this day in many countries as also by fleets of ships; nor is any thing more natural - Moses put it also in pratise, but truly made it pass for a miracle and a Token of his God's favour and protection

Now I do not desire any should believe me in this particular, when I treat the whole story as a mere fable, a glaring imposture but let them take it from Moses himself who (NUM CX) intreats Hobab his wifes brother, to accompany the Isralites and shew the way, he being well acquainted with all the countrey - this certainly is conviction. For had God walked before Israel both by day and night either in the cloud or the pillar of fire, could they have a better guide? And yet behold Moses exhorting his brother in law, nay and urging it by the most pressing motive of interest, to undertake the office of being their conductor so the cloud, and the pillar of fire were God to the people only, but not such to Moses, who well knowing the whole skit and contrivance did nevertheless make them believ the Almighty was actually and personally present in that Fire and in that smoke.

INSERT from Glasgow MSS General 1185 folio 121-138

[Those different computations of histories, which Esdras, or the Rabbins, have foisted into the books of Moses, on this head, as well as on diverse others, do so evidently demonstrate the falsity of those pretended miracles by them reported, that if we examine some few circumstances only, that alone will suffice to convince every unbiased, intelligent reader of their being no other than impostorous delusions, and withall very frequently related after so contradictory, so confused and so intricate a

manner, with so many Pleonasms, circumlocutions, or superfluous repetitions, that it is astonishing how those imposture could ever gain any kind of credit amongst the Jews, & from them pass to the Christians. This is the more amazing, since men of understanding need only give a glance upon the places where these imaginary Prodigies, or miraculous Operations, are introduced, to be made perfectly sensible of the roguery of Moses, as also the impudence of some, and the stupidity of others of commentators, who have sillily and audaciously given us a number of evidences touching these false miracles. For instance, we are told in Exodus, that the Angel of the Lord went before the Israelites, to guide them both by day and night. The like is repeated also in the same book. Lead the people to that place I told thee of; behold my angel shall march before thee. Again, and I will send an Angel to go before thee. Hence it most manifestly results, that this was not therefore God Himself, tho that was what Moses actually affirmed in the several before cited parst of his writings, and made it believed by all the numerous populace who followed him in Arabia. If any interrogated me, how it could possibly happen, that among all these people, setting aside the ignorant vulgar, none of the more illuminated chiefs of the Israelitish Tribes, should find out the cheatingtricks made use of by Moses, or be capable of discerning that what he had in him most wonderfull or most extraordinary, was not supernatural?

My answer without hesitation or preamble, is, that, in case several circumstances and particulars in the procedure of those chiefs, or principal elders of Israel specified in the Pentateuch (or books ascribed to Moses) furnish not proofs as sufficiently evident, as those which we find in their connivance both for his and their own interests, which being inseparable from his, obliged them to second him, as well in his impostures as in his greater projects and Designs; and this appears more particularly in Aaron's and Joshua's conduct towards him, after having been by him favoured with the most intimate confidence, and with employs no less honourable than important, it is not difficult to conceive, that his great address in performing extraordinary operations of natural magick might have so dazzled even the most clear sighted of the Hebrews, as to induce them, to attribute to God himself, what proceeded only from certain cunning artificial slights and inventions, wherein there was nothing at all preternatural.

Such was for example, that marvellous phenomenon of the light which shined on the countenance of Moses, as he came down from Mount Sinai, bringing thence the two tables of the Law. So replendent a radiancy appeared on the surface of his visage, that Aaron, with the other Israelites, beholding such splendor, durst not venture to approach him. It so covered his whole countenance; every time he came out of the tabernacle of Assignation (as they called it) that in order to remove the dread which it gave all those who attempted to look theron, he on these occasions used to put on a veil, intimating to them, that he had been talking with God face to face as a man talks with his friend. Then having communicated & informed whatever he thought proper to make men believe, as from the Lord, he unveiled himself: and so he repaired, from time to time, to the Tabernacle, in order to confer with so familiar a Deity, who imparted to him this light, which all the Israelites believed to be supernatural.

Nevertheless, there was not in all of this any thing at all marvellous; it being obviously certain that a salt, chymically extracted from urine, and calcined, is reduced to a phosphorous, whereof doubtless Moses, Aaron, with the able Chymists Goldsmiths etc employed in casting vessels for the service of their Tabernacle, knew the composition, which is much easier to make than it is to render Gold potable, as was done by the Golden Calf, which Moses caused the Israelites to swallow in

potions, because they had rendered divine worship to that idol. But tho it is not certainly known when, where, or by whom this phosphorus was made, it is nevertheless very certain, that this saline, sulphurous matter, which produces a brilliant light, and also a smook without any brightness when reduced to a liquor, was in use amongst the Jews of old times, of which there is a very evident demonstration in the second book of the Maccabees, c.1. where it is reported, that when Neemias that builded the Temple & the Altar, the Jews designing to celebrate the festival of the sacred fire, which had been hid in the bottom of a pit by the sacrificers, he commanded his priests to go fetch it him. But they found only a thick water instead of that fire. They drew of this out of the pit, and having brought it to him, he ordered the sacrificers to sprinkle it over the wood, and what other things were upon the Altar; and presently after the sun, which till then was covered with a cloud, began to shine out, and the fire was suddenly kindled; whereat the whole assembly greatly wondered.

One needs but a very moderate knowledge of the effects produced by these phosphori, either solid or liquid, now grown common enough, to remain satisfied, that this sacred fire of Neemias (or Nehemiah) was only a bituminous matter, wherein the urinous salt, and other ingredients of a phosphorus which had long been hid in that private place; were preserved after the same manner, as is used at this day; and consequently that fire, whereat the Jews were so amazed when they saw it handled by means of that unctuous muddy water; exposed to the sun beams, had in it nothing at all preternatural or miraculous, any more than that made use of by Elias to perswade Ahab & his people, that the Lord heard his supplication, and make them believe that the 450 priests of Baal and the 400 prophets were impostors, but that he himself only was a true prophet. Notwithstanding this, the pretended celestial fire of his, which caused that populace to massacre all these prophets, was only a phosphorus, wholly artificial, like that on the face of Moses; since the Chymists of our times do at this day sell such things to divers Curiosi, who without being such able and adroit jugglers as was this cunning and politic Lawgiver, do render their faces, hands & other parts of their bodies, even brighter & more shining than glowing coals; and yet this fiery brightness does no more hurt or burn their flesh, athn other things are injured or burned when anointed or rubbed over with a phosphorus to render them luminous.

There are abundantly more proofs & reasons than are really requisite incontestably to demonstrate that the most marvellous operations of Moses, and even the whole of what he made pass for great miracles, for prodigies or divine power, for the Lord's own works, were nothing else but mere impostures, which made room for other tricks & impositions, such as that of the cloud which rested at the door of the tabernacle of assignation; that wherewith the sanctuary of the first Temple of Jerusalem was perpetually filled, to the excessive astonishment of those who believed it a manifest token that the Almighty did constantly reside within that place, which they stiled Most Holy, on account of that phenomenon; though nothing is plainer than that it was only a fallacious evidence, a false miracle.

Nevertheless, upon these impostures it was that men have since grounded & established the grandest of mysteries of Christianity; such as for instance, those which for many commentators and interpreters have fancied to have been included in that veil where Moses was wont to cover his radiant countenance, and upon which the apostle of the gentiles himself has spoken thus 'we are not as Moses, who cast a veil over his face, to the end that the children of Israel might not see the consummation of what was to end.

Those poor silly wretches were seduced and led astray by means of these subtil pranks, and diverse others of the like stamp which they believed real miracles, for want of knowing the natural causes of such fallacious appearance, and which we could easily make evident, had not Moses himself declared in his writings, that the magicians expert in those arts & sciences of which he was master, performed prodigies of the very same nature with his, except some few of his tricks, the materials or ingredients whereof they had prepared secundum artem, or could not perhaps procure to serve their present occasions.

As for example, with regard to certain reptiles etc, the magicians were able to produce serpents which were devoured by those of Moses, made like theirs of a stick, wand or rod: for if those were only phantoms, these would not have devoured realities, but merely the shadow of certain objects, represented after the manner of those we see in what we call magick lanterns. Hence it results, that he who has the knack of producing a serpent which devours anothers, or that of multiplying & hatching the eggs of lice and other such vermin, which tricks his competitor faisl of performing, either thro neglect, or want of time to provide the requisite means; such able jugler, I say, produces nothing sufficient to prove his operations to be supernatural, and that his genius, or his God is more potent than the genius or God of him whose serpent had been devoured: for it requires but a slender share of understanding to conceive, that, if a large eel-skin, coloured like a stick or rod, was made a coat or case for a serpent or the like size, it might easily be made to devour another smaller one, if both were cleanly got out of their borrowed coats, and irritated against each other when cast upon the ground: afterwards that which had eat up the lesser one might be neatly reconveyed into its eel-skincase by a nice cast of legerdemain. This I have actually seen performed by a very clever jugler, who instantly substituted a cudgel in the room of his snake in a such a dextrous manner, that the most quick sighted spectators perceived not how he did it, any more than they could discern how he managed several other still more surprising slights of hand, with the secrets & mysteries whereof he was obliged to acquaint the magistrates, who would have sentenc'd him to suffer as a wizard, or sorcerer, if he had not discovered the natural methods he employed to fascinate or bewitch the admirers of his prodigies, who gave out, that what he did was either miraculous or diabolical.

People of better judgement & more clearly illuminated than these wanderers, may readily collect from what we have been advancing & making evident, with regard to the jugling tricks and impostures put in practice by Moses to seduce the Jews, a stupid race of abject slaves, ill treated and appressed in Egypt, where going to declare to them, that the eternal lord had sent him to free them from their bondage, they were charmed to find themselves adopted & protected by Him who was the sovereign of all Gods, as he told them; so they applauded this deliverer, and vowed obedience.]

This poor wretched populace, thus seduced, were charmed with the thoughts of their being become the adopted people of the sovereign of all the Deities as they were told, and this too immediately upon their quitting a painful and cruel bondage, failed not to extol and applaud Moses, who brought these joyous tidings, swearing to obey him in all he should command. His authority being now confirmed his next care and study was how to perpetuate it; and so, under pretext of settling a divine worship or a form of adoration to a supreme divinity whose Lieutenant he stiled himself, he appointed his brother

and his sons chiefs in the Imperial Palace, that us to say, of a certain place wherein the Divine oracles were delivered out of the peoples sight.

This being also settled, he continued playing off upon them his pretended prodigies, which dazzled the Majority, quite astonished some of the simplest; but scandalized such as were clearer sighted, and could read through the veil of this impostors artifice. So how subtil soever Moses was, how many clean jugling tricks soever he was master of, he would nevertheless have found it difficult enough to carry his point, and make himself obeyed, had his hand been unarmed, imposture without power having rarely succeeded.

It was therefore, in order to secure to himself that assured means of supportig his pretensions against such as could see thro' him, that he began by gaining over to his party all those of his own tribe by giving them the posts of Trust and exempting them all from laborious occupations: and then he had the address to sow jealousies and contentions amidst the other tribes, so that some of them sided with him in opposition to others. In short he was so adroit, and knew so well how to play his game, that he at length drew to him over those who seemed to be most illuminated, all which he affected either by admitting them into his confidence or by bestowing on them charges of eminence, profit and distinction.

After these points were gain'd, whenever any of the ideots under his command had courage enough to reproach him, with his impostures and sinister dealings, how under the cloak of piety, justice and equity, he had possessed himself of all, and that the sovereign authroity was so absolutely vested in him and his family, that no others had any prospect of pretending to the least share of it, and that, in a word he was rather their tyrant, than their father, as he would be thought: in such rencounters, I say, Moses acted the true politician, and rid himsel of those Freethinkers, never sparing any who found fault with his government.

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[The means he used to exterminate Korah and his associates, very far from being a miraculous chastisement of the Lrd, was nothing else but a subterraneous mine which overthrew their tents and buried in the earth all within or near them, as frequently occurs in wartime to soldiers, who are swallowed up so, by divers stratagems & artifices before places which they are attacking or besieging. For, had it been the all wise, the all powerful Lord only who caused the earth to open, purposely to swallow up those pretended rebels, divine providence would never have suffered so many to escape as appeared at the numeration after this disaster, wherein perished many innocents, while Theopheliad, one of the principal malcontents, was exempted, tho he persisted in their sentiments to the very last day of his life.

But here also follow other incontestable proofs, nay and still more glaring ones, of the iniquity, the fallacy, and injustice of Moses, in that under false pretexts, during the whole space of forty years, he detained in the Arabian desart, that vast multitude of Israelites, whom he had induced to quit Egypt, iniquitously causing them there to perish, as evidently is manifested by this denunciation of his against them (Numb: XIV. 33) and your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness; and in effect, most of those spies, whom he had sent to view the land, having on their return set the whole congregation a murmuring against him by reprotig bad and defamatory things concerning that country; for which reason it only it seems, the fire ^(a) of the Lord was kindled among them and they died.

^(a) Fire was the ordinary instrument made use of by Moses in his revenge; executions & punishments, because he had certain physical and chymical secrets whereby to kindle it (with combustibles not unlike our engineers with gunpowder) with materials whose nature is to take fire suddenly.

All this horrible chastisement inflicted on those people was grounded only on a false accusation raised and carried on by Moses against those whom he sent as spies, because they would not tell lies, and conceal from the Israelites such difficulties as they were to expect in obtaining the promised land: Numb 13.28 Nevertheless the people be strong who dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great. As well because there were strong fortified towns, as that the inhabitants of that country were very numerous, and withal robust & and of a gigantic stature.

This report of theirs, which was just and sincere, disheartened the Israelites, and cooled their courage: Deut 1.28 Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, the people are greater and taller than we etc. Tho the spies shewed them fine large grapes and other choice fruits, which they had brought them from thence; which they owned to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Numb XIII.23 And they came unto the brook of Eschol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bore it between two upon a staff, and they brought of the pomegranate, and of the fig. However, as Moses disliked the other parts of their relation, Caleb and Joshua, who were of the number of these twelve spies, encouraged the Israelites, by assuring them of conquest, and this was the cause why Moses did afterwards confer on them the chief employments, which he had in his gift, and destroy the other spies, who had acted sincerely, and together with them all the people whom they had discouraged.

His procedure on this occasion was by so much the more unjust, tyrannical and insupportable, as it tended to force the Israelites not only to undergo, like slaves, infinite hardships & miseries amidst those burning barren deserts of Arabia Petrea, but also to continue in arms till they had destroyed a powerful nation, and reduced a number of fortified places, spite of all the unsurmountable obstacles which visibly appeared in the execution of that enterprise; on which account it is very evident, that Moses had not the least reason to oblige the twelve tribes of Israel to follow rather the opinions of the two spies, who were on his party, than the sentiments of ten others, more interested, and altogether as well informed as they of the strength and weakness of town etc in that country which Moses had taken it into his head to subdue, notwithstanding the contradictory Remonstrances made him by almost all the leading men among the Tribes, since there were ten to oppose these two, and they not such as our common spies attending armies now a days, but men of judgement, and so expert in the affairs of military government, that the hosts of Israel had selected them for their deputies, pursuant to the counsel and injunction of Moses, who dispatched them to Canaan, and consequently ought to have abided by their report: But, not finding it favourable to his schemes, he put in practice the most violent methods his fund of policy could suggest, in order to work the destruction of those who would not second him, and to make himself obeyed (through dread of cruel chastisements) by those whom he judged to be least capable of resisting him.]

With these precautions, and colouring his cruelties and bloody executions with the specious epithet of divine vengeance, he all along maintained himself in absolute authority: And, that he might finish as he began, that is to say like a juggling impostor, he made choice of a very extraordinary kind of death, for he precipitated himself into a frightful abyss, which he had formerly met with in a lonely place, whither from time to time he retired under pretence of conferring with his God, and which he had long designed for his grave, to the end that, that as his body was not to be found, people should believe that his God had carried him away, and that he was come like himself.

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[He chose this cavern of Mount Nebo in the land of Moab, for his grave, to the end (as is hinted) that his body not appearing, it might be believed that his God had

either taken it to himself, or buried it, and consequently that he had been mightily beloved & favoured by the eternal. But, contrariwise, in the book of Deuteronomy, which is ascribed to him both by Jews and Christians, it appears that on the day preceeding his demise, the Lord was extremely angry with him on account of some affairs of the Israelites, and forbid him ever more to speak to him concerning them; and that since then Moses was never seen more. Deuteronomy 34 ch.42 And the Lord said unto him, this is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have called thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. It is added, that his sepulchre was never discovered: on this subject Jude the Apostle (v.9) reports that the Devil desirous of having his body, Micheal the Archangel, who opposed Satan's design therein, durst not bring against him a railing accusation. Nevertheless this archangel, tho he durst not do that, yet while he was so contending & disputing with Satan about the body of Moses, went so far as to say, The Lord rebuke thee. Hence we may infer, that the pretension which this Demon had upon the carcasse of Moses us yet undecided. But be this as it may, it is plainly to be understood, that there was no less Fallacy & deceit in this his tragical death, & concealed sepulture than in his other multifarious impostures.]

He was not ignorant, that the memories of those patriarchs who had proceeded him, were held in high veneration, tho their remains and sepulchers were to be found: but such ambition as his could not be so easily staisfied he must be rever'd as a deity over whom death had no dominion, which was the real tendency of what he advanced when he commenced ruler of the people: viz; that he was established in his charge by God himself, the God of Pharaoh, indeed all those who have been possess'd with that foolish vanity of desiring to eternize their names, have sought to have their death conceal'd, that they might be thought immortal.

Let us return to legislators in general. There have not been any who did not make their laws to descend from a divinity, or attempt to be themselves taken for somewhat more than men. Numa, having tasted the sweets of solitude, was unwilling to leave it for the Roman throne: but finding himself constrain'd to do it by popular acclamations, he took advantage of the devotion of the Romans, insinuating to them, that he communicated with the divinities, and that, if they would have him for their king, they must determine on observing such laws, and divine institutions as had been dictated to him by the nymph Egeria. Alexander would needs pass for the son of Jupiter -Perseus pretended he owed his birth to the same deity and the virgin Danae. Plato his to Apollo and a certain virgin. This belief they entertained perhaps, because the Egyptians held, that the divine spirit was a ble effectually to make a woman conceive in like manner as certain winds are reported to impregnate the mares of Iberia.