

The ‘Theological-Political Treatise’: English Quarto and Octavo

English Quarto Edition of Chapter 6 (‘On Miracles’), First and Only Issue

Anon., *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature*. London, printer: unidentified, for: Robert Sollers (bookseller), 1683.

Anonymous. Translation by [Charles Blount]. Exemplar: possibly the Latin quarto edition T.1 or T.2/T.2a, or the Latin octavo edition T.3. The translator’s holograph and/or an apograph of it, which served as printer’s copy, is no longer extant.

First Full English Octavo Edition, First Issue of Two States

Anon., *A Treatise Partly Theological, and Partly Political*. London, printer and bookseller unidentified, 1689.

Anonymous. Translated by [Charles Blount]. Exemplar: possibly the Latin quarto edition T.1, or the Latin octavo edition T.3.



1 Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in Restoration Britain

In the course of 1670, the first copies of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* had also reached Stuart Britain. The earliest immediate overall-negative responses to Spinoza’s treatise by anti-atheist English apologists were fuelled by an anxiety the book would revive the ‘ancient Atheists’, such as Diagoras (fifth century BCE) of Rhodes, Protagoras (c.490–c.420 BCE) of Abdera, and Theodorus (c.340–c.250 BCE) of Cyrene.¹ Their reactions to the Dutch

1 For the early reception of Spinoza’s writings in Stuart England and apologists’ reactions: Tjitze J. de Boer, ‘Spinoza in Engeland’, *Tijdschrift voor wijsbegeerte*, 10 (1916), pp. 331–336; Rosalie L. Colie, ‘Spinoza and the Early English Deists’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20 (1959), pp. 23–46; id., ‘Spinoza in England (1665–1730)’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 107 (1963),

philosopher’s treatise expressed also fear for the spread of speculative atheism on the British Isles.² Because of growing accounts of inscrutable miracles and healing stories disseminated all around England, British Protestants felt therefore acutely obliged to intensively rethink the doctrine of the cessation of miracles and to rearticulate faith in general. God’s existence was not problematic for them.³ It were precisely Spinoza’s firm rejection of miracles and his textual criticism of Scripture that attracted the attention of intellectuals and clergymen alike. In their

pp. 183–219; Johannes J.V.M. de Vet, ‘Learned Periodicals from the Dutch Republic and the Early Debate on Spinoza’, *Miscellanea Anglo-Belgica* (Leiden: 1987), pp. 27–39; Luisa Simonutti, ‘Reason and Toleration: Henry More and Philip van Limborch’, in Sarah Hutton (ed.), *Henry More (1614–1687). Tercenary Studies* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), pp. 201–208; id., ‘Spinoza and the English Thinkers. Criticism on Prophecies and Miracles: Blount, Gildon and Earbery’, in Van Bunge, etc. (eds.), *Disguised and Overt Spinozism*, pp. 191–211; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, esp. pp. 252–257 (Boyle*) and 265–270 (Locke*); Van Bunge, etc. (eds.), *The Continuum Companion to Spinoza*, pp. 106–129; Sarah Hutton (ed.), *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Sheppard, *Anti-Atheism*. Cf. also: Wayne I. Boucher, *Spinoza in English: A Bibliography from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

2 The term ‘atheist’ was introduced in English in the sixteenth century. Initially, it meant loosely ‘godless’, a qualification which was later broadened to Catholicism, ‘the high way to Atheisme’, and to upsettingly-marked evil living, and the like. Cf. Sheppard, *Anti-Atheism*, p. 216. For the term ‘atheist’, see further: Michael C.W. Hunter, ‘The Problem of “Atheism” in Early Modern England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 35 (1985), pp. 135–157, there at pp. 139–140. See on atheism also: Chapter 3, n. 13.

3 The cessationism doctrine, put forward from the third century CE onward, was revived in the sixteenth century. It upheld that speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, and miracles ‘had ceased after the early church had been established’. Because of swelling claims of miracles and miraculous healings, English Protestant theologians felt obliged to rethink the cessation doctrine. They began ‘to incorporate a belief in, and experience of, miracles into their religious practice and theology’ (Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006], p. 1). Three major stances were defended in the miracles debate: (1) impossibility (‘atheism’), (2) superfluity of miracles (enthusiasm), and (3) the possibility of miracles which were potentially ‘plausible, but only with very great evidence’ (ibid., p. 3). Background: Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 80, 124, 256, 479, and 485; Robert M. Burns, *The Great Debate on Miracles. From Joseph Glanvill to David Hume* (Lewisburg, PA, London, and Toronto: Bucknell University Press/Associated University Presses, 1981).

consternation about what they thought were dangerous notions, they felt it their duty to defend the Protestant faith against scepticism, irreligion, and atheism. Spinoza's questioning in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* of Christ's nature in particular was of major concern to many of his English critics for obvious reasons. On 7 February 1676, to give just an example of his stance in Christology from his letters, Spinoza would write to his London-based correspondent Henry Oldenburg he accepted 'Christ's suffering, death, and burial literally', but 'his resurrection allegorically'.

Whether this untypical reverence was rhetorical or not, this puzzling claim was in any case an outright rejection of the central tenet of the Christian faith, enshrined as well as part in the Nicene Creed. The then current raging debate in Restoration Britain, regarding the Churches' authority in politics and the state, as well as the struggles over the 'confutation of atheism' deeply troubled scholarly discussions about the relationship of revelation and reason among supporters of the 'New Philosophy', too.⁴ When Spinoza's treatise was first being read and accordingly refuted by English intellectuals, most of the book's opponents' outraged retorts instantly paired his name automatically with that of Thomas Hobbes (for many of his contemporaries the reincarnation of Epicurus and Lucretius), by many labelled as the perverted leading conspirator in the cause of atheism. In their scathing ripostes, his adversaries even went further, portraying Spinoza as that 'junior Hobbes', and as an 'improved' arch-atheist version of the controversial British philosopher.⁵

One of the first intellectuals in Great Britain who became rather intimately familiar with the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* and its inception at an early stage was Henry Oldenburg. After paying a visit to Spinoza in Rijnsburg, he had entered into a long-lasting correspondence with the Dutch philosopher in late August 1661. About four years later, Spinoza in a now-lost letter of early September 1665 would inform Oldenburg for the first time about his new philosophical project in progress 'about Angels, prophecy and miracles'. Several months after the book's publication, the London scholar laid hands upon a now-lost printed copy of Spinoza's published Latin

treatise.⁶ That is evinced by a list (no. 2, 3/13 October 1670), entitled 'The Catalogue of my Books. Taken A[nno]. 1670. Octob. 3d. H. Oldenburg' (caption in Oldenburg's handwriting). This list comprises an inventory of Oldenburg's private library which mentions a copy of the 'Tractatus Theologico Politicus de Libertate Philosophandi'.⁷

As the matter stood, at the time when Oldenburg obtained the book, his correspondence with the Dutch philosopher had long been interrupted (since mid-December 1665), in all likelihood due to the brunt of the Second Anglo-Dutch naval war (1665–1667). That he apparently wanted to know more about the treatise they once discussed in their exchange shows however the London scholar's preoccupation with Spinoza's 'Treatise on Scripture'. About this project, in his letters he had told the philosopher 'the work will be worthy of you and something I shall want very much to see' (second half of September 1665) and also that he wanted 'to see for myself what you have written on that subject' (late October 1665). How Oldenburg came in the possession of a copy of Spinoza's second book in the autumn of 1670 is not documented. He may simply have purchased a copy of it, but it might also be considered whether perhaps the Dutch philosopher himself, or one of his friends in Amsterdam, directed the book to London.

The fact remains that Oldenburg, in his correspondence with Spinoza, had always expressed a keen interest in the 'Theological-Political Treatise'. He exchanged four letters with the Dutch philosopher in the second half of 1665 in regard to the latter's writing project 'regarding scripture'.⁸ Ten years later, in the spring of 1675, Spinoza sought to revive his epistolary exchange with Oldenburg by directing to London a copy of the 'Theological-Political Treatise'. Apparently, Oldenburg found out the philosopher had communicated it to him, in all likelihood through the intermediary of Tschirnhaus who had just started a customary Grand Tour by travelling to England in the first week of May 1675. The book's copy never reached Oldenburg however.⁹ Nevertheless, the offer in any case triggered a spirited discussion in their renewed correspondence, mainly about overall-negative reactions by

4 'From about 1580 onward a steady stream of books and broadsides, pamphlets and prints, tracts and tomes, cried out against the spread of atheism in England. Between 1650 and 1720 a torrent of anti-atheist works joined what was by then a distinct genre of Christian apologetics which gave the title as well as the form to many of these texts: the confutation of atheism.' (Sheppard, *Anti-Atheism*, p. 2). See also: *ibid.*, pp. 48–57.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 32. Hobbes: BL.

6 Cf. for the early inception of the *TTP* and those letters: Chapter 3, *Of Angels, Prophecy and Miracles*. Oldenburg: BL.

7 London, British Library, Add. ms. 4255, fols 228–235 (retrograde); fol. 230^r (*TTP*). Cf. Noel Malcolm, 'The Library of Henry Oldenburg', *The Electronic British Library Journal*, 4 (2005), pp. 26 and 29; also p. 50 ('Consolidated Catalogue'), no. 279.

8 See: 1665.09.04*, 1665.09.14–28, Ep 29 (G 4/164–165); 1665.[10].[01], Ep 30B; 1665.10.[22], Ep 31 (G 4/167–169).

9 1675.[04/05].00*. Confirmed in: Oldenburg* to Spinoza, 1675.06.08, Ep 61 (G 4/272.3–5). Tschirnhaus: BL.

English readers. Possibly, the exchange of their epistolary arguments also may have contributed to the composition and contents of Spinoza's *Adnotationes* appended after his death in 1678 to Saint Glen's French translation of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, already discussed at length in the previous chapter of this bibliography.¹⁰

After Oldenburg's death (September 1677), the Anglo-Irish royalist Arthur Annesley purchased the greater part of the London scholar's library.¹¹ *Bibliotheca Angleseiana*, the auction catalogue (1686) of Annesley's vast library (8,500 items) mentions three copies of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. The now all-dispersed copies from the Annesley library were all sold at auction, despite a stop made by public order to the sale of seditious books. The book collection's auction catalogue lists one copy of Spinoza's treatise dated 1670, according to the auctioneer's annotated copy sold for 4s. This annotated copy also inventories a 'large-paper copy', from 1670, sold for: 3s 6d, and the English-style octavo variant (T.3e) of 1674, which was sold for: 5s 1d.¹² Whether the aforementioned copies were indeed once part of Oldenburg's private library is not known unfortunately, but this certainly is a distinct possibility.

2 Early Responses

In the early 1670s, Spinoza's treatise was first read, discussed, and refuted out of hand by a select group of contemporary English intellectuals only, in particular by prominent leaders of the loosely-bound modernist group of Cambridge 'Neoplatonists'. They did so in their letters and, more importantly systematically from 1677 onwards, also publicly in their printed retorts. Those liberal Platonist theologians were all like-minded atomist philosophers devoted to rational Christian religion and

they were staunch defenders of individual conscience and toleration. They abhorred rigid dogmatist Protestant doctrines, such as predestination and other materialist notions, and, generally spoken, they were supporters of the Copernican world view, too.¹³ By 1671, in evidence, more copies of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* began circulating in Britain.

Until eventually copies of the 1674 English-style T.3e issue were imported in Britain and sold to the general reading public, most British scholars were in all likelihood first introduced to Spinoza's philosophy mainly through copies of the 'Theological-Political Treatise' sent over by colleagues from the Continent. In early 1671, for instance, the Arminian theologian Philippus van Limborch, one of Spinoza's ardent Dutch adversaries who was in a regular epistolary contact with the British philosopher John Locke and several of the moderate rationalist Cambridge theologians, sent over from Amsterdam to Oliver Doiley, Doctor of Laws, Fellow of King's College, and then rector of Cambridge university a copy of Latin quarto edition T.1.¹⁴

In the book's accompanying letter of 23 January 1671, the theology professor Van Limborch informed the Cambridge don that an (unidentified) Amsterdam bookseller, who would soon visit Cambridge, was to be handing over a work entitled 'Discursus Theologico-politicus' to him on his behalf. Perhaps, the individual crossing the Channel was one of several English booksellers working at Amsterdam.¹⁵ Van Limborch in his letter to Doiley qualifies 'Benedictus Spinoza', the book's anonymous author,

10 See for background: Chapter 5.

11 Cf. Malcolm, 'The Library', esp. pp. 10, 29, and 50. Annesley: BL.

12 Thomas Philipps (ed.), *Bibliotheca Angleseiana, sive catalogus variorum librorum in quavis lingua, & facultate insignium: quos cum ingenti sumptu, & summa diligentia sibi procuravit. Honoratiss. Arthur Comes D'Anglesey, ...* (2 vols., London: 1686), vol. 1, pp. 8, no. 198 (1670, 'large-paper copy'), 15, no. 261 (T.3e), and 20, no. 28 (1670). For T.3e, see: Chapter 4. The 1670 copies of the *TTP* may concern the first Latin quarto edition T.1. However, its variants T.2a, T.4n/T.4, and T.5 (Latin quartos) are also dated '1670'. They were however issued in 1672 (T.2), and in or after 1677 (T.4n/T.4, and T.5), respectively. For the sale's stop: Thomas A. Birrell, 'Books and Buyers in Seventeenth-Century English Auction Sales', in Robin Myers, etc. (eds.), *Under the Hammer: Book Auctions since the Seventeenth Century* (New Castle, DE, and London: Oak Knoll Press/British Library, 2001), pp. 51–64, there at p. 60.

13 The Neoplatonists or Platonists, a 'group' of kindred liberal divines interested in philosophy all educated in Cambridge, were not connected to a specifically-defined philosophical school. Background: Constantinos A. Patrides, *The Cambridge Platonists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); G.A. John Rogers, etc. (eds.) *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context: Politics, Metaphysics, and Religion* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997). For their contacts with Dutch Arminians: Rosalie L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment. A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

14 Van Limborch* corresponded with Ralph Cudworth*, Henry More*, and Peter Gunning (1614–1684), the Cambridge Regius professor of Divinity, after he had all sent them in 1666 a copy of Simon Episcopius's *Operum theologicum. Pars altera* (Gouda: 1665). Cf. De Boer, 'Spinoza in England', pp. 331–332. They exchanged ideas centring on re-establishing dialogue and consensus between Remonstrants and liberal Protestants in Oxford and Cambridge, such as the Latitudinarians and the Neoplatonists (Simonutti, 'Reason and Toleration', p. 201). Van Limborch owned copies of the *PP/CM*, the *TTP*, and the *OP*. See for this: *Bibliotheca librorum quibus usus est vir plurimum reverendus Philippus van Limborch ...* (Amsterdam: 1712), p. 80, nos. 460 and 461. Locke/Doiley: BL.

15 See: Chapter 4, *A Red Herring*, there at n. 27 among other notes.

as a Jewish apostate and a deist, adding to this that in his opinion he might even be considered a full-blown atheist.¹⁶ After a cutting introduction, Van Limborch warns Doiley for the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*'s explosive contents and worriedly expresses his abhorrence of the book's radical necessitarian underpinnings thus:

The carrier of this letter, a bookseller from Amsterdam, will hand over to you on my behalf this 'Discursus theologico-politicus', whose supposed author is Benedictus Spinoza, a former Jew who became a deist, if not an atheist. I cannot recall having read so pestilential a book. He ridicules the prophets and apostles and according to him no miracles took place or ever can. There is a fate and even God is bound to it. He describes God in such a way that he seems to cancel him completely. I wanted to confide this with you, of refined erudition, so you know what monsters are produced in our United Provinces. Such men touch not a specific article [of faith], but the very soul of religion. You ought to show this work not to anyone, but only to the learned, who have an experienced ability to distinguish between good and evil.¹⁷

16 True or not, Van Limborch* in a letter of 23 January 1682 to the French theologian Jean le Clerc (1657–1736) claimed to have met Spinoza personally: 'Memini me ante sexennium ad convivium vocatum, cui, praetor meam exspectationem, author hic intererat: inter precandum signa animi irreligiosi ostendebat, adhibitis gestibus, quibus nos, qui Deum precabamur, stultitiae arguere velle videbatur.' ('I recall, six years ago, I was invited to a meal where, against my expectation, also this author was present. During prayer, he showed with signs his godless soul with which he seemed to accuse us, who prayed to God, of silliness'; Jean le Clerc, *Epistolario*, Mario Sina and Maria G. Zaccone-Sina [ed.] [3 vols., Florence: L. Olschki, 1987–94], vol. 1, p. 35). On 19 June 1703, the German travellers Stolle* and 'Hallmann' put forward about the same story (S/H, ms. B, quoted in W/Cz, vol. 1, p. 82).

17 'Lator harum, bibliopola Amstelodamensis, meo nomine tibi tradet infamem illum Discursum Theologico-Politicum, cujus autor creditur Benedictus Spinoza, qui ex judaeo factus est deista, si non atheus. Non memini, me pestilentiore librum unquam legisse. Ridet prophetas et apostolos, nulla unquam ipsi contingere miracula, imo nec contingere possunt; datur fatum, cui ipse Deus alligatus est; ita tamen Deum describit, ut eum plane videatur tollere. Volui te eruditionis defaecatae et iudicii subacti virum ejus participem facere, ut cognoscas, quae monstra producat Batavia nostra. Impetunt ejusmodi homines non hunc aut illum articulum specialem, sed ipsam religionis animam. Tu illum non quibusvis sed doctis, et qui sensus ad discretionem boni et mali exercitatos habent, solummodo ostendes.' (quoted in: Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinozas*, p. 292; De Boer, 'Spinoza in England', p. 333. On 28 February/10 March 1671, Doiley* replied to

Because of the lack of further historical evidence, it is hard to determine when exactly Doiley read the work.

Four years after he had directed the copy of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* to Doiley in Cambridge, Van Limborch responded equally harsh to the book's doctrines once again. This time he vented his criticism in a letter dispatched on 30 December 1674 to another Neoplatonist, Henry Jenkes, the professor of rhetoric at Gresham College (London) and Fellow of the Royal Society.¹⁸ With devilish pleasure, it seems, Van Limborch informed his London correspondent he had come to understand (without revealing his source) Spinoza himself had been upset when learning his book had become the object of general disapproval by British readers, the mechanist philosopher Robert Boyle in particular. About this condemning, Van Limborch writes to Jenkes the following:

I have learned Spinoza, the author of the profane 'Tractatus theologico-politicus', has heard not without surprise and confusion that in England his tract is unanimously rejected by all. He thought it especially unpleasant because the renowned philosopher Robert Boyle judges unfavourably about his treatise. Apparently, he had foolishly counted on the applause of eminent philosophers. We truly congratulate England it generates and breeds no profane philosophers, but Christian [philosophers] for whom we pray all the best from the father of lights.¹⁹

On 19/29 March 1675, Jenkes replied to Van Limborch's letter sent to him on 30 December of the previous year. He

Van Limborch's letter of 23 January to thank him for sending a copy of *De legibus naturae disquisitio philosophica* (London: 1672) by Bishop-philosopher Richard Cumberland (1632–1719). Doiley told Van Limborch he considered the latter work as an 'antidote to the poison of that Theological Political Treatise which is full of Hobbesian errors' (cf. De Boer, 'Spinoza in England', p. 333). For Van Limborch's letter of 23 January: Simonutti, 'Reason and Toleration', p. 129; Israel, 'The Early Dutch and German Reaction', p. 85. Van Limborch: BL.

18 Jenkes: BL.

19 'Intelligo Spinozam, profani Tractatus Theologico-Politicum autorem, nuper non sine admiratione ac quadam perturbatione audivissem tractatum suum in Anglia unanimi omnium consensu improbari; imprimis autem male ipsum habebat, celeberrimum Philosophum Robertum Boyle non benigne de suo tractate iudicare. Philosophorum praesertim eminentiorum applausum stolidè sibi promiserat. Verum gratulamur Angliae, quod Philosophos non profanos, sed christianos producat ac alat, quibus omnia prospera a Patre luminum praecamur.' (quoted in De Boer, 'Spinoza in England', p. 334). See for the letter: Simonutti, 'Reason and Toleration', pp. 130–131. Boyle: BL.

answered his Cambridge correspondent Spinoza's treatise had met with strong opposition and dislike in their 'Academy':

Regarding the author of the 'Theological-Political Treatise', B. Spinoza, it does not surprise me he takes it ill his book is not valued at all. It is certain in what you write, because the work has in our Academy as many adversaries as it has pious and sincere Christian readers. I have at least, although I read his infamous book with the greatest attention, without prejudice or evil will, found nothing else than an ongoing effort (albeit cunningly) to undermine and tear away the foundations of revealed religion. But it is all in vain. May the God of truth illuminate the eyes of his mind, that he sees his errors and come to his senses. Because he once used to declare himself a Cartesian scientist I cannot refrain from wishing him a better mind. Was he but a Christian, or that he never had become the author of 'Theological-Political Treatise'.²⁰

In the early 1670s, also the theologian-philosopher and poet Henry More, since 1641 Fellow of Cambridge's Christ College and one the most prominent representatives of the British Neoplatonist group, proffered in one of his letters another reaction to the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. On 4/14 December 1671, the latter had dispatched a letter to Robert Boyle with whom he was on civil terms, despite their many differences of opinion in matters philosophical.²¹ Henry More in this letter discussed the

predictable dangers of the mechanist philosophy and of atheism, mainly in relation to his recently-issued irenic *Enchiridion methaphysicum*.²² In this ethical manual, he rigidly attacked Cartesian metaphysical doctrines and took issue to seek support for his concept of a 'spirit of nature' by minutely scrutinizing Boyle's air-pump conclusions.²³

More's letter of 4/14 December also critiques Boyle's hydrostatical and pneumatic experiments as well as it is a riposte to Boyle's disapprobation of his *Enchiridion*.²⁴ A few days beforehand, the Cambridge don had already informed Boyle that one of his correspondents (unidentified) had written him a letter about Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, a work he had however probably never seen himself.²⁵ Nonetheless, apparently he had gathered enough information about the contents of the Dutch philosopher's treatise to connect the book with the materialist philosophy of René Descartes, More's former idol, whose philosophical underpinnings he ultimately

20 'Quod attinet authorem Tractatus Th. Polit. B. Spinozam non miror male habere eum quod liber ejus hic nullo in pretiosit. Certissimum enim est quod scribis et narras, nam tot fere habet adversarios in Academia nostra quot lectores pios et candidos h.e. Christianos. Ego certe quamvis attente et defixis oculis perlegerim infamem illius librum, sine ullo praejudicio aut malo affectu, nihil tamen aliud reperi in toto, quam quod prorsus conetur, licet subdole, omnia fundamenta religionis revelatae convellere et evertere, sed irrita labore et conatu. Deus veritatis illumet oculos mentis ejus, ut videat errorem suum et respiscat. Et quoniam antehac confessus est se cartesianum esse philosophum, non possum non ipsi meliorem mentem optare. Utinam Christianus esset, aut saltem nunquam fuisset author Tract. Th. Politici.' (quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 335). Their 'Academy': meant is probably Gresham College, the London Royal Society's regular meeting place in Bishopsgate Street.

21 The polymath Robert Hooke (1635–1703), Boyle's assistant and Curator of Experiments (1663) of the Royal Society, was also familiar with Spinoza's writings. He had, apparently in quires, copies of the *PP/CM*, the *TTP*, and of the *OP*. Cf.: Edward Millington (ed.), *Bibliotheca Hookiana. Sive catalogus diversorum librorum*, ... (London: 1703), p. 5, nos. 7, 24, and 23; Will Poole, etc. (eds.), *Robert Hooke's Books Database*, 2015, p. 15. On 24 July 1678,

Hooke wrote in his diary he had recently been engaged in 'much discourse about Spinoza quakers', without further clarifying the remark. Boyle/More: BL.

22 For More's critique of the mechanist philosophy: Alan Gabbey, 'Henry More and the Limits of Mechanism', in Hutton (ed.), *Henry More (1614–1687)*; Jasper Reid, *The Metaphysics of Henry More* (Dordrecht, etc.: Springer, 2012), pp. 279–312. For More's critical stance on Descartes*: Alan Gabbey, 'Philosophia Cartesiana triumphata: Henry More 1646–1671', in Thomas M. Lennon, etc. (eds.), *Problems of Cartesianism* (Montreal: Mc Gill – Queen's University Press, 1982), pp. 171–250. See on a reply by More* to Spinoza's philosophy also: Colie, *Light and Enlightenment*, pp. 66–93.

23 Henry More*, *Enchiridion metaphysicum, sive, de rebus incorporeis succincta & luculenta dissertatio* (London: 1671). The book ambitiously takes issue to defend the existence of immaterial substances. Boyle* reacted to the book in a work on experimental methodology: *An Hydrostatical Discourse ...* (London: 1672). See: Robert Boyle, *Works*, Michael C.W. Hunter and Edward B. Davids (eds.) (14 vols., London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999–2000), vol. 7. More had already reversed atheism in *The Immortality of the Soul, so Farre Forth as it is Demonstrable from the Knowledge of Nature and the Light of Reason* (London: 1659). For a critical edition: Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul*, A. Jacob (ed.) (Dordrecht: M. Nijhoff, 1987).

24 The letter by More* to Boyle* starts thus: 'Mr. Foxcroft being at my chambers yesterday, and acquainting me so explicitly how you have taken offence at what concerns you in my *Enchiridion Metaphysicum*, it has quickened me to do that, which I was sometimes thinking to do, since I saw you last. For I had some such inklings before now. But when I was with you, you seemed not to be concerned for yourself, but for *Des Cartes*.' (4/14 December 1671, Robert Boyle, *Correspondence*, Michael C.W. Hunter, etc. [eds.] [6 vols., London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001], vol. 4, p. 231).

25 Cf. Gabbey, 'Philosophia Cartesiana triumphata', p. 171, and *passim*.

considered as a version of ancient Pythagoreanism and deeply anti-Christian.²⁶

Thus, Henry More in his letter to Boyle of 4/14 December not only doggedly rejected Descartes's natural physics and underlined his own position on the 'necessity' of incorporeal active principles and the nature of incorporeal substance but he lambasted Spinoza, too.²⁷ In regard to the latter's 'Theological-Political Treatise', he wrote Boyle about the Dutch philosopher's controversial treatise, Cartesianism, and their imminent danger of advocating speculative atheism in the same breath the following:

Certainly, all those of the atheistical party, that have observed my zeal in the behalf of religion, in almost all my writings, must, as once I heard a known physician say of them of our profession, that God Almighty has sent none but a company of fools upon his errand, take me to be one of the chief of them; or think me a juggler and deceiver, I not declaring against that philosophy, which is the pillar of many of those men's infidelity, and of their atheism; and it is not a week ago, since I saw a letter, that informed me, that *Spinosa*, a Jew first, after a Cartesian, and now an atheist, is supposed the author of *Theologico-Politicus*. I suppose, you may have seen the book. Wherefore what could I have done less, than declare my sense of the Cartesian philosophy, and vindicate myself, from the imputation of so fond a blindness, as not to be aware of the danger of that philosophy, if it be credited; and, which is best of all, to put it quite out of credit, in that sense I oppose it, by demonstrating the great weakness thereof, in its pretences of solving, though but the easiest and simplest phaenomena, merely mechanically? which, I think, I have done irrefutably, nay, I am unspeakably confident of it: and have therewithal ever and anon plainly demonstrated the necessity of incorporeal beings; which is a design, than which nothing can be more seasonable in this age; wherein the notion of a spirit is so hooted at by so many for nonsense. This yet I am very confident in myself, I have proved

over and over again, by invincible arguments, to be no figment in this discourse; which, whatever the opinions of other men are, is a satisfaction to my own mind, which I value more than any thing this world can afford me. And if in a compliment to Des Cartes, I should not have taken my full stroke at this daring monster, that struts thus confidently in this present degenerate age, I had been perfidious to the church of God, and to the kingdom of his son Jesus Christ; whom, however I compliment others, I am bound to the utmost in my power really and cordially to serve.²⁸

Several years later, as it will be discussed later in this chapter at length, Henry More also launched an attack in print on Spinoza's writings in two 'Epistolae'-style essays, called 'Ad V.C. epistola altera' (1677) and 'Demonstrationis duarum propositionum', or *Confutatio* (1678), which were both published in the Cambridge scholar's *Opera philosophica* (1679).

On 14/24 December 1671, a few days after Henry More had written his outraged letter to Boyle, Sir Thomas Blount also made briefly mention of the 'Theological-Political Treatise' in one of his letters.²⁹ On the latter date, this British barrister, archivist-lexicographer, and notoriously-known *franc-tireur*, dispatched a parcel holding a short message and two copies of books to the English historian and antiquary Anthony Wood, a specialist in the history of the city and university of Oxford.³⁰ Apart from a copy of the *Tuba stentoro-phonica*, a pamphlet on the speaking trumpet by the diplomat-spy and inventor Sir Samuel Morland (1625–1695), Blount's package also contained a copy of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.³¹ In the postscript appended to the package's accompanying letter of 14/24 December, also announcing that the young 'Duke of Somerset is dead', Blount remarks about the two books enclosed thus:

26 More*, by his own account, read the *TTP* only as late as 1677 and reacted hurriedly to it. He had briefly corresponded with Descartes (1648–1649) and was one of the first to promote the Cartesian philosophy (in relation to dualist theology) in Britain. Later, though, he developed into an ardent critic of Descartes's mechanist physics and its 'misguiding' implications.

27 See also the letter by More* to Descartes* of 5 March 1649 (AT v, 298–317). More's atomist philosophical theology was primarily opposed to the Cartesian concept of *automata* which More thought could easily be appropriated by defenders of atheism.

28 Boyle*, *Correspondence*, Hunter, etc. (eds.), vol. 4, p. 232. For More's correspondence with Descartes*: AT v, 628–647. For Cartesianism in Britain: Sarah Hutton, 'Cartesianism in Britain', in Steven Nadler, etc. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook*, pp. 496–513.

29 Blount: BL.

30 Anthony Wood: BL.

31 Samuel Morland, *Tuba Stentoro-Phonica, an Instrument of Excellent Use, ...* (London: 1671). See: Oldenburg* to Martin Lister, 23 December 1671. In: Henry Oldenburg, *Correspondence*, Alfred R. Hall and Marie Boas Hall (eds.) (13 vols., Madison, Milwaukee, WI, and London: University of Wisconsin Press/Mansell/Taylor & Francis, 1965–85), vol. 8, pp. 428–430. 'Duke of Somerset': meant is William Seymour (1652–1671), 3rd Duke of Somerset.

Here is a pestilent book com from Hamburg called Tractatus Theologo-Politicus, also extant Sir Samuel Morelands Tuba Stentoro-phonica.³²

The English philosopher and political theorist John Locke, the founder of empiricism and a fanatical collector of books on religious toleration, also took an interest in Spinoza, at least to a certain extent. Locke's concerns were particularly centred on theological debate and the eternal salvation of souls. For the latter, toleration meant individual responsibility and the freedom of worship. Nonetheless, he refused to allow the privilege of toleration to what he saw as inherently-immoral 'Hereticks', i.e., atheists, those 'who deny the Being of a God', and 'Romanists', Roman Catholics who obeyed a foreign prince.

Locke was not primarily interested in Spinoza's ideas about the liberty to philosophize and the freedom of thought which he even strongly denied to those rejecting divine revelation. Evidence he was at least familiar with Spinoza's writings is borne out by his unpublished manuscripts (1664–1666), containing miscellaneous notes about medical issues, Helmontian alchemy, and financial matters. Locke in one of these manuscripts wrote a brief remark regarding Spinoza's learned 1663 exposition of Descartes, *Renati Des Cartes Principiorum philosophiae pars I et II; Cogitata metaphysica*, thereby asking himself the following:

What did Spinoza write beyond Parts 1 & 2 of the 'Principles' of Descartes in quarto 1663. Lodewijk Meyer. What did he [Spinoza] write.³³

So, apparently, this remark proves Spinoza's work on the 'Principles of Philosophy' had in any case aroused Locke's interest.

As for the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, it is documented that the English philosopher purchased a copy of the book on 16 March 1672.³⁴ While perusing the work,

Locke duplicated several passages from it in a copy of a King James Bible (1648) also present in his private library.³⁵ The strong likelihood is that Locke wrote those quotations, all from the treatise's chapter 1 ('Of Prophecy') together with his own comments, between 1672 and 1675.³⁶ Although a date is not known he must have entered these annotated citations from Spinoza's 'Theological-Political Treatise' in the Bible copy before transferring to France to work in the service of the English politician Caleb Banks (1659–1669) as a tutor and medical attendant from 1677 to 1679.³⁷

The remaining master catalogue (1674) of Locke's final library shows he owned the English-style octavo issue (T.3e) of the 'Theological-Political Treatise' (1674).³⁸ The British philosopher's 'Catalogue de livres deffendus et qu'on trouve avec peine', compiled by him on two folded sheets in (May?) 1679 (endorsed 'Libri 79'), also mentions a copy of the *Traitté des ceremonies*, one of the 1678 duodecimo variants (either X.3 or Y.4/Y.5) of the treatise's French translation. The 'Catalogue' lists a 'Tractatus Theologico-politicus en Francois soub le nom de Ceremonies des Juifs'.³⁹ In addition, the surviving list (1686) of Locke's library in Holland mentions two sets of the *Opera posthuma*.⁴⁰ Another inventory (1693) of his

courtier Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper (1621–1683), Locke's patron and friend, bought the copy from Locke for his own library. Cf. Kim I. Parker, etc., *The Biblical Politics of John Locke* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004), p. 165.

35 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Locke 16.25 (first interleaf).

36 *TTP*, ch. 1 (G 3/15–29). Paraphrases of Spinoza by Locke* are at 1 Sam. 3:21 (King James Bible [1648], introductory notes, 17): 'In more est apud Judaeos religionis sive devotionis causa omnia ad deum referre omissa causarum mediarum inertia'; 'Appeared & revealed himself by the wonders &c. i.e. Shamuël deum audiverit loquentem'. Another quote, recording Spinoza's definition of a prophet, is at Exod. 7:1 (King James Bible [1648], p. 63). Cf. Parker, etc., *The Biblical Politics of John Locke*, p. 165.

37 For Spinoza's influence on Locke*: John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For background on differences between Locke and Spinoza: Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1650–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 135–163.

38 See: Harrison and Laslett, *The Library*, nos. 2743–2744; Parker, etc., *The Biblical Politics*, p. 165.

39 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Locke b.2, fols 26–29. Cf. John Lough, 'Locke's List of Books Banned in France in 1679', *French Studies*, 5 (1951), pp. 217–222, at p. 217; Locke*, *Epistola de tolerantia*, Klibansky (ed.) and Wiedhofft Gough (transl.), p. xxxii. Meant is: *Traitté des ceremonies superstitieuses des Juifs tant anciens que modernes*. Three variant states of the French duodecimo edition are known: X.3, Y.4/Y.5, and Y.n/Y.4/Y.5. See for this: Chapter 5.

40 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Locke b.2, fol. 44^v. Cf. Harrison and Laslett, *The Library*, no. 2518. One copy is extant in: Edinburgh, University Library, Special Collections, JA 2017. Inscribed on the inside front board is 'John Locke'.

32 Quoted in: Theo C.G. Bongaerts (ed.), *The Correspondence of Thomas Blount (1678–1679). A Recusant Antiquary* (Amsterdam: APA – Holland University Press, 1978), p. 123.

33 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Locke f. 27 (Pocket memorandum book, 1664–6), p. 5: 'Spinoza quid ab eo scriptum praeter partem 1 & 2 principiorum Cartesii. 4^o. 63. Meyer Ludovicus. Quid ab eo scriptum' (quoted in: John Locke*, *Epistola de tolerantia*, Raymond Klibansky [ed.] and John Wiedhofft Gough [transl.] Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. xxxi. For the copy of the *PP/CM* in Locke's private library: John R. Harrison and Peter Laslett, *The Library of John Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), no. 2742. See: Colie, 'Spinoza and the Early English Deists', p. 31.

34 Locke* may have bought a copy of the first quarto edition (T.1), but it was absent in his final library. On 11 November 1675, the

library also lists that 1677 Latin edition as well as another copy of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.⁴¹

Whether Locke read all these books is quite uncertain. In 1699 in *Mr. Locke's Reply*, part of his controversy with the Bishop of Worcester, Edward Stillingfleet, over substance theory and rational certainty, the British philosopher would put forward, about the issue of life after death, the following remark:

I am not so well read in *Hobbes* or *Spinosa*, as to be able to say, what were their Opinions in this Matter.⁴²

Given the similarities of their political theories, Thomas Hobbes probably must have been sympathetic to Spinoza's treatise, too. According to *Brief Lives*, a work by the English antiquarian writer-babbler John Aubrey, Hobbes would have read the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* in the early 1670s. Allegedly, the noted English poet and politician Edmund Waller (1606–1687) had directed a copy to Hobbes's former pupil and patron William Cavendish, 3rd Earl of Devonshire, a Royal Society's original Fellow (1663) and royalist. Hobbes, according to the latter's undated reaction rephrased by Aubrey *Brief Lives*, had allegedly been awestruck by Spinoza's courage in putting to press such a fearless work, putting it thus:

When Spinoza's <<Tractatus theologico-politicus>> first came out, Mr. Edmund Waller sent it to my lord of Devonshire and desired him to send him word what Mr. Hobbes said of it. Mr. Hobbes told his lordship [Cavendish]: 'Ne judicate ne judicemini' [Matthew 7:1]. He told me that he [read: Spinoza] had out throwne him [Hobbes] a barre's length, for he durst not write so boldly.⁴³

41 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Locke f.16, p. 211 (inventory of Locke's private library, made by Sylvester Brownover [fl.1678–1699]). Cf. Locke*, *Epistola de tolerantia*, Klibansky (ed.) and Wiedhofft Gough (transl.), p. xxxii.

42 John Locke, *Reply to ... the Lord Bishop of Worcester's Answer to his Second Letter Wherein, ..., What his Lordship has Said Concerning Certainty by Reason, ... is Examined* (London: 1699), p. 422.

43 Quoted in: Karl Schuhmann, *Hobbes une chronique. Cheminement de sa pensée et de sa vie* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), p. 206. See further: John Aubrey*, *Brief Lives*, Andrew Clark (ed.) (2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), vol. 1, p. 357 (edition reads: 'he had cut through me a bar's length'); Vivian de Sola Pinto (ed.), *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century. Selected Short Lives* (London: Harrap, 1951), p. 189 (De Sola Pinto proposes: 'outthrowne'). Cf. further: Edwin Curley, "I Durst Not Write So Boldly", or How to Read Hobbes' Theological-Political Treatise, in Daniela Bostrenghi and Emilia Giancotti Boscherini (eds.), *Hobbes e Spinoza: Atti del Convegno Internazionale Urbano, 14–17 ottobre, 1988* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1992), pp. 497–593. Waller

The account in Aubrey's *Brief Lives* does not add up to much. It is neither clear what passage in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* Hobbes would have exactly referred to nor what Aubrey was trying to testify in *Brief Lives* about Hobbes's perhaps hidden convictions never put to paper anyway.

Spinoza in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* brings up Hobbes's political notions, in *Adnotatio* (33), clarifying his statement in the treatise's chapter 16 ('On the Foundations of the Republic'), in which he upholds that each person 'when he wishes, can be free'. In the explanatory note 33, he argues that '(contrary to Hobbes) reason urges peace in all circumstances'. It must be assumed that, by 1674, Spinoza had in any case read Hobbes's *Leviathan* and *De Cive*, a copy of which he had in his own private reference library.⁴⁴ For in early June that same year, he mentions Hobbes once again in a letter addressed to his Amsterdam friend Jarig Jelles. In it, the Dutch philosopher answers Jelles's question asking him what he thought specifically set his views aside from those of Hobbes. Their political divergences, according to Spinoza's own account, were particularly in the areas of rights of nature and powers. Sceptically, he informs Jelles thus:

As far as Politics is concerned, the difference you ask about, between Hobbes and me, is this: I always preserve natural Right unimpaired, and I maintain that in each State the Supreme Magistrate has no more right over its subjects than it has greater power over them. This is always the case in the state of Nature.⁴⁵

befriended Hobbes*. His later poems were heavily influenced by the latter. Cavendish: BL.

44 Hobbes*, *Leviathan*; id., *Elementa philosophica de cive* (Amsterdam: 1647). For *Adnotatio* 33: CW, vol. 2, p. 289, there at n. 17 (G 3/195.4).

45 1674.06.02, Ep 50: 'Quantum ad Politicam spectat, discrimen inter me, & Hobbesium, de quo interrogas, in hoc consistit, quod ego naturale Jus semper sartum tectum conservo, quodque Supremo Magistratui in qualibet Urbe non plus in subditos juris, quam juxta mensuram potestatis, qua subditum superat, competere statuo, quod in statu Naturali semper locum habe.' (G 4/239; CW, vol. 2, p. 406). Ep 50 was a reply to a (lost) letter by Jelles* (< 1674.[04].02*). Spinoza's response is advanced in the *TTP*'s ch. 16 (G 3/189) and in *TP*, ch. 2 (§ 2–4 [G 3/276–277]). For background on Spinoza's and Hobbes's philosophy: William Sacksteder, 'How Much of Hobbes Might Spinoza Have Read', *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy*, 11 (1980), pp. 25–39; Arrigo Pacchi, 'Leviathan and Spinoza's Tractatus on Revelation: Some Elements for a Comparison', in id., *Scritti Hobbesiani (1978–1990)* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1998), pp. 123–144, 1998; Curley, "I Durst Not Write So Boldly"; Noel Malcolm, 'Hobbes, Ezra, and the Bible: The History of a Subversive Idea', in id., *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 383–431; Karl Schumann, 'Methodenfragen bei Spinoza und Hobbes: Zum Problem des

Hence, what Spinoza simply argues here is that he rejected in Hobbes's *Leviathan* and *De Cive* the intrinsic binding of the transference of the natural right whenever we make pledges. That stance was boldly countered by the Dutch philosopher's own upending preference for a self-interested contract, bound only by perceived utility and by doing whatever a person can do and not by previous agreements whatsoever.

3 Two Early Critics: Henry Oldenburg and Robert Boyle

Henry Oldenburg, returning in the summer of 1661 from a brief trip to his birthplace Bremen, paid a visit to Spinoza in Rijnsburg. There, they enthusiastically partook in discussions relating to fundamental issues as metaphysics and the New Philosophy. Still uncertain is how contacts between Oldenburg and Spinoza were exactly established or arranged and, more significantly, by whom. Possibly, the intermediary who brought Spinoza to the scholar's notice was perhaps Oldenburg's relative Johannes Coccejus, a leading Hebrew scholar and German theology professor from Bremen lecturing at Leiden University. Another likely candidate bringing Spinoza to the spotlight might have been the Dutch Collegiant and Hebrew scholar Adam Boreel (1603–1665). He befriended Oldenburg and had close links with the Rijnsburg Collegiants and with prominent Jewish scholars in Amsterdam, like rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657).⁴⁶

By the time Oldenburg paid Spinoza a visit in the Leiden hinterland, the latter had only composed the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione, et de via, qua optime in veram rerum cognitionem dirigitur*, what is assumed to be his first work, and he was probably still in the process of composing and polishing the *Korte verhandeling*. The

visit by Oldenburg however underlines he must already have had a reputation of some sort as an original, independent thinker drifting away from his Dutch-Sephardic upbringing and refining his skills as a natural philosopher probing deeply into the Cartesian system.⁴⁷ Impressed by this young Dutchman, Oldenburg eagerly initiated a 'philosophical' correspondence with Spinoza immediately upon his return to London. In his first letter to the Dutch philosopher, composed on 26 August 1661, he

Einflusses', in id., *Selected Papers on Renaissance Philosophy and on Thomas Hobbes*, Piet Steenbakkers and Cees Leijzenhorst (eds.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2008), pp. 45–71; Don Garrett, "Promising" Ideas: Hobbes and Contract in Spinoza's Political Philosophy', in Melamed and Rosenthal (eds.), *Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise*, pp. 192–209.

46 Among many other works, Coccejus* published a translation of the *Mishnah*. He also issued a treatise, called *Protheoria de ratione interpretandi sive introductio in philologiam sacram* (1630). In it, he lauds the overall erudition of rabbis such as 'Rashi' (1040–1105) and David Kimchi (c.1160–c.1235). For Boreel: Walter Schneider, *Adam Boreel. Sein Leben und Seine Schriften* (Giessen: Munchöw, 1911); Molhuysen, etc. (eds.), *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, vol. 6, cols 164–166; *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme*, vol. 6, 44–46; Francesco Quatrini, *Adam Boreel (1602–1665): His Life and Thought* (2017).

47 Textual history of the *TIE*: G 2, pp. 319–340; Spinoza, *Œuvres complètes*, I, pp. 21–58. For a synopsis: Van Bunge, etc. (eds.), *The Continuum Companion to Spinoza*, pp. 341–343. See also: Don Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. pp. 73–96; Eugenio Canone and Pina Totaro, 'Index locorum du "Tractatus de intellectus emendatione"', in Akkerman and Steenbakkers (eds.), *Spinoza to the Letter*, pp. 69–106. For Spinoza's involvement with hermeneutics and methodology: Alan Gabbey, 'Spinoza's Natural Science and Methodology', in Don Garrett (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 142–191. It is assumed, Spinoza composed the *TIE* around or soon after the *Mahamad* (college of lay leaders) of the Amsterdam *Talmud Torah* congregation put him to a *herem* (27 July 1656). For background: Asa Kasher and Shlomo Biderman, 'Why Was Baruch de Spinoza Excommunicated?', in David S. Katz and Jonathan I. Israel (eds.), *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp. 98–141, at p. 100. For the *herem*'s formula: Israel S. Revah, *Spinoza et Dr. Juan de Prado* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1959), pp. 57–58; Herman P. Prins Salomon, 'La Vraie excommunication de Spinoza', in Hans Bots, etc. (eds.), *Forum Litterarum. Miscelânea de Estudos Literários, Linguísticos e Históricos oferecida a J.J. van den Besselaar* (Amsterdam and Maarsen: APA-Holland University Press, 1984), pp. 181–199; W/Cz, vol. 1, pp. 262–265. English translation from the Portuguese: Paul Mendes-Flohr, 'The Sephardi Community of Amsterdam. The Writ of Excommunication Against Baruch Spinoza (July 27, 1656)', in id., and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 57. The ban's text derives from chapter 139 of the *Kol Bo* ('All is Within'), a Jewish ritual and civil law anthology printed in Naples in 1490 (cf. Steven Nadler, *Spinoza. A Life* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], p. 128). The sole (unsigned) copy of the surviving Portuguese text, published by Van Vloten (Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ad Benedicti de Spinoza Opera quae supersunt omnia supplementum* [Amsterdam: F. Muller, 1862], pp. 290–293), is in the *Mahamad* minute book. See: 334: 'Archief van de Portugees-Israëlietische Gemeente', ms. 'Escamoth A' (register of rules and regulations), inv. no. 19, p. 408, 6 Ab 5416. Background: Odette Vlessing, 'The Excommunication of Baruch Spinoza. A Conflict between Jewish and Dutch Law', *Studia Spinozana*, 13 (1997), pp. 15–47; id., 'The Excommunication of Baruch Spinoza: The Birth of a Philosopher', in Jonathan I. Israel and Reinier Salverda (eds.), *Dutch Jewry. Its History and Secular Culture 1500–2000* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 141–172; Jonathan I. Israel, 'Philosophy, Commerce and the Synagogue: Spinoza's Expulsion from the Amsterdam Portuguese Synagogue in 1656', in id. and Salverda (eds.), *Dutch Jewry*, pp. 125–140.

referred to their earlier Rijnsburg encounter as a meeting during which

... we talked about God, about infinite Extension and Thought, about the difference and agreement of these attributes, about the way the human soul is united with the body, and about the Principles of the Cartesian philosophy and of the Baconian.⁴⁸

The epistolary friendship between Spinoza and Oldenburg comprised two stages in their lifetime. Between 26 August 1661 and 18 December 1665, and between [April/May] 1675 and 18 October 1676, they exchanged (at least) thirty-five letters and parcels, ranging from short messages and books to lengthy accounts, scholarly reports, all spanning the private and the public realms. Spinoza passed along continental news to Oldenburg about scholarly subjects, books, and politics. He also informed his London correspondent about his own occupations, like his philosophical writing projects, and dutifully answered Oldenburg's questions, too. As for Oldenburg, he dispatched letters to the Dutch philosopher with news about, for example, the London Royal Society and its members' endeavours and trials in natural philosophy, a subject being of great importance to the both of them.

More importantly, through Oldenburg's contacts, Spinoza was also in the position to communicate (1662–August 1663) with Robert Boyle. At least for a while, the latter British empiricist, Spinoza and Oldenburg first started writing on the corpuscular chemistry and on the physical properties of cohesive attraction.⁴⁹ During the

early 1660s, Boyle in his private meetings with Oldenburg, his amanuensis, and by way of the latter's correspondence will undoubtedly have learned far more details about Spinoza's philosophical notions.⁵⁰ This is evinced by one of Oldenburg's letters, sent to Spinoza in the autumn of 1665, in which he informed the Dutch philosopher both he and Boyle had spoken about 'your Erudition, and your profound meditations', without however stipulating what subjects they had discussed.⁵¹

A few years beforehand, in autumn 1661, Oldenburg had spent Spinoza a Latin translation of Boyle's *Certain Physiological Essays*. The latter work comprised an account of chemical tests, with examples. In it, Boyle particularly focused on the mechanical properties of pure nitre or saltpetre (a main component of gunpowder), i.e., the fertilizer potassium nitrate (KNO_3), and on the physical characteristics of the cohesive force of smooth singular bodies *in vacuo*. In the book's accompanying letter of 11/21 October 1661, Oldenburg also kindly asks his Dutch correspondent to give his critique of the five-part work as he informs him thus:

Here is the little book I promised you. Do let me know your judgment of it, particularly regarding the Experiments he has included on Niter, and on Fluidity and Solidity.⁵²

Spinoza in his reply, he objects to aspects of Boylean corpuscular chemistry. He also assaults Boyle's interpretation of the physical property of cohesive attraction, i.e., the tendency of similar particles or surfaces to cling to one another because of what Boyle called 'pressure'. The philosopher's reply was probably first 'republished' in

48 'Habebamus Rhenoburgi sermonem de Deo, de Extensione, & Cogitatione infinita, de horum attributorum discrimine, & convenientia, de ratione unionis animae humanae cum corpore; porro de Principiis Philosophiae Cartesianae, & Baconianae.' (1661.08.26, Ep 1; G 4/5–6; CW, vol. 1, pp. 163–164).

49 To Oldenburg*, 1662.[01–06].00, Ep 6 (G 4/15–36); to Spinoza, 1663.04.03, Ep 11 (G 4/48–52); to Oldenburg, 1663.07.27, Ep 13 (G 4/63); to Spinoza, 1663.08.14, Ep 16 (G 4/73–75). Although there are doubts Spinoza and Boyle* were directly in contact by letter, I have found evidence proving they might have exchanged at least two now-lost letters; with or without Oldenburg's help. The likely existence of a letter to Boyle (text unknown) is constituted by a chronological correspondent inventory (c.1700) compiled by classical scholar and linguist William Wotton (1666–1726), advancing his project in composing Boyle's biography. It lists one undated incoming letter from Spinoza to Boyle: 'Spinoza 317'. The reference may be to a holograph, but it cannot be ruled out Wotton's inventory lists a copy or minute from a further unidentified letter, by Spinoza to Oldenburg, and then passed to Boyle. For Wotton's list: London, Royal Society, ms. BP 36, fols 180–189. Cf.: Boyle, *Correspondence*, Hunter, etc. (eds.), vol. 6, Appendix 3, p. 408 ('Wotton's list'). A letter by Boyle to Spinoza can be also inferred from quite an erratic addition in a letter (1663.07.27,

Ep 13) published in the *NS* (p. 481; not in the *OP*), in which the Dutch philosopher responds to another letter (1663.04.03, Ep 11). It concerns a reply to Oldenburg's remarks on Spinoza's critique of Boyle's 1661 *Certain Physiological Essays* (Chapter 2, n. 8). It reads: '... en aan de welken ik ook zijn brief heb getoont, na dat ik hem ontvangen had, ...' (my emphasis). My translation reads in English: '... and to whom [i.e., 'others' who had read Boyle and Descartes] I have also shown his letter [Boyle's], after I had received it; ...'. This erratic statement suggests Spinoza circulated Boyle's letter in an edited version among his friends and admirers in Amsterdam.

50 To Oldenburg*, 1662.[01–06].00, Ep 6 (G 4/15–36).

51 To Spinoza, 1665.04.28, Ep 25 (G 4/158).

52 To Spinoza, 1661.10.21, Ep 5: 'Libellum, quem promiseram, en accipe, mihique tuum de eo iudicium, imprimis circa ea, quae de Nitro, deque Fluiditate, ac Firmitudine inserit Specimina, rescribe.' (G 4/14). Oldenburg* had already promised to send the copy (through an intermediary) in his first letter to Spinoza (1661.08.26, Ep 1) as soon as 'it has been printed'. Oldenburg* gift copy concerned: Boyle*, *Certain Physiological Essays*.

manuscript, amongst friends and admirers in Amsterdam, in an edited version and highly likely entitled 'Comments on the Most Noble Robert Boyle's book on Niter, Fluidity & Solidity' ('Epistola continens annotationes in librum nobilissimi viri Roberti Boyle, de nitro, fluiditate, & firmitate'). In turn, Boyle, through the intermediary of Oldenburg, answered Spinoza's critique of his *Certain Physiological Essays*.⁵³

Said more concisely, it appears that, from an early start, Oldenburg and Boyle both considered Spinoza chiefly to be a sceptical, primarily Cartesian philosopher and an expert practitioner in physics and mathematics.⁵⁴ Apart from the *Tractatus theologico-politicus's* contents, Oldenburg may also have informed Boyle about his interpretation of what Spinoza had expounded to him in his letters about some of the metaphysical doctrines contained in the *Ethica's* embryonic instalments, too. When this proves to be the case, it most certainly must have attracted Boyle's attention.⁵⁵ The English mechanist philosopher had, in his young-adult years, also himself composed a work called 'The Aretology or Ethicall Elements' (1645), referred to by him in his correspondence as 'my *Ethics*'.⁵⁶

Possibly, Boyle in *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature*, a lengthy treatise he had begun composing in about 1666 and which was only first

published in 1686, indirectly refuted Spinoza's substance theory in relation to the Christian concept of God.⁵⁷ In this natural philosophical key text, which mechanistically elucidates and contextualizes various views of the natural world and places the Dutch philosopher willingly between 'atheists' and 'theists', Boyle upholds in its section 4 that

... even in these times there is lately sprung up a sect of men, as well professing Christianity, as pretending to philosophy, who (if I am not misinformed of their doctrine) do very much symbolise with the ancient heathens, and talk much indeed of God, but mean such a one as is not really distinct from the animated and intelligent universe, but is on that account very differing from the true God that we Christians believe and worship.⁵⁸

Over time, particularly Oldenburg's epistolary interest in Spinoza and in his writings would gradually shift from a once happy meeting of minds and an attitude of curiosity to an austere critical stance when it came to matters theological. Especially when in their letters, published in the posthumous works in 1677, they started discussing far-stretching theological key subjects such as miracles, prophecy, scriptural exegesis, and Spinoza's equation of God with nature. A letter of 8 June 1675 of Oldenburg to Spinoza gives the impression that the former, at least for a

53 Oldenburg* to Spinoza, 1663.04.03, Ep 11 (G 4/48–52). Spinoza's original reply was contained in a letter to Oldenburg: 1662.[01–06].00, Ep 6, G 4/15–36. *Certain Physiological Essays* contains essays presenting a subtle view of experimentation. Boyle* underscored in it that unsuccessful tests should be recorded, too: 'Essay, of the Unsuccessfulness of Experiments' (pp. 37–66); 'Essay II, Of the Un-succeeding Experiments' (pp. 67–105). A second edition (1669) included a new annex, too: 'Of Absolute Rest in Bodies'. See: Boyle, *Works*, Hunter and Davids (eds.), vol. 2. Spinoza inspected its Latin translation: *Tentamina quaedam physiologica diversis temporibus & occasionibus conscripta* (London: 1661). Neither the Latin nor the English edition were in Spinoza's private library when, upon his death, an inventory was made on 2 March 1677. For further background: Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 185–201. See: Spinoza to Oldenburg*, 1662.[01–06].00, Ep 6 (G 4/15–36).

54 To Spinoza, 1665.09.14–28, Ep 29 (G 4/164–165); 1665.10.[22], Ep 31 (G 4/167–169). See: Colie, 'Spinoza in England (1665–1730)', pp. 193–202.

55 See as an illustration for Spinoza's remarks on his *E* his first letter to Oldenburg* (1661.09.00, Ep 2 [G 4/7–9]), expounding his theory of substance, extension, and attribute.

56 Boyle*, *Correspondence*, Hunter, etc. (eds.), vol. 1, pp. 34 and 41–42. Cf. for Boyle's 'Aretology': Michael C.W. Hunter, *Boyle: Between God and Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 59. Boyle published another work on ethical issues: *Occasional Reflections upon Several Subjects, ...* (London: 1665).

57 For Boyle*, 'vulgar' meant 'common', 'ordinary'. All experiments ever conducted by him culminated in *A Free Enquiry* which critically discusses the ancient Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of the 'plastic nature'. For Boyle, who refused to treat nature as a sole agent, a mechanistic explanation of the workings of the impersonal machine making up the natural world alone lay bare the properties and powers of a personal, omnipotent God acting freely and arbitrary. In this deterministic view, material nature was free from purpose, willing and unaware, and 'motion does not belong essentially to matter'. Only God would act as an incorporeal agent: '... ; the Motions of all Bodies, at least at the beginning of Things, and the Motions of most Bodies, the Causes of whose Motions we can discern, were impress'd on them, either by an External Immaterial Agent, God; or by other Portions of Matter (which are also Extrinsic Impellers) acting on them.' (Robert Boyle, *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature*, Michael C.W. Hunter and Edward B. Davids [eds.] [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], VI, p. 90). *A Free Enquiry* was first published in London in 1686. A Latin edition, authorized by Boyle* and issued by Scottish physician David Abercromby (*fl.*1682–1702), appeared in 1687, the year in which also Newton published his *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* (London: 1687). Present-day edition: Boyle, *A Free Enquiry*; id., *Works*, Hunter and Davids (eds.), vol. 10. See further: Michael C.W. Hunter and Edward B. Davis, 'The Making of Robert Boyle's "Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature" (1686)', *Early Science and Medicine*, 1 (1996), pp. 204–271. Boyle*, *A Free Enquiry*, Hunter and Davids (eds.), IV, p. 47.

brief period, seems to have clearly struggled to fathom the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*'s contents and the book's radical metaphysical and theological implications.⁵⁹ Earlier that same year, in a now-lost letter to Spinoza he had given a harsh critique of the treatise.⁶⁰ Spinoza had forwarded the copy of the treatise to Oldenburg, in all likelihood with Tschirnhaus's help who was visiting England and went to London in the spring of 1675; the book however went missing. Oldenburg in a letter (now lost) had thanked him for the gift, but it never reached Spinoza either.

A few months later, Oldenburg apologized to his Dutch correspondent by remarking he had come to realize finally that that previous judgement had been unfortunately without enough consideration.⁶¹ The aforementioned letter of 8 June 1675 was another effort to thank Spinoza. Oldenburg in this letter writes about his overhasty judgement thus:

*In it [i.e., his first thank-you letter dispatched to Spinoza] I indicated my opinion of that Treatise, which now, having subsequently examined and weighed the matter more carefully, I certainly think was premature. At that time certain things seemed to me to tend to the detriment of Religion, when I measured it by the standard provided by the common herd of Theologians, and the accepted Formulas of the Confessions (which seem to be too full of partisan zeal).*⁶²

Accordingly, Oldenburg immediately adds to the former remark that he had now become fully convinced that

... you are so far from trying to harm true religion, or solid philosophy, that on the contrary you are working to commend and establish the authentic purpose

of the Christian Religion, and indeed, the divine sublimity and excellence of a fruitful Philosophy.⁶³

Oldenburg wrote to Spinoza stating that he believed 'that in your heart you have this intention [to advance the cause of true Christianity]'. He urged his Dutch correspondent to soon write back to him to inform him 'what you are now preparing and thinking about for that purpose'. What Oldenburg was really up to here is puzzling, to say the least. Perhaps, this was a cunning plan to draw Spinoza into a correspondence on the unpublished *Ethica* about which Tschirnhaus may have first informed Oldenburg and Boyle during meetings with the two scholars.⁶⁴

Shortly afterwards, Oldenburg changed his rather seemingly receptive opinion and found repugnant certain theological implications of the 'Theological-Political Treatise' on Reformed Christology once again. When Spinoza kindly asked Oldenburg in a letter (now lost) to distribute copies in England on his behalf of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, the latter scholar hastened to answer him, in a letter of 22 July 1675, to send these *not* to his private address (at Pall Mall, Westminster). By then, Spinoza's treatise was already a banned book in Holland, Zeeland, and West-Friesland for almost one year. As the matter stands, Oldenburg's plain reply to Spinoza in regard to his request to circulate copies indicates he clearly had no intentions whatsoever to become openly associated with either the banned treatise or the Dutch philosopher so badly received by the Cambridge Neoplatonists. Not surprisingly, since Oldenburg's temporary imprisonment during the Second Anglo-Dutch War in the Tower of London from 20 June to 3 October 1667, he had become evidently cautious about his correspondence traffic with the continent.⁶⁵

59 Oldenburg* never received Spinoza's copy. He might however have read a copy which was in his possession since October 1670.

60 1675.[04/05].00^{a*}.

61 1675.06.08, Ep 61 (G 4/271–272).

62 The remark about his premature critique is italicized in the *OP* (xvii, p. 445): '*Indicaveram in iis me de Tractatu illo sententiam; quam utique, dehinc re proprius inspectâ, & perpensâ, nimis immaturam fuisse nunc existimo. Quaedam mihi videbantur tunc temporis vergere in fraudem Religionis, dum eam ex eo pede metiebar, quem Theologorum vulgus, & receptae Confessionum Formulae (quae nimum spirare videntur partium studia) suppeditant.*' (G 4/272; CW, vol. 2, p. 434). Curley points out he thinks the italics were absent in the autograph letter, but merely do express an intervention by the Amsterdam editors.

63 'At totum negotium intimius recogitanti multa occurrunt, quae mihi persuasum eunt, te tantum abesse, ut quicquam in Verae Religionis, solidaeve Philosophiae damnus moliaris, ut contra genuinum Christianae Religionis finem, nec non divinam fructuosae Philosophiae sublimitatem, & excellentiam commendare, & stabilire allabores.' (G 4/272; CW, vol. 2, p. 434).

64 Soon afterwards, Spinoza indeed wrote Oldenburg* a brief now-lost letter in which he brought up the *E* and his plan to publish the work (1675.07.05^{a*}).

65 The London Post Office was supervised by Sir Henry Bennet (1618–1685), 1st Earl of Arlington, the Secretary of State of the Southern Department (today's British Home Office). With respect to war politics, Arlington's information policy forced Oldenburg* to have all his incoming foreign letters opened at the Post Office's Foreign Office, particularly those from France and the Dutch Republic. The objective was to inspect whether they contained 'Civill news', i.e., sensitive political information. As a kind of prudent cipher, Oldenburg told his foreign correspondents to send him their letters with the code anagram/

Here is what Oldenburg wrote to Spinoza on 22 July about any copies of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* the Dutch philosopher had offered to send him:

As for other matters, I won't decline to receive copies of the Treatise you mention. I should only like to ask this: that they be addressed, when the time comes, to a certain Dutch merchant living in London, who will make sure that they are passed on to me afterward. There'll be no need to mention that you have sent me books of this kind. Provided they come safely into my possession, I have no doubt that it will be convenient for me to distribute them from here to my friends, and to get a just price for them.⁶⁶

Thus, Oldenburg in his letter of 22 July instructed Spinoza to send the books 'of this kind' not to Pall Mall, but instead to a Dutch merchant in London he apparently was in touch with. He urged the Dutch philosopher kindly also to refrain from mentioning his name in any letter accompanying the package. In other words, Oldenburg was far from keen being openly linked with Spinoza, even in a private letter sent to a Dutch acquaintance in London he apparently trusted well enough to receive copies of the treatise on his behalf. Spinoza's answer, composed after 22 July 1675, shows he wanted to respect his correspondent's request and, accordingly, he thanked Oldenburg 'very much for your most friendly warning'.⁶⁷

address 'Monsr Grubendol, London'. This would secure that, by his own account, these letters 'will come more safely to my hands, than if they were directed to my owne name'. At long last, Oldenburg was even temporarily imprisoned (25 June 1667) for 'dangerous designs & practices', i.e., on suspicion of exchanging political news in letters with parties overseas ('Regulation 18b'). Samuel Pepys (1633–1703) wrote about Oldenburg's arrest in his diary: 'I was told, yesterday that Mr. Oldenburg, our Secretary at Gresham College, is put into the Tower, for writing news to a virtuoso in France, with whom he constantly corresponds in philosophical matters; which makes it very unsafe at this time to write, or almost do any thing.'. Background: Douglas McKie, 'The Arrest and the Imprisonment of Henry Oldenburg', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 6 (1948), pp. 28–47.

66 1675.07.22, Ep 62: 'De caetero, non renuam aliquot dicti Tractatus exemplaria recipere. Hoc duntaxat rogatum te velim, ut suo tempore mercatori cuidam Belgico, Londini commoranti, inscribantur, qui mihi postmodum tradenda curet. Nec opus fuerit verba de eo facere, libros scilicet istiusmodi ad me fuisse transmissos: dummodo enim in potestatem meam tuto pervenerint, nullus dubito, quin commodum mihi futurum sit, eos amicis meis hinc inde distribuendi, justumque pro iis precium consequendi.' (G 4/273; CW, vol. 2, p. 435). The letter with Spinoza's request is no longer extant.

67 > 1675.[07].22, Ep 68 (G 4/299).

The identity of the Dutch entrepreneur residing in London remains unfortunately a mystery. Spinoza's request in any case proves that by then he was actively promoting his book by circulating copies among friends and correspondents abroad. As for large-scale distribution in Restoration England it seems likely to assume Jan Rieuwertsz *père*, the treatise's putative publisher, would have taken care of the shipment of the majority of the copies of the book, perhaps with the help of an English bookseller working in Amsterdam or The Hague. Whether copies of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, meant for further distribution, were indeed directed from Amsterdam via a Dutch trader staying in London to Oldenburg in Westminster is not known.

With respect to the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, Oldenburg and Boyle were at the same time deeply confused and worried by Spinoza's metaphysical notions, as evinced by a letter of Georg Hermann Schuller dispatched to Spinoza on 25 July 1675. Schuller informed him in it that Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus, by then in London and occasionally dispatching letters to Schuller about his daily routine and encounters with scholars such as John Collins (1625–1683) and Isaac Newton (1643–1727), had recently provided him with a written account of a rendezvous with Boyle and Oldenburg. Schuller writes to Spinoza that, according to Tschirnhaus,

... Messrs. Boyle and Oldenburg had formed a strange conception of Your person. Not only has he disabused them of this conception, he has also added reasons inducing them, not only to think most worthily and favorably again of your person, but also to value most highly the *Theological-Political Treatise*.⁶⁸

Whether the last above remark was indeed Tschirnhaus's correct interpretation of his conversations with the two British scholars should be sincerely doubted. Perhaps, Oldenburg and Boyle were only acting politely and

68 '... caeterum refert D^{nm} Boyle & Oldenburgh mirum de Tua persona formasse conceptum, quem ipse eisdem non solum ademit, sed rationes addidit, quarum inductione, iterum non solum dignissime et faventissime de eadem sentiant, sed & T. Theol. Politicum summe aestiment, ...' (Schuller* to Spinoza, 1675.07.25, Ep 63 [G 4/276; CW, vol. 2, p. 437]). Colie ('Spinoza in England (1665–1730)', p. 183) writes: 'At the same time, even in the din of the Hobbist controversies, Spinoza's work could not go entirely unnoticed; though he was often shrugged off as a mere disciple of the sage of Malmesbury, his work dismissed as the natural spawn of Hobbist error, Spinoza ultimately engaged intellectual attention as a figure of note in his own right.' Tschirnhaus: BL.

strategically, thus fiendishly avoiding to disclose to their German visitor their real opinion of Spinoza's treatise. Not surprisingly, both men were loyally adhering to their religious Protestant convictions and rejected the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*'s contents by all means.

Especially the voluntarist natural philosopher Robert Boyle, who took up the view 'God was the immediate Author of things' and was as deeply religious as he was uncompromising, saw the natural world as God's 'curious engine' and treated theology as paramount. After a conversion experience at a young age while travelling on a Grand Tour to the Savoy in 1641, Boyle would undertake a long-life search for Christianity's truth, something which also shines through his published writings. For instance, in the prologue to *An Examen of Mr. T. Hobbes his Dialogus Physicus de Naturâ Aëris*, a fierce attack published in 1662 on Thomas Hobbes whom he disliked and thought incompetent, Boyle characterized himself as one of the 'Orthodox Christian Naturalists'.⁶⁹ What is more, Boyle was also a propagator of the Gospel in New England and financed translations in many languages, too. Moreover, he donated money to pious causes and founded the noted Boyle Lectures in his will (28 July 1691). These missionary lectures (eight sermons each year on the first Sunday of every month),

... for proving the Christian Religion, against notorious Infidels ... that are among Christians themselves,

were considered straightforward defences of Christianity's truth against Judaism, Islam, atheism, and other forms of

'irreligion' (such as deism), which in Boyle's opinion were seemingly disrupting Christian society.⁷⁰

Being a convinced theist and a strong advocate of the divine designer argument, Boyle made no difference between reason and revelation. He was profoundly convinced that God was the 'divine maker of the universe' who has 'ends unknown to us' as he puts it in *A Free Inquiry*.⁷¹ God, according to Boyle, was an omnipotent, incorporeal creator who had made the world freely and maintains it, not out of necessity.⁷² More particularly, Boyle appears to have developed an intense dislike for the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*'s contents and its rigid rejection of miracles, according to him being one of the 'three grand arguments' for Christianity which he principally saw as cogent, special signs of God's special grace (but not as proofs of God's existence).⁷³ To put it differently, Boyle immensely worried about the implications of Spinoza's biblical criticism for the central tenets of Christian theology, fearing it would make the New Philosophy appear an accomplice to atheism and work contrary to the Christian faith. This stance is exemplary for Boyle's struggle, enduring throughout his entire scholarly life, to reconcile his distinctive mechanical programme in natural philosophy with Christianity.

In an undated 'reply' (on miracles), globally referred to by what one of his amanuenses described as 'Mr. Boyle's Answer to Spinoza', Boyle too reacted to Spinoza, addressing him as one of the 'Embracers of the Cartesian [Philosophy]'. Here is one of Boyle's statements, setting out to refute Spinoza's 'error' regarding the substance question:

69 Robert Boyle*, *An Examen of Mr. T. Hobbes his Dialogus Physicus De Naturâ Aëris ... With an Appendix Touching Mr. Hobbes's Doctrine of Fluidity and Firmness* (London: 1662). Included in the expanded 1662 edition of: id., *New Experiments Physico-Mechanicall, Touching the Spring of the Air, and its Effects (Made, for the Most Part, in a New Pneumatical Engine)* (Oxford: 1660). See: Boyle, *Works*, Hunter and Davids (eds.), vol. 3, pp. 111–112. The work, a critique of Hobbes's *Dialogus physicus, sive, De natura aeris conjectura sumpta ab experimentis nuper Londini habitis in Collegio Greshamensi, ...* (London: 1661), is an advanced defence of the *New Experiments*' first edition. In the latter work, Boyle first described controlled pneumatic experiments with his air-pump, a 'pneumatic engine' or *machina Boyleana* as fellow natural philosophers called the contraption. Boyle in the book specifically undertook to exemplify a 'working philosophy' of scholarly knowledge, because he maintained neither systematic philosophy nor formal rules were sufficient for amassing scientific knowing.

70 In Boyle's view, at least, speculative atheists in particular were irrational and self-contradictory. Tellingly, the first lecture, dealing with the role of religion in society, was presented in 1692 by the English classical scholar and FRS Richard Bentley (1662–1742) with the title 'The Folly of Atheism'. Cf.: Jacob, Bentley, Newton, and Providence: The Boyle Lectures Once More', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 30 (1969), pp. 307–318. For background on Boyle's views on science and religion: id. *The Excellency of Theology, Compar'd with Natural Philosophy* (London: 1674). See: Colie, 'Spinoza in England (1665–1730)', pp. 193–202.

71 Boyle*, *A Free Enquiry*, Hunter and Davids (eds.), VI, p. 101.

72 Boyle* 'represented almost an ideal type of "the Christian virtuoso"' (Michael C.W. Hunter [ed.], *Robert Boyle Reconsidered* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], p. 1 [Introduction]). For Boyle's teenage conversion: Hunter, *Boyle*, pp. 48–49. See for Boyle's religious position: James R. Jacob, 'Robert Boyle and Subversive Religion in the Early Restoration', *Albion. A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 6 (1974), pp. 275–293.

73 Cf. Colie, 'Spinoza and the Early English Deists', p. 199; Wootton, *The Invention of Science*, p. 460.

I say then, as has been already noted; that God is a most free Agent; and his Divine Wisdom does accompany all that he does, in such a manner, as not to impair his Freedom;

About the possibility of miracles and the laws of nature, Boyle writes further:

That the great God; the most Free & Omniscient Author of Things, can have no Ends, to which it may be congruous, that some of the arbitrary Laws he has establish'd, in that little portion of his Workmanship that we men inhabit, should now and then, (tho' very rarely) be control'd or receded from.⁷⁴

In another untitled manuscript, composed during the 1670s or 1680s, Boyle abstracts his critical reply to the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* and the book's rigid denial of miracles. For him, miracles were essential for salvation and testifiers of God's veracity and benevolence. For Spinoza however these were simple violations of natural laws and the result of anti-rational superstition. In the aforementioned manuscript, Boyle therefore states the following:

Show in the Paper against Spinosa that we ought not to confound all things that may be effected with mechanicall Powers whatever the Agents be that sett them on worke and that we cannot conclude a thing to be no miracle meerly because tis possible to be produc'd by matter & motion.⁷⁵

In the winter of 1675, Henry Oldenburg for his part started exchanging letters about the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* with Spinoza in their revived correspondence. Their spirited epistolary discussion took off after the Dutch philosopher had informed his London correspondent about his plan to issue a new edition of his treatise with explanatory comments, now known as the *Adnotationes*.⁷⁶ In a letter of 15 November, Oldenburg asked Spinoza to react to the work's English readers' overall negative responses while

still offering him, it seems, an openness to academic discussion to some extent.⁷⁷

First, Oldenburg writes in the foregoing letter that readers in Britain are generally offended by 'those passages in the work which seem to speak ambiguously about God and Nature' and many do feel 'you confuse these two things'.⁷⁸ Second, he continues, they disapprove the book is questioning 'the authority and value of miracles'. Clearly, in evidence, this remark must point to the general concern felt by British Protestants in Stuart England towards reassessment of the cessation doctrine.⁷⁹ The third point to address in the readers' critique, Oldenburg concludes, is that people think 'you conceal your opinion' regarding the true nature of Christ, 'as well as your opinion concerning his Incarnation and Atonement'. The fact that Oldenburg in his correspondence with Spinoza brought up these topics is remarkable, to say the least, especially since from the early 1660s he had remained completely silent about all religious matters in his letters exchanged with correspondents in his vast network.

Here, particularly Oldenburg's last remark on Christology was a view central to his disagreement with Spinoza in late 1675 and early 1676. Looking more closely into the contents and the critical tone of Oldenburg's letters, it is obvious many elements of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*'s contents lay bare their differences of opinion regarding key issues of orthodox scriptural interpretation and of Christianity as a whole. As it stood, the traditional focal

74 London, Royal Society, ms. BP/1 ('Boyle Papers'), vol. 7 (theology section), 'Letter on Miracles' (0595), fols 112–116, there on fol. 113^r. See: Colie, 'Spinoza in England (1665–1730)', pp. 199–202 and 213–219 ('Mr. Boyle's Answer to Spinosa').

75 London, Royal Society, ms. BP/1 ('Boyle Papers'), vol. 3 (theology section), 0476, fol. 102^r. Quoted in: *ibid.*

76 Starting with: 1675.11.15, Ep 71 (G 4/304). For the *Adnotationes*, see: Chapter 5, *Spinoza's Presentation Copy and Other Sources*.

77 1675.11.15, Ep 71 (G 4/304).

78 For instance: *TTP*, ch. 1 (G 3/26 and 28), ch. 2 (G 3/37–42), ch. 3 (G 3/45–46), ch. 4 (G 3/64).

79 *TTP*, ch. 6 (G 3/81–96). Regarding the English debate on miracles (Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*), members of the Royal Society closely followed that discussion. Boyle* in particular was fascinated (*ibid.*, p. 75) by the efforts of the Irish healer Valentine Greatrakes (1628–1682) who allegedly cured Lady Anne Conway* from her migraines. During Greatrakes's visit to England (1666), Boyle attended some sixty healing sessions (*ibid.*, p. 76). One of his work diaries (10–16 April 1666) comprises 'Accounts of cures performed by Greatrakes during his visit to England in 1666' (London, British Library, Add. ms. 4293, fols 50–53). Greatrakes himself addressed Boyle in a semi-scholarly account with testimonials by people who had 'witnessed' his healings and testified positively about his work's medical results: *A Brief Account of Mr. Valentine Greatraks, and Divers of the Strange Cures by Him Lately Performed Written by Himself in a Letter Addressed to the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esq., ...* (London: 1666). Boyle's name, together with that of FRS John Wilkins (1614–1672), appears many times in *A Brief Account's* annexed 'Testimonials'. Boyle, though, was inclined to the view Greatrakes's healing powers were incomparable to biblical miracles, although he considered the possibility whether the latter's 'cures' might comprise 'an extraordinary Gift of God'. Cf.: Hunter, *Boyle*, p. 151.

point of Scripture and established theology has the conviction Jesus suffered, died, was buried, descended into hell, and ultimately rose from the dead. Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 writes about Jesus' resurrection the following:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

Another statement about the truth of the resurrection can be found in 1 Corinthians 15:14: 'And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain'. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:17–19 finally concludes:

And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

The Nicene Creed, a profession of faith in Christian liturgy, adopted by the first Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, further affirms the resurrection of Jesus thus: 'On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures'.

For Oldenburg, like Boyle in his letters a staunch defender of the Reformed Christian faith, the major obstacle in fathoming and accepting Spinoza's doctrines was his rigid heterodox stance towards Christology. Offended by the Dutch philosopher's bold denial of Christ's resurrection, he could not accept such a stance as an historical fact and considered it being principally to be contrary to nature and to reason alike. Spinoza in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* claims with fervour in chapter 6, on miracles, about this thus:

So we conclude here, without qualification, that everything Scripture truly relates as having happened must have happened, as all things do, according to the laws of nature. And if anything should be found which can be conclusively demonstrated to be contrary to the laws of nature, or to have been unable to follow from them, we must believe without reservation that it has been added to the Sacred Texts by sacrilegious men. For whatever is contrary to nature is contrary to reason; and what is contrary to reason is absurd, and therefore to be rejected.⁸⁰

80 'Quare hic absolute concludimus, omnia, quae in Scriptura vere narrantur contigisse, ea secundum leges naturae ut omnia necessario contigisse, & si quid reperiat, quod apodictice

Spinoza in his next letter to Oldenburg dated [1 January 1676] makes the following allegorical reflection about the resurrection of Christ who, in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, is portrayed as a divine philosopher. While referring to 1 Corinthians 15, he notices the following:

I conclude, then, that the resurrection of Christ from the dead was really spiritual, and was revealed only to the faithful, according to their power of understanding, that is, that Christ was endowed with eternity, and that he rose from the dead (here I understand 'dead' in the same sense in which Christ said, 'let the dead bury their dead'), and at the same time that he gave, by his life and death, an example of singular holiness, and to that extent he raises his disciples from the dead, insofar as they follow this example of his life and death. It would not be difficult to explain the whole teaching of the Gospel according to this hypothesis. Indeed only on this hypothesis can 1 Cor. 15 be explained and the arguments of Paul be understood.⁸¹

Intriguingly, in terms of Christology, in this passage Spinoza conjointly with many Christian authors refers not to 'Jesus' but to 'Christ'. Judaism in general does not accept him as Messiah nor accepts he was raised from the dead but, for instance someone like Maimonides (alias Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, or 'RaMBaM', c.1135–1204), saw him as a failed prophet foreseen by the prophet Daniel who had damaged Jewish faith and brought about a false God.

Spinoza in another letter to Oldenburg, one from 7 February 1676 contends about Christ thus:

demonstrari potest, legibus naturae repugnare, aut ex iis consequi non potuisse, plane credendum id a sacrilegis hominibus Sacris Literis adjectum fuisse: quicquid enim contra naturam est, id contra rationem est, & quod contra rationem, id absurdum est, ac proinde etiam refutandum.' (*TTP*, ch. 6; G 3/9; CW, vol. 2, pp. 163–164).

81 'Concludo itaque Christi a mortuis resurrectionem revera spiritualement, & solis fidelibus ad eorum captum revelatam fuisse, nempe quod Christus aeternitate donatus fuit, & a mortuis, (mortuos hic intelligo eo sensu, quo Christus dixit: sinite mortuos mortuos suos sepelire) surrexit, simulatque vita & morte singularis sanctitatis exemplum dedit, & eatenus discipulos suos a mortuis suscitavit, quatenus ipsi hoc vitae ejus, & mortis LXXV. exemplum sequuntur. Nec difficile esset totam Evangelii doctrinam secundum hanc hypothesin explicare. Imo Caput 15. Ep. 1. ad Corinthios ex sola hac hypothesi explicari potest, & Pauli argumenta intelligi.' ([1676].[01].[01], Ep 75 [G 4/314–315; CW, vol. 2, p. 472]). Cf. also: Rom. 1:3–4, 2 Tim. 2:8, John 3:16–18, 3:36, 11:25–27, 14:6, and 20:31.

However that may be, I accept Christ's suffering, death, and burial literally, as you do, but his resurrection, allegorically. I grant, certainly, that the Evangelists relate the resurrection too in such detail that we can't deny that they themselves believed that the body of Christ was resurrected and ascended into heaven, where he sits on the right hand of God. We also can't deny that they believed this could also have been seen by non-believers, if they had been present at the same time in the places where Christ himself appeared to the disciples. Nevertheless, they could have been deceived about this, without harm to the teaching of the Gospel, as also happened to other prophets. I've given examples of this in my preceding letter. But Paul, to whom Christ also appeared afterward, gloried that he knew Christ not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.⁸²

About the apostle Paul, Spinoza's favourite superior Bible character who, he believed, philosophized more than the other apostles and distanced himself from Jewish superstition, the Dutch philosopher is crystal clear. According to him, the Apostle Paul did not believe in Christ's physical resurrection either. Not surprisingly, Henry Oldenburg for his part considered Spinoza's spiritual notions on Christ's resurrection to be markedly dangerous. Especially because the philosopher in his opaque statement avoids making it distinctly clear precisely when he was interpreting events either literally or allegorically.

In Oldenburg's disappointed opinion, in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* the Dutch philosopher's doctrines were openly undermining the essence and truth of Christianity. In a letter of 11 February 1676, Oldenburg concludes decisively the following about Spinoza's daring claims:

Finally, you do not support your claim that Christ's passion, death and burial are to be taken literally, but

82 'Caeterum Christi passionem, mortem, ac sepulturam tecum literaliter accipio, ejus autem resurrectionem allegorice. Fateor quidem hanc etiam, ab Evangelistis iis narrari circumstantiis, ut negare non possimus, ipsos Evangelistas credidisse, Christi corpus resurrexisse, et ad coelum ascendisse, ut ad Dei dextram sederet, et quod ab infidelibus etiam potuisset videri, si una iis in locis affuissent, in quibus ipse Christus discipulis apparuit, in quo tamen salva Evangelii doctrina potuerunt decipi, ut aliis etiam prophetis contigit, cujus rei exempla in praecedentibus dedi. At Paulus cui Christus postea etiam apparuit, gloriatur quod Christum non secundum carnem, sed secundum spiritum noverit.' (1676.02.07, Ep 78 [G 4/328a–329a; CW, vol. 2, p. 481]). For Spinoza's stance on 'Christ according to the flesh': Van Cauter, *Spinoza on History*, pp. 158–172. See: Van Bunge, *Spinoza Past and Present*, pp. 72–80 (Spinoza on Moses and Christ).

his Resurrection allegorically, with any argument that is clear to me. In the Gospels the Resurrection of Christ seems to be related as literally as the other things. And the whole Christian Religion and its truth rests on this article of the Resurrection. Take this away, and the mission of Christ Jesus and his heavenly Teaching both collapse. It cannot escape you how much trouble Christ took, once he had been raised from the dead, to convince his disciples of the truth of the Resurrection, properly so called. To try to turn all those things into allegories is the same as if someone did his best to undermine the whole truth of the Gospel Narrative.⁸³

To sum up now, Oldenburg considered Spinoza's doctrines on Christology weird and unacceptable as well as also unjustifiable, even dangerous in regard to Christian theology. During his life, Oldenburg, like Boyle, had been preoccupied with the aim of uniting Christendom and 'ye extreme necessity of plucking up above all yt Atheisme so deeply rooted'.⁸⁴ As early as 1656, reacting to a theory circulating the rumour that Jesus, Moses, and Mohammed were political impostors (the 'three impostors thesis'), he already from Oxford had anxiously reported to Dutch Hebrew scholar-Collegiant Adam Boreel that in his opinion 'religion falls into contempt, the raillery of the profane grows sharper, and the hearts of those who fear God are crucified'.⁸⁵ It should finally also be pointed out here that

83 'Denique quod affirmas, Christi passionem, mortem et sepulturam literaliter quidem accipienda esse; Resurrectionem verò cujus allegorice, nullo, quod mihi apparet argumento a Te fulcitur. Aequè literaliter tradi in Evangeliiis videtur Resurrectio Christi, ac reliqua. Et hoc Resurrectionis articulo tota Religio Christiana, ejusque veritas nititur, eaque sublata Christi Jesu missio, ac Doctrina coelestis collabascit. Latere te non potest, quantopere laboraverit Christus a mortuis resuscitatus, ut discipulos suos de Resurrectionis proprie sic dictae veritate convinceret. Omnia illa in allegorias vertere velle, idem est, ac si quis omnem Evangelicae Historiae veritatem convellere satagat.' (1676.02.11, Ep 79 [G 4/330; CW, vol. 2, p. 483]).

84 Oldenburg*, *Correspondence*, Hall and Boas Hall (eds.), vol. 1, p. 385.

85 *Ibid.*, pp. 89–91. As evinced by his correspondence with Boreel, leader of the Dutch Collegiant movement (n. 134), Oldenburg* was devoted to fight atheism. To save Christianity, he expected Boreel to write an answer to the 'three impostors thesis'. Cf.: *ibid.*, esp. pp. 39 and 216. Cf. also Oldenburg's correspondence with John Beale (1603?–1683?): *ibid.*, p. 154. Boreel's reply, 'Jezus Nazarenus legislator', was never printed. Oldenburg and Boyle* owned copies of the retort. Cf.: Richard H. Popkin, 'The Crisis of Polytheism and the Answers of Vossius, Cudworth, and Newton', in *id.* and James E. Force (eds.), *Essays on the Context, Nature, and Influence of Isaac Newton's Theology* (Dordrecht and Boston, MA, and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), pp. 9–25, there at p. 16. See: Sarah Hutton, 'Henry Oldenburg (1617/20–1677) and Spinoza', in Christofolini (ed.), *The Spinozistic Heresy*,

Oldenburg's true religious, prudentialist outlook particularly shines through in 'Admonitions and Directions of a Good Parent to his Child especially a Son', an unpublished religious paper written for his son Rupert, composed shortly before his death in 1677. In this devout paper, Oldenburg underlines the importance of performing acts of piety and in fatherly fashion he urges his son to keep to his daily prayers, to read the Bible, and to seek friends helpful 'in acquiring knowledge of the works and creatures of God', or in 'Artificial good things and Mechanical Ingenuities [since] all good is of God'. The best summary of the work's piety is expressed by Oldenburg's remark that in Scripture

... you'd meet with histories, yt none but God could tell you ... ye Inspired Writers thereof were ye Servants of ye most high God, wch were sent to show ye ways of peace.⁸⁶

4 First Public Reaction to Spinoza in England: Stillingfleet's *A Letter to a Deist* (1677)

In Restoration Britain, the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* found a more substantial readership after the treatise had conjointly with the *Philosophia S. Scripturae interpretis* been published in the English-style issue T.3e, with its either correctly dated or postdated title-page's imprint stated the book to be issued in 1674. That variant T.3e, one out of five octavo variants laid up in one print run (1673) by its putative publisher Rieuwertsz père in presumably Amsterdam, had a typography designed for dissemination in the 'Latin Trade', the British import of Latin books from the continent.⁸⁷ Scarce evidence proving that indeed

pp. 106–119, at pp. 115 and 117. For background on the 'three impostors thesis': Richard H. Popkin, 'Spinoza and the Three Impostors', in Curley and Moreau (eds.), *Spinoza: Issues and Directions*, pp. 347–358; Iliffe, "'Jesus Nazarenus Legislator'", in Berti, etc. (eds.), *Heterodoxy, Spinozism and Free Thought*; Silvia Berti, 'Unmasking the Truth: The Theme of Imposture in Early Modern Europe', in James E. Force and David S. Katz (eds.), *Everything Connects: In Conference with Richard H. Popkin. Essays in his Honour* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 21–36.

86 London, British Library, Add. ms. 4458, fol. 110. Cf.: Michael C.W. Hunter, *Establishing the New Science. The Experience of the Early Royal Society* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989); Hutton, 'Henry Oldenburg', in Christofolini (ed.), *The Spinozistic Heresy*, p. 114; Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: MA, and London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 100.

87 For T.3e, see: Chapter 4, there also at n. 23 ('Latin Trade'). Not the *TTP* (although mentioned) but the *Philosophia* was attacked in *The Scriptures Genuine Interpreter Asserted, or a Discourse Concerning the Right Interpretation of Scripture*, ... (London:

copies of Spinoza's treatise were actively disseminated by English and Scottish booksellers can be found in a letter composed two months after the Dutch provincial Hof van Holland, Zeeland, and West-Friesland had officially forbidden the 'Theological-Political Treatise'.

This letter, dated 19 September 1674, was written by stationer Robert Scott (c.1632–1709/10), a publisher and book importer working at the Prince's Arms in London's Little Britain, and an agent of the Oxford University Press, too. Scott's letter, accompanying a shipment of books, was addressed to Archibald Hislop (fl.1670–1697), a book trader, printer, and bookbinder working 'In the Parliament-Yard at the sign of the Bible' at Edinburgh, who imported thousands of titles and paper from London. Scott's letter, one of very few accounts known to report about the public distribution of Spinoza's treatise by British book retailers, details the following about the twelve copies of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* shipped to Edinburgh. Scott informs the latter about the shipment thus:

... there is 12 of ye Tractatus Theol polit: which is a prohibited books is sold for £8 in London [charged at three pounds]....⁸⁸

Although it is uncertain which edition was shipped to Hislop, the above remark underlines that the news about the book's official prohibition in the Dutch Republic had been travelling fast across the Channel. Perhaps, Scott's

1678), a work by John Wilson 'M.A., sometime of Kath. Hall, Cambridge'. P. 71: 'Indeed the whole design of his book, and of that other Tract that is prefixed to its latter Edition (written, as is supposed, by the same Author) is utterly to undermine and overthrow the credit of the Scriptures'. In the right margin on the same page, it reads: *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*. Rieuwertsz père: BL.

88 John Grant, 'Archibald Hislop, Stationer, Edinburgh, 1668–1678', *Papers of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society*, 12 (1921–1925), pp. 35–51, at p. 49 (Appendix). More people were interested in Spinoza, especially in his 'Ethics'. On 5 May 1678, for instance, the Scottish clergyman James Fall (1647–1711) wrote in a letter to Lord Tweeddale James Hay (1625–1697), Lord Chancellor of Scotland: 'I hear there is lately come out a piece writne by that Famous author of the Tractatus Theologico-politicus, I am sorry such books are printed but since they are my curiosity leads me to desire a sight of them.' (ibid., p. 200). On an earlier occasion, Fall had advised Tweeddale to contact Reinier 'Leers a great bookseller in Rotterdam' to find out further printing details about the *E*. Cf.: Murray C.T. Simpson, *The Library of the Reverend James Nairn (1629–1678). Scholarly Book Collecting in Restoration England* (1987), vol. 1, p. 110. In 1688, Scott also sold copies of the *PP/CM*. Cf.: *Catalogus librorum Roberti Scott, bibliopola regii Londinensis*, ... (London: 1688), p. 122, no. 195. For Scott: Leonora Rostenberg, 'Robert Scott, Restoration Stationer and Importer', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 48 (1954), pp. 49–76.

statement also indicates that it was even more attractive for British traders to deal in copies of Spinoza's treatise because of its banning anyway.

As had mainly after the controversy over Hobbes's writings also been the case on the European continent, in Britain controversy about the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* began raging towards the last quarter of the seventeenth century as the book became the target of a series of spirited assaults, too.⁸⁹ English academics scribbled their vitriolic remarks about the treatise in obscure notebooks and in printed theses while others, most of them being prominent Neoplatonist theologians, published harsh attacks on Spinoza in the vernacular.⁹⁰ On 8 February 1676 ('Old Style'), William Jane, a local ordinary in the established Church of England, signed a grant of imprimatur

89 Several prominent British scholars made scattered remarks about Spinoza and the *TTP* as early as 1672. For instance, the Puritan theologian Richard Baxter* disdained the latter treatise in passing in *The Certainty of Christianity without Popery, or Whether the Catholick-Protestant, or the Papist Have the Surer Faith., ...* (London: 1672): 'And so when such a fellow as Hobbs, or Benedictus Spinoza in his *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, shall stretch their wits to disgrace the Scripture and the Christian cause, all this shall seem only to fall upon the Protestants; whereas if we could not better defend Christianity than the present principles of Popery enable them to do, we must confess that the Infidel were far hardlier answered than any Sectary that we have to deal with.' (p. 3). Another brief attack by Baxter followed three years later in *More Proofs of Infants Church-Membership and Consequently their Right to Baptism, or a Second Defence of our Infant Rights and Mercies., ...* (London: 1675): 'I take it to be Plainly provable that the Scripture is certainly true: And yet I take it to be quite above this confident mans ability well to solve all the difficulties objected? were it but those poor ones of Benedictus Spinoza in his late pestilent *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.' (p. 307). See also: Richard Baxter, *Catholick Theologie: Plain, Pure, Peaceable: for Pacification of the Dogmatical Word-Warriors., ...* (London: 1675), bk 1, part 3, pp. 108, 117, and 118, bk 2, p. 152.

90 Christine M. Shepherd (*Philosophy and Science in the Arts Curriculum of the Scottish Universities in the 17th Century* [1974]) lists several late-seventeenth-century Scottish scholars who assailed Spinoza, frequently coupling the latter with Thomas Hobbes* and with atheism. At Edinburgh: John Wishart, *Prae-lustri & prae-potentis principis, Ioanni Lauderdaiae Duci: marciae marchioni, Lauderiae comiti vicecomiti metellano....* (Edinburgh: 1672); id., *Plurimum honorando Senatui Edinburgeno: ... Spicelegia haec philosophica., ...* (Edinburgh: 1676); id., *Theses hasce philosophicas* (Edinburgh: 1680); Alexander Cockburn, *Theses philosophicae quas, savente Deo, adolescentes aliquot e lyceo Leonardino ad Lauream magisterialem aspirantes., ...* (Edinburgh: 1679), pp. 6–7, and 9; Andrew Massie (1682). At Aberdeen: George Skene (1696) and at Glasgow: John Tran (1699). King's College Aberdeen acquired a 1674 copy (T.3e, now dispersed) of the *TTP* (bound with: Van Mansveld*, *Adversus*) among many other books around 1700 from a bequest of the Scougal library (cf. Simpson, *The Library*, vol. 1, p. 201). The bequest did not comprise any copies of the writings of Descartes* or Hobbes.

with which he officially endorsed an early manuscript version of *A Letter to a Deist*, printed one year later.⁹¹ The 1677 work's Anglican author was the London archdeacon and later (1689) Bishop of Worcester Edward Stillingfleet. On the last page of *A Letter*, Stillingfleet declares he had 'finished' *A Letter to a Deist*, subtitled 'A Letter of Resolution to a Person Unsatisfied about the Truth and Authority of the Scriptures', on 11 June 1675 ('Old Style').

Stillingfleet was a member of the Royal Society and a fervent supporter of the empirical work done by his friend Robert Boyle.⁹² A keen controversialist, the former would later also earn a reputation for his lengthy controversy fought out with John Locke between 1697 and 1699 over substance theory and rational certainty.⁹³ A major representative of the Latitudinarian ('liberal Anglican') milieu, Stillingfleet is to be credited as the first English critic of Spinoza's theological notions and biblical criticism writing publicly in print: in *A Letter*, he predominantly brackets the atheism of Hobbes and Spinoza with philosophical deism.⁹⁴ The term 'deism' (from 'deus') is, it seems, controversial, but refers merely to the elevation of natural religion dominated by free examination and reason. During the Restoration, deism was a term primarily linked to libertine circles at the court of King Charles II (1630–1685), merely pleading for 'the reasonableness of Christianity'.⁹⁵ Stillingfleet's stance is evident about those who, like Spinoza, advocated deism. Supporters of the deist thought, according to *A Letter*, particularly maintained a 'mean Esteem of the Scriptures, and the Christian Religion'.⁹⁶

A Letter's prologue predominantly expresses Stillingfleet's concern about the growing popularity of the

91 Edward Stillingfleet*, *A Letter to a Deist, in Answer to Several Objections against the Truth and Authority of the Scriptures* (London: 1677). Israel (*Radical Enlightenment*, p. 603) mistakenly claims the book to be published in 1675. Background: Sarah Hutton, 'Edward Stillingfleet and Spinoza', in Van Bunge, etc. (eds.), *Disguised and Overt Spinozism*, pp. 261–274. Jane/Locke: BL.

92 Stillingfleet: BL.

93 Stillingfleet* accused Locke* of being an Epicurean, thus paving the way to atheism (cf. Sheppard, *Anti-Atheism*, pp. 92 and 132). The idea put forward by Locke 'that God might "super-added" non-material properties to matter' bothered Stillingfleet particularly when 'combined with Locke's argument that philosophical certainty was based solely on clear and distinct ideas' (ibid., p. 135). Background: ibid., p. 136.

94 For background: James A. Herrick, *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists: The Discourse of Skepticism, 1680–1750* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

95 'The fact that Epicurus and Lucretius had provided actual arguments for their alleged atheism meant that Stillingfleet saw Hobbes and Spinoza as atheists for appearing to parallel many of those ancient arguments.' (Sheppard, *Anti-Atheism*, p. 223).

96 Stillingfleet*, *A Letter*, preface.

Tractatus theologico-politicus, without however mentioning Spinoza's name.⁹⁷ Worried, the London archdeacon discloses his uneasiness a future translation of the Dutch philosopher's treatise into English would, at least in his view, encourage the dissemination of the book's radical approach towards biblical criticism, Mosaic law, prophecy, and miracles.⁹⁸ At the outset, Stillingfleet explicitly warns readers for the atheist tenets expounded in Spinoza's treatise. He writes thus in the prologue:

*There is a late Author, I hear is mightily in vogue among many, who cry up any thing on the Atheistical side, though never so weak and trifling. It were no difficult task to lay open the false Reasonings, and inconsistent Hypotheses of his Book; which hath been sufficiently done already in that language wherein it was written. But if for the Advancement of Irreligion among us, that Book be, as it is talked, Translated into our Tongue, there will not, I hope, want those who will be as ready to defend Religion and Morality as others are to decry and despise them.*⁹⁹

In sum, when Stillingfleet composed his prologue to *A Letter* in the late spring of 1675 and warned readers for the 'Irreligion' advanced in Spinoza's treatise, there were apparently already rumours afoot whispering the book would soon be translated into English. This was indeed the case. More than a decade later, the fear expressed in Stillingfleet's retort an English translation of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* would be circulated in Britain became a reality. In 1689, one year after the Glorious Revolution overthrew James II of England's rule and incidentally in the same year Stillingfleet was created Bishop of Worcester, *A Treatise Partly Theological, and Partly Political* was surreptitiously issued in London by an otherwise unknown publisher.¹⁰⁰ From then on, Spinoza's fully translated work

could see also its way to a large group of English readers who were not Latinate.¹⁰¹

In 1697, eight years after *A Treatise* had been published, Stillingfleet embarked upon an apologetical writing project which he entitled *Origines sacrae*, addressing in it issues in the controversial relationship between the New Philosophy and established Protestant faith. He had already published a popular anti-atheist, apologetical work with the same title in 1662 beforehand which went through five editions. In the new *Origines sacrae*, Stillingfleet stated he wanted to deal with Spinoza, 'a man too well known in the world, (and whom I intend to consider at large afterwards)'. Despite the announcement, and probably because of his time-consuming controversy with Locke also including discussions about the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, Stillingfleet was only able to finish the manuscript of the *Origines sacrae* (2) up to its chapter 2.¹⁰² In this new second *Origines sacrae*, he defends the stance that the 'atheistical hypotheses' of the New Philosophy were real threats to piety and religion. Meant by Stillingfleet was Spinoza's position on imagination-driven thinking and his claim final causation is 'repugnant to the nature of things' in particular.¹⁰³ *Origines sacrae* (2) contains quotations taken from Spinoza's 'Ethics', especially from the Appendix to Part 1, and from the *Tractatus de emendatione intellectus*.

Like many of Spinoza's other opponents, Stillingfleet was of the opinion that the philosophical system of Spinoza, 'a strict follower of Des Cartes's notions in his *Metaphysical Meditations*', bore the fruit of the Cartesian

97 Israel (*Radical Enlightenment*, p. 603) declares Stillingfleet* 'purposely refrains from naming either author or book'. In the prologue's margins, its title is however printed in italics: '*Tractat. Theol. politic.*'

98 'To Stillingfleet and the vast majority of his contemporaries a society of atheists was impossible because society required a set of virtues atheists by definition could not possess and religious beliefs atheists necessarily denied.' (Sheppard, *Anti-Atheism*, p. 214).

99 Stillingfleet*, *A Letter*, 1677, preface.

100 Its second issue was launched with the following lengthy title: anon. (Benedictus de Spinoza), *A Treatise Partly Theological, and Partly Political, Containing Some Few Discourses, To Prove That the Liberty of Philosophizing (That is Making Use of Natural Reason) May be Allow'd without Any Prejudice to Piety, or to the Peace of Any Commonwealth; And That the Loss of Public Peace and Religion It Self Must Necessarily Follow, Where Such a Liberty of Reasoning is Taken Away* (London: 1737).

101 The work was preceded by: anon., *Miracles, no Violations of the Laws of Nature* (London: 1683), a rationalist work assaulting revealed religion and prophecies. A description of the booklet can be found in this Chapter 6: *Blount's English Translation* and passim. In an attempt to prove reports in the Scriptures on miracles are unsubstantiated, its assumed anonymous deist author, Blount*, has faithfully translated in the polemical booklet the larger majority of the *TTP*'s chapter 6.

102 Note in their controversy and debates about the *TTP* for example a statement about divine revelation in: anon. (Edward Stillingfleet*), *The Bishop of Worcester's Answer to Mr. Locke's Second Letter; Wherein his Notion of Ideas is Prov'd to be Inconsistent with it Self, and with the Articles of the Christian Faith* (London: 1698). There, at p. 30, it reads: '... all Revelation may be nothing but the Effects of an exalted Fancy, or the Heats of a disordered Imagination, as *Spinosa* affirmed'. Also John Locke* refers (p. 414) to the *TTP* in his *Reply to ... the Lord Bishop of Worcester's Answer*: 'For 'tis with such Candid and Kind insinuations as these, that you bring in both *Hobbes*, and *Spinosa*, into your Discourse here about God's being able, if he please, to give to some parcels of Matter ordered as he thinks fit, a Faculty of thinking.'

103 Cf. Hutton, 'Edward Stillingfleet and Spinoza', in Van Bunge, etc. (eds.), *Disguised and Overt Spinozism*, pp. 261–262 and 265–266.

philosophy. He never declared Descartes to be an atheist, though he was convinced atheists might well use his philosophical system for their own evil purposes. According to *Origines sacrae* (2), the philosophy of the ‘true disciple to the Leviathan, Spinoza’ aimed at eroding the sacrosanct status of theology and Holy Scripture, a dangerous position paving the way to immorality and to societal chaos.¹⁰⁴ In addition, Stillingfleet took also issue with Spinoza’s denial of final causes (claiming them to be ‘mere fictions of men’s brains’) and with the philosopher’s epistemological view on error. The portion on Spinoza’s ‘argument from the necessity of all things’, although announced by Stillingfleet, is lacking in *Origines sacrae* (2).¹⁰⁵ First published in 1702, a fragment of the work was later published in London in 1709. One year later, it was included in Stillingfleet’s posthumously collected works.¹⁰⁶

During the remainder of his life, the Anglican theologian-preacher and Bishop of Worcester Stillingfleet remained occupied with radical biblical criticism. He continued his personal stock-in-trade crusade against the spectre of atheism and, like Leibniz, he seems to have been particularly fascinated by Spinoza, too.¹⁰⁷ His extensive private reference library (about 10,000 printed books, now being kept in the Dublin Marsh’s Library) contained

several copies of Spinoza’s books.¹⁰⁸ Stillingfleet owned *Renati Des Cartes Principiorum philosophiae pars I et II; Cogitata metaphysica*, the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, and the *Opera posthuma*, but he also came in the possession of several copies of refutations composed by Spinoza’s main critics, such as Frans Kuyper, Christoph Wittich, and Johannes Bredenburg.¹⁰⁹ So, apparently, he maintained a strong interest in works criticizing Spinoza’s philosophical doctrines: his library also contained copies of other noted contemporary retorts, like those for example by the French advocate of religious toleration Noël Aubert de Versé (1642/45–1714) and by the French Labadist Pierre Yvon (1640–1707).¹¹⁰

5 Cudworth’s Confutation of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus: The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678)

Another public British retort defending free will against the New Philosophy and refuting the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* was composed by Henry More’s close friend the Neoplatonist Ralph Cudworth. He also attacked Spinoza’s biblical criticism in *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, a lengthy anti-determinist work running to a whopping 900 pages in folio which Cudworth had started composing in 1671.¹¹¹ The Regius Professor

104 Edward Stillingfleet*, *Origines sacrae: or, a Rational Account of the Grounds of Natural and Revealed Religion, ...* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1836), p. 430. Background: Hutton, ‘Edward Stillingfleet and Spinoza’, in Van Bunge, etc. (eds.), *Disguised and Overt Spinozism*, pp. 266–271.

105 Ibid., p. 437.

106 Edward Stillingfleet*, *Origines Sacrae: or, a Rational Account of the Grounds of Natural and Revealed Religion, ...* (Cambridge: 1702); id., ‘Origines Sacrae: or, a Rational Account of the Grounds of Natural and Revealed Religion.... The Second Volume’ (London: 1709). The latter fragment forms the second part of: *The Works of Dr. Edw. Stillingfleet* (London: 1710). For Stillingfleet’s statement about Spinoza: id., *Origines Sacrae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1836), p. 430.

107 Hutton (‘Edward Stillingfleet and Spinoza’, in Van Bunge, etc. [eds.], *Disguised and Overt Spinozism*, p. 266) points out Stillingfleet* quoted Spinoza in one of his unpublished sermons (Cambridge, St John’s College, [James 579] ms. O.81): ‘This contains a brief discussion of the implications of Richard Simon’s *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament* and Spinoza’s *Tractatus*, including two quotations from the latter, both of which concern prophecy’. According to the library catalogue of St John’s, the manuscript contains four sermons. On Jer. 17:9 (fol. 1^r, preached at Mercers’ Chapel, 11 November 1682), on Luke 16:31 (fol. 25^r, Whitehall, 23 February 1683), on 2 Tim. 3:5 (fol. 50^r: ‘a Lent Sermon’, St Clement’s, 4 April 1683), and on John 20:29 (fol. 75^r, Easter Day 1683). Extracts are included in: Gerard Reedy, *The Bible and Reason, Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), Appendix 1.

108 Cf. Luisa Simonutti, ‘Spinoza and the English Thinkers. Criticism on Prophecies and Miracles: Blount, Gildon and Earbery’, in Van Bunge, etc. (eds.), *Disguised and Overt Spinozism*, pp. 191–211; Israel, ‘Philosophy, Commerce and the Synagogue’, p. 604.

109 Cf. ‘Bibliotheca Stillingfleetana’. This handwritten late-seventeenth- or early-eighteenth-century catalogue can be accessed at: <http://picus.unica.it/index.php?page=Filosofo&id=102&lang=en> OP: p. 469, no. 49; TTP: p. 473, no. 48. Refutations: Kuyper*, *Arcana*, p. 478, no. 73; Wittich*, *Anti-Spinoza*; Bredenburg*, *Enervatio*.

110 Noël Aubert de Versé, *L’Impie convaincu, ou dissertation contre Spinoza: dans laquelle l’on refute les fondemens de son athéisme* (Amsterdam: 1685); Pierre Yvon, *L’Impiété convaincue en deux traitez, ...* (Amsterdam: 1681). Cf. Hutton, ‘Edward Stillingfleet and Spinoza’, in Van Bunge, etc. (eds.), *Disguised and Overt Spinozism*, pp. 264–265.

111 Ralph Cudworth*, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: The First Part; Wherein, All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted; and its Impossibility Demonstrated* (London: 1678). The book was reworked into an abridged edition by clergyman Thomas Wise (1670/71–1726) with the following title: *The Confutation of the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism* (London: 1706). A modern edition was published in 1995 (Bristol: Thoemmes Press). Background: Sheppard, *Anti-Atheism*, pp. 165–181. For Cudworth’s atomism: Joel M. Rodney, ‘A Godly Atomist in Seventeenth Century England: Ralph Cudworth’, *The Historian*, 32 (1970), pp. 243–249. Also Newton studied *The True Intellectual System*. For his manuscript notes on the book:

of Hebrew and Master of Christ's College Cudworth, like the aforementioned Spinoza critic Stillingfleet, was offered the membership of the London Royal Society; whether he accepted that honour is not known. In *The True Intellectual System*, a forceful attempt to confute 'All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism', he lambasted Spinoza and other contemporary natural philosophers. In addition, he also introduced in the work the term 'consciousness' into the English philosophical lexicon ('the essence of cognition exists in express consciousness'). In regard to the 'Theological-Political Treatise', Cudworth corresponded with several Dutch Arminian theologians, such as Philippus van Limborch, who had sent over a copy of Spinoza's second book to Cambridge University's rector Oliver Doiley in early January 1671. Cudworth in turn sent Van Limborch a copy of *The True Intellectual System*.¹¹²

Of Cudworth's book, a massive uncompleted repository of classical learning originally conceived in three portions, was only shortly after Spinoza's demise published in London in 1678. During Cudworth's lifetime, only one volume (part 1) was published: 'Against Atheism', which was *The True Intellectual System's* unofficial title. Parts 2, on moral absolutes in nature, and 3, concerning free will (both prepared by part 1) remained unpublished. The bulky work took up issue to prove Democritus' atomism is only sufficiently right when the dualism in substance of body and mind is taken into account. It therefore sought to direct its energy in its support in bridging theology and philosophy. It also promotes the necessitarian concept of the *anima mundi*, 'Plastick Nature', or 'Spirit of Nature', the governing agency in nature apart from God, such as the anti-Christian idea of self-movement.

The True Intellectual System was a philosophical project with explicit theological ramifications. Cudworth in the work tears radical biblical criticism to pieces. He seeks

to demonstrate 'the absolute impossibility of atheism', i.e., speculative irreligion. He positions professed atheists against representatives of theist thought, accusing the atheist thinkers of purposely ignoring the truth of the *prisca theologia*, the original theology of the teachings of Moses, Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, and of neglecting the central themes of universal philosophy. Frequently, Cudworth warned readers in the book for the erring doctrines that 'Modern Atheistick Writers' upheld about the Pentateuch's Mosaicity. For Cudworth, being a Christian Platonist convinced Moses' teachings had been confirmed by miracles, primarily fatalists like Hobbes and Spinoza had called into question the Pentateuch's Mosaicity together with the New Testament and, for that matter, the Christian faith as a whole.¹¹³

Explicit references to Spinoza in *The True Intellectual System* are sparse. Though it seems Cudworth was mainly concerned the Dutch philosopher was reviving the ancient atheist tradition based on the assumptions 'that nothing can be generated out of nothing' and that 'everything that exists is either a body or accidents of a body'. Already in the book's prologue, bringing up Strato of Lampsacus (c.335–c.269 BCE), he seems to accuse Spinoza of having 'Awakened and Revived' lately the Greek Peripatetic philosopher's hylozoic atheism, 'though not Bare-faced, but under a Disguise'. Spinoza, for Cudworth, got it all wrong and most definitely bore the brand of Hobbesian atheist materialism. He was also of the opinion Spinoza attributed life to matter itself and rejected *ex nihilo* creation (deeply troubling also for Henry More), a position inherited and defended in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim theological and philosophical tradition alike.¹¹⁴

Cudworth indirectly refers to Spinoza in *The True Intellectual System*, when stating the following remark:

This Argument is thus urged by a Modern Writer, agreeably to the Sense of the Ancient Democriticks; ... *From hence, that Nothing can move it self, it cannot be rightly inferred, as commonly it is, that there is an*

Danton B. Sailor, 'Newton's Debt to Cudworth', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49 (1988), pp. 511–518. Newton had at least some fair knowledge about the *TTP*, too. A copy of Spinoza's treatise was kept in the private library (1,100 items) of the British mathematician and theologian Isaac Barrow (1630–1677), now extant in the following manuscript list: 'A Catalogue of the books of Dr Isaac Barrow sent to S.S. by Mr Isaac Newton, Fellow of Trin: Coll: Cambs. July 14. 1677'. For a reconstruction from Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawl. D878 (fols 33–59): Mordechai Feingold, 'Isaac Barrow's Library', in id. (ed.), *Before Newton. The Life and Times of Isaac Barrow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 333–372. For the *TTP*, there: at p. 365, no. 904.

112 Cf. Luisa Simonutti, 'Liberté et vérité: Politique et morale dans la correspondance hollandaise de More et de Cudworth', in Rogers, etc. (eds.), *The Cambridge Platonists*, pp. 17–37, p. 109. Van Limborch/Doiley: BL.

113 Cf. Sheppard, *Anti-Atheism*, p. 38.

114 Eip17s ('God acts from the laws of nature alone, and is compelled by no one') reads: 'God's omnipotence has been actual from eternity, and will remain in the same actuality to eternity'. For the creation *ex nihilo* doctrine (Gen. 1:1, close to the Platonic view of the 'craftsman' god), see: Gerhard May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 2004; Janet M. Soskice, 'Creatio ex Nihilo: Its Jewish and Christian Foundations', in David B. Burrell, etc. (eds.), *Creation and the God of Abraham* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 24–39. Jewish philosopher and Talmudist Maimonides saw *creatio ex nihilo* as the sole metaphysical theological concept shared by Judaism, Christianity, and by Islam (ibid., p. 24). More: BL.

Eternal Immoveable Mover (that is, a God) but only an *Eternal Moved Mover*; or that one thing was moved by another from Eternity, without any first Mover. Because as it is true, that nothing can be Moved, but from it self; so it is likewise true, that nothing can be moved but from that which was it self also moved by something else before; and so the progress upwards must needs be infinite, without any Beginning or first Mover. The plain Drift and Scope of this Ratiocination, is no other then this, to shew that the Argument commonly taken from Motion, to prove a God, (that is, a *First Mover or Cause*) is not Ineffectual and Inconclusive; but also on the contrary; it may be demonstrated from that very Topick of Motion; that there can be no Absolutely First Mover, No First in the order of Causes, that is, no God.¹¹⁵

Cudworth in *The True Intellectual System's* lengthy chapter 4, demonstrating 'the Idea of God' by way of an 'Answer to the First Atheistick Argument', presents Spinoza as 'a Late Writer' who is upholding the stance 'God Reigneth over men, only in the Civil Sovereigns'. Cudworth in this chapter assails the 'Groß Impudence of Atheists' in 'denying the word GOD, to have any Signification, or that there is any other Idea answering to it', besides the 'mere Phantasm of the sound'. Cudworth, further building on the already previously-mentioned notorious 'three impostors thesis', was of the opinion the Dutch philosopher was promulgating a Machiavellist state of dominance. According to Cudworth, a realm ruled by politicians, 'The Old Atheistick Cabal', betraying the minds of their subjects via belief in God and religious piety, thus threatening moral conduct. This author, he argues, provides readers with

... another *Atheistick Account of Religions* so generally prevailing in the world, from its being a fit *Engine of State*, and Politicians generally looking upon it, as an *Arcanum Imperii*, a *Mystery of Government*, to possess the Minds of the People with the Belief of a God, and to keep them busily employed in the *exercises of Religion*, thereby to render them the more *Tame and Gentle*; apt to *Obedience, Subjection, Peace and Civil Society*.¹¹⁶

At this very instance, Cudworth explicitly points out to readers he is referring to Spinoza, particularly because the title of the latter's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* is printed in the book's external margins: 'Tract. Theol. Polit.'. He is,

arguably, however evidently confusing here Spinoza with the champion of the absolutist theory of sovereignty, Thomas Hobbes, who in chapter 35 of *Leviathan* claims 'the kingdom of God is a civil kingdom'.¹¹⁷ Later, in the same chapter of *The True Intellectual System*, where two running headlines together read 'Of Miracles. And how [...] | [...] they Confirm a Prophet', Cudworth indirectly refers to the cloaked author of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* once more. This time, he calls him a 'late *Theological Politician*'. Before putting forward arguments in a long defence of 'true' miracles, he concludes the treatise is unworthy of any refutation because of its weakness, falseness, and irrelevance:

As for that late *Theological Politician*, who writing against *Miracles*, denies as well those of the Former, as of this Latter Kind, contending that a Miracle is nothing but a Name, which the Ignorant Vulgar gives, to *Opus Naturae Insolitum*, any *Unwonted work of Nature*, or to what themselves can assign no Cause off; as also that if there were any such thing done, Contrary to *Nature* or *Above* it, it would rather Weaken than Confirm, Our Belief of the Divine Existence; We find this Discourse every way so Weak, Groundless, and Inconsiderable; that we could not think it here to deserve a Confutation.¹¹⁸

The True Intellectual System was reprinted several times, even still in the nineteenth century. It was however badly received by Cudworth's contemporaries, such as his friend and colleague Henry More who accused him of introducing atheism by the back door. Finally, Cudworth, in one of his extant manuscripts on free will and clearly meant for publication, also brings up Spinoza, now dubbing the latter in it as 'a kind of hylozoick atheist'.¹¹⁹ In the catalogue of Cudworth's private library, called *Bibliotheca Cudworthiana*, strange enough the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* itself is abundantly absent. Yet, the catalogue does list a copy of the 1663 *Renati Des Cartes Principiorum philosophiae pars I et II; Cogitata metaphysica*.¹²⁰

117 Hobbes*, *Leviathan*.

118 Ibid., p. 707.

119 London, British Library, Add MS 4982, 55 ('Writings on Free Will by Dr. Cudworth'). Cf. John A. Passmore, *Ralph Cudworth. An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 6.

120 *Bibliotheca Cudworthiana, sive catalogus variorum librorum plurimis facultatibus. Insignium bibliothecae instructissimae Rev. Doct. Dr. Cudworth, ...*, Edward Millington (ed.) (n. pl. [London]: 1690/1), p. 29, no. 104.

115 Cudworth*, *The True Intellectual System*, p. 76.

116 Ibid., p. 656.

6 Spinoza in More's *Opera Philosophica* (1679) and in Conway's *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (1670s)

As has been already stated at an early stage in this chapter, the reputed Neoplatonist theologian-philosopher and poet Henry More was among one of the first British intellectuals who gave a judgement of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* in the early 1670s, being it then still in his private exchange. In a letter to Robert Boyle, dated 4/14 December 1671, the Cambridge theologian had unequivocally linked the treatise to the materialism of Descartes's philosophy which More considered a serious threat to Christian piety.¹²¹ Some years later, on 3 April 1677, Henry More wrote another letter, referencing to Spinoza's work once more. This time, he dispatched a letter about the treatise to the British woman philosopher Anne Finch, Viscountess Conway, informing his once 'Heroine pupil' and friend about his own work and occupations.¹²² Henry More had met Lady Conway through her brother, the anatomist John Finch (1626–1682), later Fellow of the Royal Society, back then a student at Christ's who asked More to take his sister on privately as a pupil. John Finch was also an amateur philosopher who left behind a manuscript treatise setting out his own philosophical observations, which prove him critical of Descartes, but rather sympathetic to Hobbes.

According to More's letter to Conway of 3 April, he had arrived in London 'thus late' than he had originally planned. The reason for this was because he had stayed much longer in Cambridge where he had been waiting for a local bookbinder to sew and bind for him quires of a copy of a refutation of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. The riposte bound for him, it appears, was *Arcana atheismi revelata* (1676), a work written by the Rotterdam Collegiant pamphleteer and printer Frans Kuyper, the driving force behind the Socinian anthology *Bibliotheca fratrum Polonorum*.¹²³

Kuyper's refutation *Arcana*, according to More's letter a gift from some Dutch friend, had been handed to him by Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, who he had first met in 1670 and would lead to making the acquaintance with Conway.¹²⁴ That wandering Flemish alchemist had passed More the copy during a visit by the latter Neoplatonist to Ragley Hall (south of Alcester, Warwickshire), the country seat of Lady Conway's royalist husband Colonel Edward Conway (c.1623–1683), the then future 3rd Viscount of Conway. Van Helmont would also attack Spinoza in *A Cabbalist Dialogue* five years later (1682), disdaining the Dutch philosopher's 'vulgar' equation of God with nature as it is upheld in the *Ethica*.¹²⁵

Henry More in the letter of 3 April 1677 further informed Viscountess Conway that, while waiting for *Arcana* to return from binding, he had started reading the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (in the context of his study of kabbalism). Likewise, he argued, he could better quickly fathom the contents of Kuyper's *Arcana* and thus prepare and refine his own rebuttal of Spinoza's treatise. He makes about all the foregoing the following remark:

I come thus late to London by reason of Cuperus his Confutation of Tractatus Theologicopoliticus which Monsieur Van Helmont gave me at Ragley from a friend in Holland, in quires, which whyle it was a binding at Cambridge I fell a reading Theologicopoliticus the better to understand Cuperus his confutation when it came from binding. But I found this Theologicopoliticus such an impious work, that I could not forbear confuting him whyle a reade him. This and other things spent so much time

124 Van Helmont: BL.

125 'And yet this Subject so vile and void, which is by us deservedly said to occupy the least part of the Universe, is notwithstanding in this vulgar Hypothesis, concluded to be co-extended, yea, co-existing, and co-ordinate with God, and therefore is lifted up unto so high an estimation, that all the doctrine in the whole Pagan Philosophy is exhausted or drawn from this Subject alone: which also is established the measure of all Theorems, Maxims, and Conclusions concerning Spirits, or concerning God; (which they call a Demonstration a posteriori, that is, from effects, or posterior Considerations) whence it becomes an accursed Materialism, and consequently Atheism.' (Franciscus M. van Helmont*, *A Cabbalistic Dialogue in Answer to ... a Learned Doctor in Philosophy and Theology, that the World was Made of Nothing* [London: 1682], p. 11). Aside from the vast library at Ragley Hall, Conway had a small reference library of her own, containing some books presented to her as a gift by Henry More*. Four extant copies, two by John Wilkins, one by Thomas Browne, and one by Richard Verstegan (1550–1640), contain her marks of ownership. See further: Michael Edwards, 'The Lost Library of Anne Conway', *The Seventeenth Century*, 36 (2019), pp. 1–29.

121 More* had already published a work, on witchcraft cases, against the blaze of atheism, dedicating the work to Anne Finch*, Viscountess Conway: *An Antidote against Atheism or, an Appeal to the Naturall Faculties of the Minde of Man, Whether There be not a God* (London: 1652).

122 Conway: BL.

123 Kuyper*, *Arcana*; anon., *Bibliotheca fratrum Polonorum*. Henry More* was horrified by the rejoinder, primarily because of Kuyper's denial God's existence could be read in the book of nature. Cf. Michael J. Petry, 'Kuyper's Analysis of Spinoza's Method', in Konrad Cramer, etc. (eds.), *Spinozas Ethik under ihre frühe Wirkung* (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1981), pp. 1–18, p. 4.

that I am a moneth or six weekes later here then I intended. Proposing this Confutation of mine shall make up some part of this Philosophicall volumn. And as for Cuperus, that pretends to confute him, truly I do not know that he is better then he whom he pretends to confute.¹²⁶

By 1677, as is evidenced by the above citation, More was ready to do battle and deal with Spinoza's radical biblical criticism and metaphysics. His concern about the impact of Spinoza's influence and the promotion of a Cartesian form of speculative atheism let him to write two polemical anti-Spinoza essays, both published in his collected writings in Latin translations in 1679.¹²⁷

The first work by More scolding the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* was called 'Ad V.C. epistola altera', a treatise hurriedly composed in 1677.¹²⁸ More composed this diatribe, addressed to a still unidentified correspondent, to particularly refute the 'Theological-Political Treatise' and its denial of miracles.¹²⁹ The second treatise, written within a year of the first, was 'Demonstrationis duarum propositionum', also dubbed *Confutatio*.¹³⁰ The latter essay is con-

sidered one of the first contemporary detailed reactions to the then only very recently printed posthumous works of Spinoza.

For Henry More the Dutch philosopher evidently was a wickeder Descartes, destroying God and expanding the view, in More's words, 'that there is no God beyond Nature'. More, defender of an absolute and morally perfect God, in his *Confutatio* debunked the *Ethica*'s geometric composition method, which he believed demolished the philosophical side of theology and ethics.¹³¹ He too stated in it that in Spinoza's metaphysics matter, nature, and God are equally the same.¹³² Because the *Ethica*'s development can also be closely followed in Spinoza's letters, More referred to the printed correspondence section included in the posthumous works in detail, too. In the *Confutatio*, he assails Spinoza's metaphysical propositions on substance theory in particular, also connecting the Dutch philosopher with Hobbesian philosophy.¹³³ Evidently, Henry

126 Majorie H. Nicholson and Sarah Hutton (eds.), *The Conway letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More and Their Friends, 1642–1684* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 429. The 'friend in Holland' may well have been the Quaker merchant Benjamin Furly (1636–1714), a friend of Van Helmont.

127 Henry More*, *Opera omnia, tum quae latine, tum quae anglice scripta sunt, nunc vero latinitate donata* (London: 1679).

128 Id., 'Ad V.C. epistola altera, quae brevem tractatus Theologico-politici confutationem complectitur, ... De libri Francisci Cuperi..., Arcana atheismi revelata, &c', in: id., *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, pp. 563–614. 'V.C.' patently stands for: 'Vir Clarissimus'. Cf.: Gabbey, 'Philosophia Cartesiana triumphata', pp. 214–215. More: BL.

129 'To More, the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* limited God by the postulate of fixed laws or nature, and attempted to liberate human behaviour from the control of conscience, by the evidence of an empirical ethical relativism.' (Colie, 'Spinoza in England (1665–1730)', p. 186). More* in an undated letter darkly referred to supporters of the New Philosophy as 'course-grain'd Philosophers as those Hobbians and Spinozians, and the rest of that Rabble', slighting 'Religion and the Scriptures, because there is such expresse mention of Spirits and Angels in them, things that their dull Souls are so inclinable to conceit to be impossible; ...' (p. 16). The letter was published in the introduction of: Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus: or Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions* (London: 1681). The Latitudinarian clergyman-philosopher Joseph Glanvill (1636–1680), More's disciple and FRS, in the book sought to produce evidence for the reality of witchcraft, thus proving a world of spirits and rejecting atheism.

130 Henry More*, 'Demonstrationis duarum propositionum quae praecipuae apud Spinozium atheismi sunt columnae', in: id., *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, pp. 615–635. Opening section in: Van Bunge, etc. (eds.), *The Continuum Companion to Spinoza*, pp. 115–118. For

an analysis: Hans-Peter Schütt, 'Zu Henry Mores Widerlegung des Spinozismus', in Konrad Cramer, etc. (eds.), *Spinozas Ethik unter ihre frühe Wirkung* (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1981), pp. 19–50. In *Korte en bondige weederlegging, van het wiskunstig bewijs van B.D. Spinoza, ..., in zijn na zijn dood, uitgegeven werken, ...* (n. pl.: 1687), the Dutch translation's prologue of the *Confutatio*, Frans Kuyper* (the work's editor-translator) quotes from a letter (9 August 1686) by More. According to this letter, More would have given permission to publish his work and to oversee its printing. For this purpose, according to Kuyper, More read the Dutch rendition, a claim which arguably was an outright falsehood.

131 Cf. Petry, 'Kuyper's Analysis of Spinoza's Method'. See also: Reid, *The Metaphysics*, p. 15.

132 More* refers to: Spinoza to Meyer*, 1663.04.20, Ep 12 (G 4/52–62); Spinoza to Hudde*, 1666.01.07, Ep 34 (G 4/179); Spinoza to Burgh*, [1675/76].00.00, Ep 76 (G 4/317–342). In the 'Ethics,' the pair concept 'Deus, sive Natura'/'Deus, seu Natura' is mentioned four times: E4praef ('infinitum Ens, quod Deum, seu Naturam appellamus', 'Ratio igitur, seu causa, cur Deus, seu Natura agit'), E4p4dem ('ipsa Dei, sive Naturae potentia', 'infinite Dei seu Naturae potentiae').

133 According to Spinoza, all natural things (*natura naturata*, constituting variety) are produced in one single substance ('Deus seu Natura', i.e., 'God, or Nature', *natura naturans*). God is his own cause (*causa sui*, E1p6) and exists necessarily (E1p7), without any bereft of purpose. E1p1: 'God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists.'. E1p1dem (the classical ontological monist argument for God's existence): 'If you deny this, conceive, if you can, that God does not exist. Therefore (by A7) his essence does not involve existence. But this (by P7) is absurd. Therefore God necessarily exists, q.e.d.' (G 2/53). Unique substance has at least two active infinite attributes, extension and thought, expressing God's essence (existence) complemented by its non-essential finite modes (composite things, states of God/nature) and by infinite modes (laws following from the 'absolute nature' of God's attributes motion and rest). Any mode of extension, individuated by the ratio of motion and rest, is mirrored by a corresponding mode under the attribute of thought.

More considered these what he perceived as flawed, pernicious ideas actually to be the foundations of the main hylozoist 'columns of atheism', i.e., Spinoza's stance on necessary existence pertaining to self-active substance and the claim there being only one substance in the universe, existing *a se*.

Although Henry More's objections to Spinoza's metaphysical doctrines went fairly unobserved in Britain in his own time, Frans Kuyper decided to translate the 'Demonstrationis' into Dutch.¹³⁴ In 1687, the latter Collegiant polemicist published the larger portion of his translation anonymously in the following retort: *Korte en bondige weederlegging, van het wiskunstig bewijs van B.D. Spinoza* (Short and Concise Refutation of the Mathematical Proof of B. de Spinoza).¹³⁵

Anne Conway, a follower of the Cambridge Neoplatonist school and a ferocious reader, would for her part offer a debunking of Spinoza's metaphysical doctrines, too. Her cosmological, theodicean rebuttal of the Dutch philosopher's notions is contained in book 9 of the 'Principia philosophiae antiquissimae & recentissimae de deo, Christo, & creatura id est de spiritu & materia in genere'. This anonymous treatise, Lady Conway's only published work, was translated from English into Latin and subsequently published as the second treatise of the noted *Opuscula philosophica* collection, surreptitiously issued in

octavo by a certain 'M. Brown' in Amsterdam in 1690.¹³⁶ Lady Conway worked out in her 'Principia', composed during the 1670s when she encountered and embraced Quakerism, a monistic tripartite ontology of spirit (God, infinitely good, Christ, and 'Creature'), and not of matter, based on God's attributes. Her Platonist study, issued in the *Opuscula philosophica*, was published posthumously at the behest of Van Helmont, whose 'Two Hundred Queries ... Concerning the Doctrine of the Revolution of Souls' (1684) is part of the same 1690 collection as well.

Two years later, the work was translated back into English by 'J.C. Medicinae Professor', who must be identified as either the German physician émigré to England Jodocus Crull (1660–1713) or the British physician John Clarke. This 1692 translation received the following title: *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy, Concerning God, Christ, and the Creatures, viz. of Spirit and Matter in General*. About the book's objective, the title-page promises in its subtitle that it sought to undertake an effort to offer a viewing frame resolving

... all those Problems or Difficulties, which neither by the School nor Common Modern Philosophy, nor by the *Cartesian, Hobbesian, or Spinosian* could be discussed.

Because of Viscountess Conway's study of the Lurianic kabbalah in *The Principles*, she primarily attacked Descartes's 'Principles of Philosophy' and diagnosed Spinoza as a blatant material pantheist. The Dutch philosopher, in her view, undertook to reinforce the false outlook and conclusions of Thomas Hobbes by uniting in his philosophical writings a corporeal God with all singular things situated within in his own tightly-closed system. After studying the metaphysical systems of the 'atheistical' trinity Descartes,

Similar claims about 'Deus, sive Natura' are in: *TTP*, ch. 1 (G 3/28), 3 (G 3/48) and 6 (G 3/83). Background studies: Chapter 2, n. 24.

134 The open-minded Protestant Collegiant movement rejected any church organisation or specific fixed creed. The movement flourished between 1620 and 1690 as the direct by-product on the issue of predestination of the Dordrecht Synod (1618–1619). Collegiant thought was practised in circles of dissenting Mennonites, Remonstrants, Socinians, and the like. It had roots running back to the fourteenth-century pietist *Devotio moderna* movement. In their 'gesprekken' (conversations) or 'colleges' (hence: Collegiants), they promoted a pragmatic, radical, and personal form of a universal, apostolic Christianity, arguing Christ is the very cause of human salvation. They distanced themselves from institutionalized church rituals (such as baptism and communion), the Holy Trinity, predestination, and violence. They held central meetings in Rijnsburg, the residence of Spinoza between the summer of 1661 and the spring of 1663. See: Jacobus C. van Slee, *De Rijnsburger Collegianten: geschiedkundig onderzoek* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1895); Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*; Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente*, esp. pp. 417–429; Wiep van Bunge, 'Spinoza and the Collegiants', *Philosophia Osaka*, 7 (2012), pp. 13–29. Two of Spinoza's friends, Joosten de Vries* and Balling*, were active members of the Amsterdam Collegiant 'college', too. The Rijnsburg Collegiants (the former college of Warmond) owned a guest quarter called 'Grote Huis' ('Large House'). Cf.: (Elias van Nimwegen), *Historie der Rijnsburgsche vergadering* (Rotterdam: 1775), p. 37.

135 More*, *Korte en bondige weederlegging*.

136 Anon. (Anne Finch*/Conway), 'Principia philosophiae antiquissimae & recentissimae de Deo, Christo & creatura id est de spiritu & materia in genere', in: anon., *Opuscula philosophica quibus continentur, principia philosophiae antiquissimae & recentissimae. Ac philosophia vulgaris refutata quibus subijuncta sunt C.C. de problemata de revolutione animarum humanorum*, id. and Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont (eds.) (Amsterdam: 1690). Modern English edition: Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, Taylor Corse and Allison P. Coudert (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Conway's treatise was edited together with two other tracts: 'De revolutio animorum humanorum', by Van Helmont, and 'Philosophia vulgaris refutata', by the mysterious French author Jean Girounet, a treatise previously-published anonymously in Frankfurt in 1668. See for Conway: Andrew Pyle (ed.), *The Dictionary of Seventeenth-Century British Philosophers* (2 vols., London: Continuum, 2000); Sarah Hutton, 'Anne Conway: A Woman Philosopher' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. p. 231 (on 'J.C. Medical Professor').

Hobbes, and Spinoza, of what she evidently saw as bankrupt 'so-called' philosophies, her conclusion is briefly the following:

Cartes acknowledged God to be plainly Immaterial, and an Incorporeal Spirit. *Hobbs* ... so confounds God and the Creatures in their Essences, and denies that there is any Essential Distinction between them ... [and] *Spinosa* also confounds God and the Creatures together, and makes but one Being of both'; all which are diametrically opposite to the Philosophy here delivered by us.¹³⁷

7 Baxter's Attack on Spinoza in *The Second Part of the Nonconformists Plea for Peace* (1680)

Richard Baxter, a controversial British philosophical theologian, was a prolific writer, renowned preacher, and book collector. Initially friendly with both Robert Boyle and Henry More, he was one of the prominent Puritan church leaders in Stuart England. One of his merits was paving the way for the 'Toleration Act' (1689), a bill accepting minor deviations in doctrine and liturgy as maintained by moderate nonconformists within the Anglican Church and thereby loosening restrictions.¹³⁸ Baxter felt obliged to defend nonconformist Protestant arguments by also attacking Spinoza's 'Epicurean principles of Philosophy about God and *Nature*'. Apparently, he saw the Dutch philosopher's metaphysical notions as the inevitable outworking of the mechanical philosophy, about which earlier in his life he had followed the ongoing scholarly debate with much interest. Baxter, an early critic of Thomas Hobbes and Edward Herbert, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury, in two chapters of his *The Second Part of the Nonconformists Plea for Peace* targeted Spinoza's theory of a corporeal, single, and self-active God

... moving the world as a Clock or Watch by meer invariable necessity, that never did or can do a miracle, or alter the necessitating course of nature....¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Conway, *The Principles*, pp. 148–149.

¹³⁸ The Act received royal assent on 24 May 1689. Dissenting Protestants were required to register the public locations of their meetings. Catholics, Non-Trinitarians, and atheists were excluded. The work by Baxter* upsetting More* was: *Methodus theologiae christianae* (London: 1681). Baxter's friendship with More deteriorated after publication of the former work, resulting in a printed clash with the Cambridge Neoplatonist on philosophy. Boyle: BL.

¹³⁹ Richard Baxter*, *The Second Part of the Nonconformists Plea for Peace*, ... (London: 1680), pp. 1–21 and 107–132. The book was a

The work's lengthy prologue is dated 16 April 1680. The book itself was published in London shortly afterwards. Baxter in *The Second Part*'s preface argues against those

... that seek our blood and ruine by the false accusation of *Rebellious principles*, to tell me if they can what body or party of men on earth have more sound and Loyal principles of Government and obedience.... Is it the new Philosophers; such Cartesians as *Spinosa*, and such as *Hobbes* that you prefer? I shall tell you after, what are their politicks.¹⁴⁰

Baxter in *The Second Part* especially addressed questions prompted by what he saw as the final consequence of the radical political views of the 'Atheistical Politician' Spinoza. Baxter, according to the prologue's statement, regarded the latter Dutch philosopher to be a full-blown Cartesian and an 'improved' Hobbes, the personification of the inevitable and complete endangerment of religion and the destruction of the commonwealth. For this reason, Baxter gave chapter 1 of *The Second Part* the following title:

The Principles of Spinosa and such Brunitists against Government and Morality recited, and confuted, and the fundamental reasons of Government asserted.

Baxter in chapter 1 focuses predominantly on what he refers to as those 'shameful words' set forth by 'this Apostate Jew' Spinoza and by all other 'Brunitist' philosophers, all aiming to subvert 'humanity, morality and Government'. Accordingly, he gives his own translation into English of a small portion of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*'s chapters 16 ('On the Foundations of the Republic') and 19 ('The Right Regarding Religion'). Before exposing the threat to the state posed by the political principles of '*Hobbes, Spinosa, Pomponatius, Vaninus, &c*' and dissociating their opinions from Anglican nonconformism, Baxter assails Spinoza by boldly putting forward the following allegation:

We suppose the Reader will think we have tediously digressed against this Apostate *Jew*: but the reason is, because the pernicious book having most subtilly assaulted the Text of the old Testament, is greedily sought and cryed up (with *Hobbes* his equal) in this unhappy time, even among those whose place make them more regardful of the interest of Magistrates at

sequel to: id., *The Nonconformist Plea for Peace: or An Account of their Judgment*, ... (London: 1679). Hobbes/Cherbury: BL.

¹⁴⁰ Baxter*, *The Second Part*, preface. Baxter* had first starting attacking Spinoza and the *TTP* scatteredly in tracts on religious topics as early as 1672. See for this: n. 89.

least; even by those *Atheists* whom God calls Fools, *Psal.* 14.1. but by themselves are called Wits, and our business is more to defend the truth than our selves.¹⁴¹

Chapter 1 is accordingly closed with a 'summ of our Judgments' (fifty counter-arguments) against 'the Principles of this *Maledictus Spinoza* and his tribe'.

In *The Second Part's* chapter 4, containing a judgement of the '*Seditious and Rebellious Principles and Practices*', Baxter furthermore opposes to

... the inhumane opinion of *Spinoza* in *Tract. Theol. Polit.* and such other Infidels, who hold that sensuality is mans chief interest, and that every man hath right to any thing that he desireth if he can but get it, and that he is bound to keep his Oaths and Covenants no longer than it is for his own interest, and that he hath as good title as the Governour or possessor had, if he can but get his place or possessions, and may destroy any if he can, that hinder his desires.¹⁴²

Next, Baxter in a separate section in chapter 6, called 'The Political Alphabet', eventually also provides readers with 'a summ of *Spinoza's* Posthumous works', while at the same time also confuting Hobbes's *De Cive*.¹⁴³ The heading of this portion reads:

*The marrow of Spinoza's Opera posthuma which I read not till after the writing of what is before. To which Hobbes much agreeth.*¹⁴⁴

The 'summ' of *The Second Part's* chapter 6 contains fifty-five pointedly-formulated abstracts of notions expounded by Spinoza in the *Ethica* and in the *Tractatus politicus*, some with specific reference to passages contained in the *Opera posthuma*, too.¹⁴⁵ In 1682, Baxter in a work on the

life and times of his close friend Sir Matthew Hale once again labelled Spinoza as the typical arch-atheist, when writing about Hale's and his own dislike for the New Philosophy as embodied by Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655), Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza:

We both greatly disliked the Principles of *Cartesius* and *Gassendus* (much more of the Bruitists, *Hobs* and *Spinoza*); especially their Doctrine de *Motu*, and their obscuring, or denying *Nature it self*, even the *Principia Motus*, the *Virtutes formales*, which are the Causes of Operations.¹⁴⁶

The anti-Catholic, liberal Anglican Dean and later Archbishop (1691) of Canterbury John Tillotson (1630–1694), a Fellow of the Royal Society and son-in-law of another Fellow, John Wilkins, linked up Spinoza with Hobbes in one of his letters exchanged with Baxter. He did so only in passing, but it proves exactly how in intellectual circles both 'radical' philosophers triggered heated discussions in relation to religion and atheism and made people accuse their opponents of secretly supporting atheist thought, even prominent representatives in the Church of England. In the late spring of 1680, targeting one of his friend's latest sermons, Tillotson wrote a reply to Baxter about the latter's apparently earlier negative response regarding a debate 'particularly designed against me'. In all likelihood, that sermon was 'The Protestant Religion Vindicated from the Charge of Singularity and Novelty', preached by Baxter at Whitehall before his master King Charles II on 2 April 1680. This sermon had caused quite a stir and induced several in Tillotson's audience to accuse him of Hobbism. Tillotson in the foregoing letter particularly expressed his fear his opponents, including also Baxter, would be

... very glad to find me struck at in the odious company of *Spinoza* & M^r *Hobbs*, as of the same Atheistical principles with them.¹⁴⁷

141 Ibid., p. 8. Baxter hints at the libertine Italian philosophers Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525) and Lucilio Vanini (1585–1619). Like Baxter*, the Scottish lawyer and statesman James Dalrymple (1619–1695), 1st Viscount of Stair, also portrayed Spinoza as an execrable atheist alongside Vanini and Hobbes*. Cf.: *Physiologia nova experimentalis in qua, generalis notiones Aristotelis, Epicuri, & Cartesii suppleuntur*, ... (Leiden: 1686), pp. 16–17 ('Exploratio prima de communibus naturalibus quae toti Physiologiae praesternuntur', 'postulatum quartum'). Boyle* lauded the book by Dalrymple.

142 Baxter*, *The Second Part*, pp. 63–64.

143 Hobbes*, *Elementa philosophica*.

144 Ibid., pp. 11–116.

145 Eip6; Eip8; Eip13; Eip15; *TP*, ch. 2, 3, and 6. There is no doubt Baxter read those works. Yet, a manuscript catalogue of his private library (1,448 titles), now kept in the Dr William's Library

(London), makes no mention of any copies of Spinoza's printed writings.

146 Richard Baxter*, *Additional Notes of the Life and Death of Sir Matthew Hale*, ... (London: 1682), p. 6. Matthew Hale (1609–1676) was a legal scholar specialized in English common law, Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and Lord Chief Justice of the London King's Bench. The French mechanical priest-philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician Pierre Gassendi was the first to explain parhelia as being ice crystals. He experimented with a barometer among many other natural philosophical 'firsts' in astronomy. See on Gassendi: Antonia Lolordo, *Pierre Gassendi and the Birth of Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Descartes/Hobbes: BL.

147 Tillotson to Baxter*, 2 June 1680 (London, Dr William's Library, DWL/RB/2/2.78). Cf.: Neil H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nutall (eds.),

Baxter, it seems, replied to Tillotson with an unpublished manuscript called 'Baxter's Duty of Propagating True Religion against Spinoza and Hobbes'.¹⁴⁸

Richard Baxter referred to Spinoza's philosophy in passing once again in *A Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared in Two Parts*, published nine years after *The Second Part* had been put to press.¹⁴⁹ After having first remarked in the book's Part 1 about the New Philosophy that a 'very great, if not the far greatest part of that part of Philosophy called *Physicks*, is *uncertain* (or certainly false)', he states about Descartes, Gassendi, and the latter's 'brothers' Hobbes and Spinoza thus:

Cartesius, Gassendus, &c. Except those whose modesty causeth them to say but little, and to avoid the uncertainties; or confess them to be uncertainties. To enumerate instances would be an unseasonable digression. *Gassendus* is large in his Confessions of uncertainties. I think not his Brother *Hobs*, and his second *Spinosa* worth the naming.¹⁵⁰

8 Blount's English Translation (1683) of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus's* Chapter 6: *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature*

In an officially-published decree dated 21 July 1683, the University of Oxford condemned Hobbes's *Leviathan* and *De Cive*, works that were rigidly qualified as being 'hateful to God and Man'. The same decree also decried the 'Heretical and Blasphemous' works of John Milton (1608–1674), of John Owen (1616–1683), and those of

Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter. Volume 2: 1660–1696 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), letter 1052. I am indebted to Emeritus Prof. Neil H. Keeble (University of Stirling) for informing me about Baxter's letter's existence. Dr Alison Searle (University of Leeds) and Dr Johanna Harris (University of Exeter) kindly provided me with a digital photo of the letter. Tillotson: ODNB.

148 London, Dr William's Library, DWL/RB/v.146. Tillotson's was published as: *The Protestant Religion Vindicated, ...: In a Sermon Preached before the King at White-Hall, April the 2d. 1680* (London: 1680; repr, 1686). Tillotson in *Remarks upon the Present Confederacy, and Late Revolution in England* (London: 1693) was accused by its anonymous author (John Pitts?) of having 'contributed more to the spreading and rooting of *Atheism* than 50 *Spinoza's*, *Hobbs's*, or *Vaninus's*'. Cf. Jonathan Israel, *Conflicts of Empire. Spain, the Low Countries and the Struggle for World Supremacy, 1585–1713* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1997), p. 358.

149 Richard Baxter*, *A Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared in Two Parts: I. Of Falsely Pretended Knowledge, II. Of True Saving Knowledge and Love, ...* (London: 1689).

150 *Ibid.*, II, ch. 6, p. 47. Descartes/Hobbes: BL.

Richard Baxter, published in both English and Latin. All of their works among those of several other authors were said to be 'repugnant to the holy Scriptures'. Accordingly, the university's vice chancellor had those banned books removed from the university library's shelves and saw to it these were publicly burned in the Bodleian's Quadrangle, 'by the hand of our Marshal in the court of our Scholes'.¹⁵¹

Despite the strict measures taken by the University of Oxford's board, another deist plea for rationality, enquiry, and reason, though, was disseminated clandestinely during the same year among the British reading public, called *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature*.¹⁵² This thirty-six-page treatise was, arguably, a new determinist contribution to the ongoing English discussion on the cessation doctrine. Among a few other short texts, this booklet contained an English translation of a large portion of chapter 6 of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. In this way, the anonymously printed work silently introduced Spinoza's radical biblical criticism in Britain via the back door to English readers who were not Latinate.¹⁵³ The tract's title-page contains an epigraph from Pliny the

151 Hobbes*, *Leviathan*; id., *Elementa*. The Congregation's decree condemned 'certain Pernicious books and Damnable Doctrines Destructive to the Sacred Persons of Princes, the State and Government of all Humane Society'. The decree debunked twenty-seven 'Propositions' allegedly 'false, seditious and impious and most of them to be also Heretical and Blasphemous, infamous to Christian Religion and destructive of all Government in Church and State' (*The Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford Past in their Convocation July 21, 1683, Against Certain Pernicious Books and Damnable Doctrines Destructive to the Sacred Persons of Princes, their State and Government, ...* [London: 1683], p. 7). The books' burning is mentioned in: Anthony Wood, *Atheneae Oxonienses. An Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education in the Most Ancient and Famous University of Oxford, ...* (2 vols., London: 1721), vol. 2, p. 664 (644). Baxter: BL.

152 Anon., *Miracles, no Violations of the Laws of Nature*, [Charles Blount] (transl.) (London: 1683). In 1689, an English translation of the complete *TTP* was published surreptitiously under the following title: *A Treatise Partly Theological, and Partly Political*. A bibliographical description is provided in this chapter. A reprint of this translation was launched in 1737 (n. 100). An abstract of the *TTP*, covering the first chapters of the work and followed by a brief account of Spinoza's life and writings, was published in: anon., *An Account of the Life and Writings of Spinoza. To Which is Added, an Abstract of his Theological Political Treatise, ...* (London: 1720).

153 Cf. Samuel Halkett and John Laing, *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature* (4 vols., New York, NY: Haskell House Publishers, 1971), vol. 4, p. 83. For *Miracles, no Violations of the Laws of Nature*, see further: Simonutti, 'Spinoza and the English Thinkers', pp. 198–204. For a study of naturalism and libertine thought of Blount*: Ugo Bonanate, *Charles Blount. Libertinismo e deismo nel Seicento inglese* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1972).

Elder's *Naturalis historia*: 'Or what is not deemed miraculous, when first it comes into knowledge'.¹⁵⁴ The title-page further states the book was produced for book dealer Robert Sollers by 'the King's arms and Bible', a prominent printing house at St. Paul's Church Yard.¹⁵⁵

There is the strong likelihood the *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature*'s cloaked editor was the freethinker and prolific Charles Blount, the fourth son of traveller Sir Henry Blount (1602–1682) who befriended Hobbes and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. Charles Blount is considered a pioneering and popularizing deist in England as well as a controversial, eclectic pamphleteer in the cause of the 'Popish Plot' (1678), the framed Roman Catholic conspiracy against the English throne.¹⁵⁶ He was a frequenter of the radical anti-court London Whig Green Ribbon Club, including many prominent politicians, meeting at the King's Head tavern at Chancery Lane End. Blount is known to have exchanged letters with Hobbes in the English philosopher's last year of his life.

Frequently, Blount was identified with Epicurus whereas some of his contemporaries might have wrongly accused him of plagiarism. Possibly, he had even connections with Dutch Protestants who partook in discussions on the work of Spinoza and philosophical deism which would explain his interest for the philosopher's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, too.¹⁵⁷ In one Blount's essays, *Anima Mundi* (1679), a defence of natural religion which was publicly burned by his enemies, he abundantly mocked pagan views on the soul. In the same work, he lambasted assertions of an afterlife in a collage of cynical heterodox views which he confronted with orthodox Christian notions.¹⁵⁸

Blount in another work, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians* (1680), assailed both 'priestcraft' and various Christian concepts, especially the doctrine of the Eucharist.¹⁵⁹ The same work also strongly criticized the English translation of a work by the Greek sophist Flavius Philostratus (c.170–c.247 CE).¹⁶⁰ Blount's last two books clearly reveal

strong influence of Hobbes and of Edward Herbert.¹⁶¹ His later *The Oracles of Reason* (1693), a collection of letters dedicated to Hobbes in which Blount expressed doubts about Scripture's revelatory contents once again, was in turn scrutinized doggedly in a work called *Mr. Blount's Oracles of Reason Examined and Answered*.¹⁶²

Cleverly, Charles Blount billed his concise 1683 diatribe *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature* as an 'innocent Discourse', promoting in it however Hobbes's *Leviathan*, and the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* of which he translated its chapter 6 on miracles. Combined with a set of quotations borrowed from *Telluris theoria sacra orbis*, a work composed by the natural philosopher Thomas Burnet (c.1635–1715), Blount in the work blatantly assailed the popular belief in miracles based on ontological grounds.¹⁶³ At the same time, in *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature* he undertook to prove that what in the scriptural sense appear to be miracles actually are nothing more than natural phenomena, having their very cause in the power of an infinite God-creator.¹⁶⁴

Conjointly with Spinoza and Burnet, Blount in the booklet's 'Premonition to the Candid Reader' contended prima facie the Hebrew Bible's authors had never intended to communicate scholarly knowledge to their devout readers. This 'Premonition', it appears, was lifted from Burnet's *Telluris*, too.¹⁶⁵ According to that same prologue, Tanach's authors had presented solely stories, accounts, and moral lessons focused on piety which Christians could easily fathom. Hence, Blount in the 'Premonition' explicitly contends that, when speaking about 'natural things', Bible authors had simply always encouraged and induced readers of Scripture to intensify their veneration of God:

154 'Quid non miraculo est, cum primum in notitiam venit?' (bk 7, 1,6–7).

155 Sollers: BL.

156 Cf. Colie, 'Spinoza and the Early English Deists', p. 30.

157 Cf. Wayne Hudson, *The English Deists. Studies in Early Enlightenment* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), pp. 62–63.

158 Anon. (Charles Blount*), *Anima Mundi: or, An Historical Narration of the Opinions of the Ancients Concerning Mans Soul after this Life: According to Unenlightned Nature* (London: 1697).

159 Id., *Great is Diana of the Ephesians: or, the Original of Idolatry, Together with the Politick Institution of the Gentiles Sacrifices* (London: 1680).

160 Id., *The First Two Books of Philostratus concerning the Life of Apolonius Tyaneus* (London: 1680).

161 Hobbes/Cherbury/Blount: BL.

162 Josiah King, *Mr. Blount's Oracles of Reason ... in Which ... the Holy Scriptures and Revealed Religion are Asserted against Deism & Atheism* (Exeter: 1698).

163 Thomas Burnet*, *Telluris theoria sacra orbis nostri originem & mutationes generales, quas aut jam subiit, aut olim subiturus est, complectens: libri duo priores de diluvio & Paradiso* (London: 1681); Hobbes, *Leviathan*. Burnet's 'Sacred Theory' was a historical attempt to reconcile scholarly knowledge with Scripture and agreed with Spinoza that humankind was ignorant of the natural causes of phenomena which had been always explained as being miraculous events. Burnet provides, for example, a rational account of Noah's flood.

164 The rejection of miracles was a persistent mark of deism. Cf. for a scholarly evaluation of atheism and deism: Hudson, *The English Deists*; id., etc. (eds), *Atheism and Deism Revalued. Heterodox Religious Identities in Britain, 1650–1800* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2016).

165 Burnet, *Telluris*, 1681, bk 2, preface, p. 141.

*It is the Judgement of most of the ancient Fathers of the Christian Faith, and of the most learned Theologues among the Moderns; that the Authors of the holy Scriptures, when they speak of natural things, do not design to instruct men in Physical Speculations and the Science of Natural Philosophy; but aim only to excite pious Affections in their breasts, and induce them to the Worship and Veneration of the true God, whom they celebrated in their Writings;*¹⁶⁶

In brief, according to the *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature's* prologue, the Hebrew Bible's authors were cunningly addressing 'the common Sense and pre-conceiv'd Opinions of the Vulgar'.

Nevertheless, as the book's 'Premonition' further points out, people however should better attempt to understand rather 'from the Light of Nature or right Reason' that 'the Power of God and the Power of Nature are one and the same'. Thus, according to Blount's 'Premonition', all the natural things presented in the Bible as miracle have proceeded only

*... from the fixt and immutable order of Nature, and necessarily flowed from a Series of Causes ordain'd according to her eternal Laws, that is, from God's Decrees.*¹⁶⁷

The prologue of *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature* also seeks to clarify that human beings have only a limited and inadequate knowledge of the causal relations of things. Moreover, people are, arguably, fully 'ignorant of the Principles of natural things'. Even so, Blount in the 'Premonition' argues, God's power and nature itself are infinite. By contrast, human understanding is finite and people are intrinsically incapable of fathoming how far the universal divine laws of nature 'extend themselves'. The last portion of the 'Premonition' ultimately contends that atypical 'miracles' reported in Scripture are commonly 'admired' by human beings. Nonetheless, Blount continues to construe, if and when one maintains these phenomena were supernatural and against nature,

*...: then I dare not believe that any such Miracle hath ever happen'd in Nature, left I oppose God to God, that is, that God changes his own Decrees; which, from the Perfection of the divine Nature, I know to be impossible.*¹⁶⁸

166 Anon., *Miracles, no Violations of the Laws of Nature*, [Blount] (transl.), preface.

167 Ibid.

168 Ibid.

Next, Blount in a twenty-five-page text provides readers with a translation of the larger portion of the text of chapter 6 of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* in which Spinoza also treats of the sheer natural impossibility of miracles. The Dutch philosopher in this chapter has stressed that 'nothing happens in nature which does not follow from its laws' and that

*... in their Chronicles and histories men relate their own opinions more than the events they're reporting.*¹⁶⁹

Ergo, to interpret scriptural miracles and to understand how these allegedly would have taken place one must know the beliefs of those who originally related them and left written records of them. Chapter 6 further stipulates 'we do not confuse the things which really happened with imaginary things', adapted according to the belief of those who passed them on in written records.¹⁷⁰ Because Blount translated the *Tractatus theologico-politicus's* chapter 6 in *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature*, this also reveals he viewed Spinoza's rejection of miracles also the programmatic focus of his own rationale of deist argumentation.¹⁷¹ Unlike Spinoza, though, Blount does not maintain theology and philosophy to be separate domains.¹⁷²

Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature ends with three citations from writers seemingly free from the suspicion of atheism. These authors were St Augustine, Edinburgh's regent Thomas Burnet, and English churchman Thomas Sprat (1635–1713), an English historian and Founding Fellow of the Royal Society appointed Bishop of Rochester one year after Blount's booklet was published.¹⁷³ In so presenting readers with quotations from the works of the last three writers, Blount sought to promote his criticism of the populace's blind devotion to the idea of an incorporeal God-creator and its belief in miracles.¹⁷⁴

No particulars about the printing and publishing history of *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature* are documented. Because the biblical reference to 'Psalm 73'

169 G 3/83; G3/92.

170 G 3/92.

171 *TTP*: ch. 6 (G 3/81–96). In the abstract by Blount* from p. 4 onwards. The treatise's concluding sections, on scriptural examples, are left out from Blount's translation.

172 Cf. Hudson, *The English Deists*, p. 66.

173 St Augustine in a homily on 1 John 6:10 and in the 'City of God' states miracles may have been suitable in the days of the early church, but in his own time these were unwarranted.

174 St Augustine, letter 143,7 (to Marcellinus); Burnet, *Telluris*, 1681, bk 1, ch. 11, p. 137. The third passage is borrowed from: Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal-Society of London, for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (London: 1667), p. 360.

(l. 31) on page 14 of chapter 6 in Blount's translation is correct and not misspelled '37', it can be construed the latter must have consulted a printed copy of either T.1, T.2/T.2a, or the T.3 octavo edition. The other later quartos T.4n/T.4 and T.5 (p. 169, l. 10), it has already been explained in this bibliography's chapter 3, do misprint '(vide Psal. 73.)' as '(vide Psal. 37.)'. All issues of the T.3 octavo edition (p. 106, l. 32) also correctly have '(vide Pf. LXXIII.)'. Up to now, twenty-eight copies of Blount's *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature* are known to be extant in international library holdings.

9 Browne's Quick Response to Blount: *Miracles Work's Above and Contrary to Nature* (1683)

Upon publication *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature* was immediately rigidly attacked by an obscure Anglican divine named Thomas Browne in a retort also published in London in 1683. The riposte, printed 'for Samuel Smith at the Princes Arms in St. Pauls Church-Yard', was called *Miracles Work's Above and Contrary to Nature*.¹⁷⁵ Smith, a 'Latin trader', was official bookseller to the Royal Society and printer of several issues of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*. He had a wide-spread international network and corresponded with the Rotterdam bookseller Reinier Leers (1654–1714).¹⁷⁶ The lengthy subti-

tle of *Miracles Work's Above and Contrary to Nature* reads the following:

An Answer to a Late Translation out of *Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Mr. Hobb's *Leviathan*, &c. Published to Undermine the Truth and Authority of Miracles, Scripture, and Religion, in a Treatise ENTITLED *MIRACLES no Violation of the LAWS of NATURE*.

From this title alone, it is obvious clergyman Browne considered *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature* a subversive, deist attack and a covert atheist attempt to undermine 'the Foundations of both Law and Gospel'. In *Miracles Work's Above and Contrary to Nature*, he rightly claimed the tract's masked author was not an original writer, but a blatant plagiarist who had only stolen the works of others. Accordingly, Browne disclosed the book's author had made a translation of chapter 6 of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. He made it also clear that *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature* contained arguments ruling out God's providence that were brutally lifted from Burnet's *Telluris*.

Browne's remarks in his reply to Blount on Spinoza's notion of divine will and human understanding fairly proves he had well prepared himself by studying the 'Theological-Political Treatise' and the *Ethica* as well. He writes:

This conceit he does not farther explain or make out in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*; and therefore, to run up, his Argument to the head, I shall consult his *Opera Posthuma* for a Scheme of his principles from whence to deduce it. There, in the *First Part of his Ethics*, which treats *de Deo*, he has this Doctrine, *That there is but one Substance in the World....* (followed by Browne's abstract from Part 1).¹⁷⁷

On the first page of his riposte, Browne immediately blames the concealed 'Compiler' of *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature*, Charles Blount, for the

... *Collection* of the several parts of his Work out of several Authors, and the *tacking* of them together.

Browne furthermore disdains the booklet's disguised author for hiding his own opinion:

is annexed to: Robert Boyle*, *Memoirs for the Natural History of Humane Blood, Especially the Spirit of That Liquor* (London: 1683/4).

177 Ibid., pp. 37–38.

175 Thomas Browne, *Miracles Work's Above and Contrary to Nature: Or, an Answer to a Late Translation out of Spinoza's Tractatus theologico-politicus, Mr. Hobb's Leviathan, &c. Published to Undermine the Truth and Authority of Miracles, Scripture, and Religion, in a Treatise Entitled Miracles no Violation of the Laws of Nature* (London: 1683). Constantijn Huygens (1628–1697), son of Constantijn Huygens père and the elder brother of the Dutch physicist Christiaan Huygens (1629–1695) was a regular visitor to the bookshop of Samuel Smith* when visiting London. Constantijn's diary contains several entries about these visits. On 18 April 1697, for instance, he wrote: 'At eleven o'clock I rode to Smith's, the bookseller, and bought the newest [Philosophical] Transactions, and another two [or] three books.' ('Ten elff ueren reed naer Smith, de boockseller, en kocht de nieuwste Transactions en twee dry boecken meer'; *Journal van Constantijn Huygens, den zoon, van 21 October 1688 tot 2 Sept. 1696. (Handschrift van de Nederlandse Koninklijke Akademie te Amsterdam)* [Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon, 1877], p. 473).

176 London bookseller and printer John Dunton (1659–1733) wrote about Smith and his bookshop thus: 'Mr. Samuel Smith, Bookseller to the Royal Society, deals very much in Books of a Foreign growth, and speaks French and Latin with a great deal of fluency and ease. His Shop is very beautiful, and well furnished.' (*The Life and Errors of John Dunston, Citizen of London, ...* [2 vols., London: J. Nichols, 1818], vol. 1, p. 207). Browne's *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature* is advertised in 'A Catalogue of late physick Books sold by Samuel Smith, at the Prince's Arms in St. Paul's Churchyard' for the price of 1 shilling. The catalogue

The *Translation* of each part out of the Latin: A Method much in use of late, to Copy out the pernicious Authors, as well as Practices, of former times, and instead of sitting down and putting their own Invention upon the Rack, to take a more easie and compendious way of doing Mischief, by Transcribing or Translating for the greedy reception of the present Age, whatever has been formerly written tending to the subversion either of Religion or Civil Authority.¹⁷⁸

Accordingly, Browne qualifies Blount's treatise as a plain plagiarist tool engineered to promote deist and atheist principles:

The Book (to assign to each Author his share in it) consists of Two Parts. The latter, which is the main, from the middle of the third Page to the end of the Book, is wholly (except for two or three Authorities in the last page) a bare Translation of the Sixth Chapter of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, written by *Spinoza*. Which Chapter he seems to have made choice out of that Author, as effectual by it self to compass the design of his whole Treatise: *viz.* To instill the Principles of *Deisme* or *Atheisme* into the minds of readers.¹⁷⁹

Next, Browne writes about the contents of the 'Premonition to the Candid Reader':

Introductory to the Book there is a *Premonition to the Reader*. And here we might justly expect from him to speak himself, and to give us a free and ingenuous Account of his Authors, his Translation, and the Design of it. But the greatest part of this too is Borrowed (or translated, whether you please) out of Mr. Burnett's *Telluris Theoria Sacra*, and the rest only brief touches of what he has aftermore at large out of *Spinoza*.¹⁸⁰

Accordingly, Thomas Browne also makes some claims about the main inspiration of *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature* and the disguised author's intention to smuggle Spinoza into the English debate on miracles by stating the following:

Spinoza indeed is the Great Patron of his Assertion, *viz. that there is no such thing as a Miracle, if we take the word to signifie a Work above or beside Nature*.¹⁸¹

Browne in his retort also turns against Hobbes and Burnet but, at the same time, he argues they were however unlike the calibre of Spinoza and they had also been misused intentionally by Blount. Especially the late Thomas Hobbes, Browne states,

... admits and supports [the veracity of particular] miracles in that very sense, wherein he is produced to deny them here.¹⁸²

On *Miracles Work's Above and Contrary to Nature's* page 23, the divine Browne finally then starts rallying against Spinoza himself by endeavouring to debunk his metaphysics. Page after page he attacks the Dutch philosopher. In conclusion, the English divine puts forwards the following conclusion about the hidden underpinnings of Spinoza's philosophical reasoning:

Here we have a full discovery of his Sense and Scope in this Argument; and it plainly terminates in one of these two, *Atheism* or *Idolatry*. For to make God and Nature the same thing, is either to advance a Creature into the place of God, or (what *Tully* [Cicero] says of *Epicurus*) *Oratione relinquere Deum, re tollere*.¹⁸³



FIRST AND ONLY EDITION, ONE SINGLE PRINT RUN, IN SMALL QUARTO (ILLUSTRATION 6.1–6.3)

Short Title

Anon., *Miracles, No Violations of the Laws of Nature*. London, *printer*: the King's Arms and Bible, *for*: Robert Sollers (*bookseller*), 1683.

Contains: translation of chapter 6 ('On Miracles') of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.

- English text; subsidiary language: Latin.
- Translated from the Latin by [Charles Blount].
- Epigraph on title-page from Pliny's *Naturalis historia* (book 7, 1,6–7).

178 Browne, *Miracles Work's Above and Contrary to Nature*, 1683, p. 1.

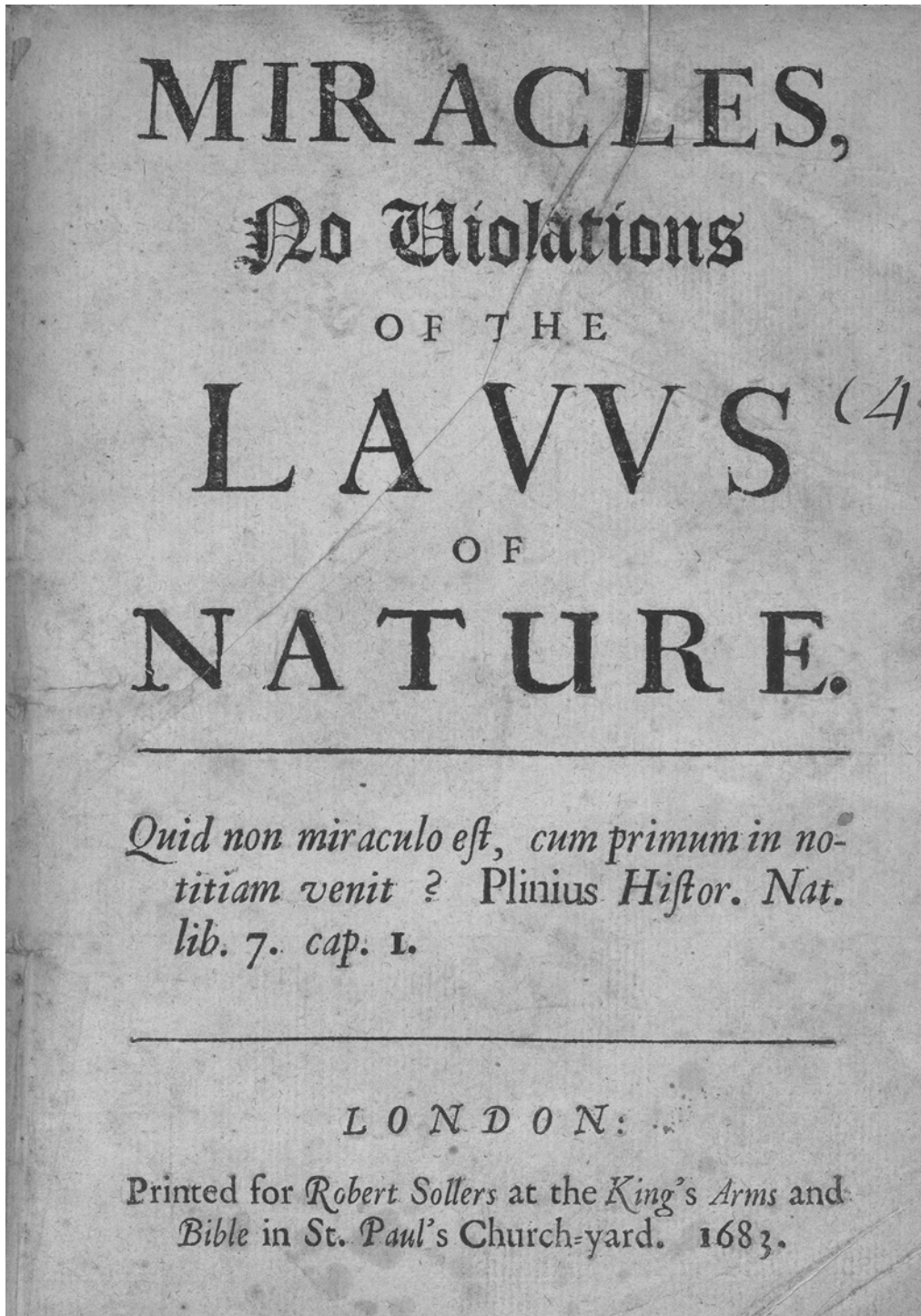
179 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

180 *Ibid.*

181 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

182 *Ibid.*

183 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

ILLUSTRATION 6.1 Title-page of the English translation of chapter 6 of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.

- Imprint with the name of bookseller Robert Sollers.
- Imprint has address of Sollers's London printing firm: 'the *King's Arms and Bible* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*'.
- Place and date of publication in imprint.
- Title-page has typographical rules dividing text portions.
- Contains 'Premonition to the Candid Reader' (text lifted from Thomas Burnet's *Telluris theoria sacra orbis*).
- Contains excerpts from Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and Burnet's *Telluris*.
- Contains preface ('Premonition to the Candid Reader').
- English bookseller's price at publication not known.

Exemplar

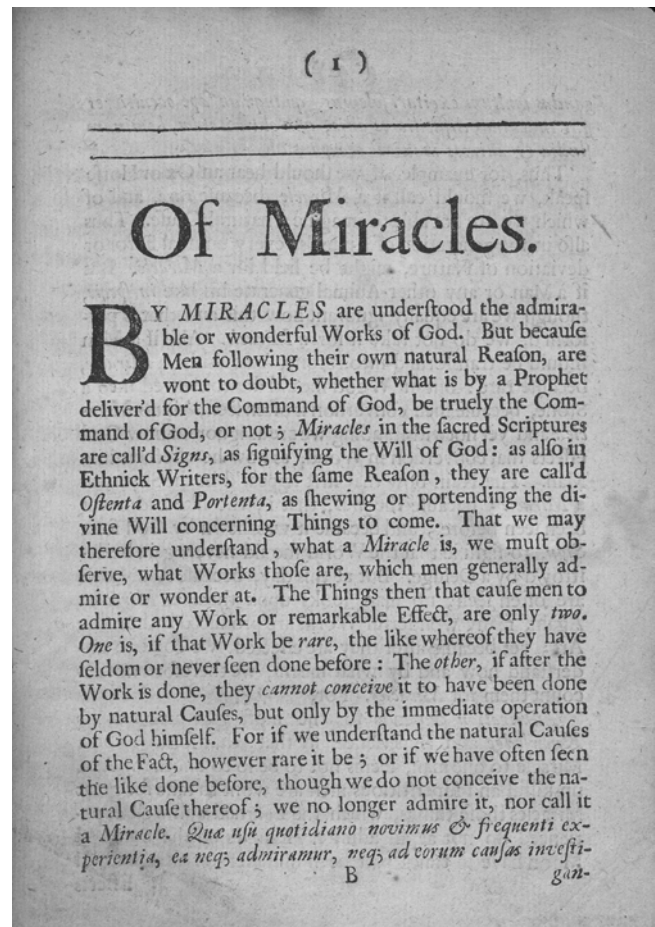
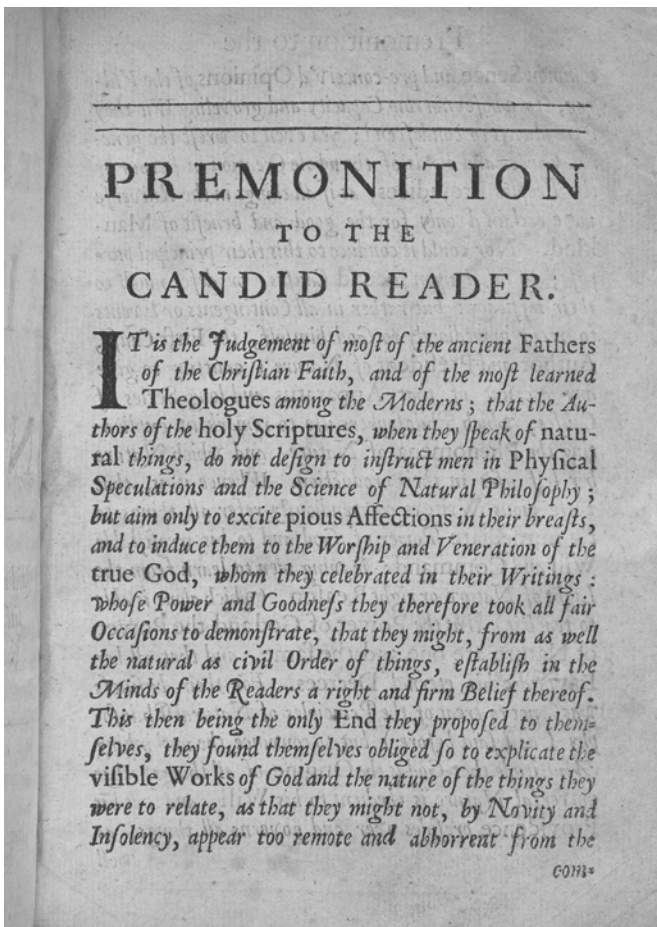
Quarto edition T.1, or T.2/T.2a, or the octavo edition T.3; the translator's autograph manuscript and/or an apograph, which served as printer's copy, is no longer extant.

Title-Page (on outer Forme of Gathering π)

MIRACLES, | No (swash N) Violations (swash V) | OF THE | LAVVS | OF | NATURE. | (rule) | *Quid non miraculo est, cum primum in no- | titiam venit ? Plinius Hiftor. Nat. | lib. 7. cap. 1. | (rule) | LONDON: | Printed for Robert Sollers at the King's Arms and Bible in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1683.*

Language and Typography

English and Latin, quotations in full text, italic type. Old-style serifed roman types of the book's printing house: the King's Arms and Bible, St Paul's Church Yard. Normally thirty-three lines.



ILLUSTRATIONS 6.2 AND 6.3 First page of prologue and page 1 of the main text.

Bibliographical Fingerprints of Separate Parts

1668o8 – a1 B \$n : a2 E2 g\$ma

Collation4^o: π 4⁻¹ B–E⁴ [\$2]

38 leaves = pp. [6] (1)–(31) [7]

Preface without pagination.

Collation Variant

No variants found.

Direction Line

Signature and catchword(s), anticipating the first word on the next page, at the foot of each page.

Running Headlines

Running headlines of prologue printed in upper middle margin, combination of larger upper-case (capital letters) and smaller lower-case (plus italics) letters: Premonition to the (verso), candid Reader. (recto); Premonition to the, &c.

Main work without headlines.

Contentsπ2^r (title-page)π2^v (blank)π3^r– π4⁴ PREMONITION TO THE CANDID READER.B^r–E⁴^r Of Miracles.***Simple Initials***

Two plain black initials (relief woodcut, 3 ll.), employed to head the first letter of the first word of the preface and of the main work.

Copies (28)***Copy Examined***

T-E/04#1 CAMBRIDGE, University Library, Wing B 3310.

Self-wraps.

Digitized copy:

http://eebo.chadwyck.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pgthumbs.cfg&ACTION=By-ID&ID=11898678&FILE=../session/1475183611_19511&SEARCHSCREEN=CITATIONS&SEARCHCONFIG=var_spell.cfg&DISPLAY=AUTHOR

Non-Collated Copies***Ireland (1)***

T-E/04#2 DUBLIN, Trinity College, P.gg.33.no.7

United Kingdom (18)

T-E/04#3 CAMBRIDGE, Sidney Sussex College (Muniment Room), Wing (2nd ed.) B3310

T-E/04#4–5 CAMBRIDGE, University Library, B125:2.9. Reel 55:12, Bb*.10.46(E)

T-E/04#6 EDINBURGH, University Library, B.a.7.5/5

T-E/04#7 EXETER, Cathedral Library, HARINGTON/TRA/12 (set with spine title: 'Tracts on the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome').

T-E/04#8 GRANTHAM (Lincolnshire), Belton House (no shelf-mark)

T-E/04#9 LAMPETER, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, University Library, AC 31864

T-E/04#10–12 LONDON, BrL, General Reference Collection, 700.e.20.(1.) (from the collection of Hans Sloane [1660–1753], one of the foundation collections of the British Museum library [now BrL], Sloane nos. m 243 and d 421, copy could be either of them), 11623.e.12.(11.), 115.b.1.

T-E/04#13 LONDON, Lambeth Palace Library, YC910 10.06

T-E/04#14 MANCHESTER, University Library, R6J7Y

T-E/04#15 OXFORD, Balliol College Library, 0300 i 09 (07)

T-E/04#16–17 OXFORD, Christ Church Library, B.117 (6), F41[1]

T-E/04#18 OXFORD, Exeter College Library, P6 30 (6)

T-E/04#19 OXFORD, Magdalen College Library, a.8.12(9)

T-E/04#20 OXFORD, Worcester College Library, TA.37.29(1)

United States (8)

T-E/04#21 CAMBRIDGE (MA), Harvard University,
University Library, Houghton *EC65 A100 683m2

T-E/04#22 LOS ANGELES (CA), University Library,
BT97.A2 B6

T-E/04#23 NEW HAVEN (CT), Yale University, University
Library, Mhc8 1683 B62

T-E/04#24–25 NEW YORK (NY), Columbia University,
University Library, SPINOZA 193Sp4 X6 1683, 1683 B65

T-E/04#26 OXFORD (MS), The University of Mississippi
Libraries, BT97.A2 B5

T-E/04#27 PHILADELPHIA (PA), Temple University
Libraries, BT97.A2 B5

T-E/04#28 WASHINGTON (DC), The Library of Con-
gress, BT97.A2 B5 English Print (convolute, bound with:
Browne, *Miracles Work's Above and Contrary to Nature*,
1683; Fernando de Tejada, *Miracles Unmasked: A Trea-
tise Proving that Miracles are not Infallible Signes of the
True and Orthodoxe Faith*, ... [London: 1625]).

Note

The book was announced (Edward Arber [ed.], *The Term Catalogues, 1668–1709 A.D., with a Number of Easter Term 1711 A.D. A Contemporary Bibliography of English Literature in the Reigns of Charles II, James II, William and Mary, and Anne*, ..., [3 vols., London: E. Arber, 1903–6], vol. 1, p. 11) in the London 'Term Catalogues' (for Michaelmas), a list of books produced and published in London.

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10 **The First Full Edition of the
'Theological-Political Treatise' in English:
*A Treatise Partly Theological, and Partly
Political* (1689)**

In 1689, six years after publication of Blount's *Miracles, no Violations of the Laws of Nature*, Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* was finally published in a full English translation. This book, *A Treatise Partly Theological, and Partly Political*, was surreptitiously issued in London,

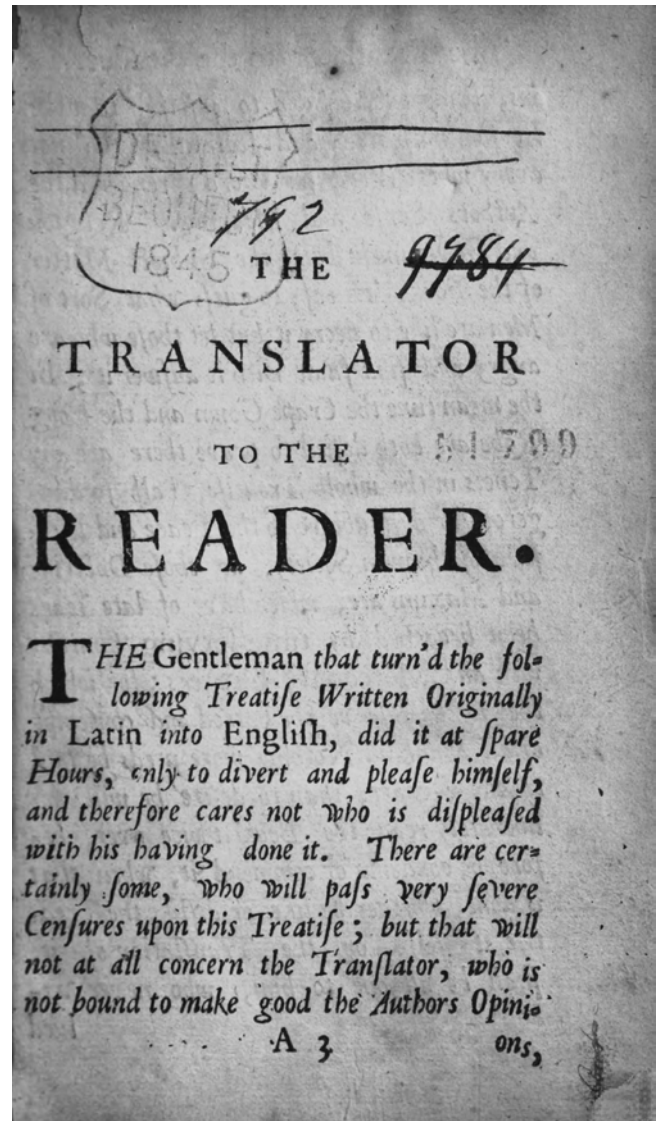


ILLUSTRATION 6.4 First page of the translator's introduction to the first English translation of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.

shortly after English Parliament passed the aforementioned lenient 'Toleration Act'.¹⁸⁴

In 'THE TRANSLATOR TO THE READER' (sigs A3^r–A4^r), about the anonymous translator, the British pamphleteer Charles Blount to all appearances, it is stated the following:

The Gentleman that turn'd the following Treatise Written Originally in Latin into English, did it at spare Hours, only to divert and please himself, and therefore cares not who is displeas'd with his having done it. There

184 Cf. Richard H. Popkin, 'The Deist Challenge', in Ole P. Grell, etc. (eds.), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 195–215, there at p. 207; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 605.

are certainly some, who will pass very severe Censures upon this Treatise; but that will not at all concern the Translator, who is not bound to make good the Authors Opinions, being only obliged to justify that the Version hath truly and faithfully (tho' not every where Word for Word) render'd the Authors Sense and Meaning.

In the treatise's introductory portion, the anonymous English translator of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* advises the reader to 'deliberately read the Book twice over, before he condemn or commend it'. The first full English text edition was published without an imprint mentioning any publisher or a printer. *A Treatise* is not inventoried in the 1698 London 'Term Catalogues' either. Perhaps, this is an indication the book was presumably produced outside the approval of censors, possibly because of its illegal status in the Netherlands.¹⁸⁵ The title-page underlines the edition was 'Translated out of Latin' but its subtitle gives an English translation of the subtitle of the Latin quartos (T.1, T.2/T.2a, T.4n/T.4, T.5). Specifically, it adds to the 'Freedom of Philosophizing' the deist phrase '(That is Making Use of Natural Reason)'. The title-page of *A Treatise* also has the biblical quotation 1 John 4:13 printed on the title-pages of the Latin quartos and on the title-page of one variant (T.3t) of the Latin octavo edition: 'Hereby know we, that we dwell in God, and God in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit'.

Because on page 320 (ll. 6–7) in chapter 15 of *A Treatise*, the biblical reference Exod. 34: 14 is printed correctly ('Exod. 34.14. '), this at least suggests the English translator had as his exemplar either the Latin quarto edition T.1 or octavo edition T.3 on his desk. The quarto editions T.2/T.2a, T.4n/T.4 and T.5 (p. 169, l. 10) all misprint 'Exod. 34. vers. 14.' of T.1 as: 'Exod. 4. vers. 14.'. This typeset flaw, though, was remedied in T.3: 'Exod. xxxiv. 14.' (p. 243, l. 21). For this reason, T.2/T.2a, T.4n/T.4, and T.5 cannot have served as the disguised translator's exemplar. Forty copies of *A Treatise* are extant in international library holdings.

In the early summer of 1737, the first issue of the complete English text edition of Spinoza's treatise was reprinted in London under the same title, this time stating to be 'sold by the booksellers of London and Westminster'. The second issue was first announced in June 1737 in the eighth volume of *The Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle*. In 'A Register of Books for June, 1737' it reads thus: 'A Treatise partly Theological and partly Political. Translated from the Latin of Spinoza. Pr. 51.'¹⁸⁶ Another announcement can be found in the sixth volume of the *London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer* in its

issue of July 1737: 'A Treatise partly Theological, and partly Political. Sold by the Booksellers, pr. 51.'¹⁸⁷



FIRST COMPLETE ENGLISH EDITION OF THE 'THEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL TREATISE', ONE SINGLE PRINT RUN, IN OCTAVO, TWO ISSUES (ILLUSTRATION 6.5–6.7)

first issue

Short Title

Anon., *A Treatise Partly Theological, and Partly Political*. London, printer and bookseller unidentified, 1689.

- English text; subsidiary languages: Latin and Dutch.
- Translated from the Latin by [Charles Blount].
- Epigraph on title-page: 1 John 4:13 (also on T.1, T.2/T.2a, T.4n/T.4, and T.5, T.3t; as well as on the second Dutch quarto edition [1694]).
- Place and date of publication in imprint.
- Title-page has typographical rules dividing text portions.
- Contains prologue ('The Translator to the Reader').
- Contains preface ('The Preface').
- Contains table of contents (twenty chapters).
- English bookseller's price at publication not known.

Exemplar

Possibly quarto edition T.1 or octavo edition T.3; the translator's autograph manuscript and/or an apograph, which served as printer's copy, is no longer extant.

Title-Page (on outer Forme of Gathering A)

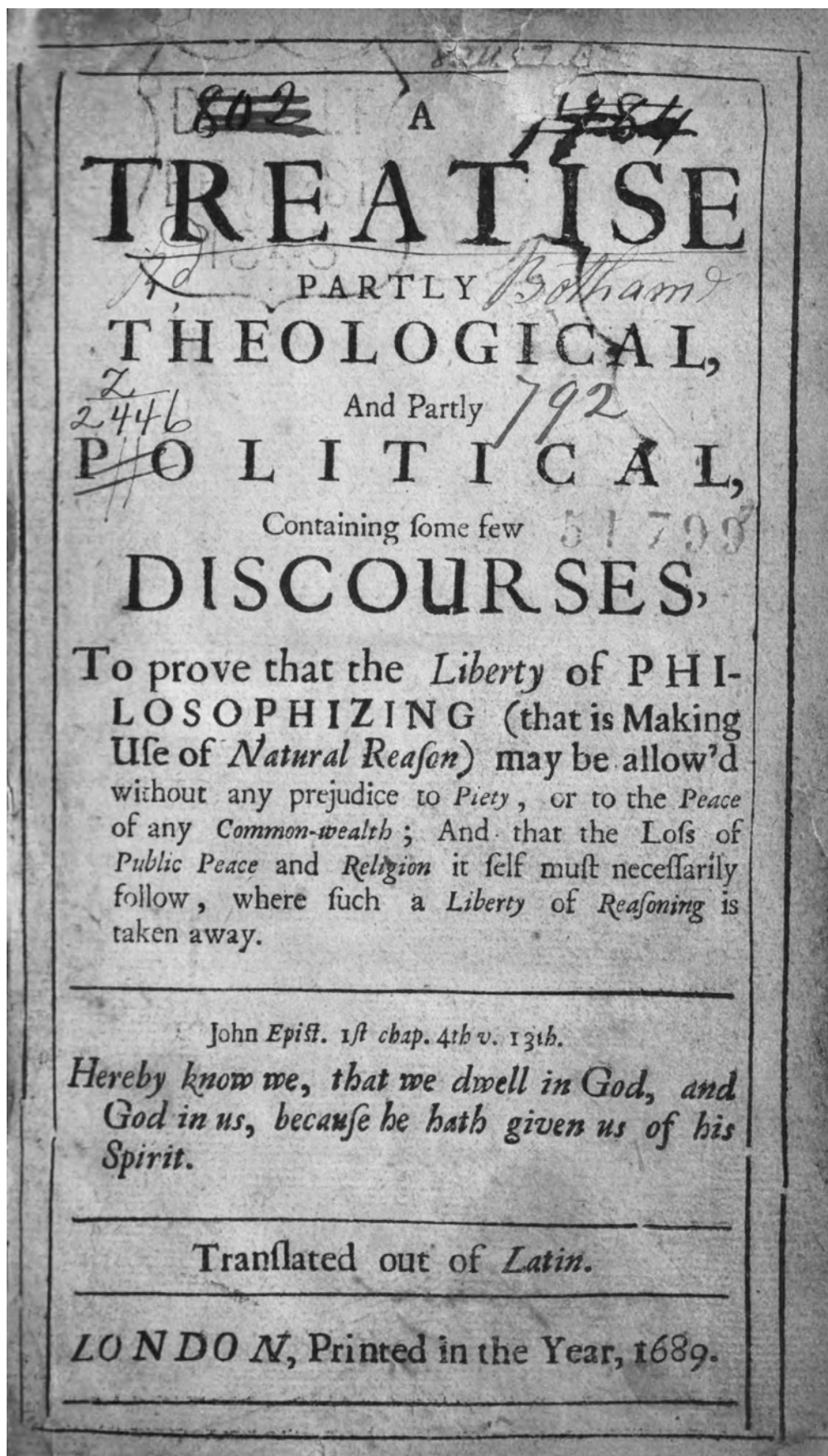
[Within a double rule]:

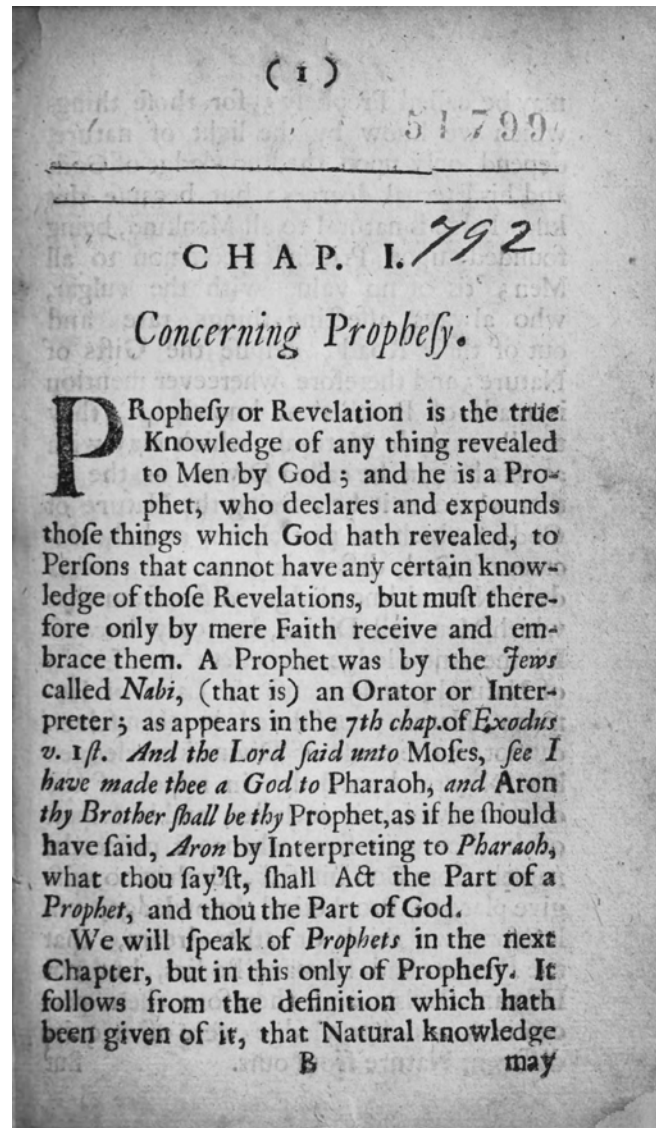
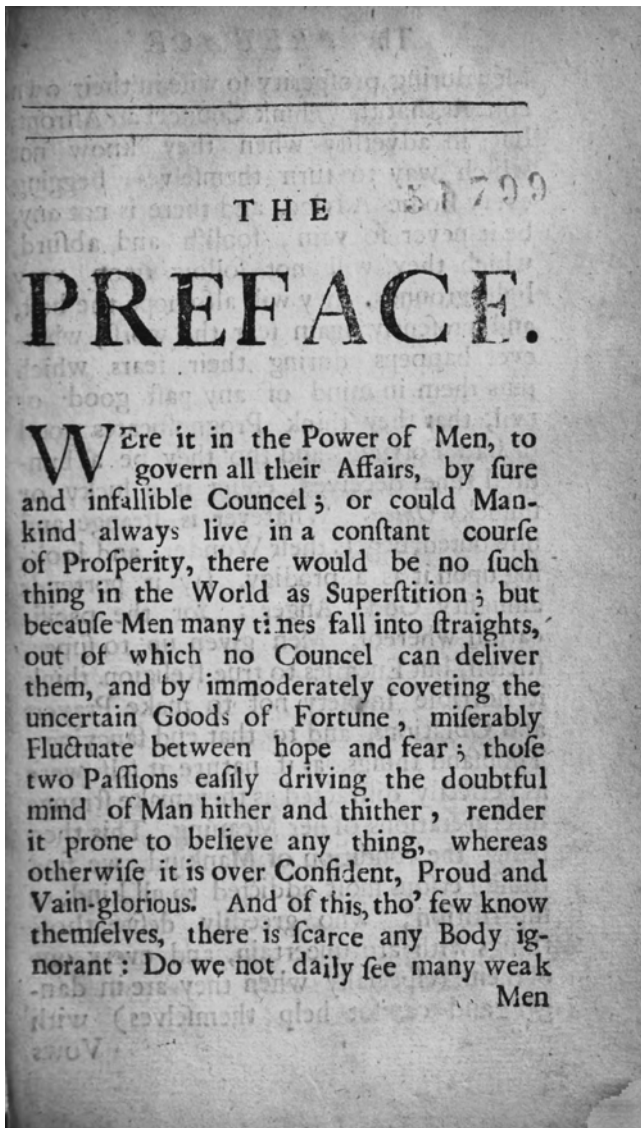
A | TREATISE | PARTLY | THEOLOGICAL, | And Partly | POLITICAL, | Containing some few | DISCOURSES, | To prove that the Liberty of PHI- | LOSOPHIZING (that is Making | Use of *Natural Reason*) may be allow'd | without any prejudice to *Piety*, or to the *Peace* | of any *Common-wealth*; And that the Loss of | *Public Peace* and *Religion* it self must necessarily | follow, where such a *Liberty of Reasoning* is | taken away. | (rule) | *John Epist. 1st chap. 4th v. 13th.* | *Hereby know we, that we dwell in God, and | God in us, because he hath given us of his | Spirit.* | (rule) | *Translated out of Latin.* | (rule) | *LONDON*, Printed in the Year, 1689. | (rule).

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Arber, *The Term Catalogues*, vol. 2.

¹⁸⁶ Cf.: p. 374, no. 14.

¹⁸⁷ Vol. 6, p. 400, no. 25.

ILLUSTRATION 6.5 Title-page of the first English translation of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.



ILLUSTRATIONS 6.6 AND 6.7 First page of the preface and page 1 of the main text.

Language(s) and Typography

English, occasionally printed Dutch (p. 302) and Latin (p. 389). No explanatory marginal footnotes. Old-style serifed roman types. Normally thirty-one lines. Sloppy printing.

Prime Literals/Misprints

- P. 3, l. 3 (inner forme of B): 'Prophets' misprinted as 'Propht s'.
- P. 12, ll. 2–3 (outer forme of B): 'Scripture' misprinted as 'Sripture'.
- P. 37, l. 11 (outer forme of D): '(as they are future) but' misprinted as: 'as they are future) but'.
- P. 68, l. 17 (outer forme of F): 'Commonwealth' misprinted as 'Common-weath'.

- P. 95, l. 23 (inner forme of G): 'Opinions' misprinted as 'Opnions'.
- P. 103, chapter title (outer forme of H): 'to whom' misprinted as 'tow hom'.
- P. 130, page number: 130 misnumbered '120' (inner forme of K).
- P. 133, l. 15 (outer forme of K): 'Human' misprinted as 'Hman'.
- P. 187, l. 7 (inner forme of N): 'opinion' misprinted as 'opiuiou'.

Bibliographical Fingerprints of Separate Parts

1689o8 – a1 A3 good\$t : a2 A4 es.\$sup
 1689o8 – b1 b h\$: b2 b4 eing
 1689o8 – c1 A t\$: c2 Gg hing

Collation

8^o: A⁸ b⁸ B–Z⁸ Aa–Ff⁸ Gg² [\$4, (–A2), sig. A is title-page]
241 leaves = pp. [30] 1–452 [3], page numbers within round brackets

Collation Variant

No variants found.

Direction Line

Signature and catchword(s), anticipating the first word on the next page, at the foot of each page.

Running Headlines

Running headlines of foreword, preface and list of contents printed in larger upper-case and small lower-case letters in upper middle margin: The Translator to the Reader; The *PREFACE*; A *TABLE*. No headlines in main work.

Contents

(A)^r (title-page)
(A)^v (blank)
A3^r–A4^r THE TRANSLATOR TO THE READER.
(unsigned, no date)
A5^r–b5^v THE PREFACE.
b6^r–b8^v A *TABLE* of the several *CHAPTERS*. (table of contents, list indicating twenty chapters, without pagination)
B^r–C6^r *CHAP. I. Concerning Prophecy.*
C6^r–E4^r *CHAP. II. Of Prophets.*
E4^v–G^r *CHAP. III. Of the Calling of the Jews, and whether the Gift of Prophecy were peculiar only to the Jews.*
G^v–H4^r *CHAP. IV. Of the Divine Law.*
H4^r–I6^v *CHAP. v. The reason why Ceremonies were instituted? to what end? and to whom the Belief of Scripture Histories are necessary?*
I7^r–L5^v *CHAP. VI. Of Miracles.*
L6^r–O^r *CHAP. VII. Of the Interpretation of Scripture.*
O^v–P4^r *CHAP. VIII. Sheweth that the Pentateuch, Books of Josua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, and the Kings, were not Written by the Persons whose Names they bear, and then inquires whether the Writers of all these Books were diverse Persons, or but one, and who?*
P4^v–Q8^v *CHAP. IX. Whether Esdras perfected the Books, which we suppose he wrote? and whether the Marginal Notes, which are found in the Hebrew Copies be divers readings?*
R^r–S2^r *CHAP. x. The rest of the Books of the Old Testament in like manner examined.*

S2^r–Tr

CHAP. XI. Enquires whether the Apostles wrote their Epistles, as Apostles and Prophets, or only as Teachers; and sheweth what is the Office of an Apostle.

Tr–U^r

CHAP. XII. Of the true Original Hand-writing of the Divine Law; why Scripture is called Holy? and why the Word of God? Lastly, that the Scripture, as it contains the Word of God, is derived down to us pure and uncorrupted.

U^v–U7^r

CHAP. XIII. Shews, that the Scripture teacheth nothing but what is very plain; intending nothing but Mens Obedience; neither doth it teach or declare any other thing of the Divine Nature, than what a Man may in a right course of life, in some degree imitate.

U7^r–X5^v

CHAP. XIV. What is Faith? Who are Believers. The Fundamentals of Faith stated. Faith distinguish'd from Philosophy or Reason.

X5^v–Y5^v

CHAP. xv. Theology or Divinity is no Handmaid to Reason, nor Reason to Divinity: Why we believe the Authority of the Holy Scripture.

Y5^v–Z8^v

CHAP. XVI. Of founding Commonwealths. Of every Man's Natural and Civil Right. Of the Right of Supreme Powers.

Aa^r–Cc6^v

CHAP. XVII. 'Tis neither necessary or possible, to transfer all things upon the Supreme Powers: Of the Jews Commonwealth, what it was during the life of Moses, and what after his death before they chose Kings, and of its Excellency: What were the Causes of the destruction of so divine a Commonwealth, and why it could not subsist without Sedition.

Cc7^r–Dd6^r

CHAP. XVIII. Certain Political Maxims Collected from the Government and Histories of the Jews Commonwealth.

Dd6^v–Ff^v

CHAP. XIX. Religion, and all things pertaining to it, are subject to no other Power, but that of the Supream Magistrate. Publick External Forms of Religious Worship, ought to be accommodated to the Peace of the Commonwealth.

Ff2^r–Gg2^r

CHAP. XX. In a Free Commonwealth it should be lawful for every Man to think what he will, and speak what he thinks.

Simple Initials

Twenty-three plain closed black initials (woodcuts), employed to head the first letter of the first word of foreword, preface and chapters of main work (initial to translator's foreword 3 ll., others 2 ll.), dimensions varying.

Decoration

Double printed rule preceding translator's foreword (sig. A3^r). Sig. A4 and catchword 'CHAP.' between double rule. Single rule after main text of Preface. Text list of contents (A TABLE of the several CHAPTERS.) between double and single rule. Single printed rules preceding chapter titles. No rule preceding title of chapter 9 (p. 216). Double rules before chapter 17 (p. 353), 18 (p. 397) and 19 (p. 412). Catchword 'CHAP.' under single rule (pp. 289 and 396). P. 240: catchword 'CHAP.' between double rule. P. 452: 'FINIS' between double rules. Rules all sloppy and with varying dimensions.

Copies (40)**Copy Examined**

T-E/08#29 MUNICH, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Rar. 4494

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References

Van der Linde, 'Notiz', p. 33, no. 370; Kingma and Offenbergh, 'Bibliography', p. 22, no. 20.

