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*The Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected:
John Wood, the Elder (1704–1754) on the
Translation of Architecture and Empire*

Edward A. Eigen

Tucked into the cover of Sir John Soane's copy of Bath architect John Wood's *The Origin of Building: or, The Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected* (1741) are the reading notes of Sir William Chambers. They deliver a hasty and bruising synopsis: "this book contains a good deal of Learning a great deal of Enthusiasm and some nonsense the Author is so desirous of proving his favorite System that he confounds dates wrests meanings cites falsely and in short Sticks at nothing to accomplish his design."¹ Even with that, Chambers was far from being Wood's least sympathetic reader. In a letter to William Stukeley, the dogmatic William Warburton judged Wood's "a most ridiculous Book," its author "a great fool."² Wood separately earned Stukeley's enmity with his *Choir Gaure, Vulgarly called Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain* (1747), which presumed to correct the antiquarian's interpretation of that "Druidical Temple."³ Wood's handling of uncommon matter, guided by a belief in the literal truth of revelation and the authority

¹ William Chambers, MS notes, in Sir John Soane's Museum London, Copy 2, John Wood, *The Origin of Building: or, The Plagiarism of the Heathens Detected In Five Books* (Bath: S. and F. Farley, 1741).

² Warburton to Stukeley (August 6, 1763), cited in Simon Varey, *Space and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 105.

³ See David Haycock, *William Stukeley: Science, Religion, and Archaeology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2002).



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of Mosaic dispensation, continues to cause consternation. In her delineation of Wood's "system of architecture," Eileen Harris usefully corrects the impression produced by a less patient historian who deemed the treatise a "stupefying mass of Scriptural summary and exegesis amplified with reference both to pagan and Christian writers of antiquity, and to modern scholars."⁴ This thorny bramble of text is where a reading of Wood's prophetic view of architectural history needs to commence. This was Wood's vineyard to tend.

The point of this essay is not to vindicate Wood's treatise, in spite of (or because of) its strained argument and barely tolerable style. Rather, it is to address the persistent difficulties encountered by Wood's readers by examining what sort of reader Wood himself made of sacred, profane, and apocryphal texts. Narrowly viewed as an attempt to reconstruct the plan and proportions of the Mosaic Tabernacle and Jerusalem Temples, Wood's treatise appears a lesser and somewhat late contribution to a widespread early modern polemic that engaged architects, scholars, antiquarians, and exegetes, notably including Sir Isaac Newton.⁵ James Bennett and Scott Mandelbrote's exhibition catalogue, *The Garden, the Ark, the Tower, the Temple* (1998), is an indispensable guide to the revenant sacred architectural landscape these rational and faithful seekers produced. Yet the startling originality of Wood's treatise resides in his accusation against the heathen Vitruvius, the presumable "Father of Architecture." For it was he who allegedly committed the culminating act of plagiarism Wood set out to detect. The "Hypothesis" of Wood's treatise, articulated in the cumbersome form of a Matthew pericope, intended to attach the authority of the Vitruvian canon: "Rendering unto Cæsar, the things which are Cæsars, and unto God, the things which are Gods."⁶

This crucial facet of Wood's plot of architectural history—that is to say, history as the legacy of plagiaristic depredation—has not been adequately addressed in the responses his treatise has to date produced. A description of the Tabernacle and Temple was the necessary vehicle for Wood's discussion of the origin of building. But his guiding concern was for the mistaken posterity of these sacred models. His central argument is as follows: "*Architecture* has been the chief Cause of the Glory and Envy,

⁴ Eileen Harris, "John Wood's System of Architecture," *The Burlington Magazine* 131 (1989): 101–07. Christine Stevenson, "Solomon 'Engothicked': The Elder John Wood's Restoration of Llandaff Cathedral," *Art History* 6 (1983): 306.

⁵ On Newton's archaeology, see Zur Shalev, "Measurer of All Things: John Greaves (1602–1652), the Great Pyramid, and Early Modern Metrology," *JHI* 63 (2002): 555–75.

⁶ Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 235.

as well as of the Ruin of Kings and Kingdoms, Emperors and Empires, each Potentate endeavoring to outdo the other in Works that wou'd render him most remarkable to Posterity.”⁷ In making his case, Wood restored an ancient theory of universal history, *translatio imperii* (translation of empire), as centrally articulated in the Book of Daniel. Guided by Daniel's prophecy, and its sustaining “Hope” for a messianic kingdom in opposition to the oppressive kingdoms of this world, Wood equates translation—invariably the result of conquest and plunder—with plagiarism, which term, frustratingly enough, he never explicitly defines.

Arguably there was no need for Wood to define plagiarism, so prevalent a theme was it amongst the religious controversialists who might have been, though ultimately failed to be, his most receptive readers. Even beyond the fold of these defenders of Christian revelation, historian Peter Harrison writes that plagiarism, in the Enlightenment and the preceding century, was virtually an axiom of historical research. This “single-source view” of history was based on the premise that Judaic civilization was the parent of all gentile cultures, and that all other histories were derived and elaborated from the original and true history of the Jews.⁸ The question for the self-appointed detective Wood was not to trace wisdom back to its singular source, but rather to demonstrate how it had been transmitted to posterity under false pretenses. The typical mode of accusation is to be found in Theophilus Gale's *The Court of the Gentiles* (1669–77). There he writes, “As for *Pythagoras* . . . that he traduced the main, or choicest parts of his Philosophie originally from the Jewish Church, and Scriptures, is a persuasion generally received by the Learned, both ancient, and modern, as wel Pagans, as Jews and Christians.”⁹ As used by Gale, “traduce” exceeds by implication the acts and deeds that a narrowly legal definition of plagiarism as the theft of literary property, which is not in any case relevant here, would seek to address or redress.

The term traduce appears at a crucial point in Wood's treatise: Augustus's burning of the prophetic books. The evidence destroyed—the nature of this evidence will be discussed below—Augustus dedicated heathen temples according to the purloined model of Jewish sacred edifices. This fatal incident, Wood asserts on the basis of Josephus, gave the Romans occasion “to

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Peter Harrison, *“Religion” and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 131.

⁹ Theophilus Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles; or, A Discourse Touching the Traduction of Philosophie from the Scriptures and Jewish Church* (London: J. Macock, 1676), 2: 130.

traduce the *Jews* as Blasphemers and Deriders of the Divinity.”¹⁰ Wood notes insinuatingly that it was at this same time that Vitruvius “composed his Works on *Architecture*, for *Caesar*’s Instruction in it.” Though of greater probative consequence is Vitruvius’s self-professed Pythagoreanism. The Muses having guided him to the discovery of Perfect Numbers, Vitruvius writes, Pythagoras “immolated sacrifices to them in thanksgiving.”¹¹ In “handing down” proportional sequences for all types of buildings, the ancients took especial care with the “sacred dwellings of the gods, as the successes and failures of those works tend to remain forever.”¹² According to Wood, the perfection of the Tabernacle and Temple was not owing to the inconstant afflatus of the Muses. For in truth, it derived from “such Authorities as the *Jewish Tabernacle* and *Temple*.”¹³

At work in Wood’s attention to plagiarism was the need to sort through distinct but necessarily interdependent historiographic traditions, each jealously asserting its claim to superior antiquity as the source of its authority. Thus Gale adduces extensive “testimony” attesting to the priority of Jewish wisdom. Prominently amongst his modern witnesses is James Ussher, who offers in his *Annales Veteris Testamenti* (1650),

It may be proved that *Pythagoras* conversed with the Jews, at *Babylon*; for as much as he transferred many of their Doctrines into his Philosophie, as *Hermippus* delcareth in his first Book of things concerning *Pythagoras*, cited by *Josephus*, and in his first Book of *Law-givers*, cited by *Origen*; which is likewise confirmed by *Aristobulus* the Jew (a Peripatetic) in his first Book to *Philometer*; who moreover was induced by the same reason to believe, that the Books of *Moses* were translated into the Greek Tongue before the Persian Empire; whereas it is much more probable that *Pythagoras* received that part of his Learning from the Conversation with the Hebrews.¹⁴

Like Ussher, Gale’s access to ancient sources, including Hermippus of Smyrna, Artapanus of Alexandria, and Aristobulus of Paneas, derived from the patristic authors Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, and

¹⁰ Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 176.

¹¹ Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Ingrid D. Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 9 praef. 7.

¹² Vitruvius 3.1.4.

¹³ Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 216.

¹⁴ Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles*, 2: 132.

Theodoret of Cyrrihus, who made an apologetic theme of the dependency of Greek philosophy upon the Bible.¹⁵ In their respective works, the church fathers converged on the same dictum of the Neo-Pythagorean Numenius of Apamea: “For what is Plato but Moses speaking in Attic Greek.”¹⁶

Yet the matter was not so nearly well settled as Gale presumed it to be. In *The Sacred and Profane History of the World Connected* (1728–37), which work of consistent history was consulted by Wood, Rev. Samuel Shuckford was at pains to refute Cambridge Hebraicist John Spencer’s “darling hypothesis” that the Tabernacle and Temple were erected in “imitation” of heathen places of worship. Spencer’s *De Legibus Hebraeorum Ritualibus et Earum Rationibus* (1685), Jan Assmann notes, was a massive scholarly edifice built upon the foundation of St. Stephen’s assertion, “Moses was well versed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.” The work of an innovative religious comparativist, Spencer’s tract enumerated the historical processes—*accommodatio*, *translatio*, *mutatio*, and *derivatio*—by which the ideas, images, and customs of one culture were received by another and their subsequent integration into the latter.¹⁷ Shuckford was not persuaded. He writes, “no learning can be sufficient to evince that the Jewish religion was derived from the customs and practices of the heathen nations.”¹⁸ Wood brought to this debate an unshakeable conviction that the “*Knowledge our Ancestors first had in Arts and Sciences, was given them immediately by God.*”¹⁹ Detecting the plagiarism of the heathens amounted to retracing the after-ages of this singular act of divine and direct communication.

The “Plan” for Wood’s investigation is revealed in the manuscript version of his treatise, deposited in the Bath Reference Library. There he lays out in unmistakable terms, subsequently muted in the published edition, the Four Kingdoms of the Book of Daniel. For Wood, Daniel’s prophetic account of world history betokened the inevitable translation of empire, and with it possession of originally divine knowledge. “[W]hat surer Basis

¹⁵ See, Daniel Ridig, *The Attic Moses: The Dependency Theme in Some Early Christian Writers* (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1995). M. J. Edwards, “Atticizing Moses? Numenius, The Fathers and the Jews,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990): 64–75.

¹⁶ Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 241–42.

¹⁷ Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 56. See also, Stephen D. Benin, “The ‘Cunning of God’ and Divine Accommodation,” *JHI* 45 (1984): 179–91.

¹⁸ Samuel Shuckford, *The Sacred and Profane History of the World Connected* (London: R. Knaplock, 1730), 2: 370–71.

¹⁹ Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 11.

can one set a Superstructure upon,” he writes, “than to find out when and where the Riches of the Earth began to Center, how it was carry’d from place to place, the Motives that governed the possession of it, and what was the design and End of Divine Providence from the *Fall* of Man to his *Redemption* in the Transfer of his Bounty’s to them?”²⁰ The Book of Daniel provided Wood with the *modus operandi* of kingdom-makers who recommended their names to posterity in enduring architectural form. It is this Plan, and not that of the Tabernacle and Temple, that is still in need of scholarly reconstruction. Wood was the first to own that his ambition was “far above my Reach . . . an Architect acting out of my immediate province.”²¹ *Habemus confitentem reum*. But so too, it seems, did it escape the reach of his readers.

THE WRITING UPON THE WALL

The stakes of Wood’s thesis are set to narrative in the episode of the writing upon the wall in the Book of Daniel—an ordeal of interpretation. Court stories set during the Babylonian Exile (586–538 BC), the political theology of the Book of Daniel chapters 1–6 marks out the separate sovereignty of temporal heathen kingdoms and the eternal kingdom of the God of heaven. An Israelite who becomes a valued advisor to the Temple-destroying Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel retains his faith in a God who establishes temporal kings and removes them in turn. Compiled during the Maccabean crisis (ca. 168–164 BC), the Book of Daniel was a source of prophetic hope for the Jewish people’s delivery from their then current oppressor, the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The Book of Daniel chapters 7–12 develops a contrasting eschatological perspective. Most resonantly, Daniel’s vision of “one like a son of man” provided the imagery for prophecies of the Second Coming in the New Testament.²² Yet the Book of Daniel chapter 2 presents an apparent exception to the internal division of the book.²³ Introducing the theme of the four kingdoms, Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream “Image,” a great statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, loins and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and feet of iron and

²⁰ John Wood, *The Origin of Building*, MS, Bath Reference Library, fol. 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 5.

²² Daniel 7:13.

²³ John J. Collins, “Current Issues in the Study of Daniel,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Boston: Brill, 2001), 1.

clay, which will be destroyed by a stone which strikes the feet.²⁴ Sir Isaac Newton writes that in this vision “the foundation of all *Daniel’s* Prophecies is laid.”²⁵ So too therein lies the plan of Wood’s treatise.

A tireless student of scripture and church history, Newton lent new intellectual force to the Protestant tradition of prophetic interpretation as he received it from the Cambridge biblical scholar and millenarian Joseph Mede. In his writing on the Book of Daniel, Newton explains that the Image “represents four great nations, which should reign over the earth successively, viz. the people of *Babylonia*, the *Persians*, the *Greeks*, and the *Romans*.”²⁶ Each in turn would handle the vestiges of original wisdom once embodied in the monuments of Jewish history. The actual translation of kingdom is seen to take place in the Book of Daniel chapter 5. In a display of arrogant impiety, Belshazzar, the last and the least considerable of the oppressive Babylonian kings descended from Nebuchadnezzar, makes a feast at which he orders wine to be served from gold and silver vessels plundered from the Jerusalem Temple. In that same hour, Daniel writes, came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote upon the wall of Belshazzar’s palace the mysteriously meant words: “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.” The king’s astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers were unable to make an interpretation thereof. Daniel was called. He rendered the following reading: “Mene: God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Tekel: Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres [singular form of pharsin, “to divide,” without the conjunctive u]: Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”²⁷ Later that same night, Belshazzar was slain and his kingdom translated to Darius the Mede. The revelation given to Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel chapter 2 is promptly fulfilled; kingdom’s head of gold is replaced by a chest and arms of silver.

Consistent with the sources on which the authors of the Book of Daniel likely drew, the medieval historiographic and political concept of *translatio imperii* originated with the histories of Herodotus and Ctesias in the fifth and early fourth century BC. The pattern of the four kingdoms appeared again in the Latin context in a passage from the otherwise unknown chronicler Aemilius Sura, preserved in a gloss inserted in Velleius Paterculus’s *The Roman History*, in which Rome’s *summa imperii* follows upon the empires

²⁴ Daniel 2:31–35.

²⁵ Sir Isaac Newton, *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John* (London: J. Darby and T. Browne, 1733), 25.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁷ Daniel 5:25–28.

of the Assyrians, Medes, Persians, and Macedonians.²⁸ This continuous tradition of universal history was renewed in the twelfth century by the bishop-historian Otto of Freising, who drew on the schema of Paulus Orosius, the disciple of Augustine of Hippo.²⁹ It was again articulated in the context of Protestant scholarship by the Strasbourg humanist Johannes Sleidan in his *De quatuor summis imperiis* (1556). In his first year at Cambridge, in 1661, Newton acquired a translated edition entitled *The Key of Historie* (1631).³⁰ For Sleidan, Daniel's prophecy was "a thing truly worthy to be committed to memory, because in a few words it comprises the history of all ages, until the end of the world."³¹ The history of universal monarchy did not end with Rome, only that of its successive temporal instances.

The notion of the four kingdoms, "said to be fatal," appeared in academic dress in Degory Wheare's *The Method and Order of Reading both Civil and Ecclesiastical Histories* (1698). The first Camden Praelector of ancient history at Oxford, Wheare paid particular attention to judging which authorities could be, in Anthony Grafton's words, safely, prudently, and critically followed.³² Wheare adopts Sura's schema of history, for which he finds confirmation in the writings of Arrian of Nicomedia, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and even the poet Claudian, to whom the subjugation of Greek to Rome "verify'd Sibylla's Words."³³ The Book of Daniel represented a separate and unassailable source of textual authority. Following Varro, Wheare divides written history into three intervals: the obscure, the mythic or fabulous, and the historic. While the Greeks historians were prone to fable and fiction—a point Wood took pains to emphasize—Christians possessed a "certain History of all this *Fabulous Interval* . . . written by *Moses*, and the *Prophets*, those Pen-men of the *Holy Ghost*." In order for the "veracity" of profane accounts of empires and kingdoms to be accepted, they first needed to pass the test of comparison.³⁴

²⁸ Arnaldo Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 40–41.

²⁹ Charles Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955 [1927]), 238.

³⁰ Richard S. Westfall, *Never at Rest: A Biography of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 310, n. 83.

³¹ John Sleidan, *The Key of Historie; or, A Most Methodical Abridgment of the Foure Chiefe Monarches, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome* (London: William Sheares, 1631 [2nd edit.]), 19.

³² Anthony Grafton, *What Was History: The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 207.

³³ Degory Wheare, *The Method and Order of Reading both Civil and Ecclesiastical Histories, in which the most excellent historians are reduced into the order in which they are successively to be read* (London: T. H., 1710), 27.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

Wood stakes his Hypothesis on just such a test. Over the space of three pages in his treatise, he runs parallel columns of text in which appear corresponding passages from Moses's and Vitruvius's version of the origin, progress, and perfection of building. To Wood, the comparison proved Vitruvius's account was consistent with the "Writings of Moses, and the succeeding Pen-men of the HOLY SCRIPTURES."³⁵ But in the parallel there is a telling difference. These pen-men were given knowledge "*immediately by God.*" By contrast, Vitruvius falsified the origin of his writings, "from whatever Authors collected." Wood's work of detection, pursued through "4 different Periods of Time," was intended to illuminate the long history of this imposture. Was Vitruvius himself a plagiarist? This remains to be seen.

ON THE QUALIFICATIONS OF MOSES

Based in a literal reading of the Mosaic account, Wood's treatise inevitably involved him in the question of the transmission and inheritance, in short the translation of primordial wisdom. Wood was certain of his sources. "In this *Temple*, GOD Himself was the Historiographer of the most beautiful and explicit Kind of History the World ever produced."³⁶ Yet such certainty was anything but self-evident. Wood reveals as much with his calm but desperate reference to the "great and learned Sir *Isaac Newton*," in the all-important matter of the relative antiquity of Jewish and Egyptian learning. In his *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* (1728), Newton sought to expose the "vanity" of the Egyptians, whose record keepers extended their monarchy "some thousands of years older than the world."³⁷ To "rectify" their accounts, Newton compared the "affairs of *Egypt* with the synchronizing affairs of the *Greeks* and *Hebrews*."³⁸ Newton's master-stroke of synchronization was to identify the Herodotean Pharaoh Sesostrius with the biblical king Shishak. This was the same Shishak who invaded Judea in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam (the Son of Solomon), and as Wood writes, "took away all the Riches of Solomon's Temple."³⁹ With his captives, Shishak built temples "in such a correct Manner, that, by those

³⁵ Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

³⁷ Isaac Newton, *The Chronology of Antient Kingdoms Amended* (Dublin: George Risk, 1728), 191.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁹ Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 139.

Works, Arts and Sciences were allowed, in After-ages, to have had their Origin in that Country.”⁴⁰ For Wood, to understand the origin of building was to uncover what had been “allowed in after-ages.” His was an extended historical reflection on the irremediable posterity of that which was once immediately communicated.

It was not the model of architecture alone, Wood alleges, that the Egyptians had from the Jews. According to Diodorus of Sicily, Wood writes, when Osiris ascended the throne of Egypt, he chose a sacred scribe to whom he committed all his secrets, and was entirely governed by his advice. This scribe was the first to teach the Greeks eloquence, and for that reason was called by them Hermes, a speaker or interpreter.⁴¹ Who was this Hermes, and what was his relationship to the sage legislator, Moses? The answer to this question depended as much on what scholars, critics, and exegetes read as on how they read it. One notable example is the use to which Wood put Richard Cumberland’s 1720 translation of Sanchuniathon of Beirut’s *Phoenician History*. The first thing to note is Cumberland’s own ready acceptance of the famous fragment of the proto-legendary Sanchuniathon, as translated into Greek by Herennius Philo of Byblos (Hardianic period), and preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea, the so-called Father of Church History, in his *Preparation for the Gospel*.

Squier Payne, who saw to the posthumous publication of Cumberland’s edition, writes in its Preface, “The Humour which prevail’d with several learned Men to reject Sanchoniatho as counterfeit, because they knew not what to make of him, his Lordship always blam’d. Philo Byblius, Porphyry, and Eusebius, who were better able to judge than any Moderns, never call in question his being genuine.”⁴² There was no simple consensus on what to make of this rare source of history, which incorporated testimony said to date to a time prior to the Trojan War, and “roughly speaking” approaching that of Moses.⁴³

For Cumberland, what recommended Sanchuniathon’s work was that it survived just so many critical ordeals, endorsed even by that ablest of ancient literary detectives, Porphyry, who authored the opinion that the Book of Daniel was a forgery. The design of Cumberland’s work was to show the “base birth of Idolatry, from the dull atheistical principles deliv-

⁴⁰ Ibid., 140.

⁴¹ Ibid., 139.

⁴² Richard Cumberland, *Sanchoniatho’s Phoenician History, translated from the first book of Eusebius De Praeparatione Evangelica* (London: W.B. for R. Wilkin, 1720), xxii.

⁴³ Albert Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 41.

er'd in *Thoth's* Cosmogony, complicated with the ambition of men great in their times, who were deify'd after their deaths."⁴⁴ Yet precisely what appealed to Cumberland in Sanchuniathon, its Euhemeristic method of interpretation, revealed it to be an exemplary near Eastern-styled forgery of the Hellenistic period.⁴⁵ Philo's sincere fabrications were meant to vindicate the profound antiquity of Phoenician wisdom; and in stating that Sanchuniathon's primary source was Taaautos (Thoth), he attempted nothing less than to establish the dependence of Mosaic cosmogony on Phoenician sources.

For Wood, Newton's chronology left no doubt as to what conclusion must be drawn. The knowledge of Thoth—the use of signs and letters—had been “stole[n] from other Nations, and published by the *Egyptian* Priests, as the Inventions of one of their own Country.”⁴⁶ However, there remained much room to doubt. Newton's *Chronology* was put to polemical use in the deistic controversies of the 1730s, which tested the stamina of even the most seasoned controversialists. This crisis of scriptural orthodoxy comprises a discrete discourse on the origin, translation, and in the case of its immediate instigator, Matthew Tindal, the “republication” of an ever-present “source of truth.” In his *Christianity as Old as Creation* (1730), Tindal argued that natural religion differed from revealed religion only in the “Manner of its being communicated.”⁴⁷ Tindal's scorn of “republication” is best articulated in his definition of the Law of Nature, taken from Pierre Charron's *Of Wisdom*: “The two Tables of *Moses* . . . are nothing but Copies and Transcripts produc'd in open Court, and published from the *Original*, which thou keepest close within thee.”⁴⁸

Daniel Waterland, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, an ardent defender of Trinitarian orthodoxy who had fought back Samuel Clarke's Newtonian apologetic, answered Tindal with his *Scripture Vindicated* (1730). His own design was “to rescue the Word of God from misrepresentation and censure, from the reproaches and blasphemies of foolish men.”⁴⁹ Evidently, to (re) publish knowledge is to make it available to such treatment. In his anonymous *A Letter to Dr. Waterland* (1731), Conyers

⁴⁴ Cumberland, *Sanchoniatho's Phoenician History*, 488.

⁴⁵ Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 95.

⁴⁶ Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 139.

⁴⁷ Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as Creation; or, the Gospel, a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (London, 1730), 1: 3.

⁴⁸ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as Creation*, 1: 62.

⁴⁹ [Daniel Waterland], *Scripture Vindicated; In Answer to a Book Intituled, Christianity as Old as the Creation* (London: W. Innys, 1730), 1: 3.

Middleton responded that Waterland's necessarily failing attempt to defend the literal truth of revelation ran the "risk" of exposing "*Religion to too great a hazard*."⁵⁰ Middleton instead addressed "*the cause of Religion*," which strategy itself ran the risk of heterodoxy.⁵¹ Even if Christianity were admitted to be an imposture, it would still be immoral to overthrow it, "as 'tis now *established by Law, derived from our Ancestors*, confirmed by the belief and practice of so *many ages*."⁵² Translation had done its work. Worthy precepts had been discovered and/or revealed, published and republished, received and retranslated, to the point of being inevitably true. If not written in stone, then they were woven into the fabric of Christian society. The question of how they were written in stone, the form of historiography with which Wood was concerned, emerges in the reply to Middleton written by Zachary Pearce, bishop of Rochester.

Coming to Waterland's defense, Pearce anonymously published *A Reply to the Letter to Dr. Waterland, Setting Forth the many Falshoods both in the Quotations and the Historical facts, by which the Letter-Writer endeavours to weaken the authority of Moses* (1732). An acquaintance of Newton's, Pearce was among those who encouraged Newton to publish his long-labored-over chronology, especially after the appearance, in France, of Nicolas Fréret's pirated version.⁵³ Pearce offered a preview of how he planned to use this piece of "artillery" against Middleton in the published version of the sermon he preached on October 20, 1726, upon the consecration of the new parish church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster. In an "Essay upon the Origin and Progress of Temples," Pearce notes that having consulted sacred and profane writers, he found "the invention of Temples was ascrib'd by the Ancients to near twenty different Persons."⁵⁴ He judged that it was improbable that the temples of the Greeks and Romans were "brought to their perfection as soon as they were thought of." It seemed far more likely that "the Patterns of them, tho' perhaps with some Variations or Improvements, were carried from one Country to another at several Times, by those whom history has reported to have been the Inventors of them."⁵⁵ Pearce writes of the temple of Belus at Babylon and that of

⁵⁰ [Conyers Middleton], *A Letter to Dr. Waterland; Containing some Remarks on his Vindication of Scripture* (London: J. Peele, 1731), 66.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 51–52.

⁵³ [Nicolas Fréret], *Abregé de la Chronologie de M. le chevalier Isaac Newton, fait par lui-même, & traduit sur le Manuscrit Anglois* (Paris: Guillaume Cavelier, 1725).

⁵⁴ Zachary Pearce, *A Sermon Preached at the New Parish Church of St. Martin in the Fields, Westminster, Oct. 20, 1726* (London: S. Harding, 1727), 15.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

Vulcan at Memphis, “it is difficult to conceive them to be so antient as is pretended; and whoever has well considered the Epitome of Chronology . . . under the Name of Sir *Isaac Newton*, will find enough therein to satisfie him, that not one of all those Temples, which boasted so much of their Antiquity, seem to have been built till after *Solomon’s*.”⁵⁶

In his polemic with Middleton, Pearce contended with the use and misuse of an authority whose credit, to quote the Cambridge Hebraicist John Lightfoot, “is commonly reputed above Talmudicall.”⁵⁷ This was the historian Flavius Josephus (Joseph ben Mattathias). Josephus begins his *Antiquity of the Jews* with the remark, here cited from Whiston’s 1737 translation, “those who undertake to write histories, do not, I perceive, take that trouble on one and the same account, but for many reasons, and those such as are very different one from another.”⁵⁸ The same holds true for readers of history. Pearce charges Middleton with contriving, by a “Master-piece of Quotation,” to show that Josephus, in his *Against Apion*, held that the “Ægyptians are all circumcised and abstain from swine’s flesh.” It was Middleton’s unmovable conviction that the Jewish people learned their sacred rites and dietary laws from the Egyptians. Such a declaration as this from “so learned a Jew,” writes Middleton of Josephus, “in defending the excellency and pre-eminence of his own Religion . . . might teach us to entertain moderate and qualified sentiments concerning the *divine origin* of the *Jewish religion*, as well as the *divine inspiration* of its *Founder, Moses*.”⁵⁹ No sooner had Middleton denied Moses’ role in initiating these sacred practices, than he showed that it was in Egypt where “wisdom and learning” first arose. Pythagoras himself, Middleton offers, brought all his knowledge thence, and went so far as to be circumcised amongst the Egyptians, “on purpose to procure a more *intimate admission into their mysteries*.”⁶⁰ This was a high price to pay for insight.

Pearce first seeks to demonstrate the falsehood of Middleton’s claims on grammatical grounds. He set his translation of Josephus and Middleton’s in parallel columns of text, with the Greek original running along the bottom of the page.⁶¹ But this exercise proved indecisive. Errors in the tex-

⁵⁶ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁷ John Lightfoot, *The Temple, Especially as it Stood in the Dayes of Our Saviour* (London: R.C. for Andrew Crook, 1650), n.p.

⁵⁸ *The Works of Flavius Josephus, the Learned and Authentic Jewish Historian*, trans. William Whiston (London: J. Richardson, 1822), 1: 5.

⁵⁹ Middleton, *A Letter to Dr. Waterland*, 29.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁶¹ Zachary Pearce, *A Reply to the Letter to Dr. Waterland, setting forth the many falsehoods both in the Questions and the Historical Facts, by which the Letter-Writer endeavours to weaken the Authority of Moses* (London: J. Watts, 1732 [2nd ed.]), 16–17.

tual translation are inevitable; they are reasonably to be expected. Pearce shifts his line of attack to the underlying chronological fallacy by which Middleton mistranslated the source of ancient knowledge: from the Egyptians to the Jews. Based on the writings of Athanasius Kircher, Middleton held that “*Hieroglyphics or sacred Characters*” were invented and used by the Egyptians before Moses’s time. “But all this is still upon the Old Scheme,” Pearce responds. For had not Newton demonstrated that Thoth was a contemporary of Sesostrius, who was the same Sheshak who plundered the Temple of Solomon. “Upon the whole then of this Article,” Pearce concludes, “it appears that ‘till you have confuted this new System of Chronology, you cannot Fairly and Justly assert, that *Egypt* was a *great and flourishing Kingdom, a learned and polite Nation* in Moses’s time.”⁶²

Middleton had his final say in his *Remarks on Some Observations, Addressed to the Author of the Letter to Dr. Waterland. By the Author of the Letter* (1733), its title a tatting of cavil and feigned conciliation. In the pamphlet, Middleton proudly “confessed” to that of which he most dangerously stood accused.⁶³ Against his valorization of Egyptian antiquity, Newton’s chronological “proofs” and “demonstrations” were to no avail. Middleton asks, “has [Newton] brought to light any old Authors, which for Ages past had lain buried in Oblivion; or any Monuments of Antiquity unknown before to the Curious? Or has he done in the learned, what he did in the natural World; invented a *new Telescope*, to pry into remote and dark Antiquity with more Accuracy than had been practicable before?”⁶⁴ With these words, Middleton can in fact be seen to have finally convicted himself—of the charge of plagiarism. Middleton’s extra-theological troubles began somewhat later, with the publication of Joseph Warton’s *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (1782). Warton pauses in his lavish praise of “An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot” to note that the inspiration for Sporus in Pope’s *Dunciad*—“Who breaks a Butterfly upon a Wheel”—was the same John, Lord Hervey to whom Middleton dedicated his *The History of the Life of M. Tullius Cicero* (1741).⁶⁵ Thus prompted, Warton notes that Middleton’s book had procured him “a great reputation, and a

⁶² Ibid., 48.

⁶³ On Middleton’s pro-Egyptian stance, see Paolo Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time: The History of the Earth & the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 129–31.

⁶⁴ [Conyers Middleton], *A Defense of the Letter to Dr. Waterland; Against the False and Frivolous Cavils of The Author of the Reply* (London: J. Peele, 1732), 69.

⁶⁵ Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (London: J. Dodsley, 1782), 2: 323.

great sum of money.” But at that, “he is much indebted, without acknowledging it, to a curious book little known.”⁶⁶

Warton identified this little-known book as the Scottish classicist William Bellenden’s (Bellendenus) *De Tribus Luminibus Romanorum* (1634). In approved humanist fashion, Bellendenus’s work was a continuous fabric of chosen passages from Cicero relating the history of Rome from its origin. Plunging his critical dagger, Warton notes that worse than Middleton’s plucking poetical flowers were his translations of Cicero’s epistles. “The style of Middleton,” writes Warton, “which is commonly esteemed very pure, is blemished with many *vulgar* and *cant* terms.”⁶⁷ The matter might have rested there had not Warton’s “intimations” excited the resentment of the classical scholar and litterateur Samuel Parr. While working with his friend Henry Homer, a fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, on a new edition of Bellendenus’s *De Statu, Libri Tres* (1789), Parr took great pains to examine “how far the charge of plagiarism from the work, urged against Dr. Middleton, was well founded.”⁶⁸ His examination complete, Parr did not withhold his judgment. He wished to secure Middleton’s “posthumous reputation” by seeing his name added to the list of plagiaries that appeared at the end of Leipzig philosopher Jacob Thomasius’s *Dissertatio philosophica de plagio literario* (1692).⁶⁹

Was Moses divinely inspired? Was his account original? For his part, Wood “suppos[ed] Sir Isaac Newton’s *Chronology* to be right.” Wood states his case most directly in spelling out “The Qualifications of Moses.” Contrary to Spencer, Wood interprets St. Stephen’s claim, “Moses was well versed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” to mean that Moses “knew all their Magick, and as such exploded it.” Moses was an exposé (exploder) of pretended mysteries. His “superior knowledge” in working miracles led the Pharaoh’s magicians to concede, “what *Moses* had done was by THE FINGER OF GOD.”⁷⁰ Wood’s reading is not an immediately obvious one. Pearce was of a similar view that St. Stephen’s testimony is not “Proof of anything, but that [Moses] spake according to the then receiv’d Tradition of the *Jews*.”⁷¹ To listen to Pearce, Middleton mockingly replied, had St.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 2: 324.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 2: 324.

⁶⁸ [Samuel Parr], *Remarks on the Statement of Dr. Charles Combe. By an Occasional Writer in the British Critic* (London: J. Bell, 1795), 42.

⁶⁹ Beloe, *Free Translation*, 9. On Thomasius’s view of plagiarism, see Martin Mulsow, “Practices of Unmasking: Polyhistor, Correspondence, and the Birth of Dictionaries of Pseudonymity in Seventeenth-Century Germany,” *JHI* 67 (2006): 230.

⁷⁰ Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 91.

⁷¹ Pearce, *A Reply to the Letter to Dr. Waterland*, 49.

Stephen “lived to see Sir *Isaac Newton’s Demonstrations and Discoveries*, he must have been of another Mind.”⁷² Pearce brings the argument back to Josephus, who writes that “the *Egyptians* had, long before the time of *Josephus* or St. *Stephen*, so boasted of the Antiquity of Arts and Sciences among them, that it was then the prevailing Notion, that they had been Eminent for *Wisdom* even before the Age in which *Moses* lived.”⁷³ This, of course, was precisely the notion Wood intended to dispute.

THE JEWS’ FUTURE TEMPLE

Newton included a plan of the Temple of Solomon in *The Chronology*, blandly offering that since the monument was destroyed by the Babylonians, it “may not be thought amiss.”⁷⁴ In this setting, the historical fate of the Temple, set against the succession of empires, served not only to calculate the onset of the millennium, but also as proof of the Temple’s architectural originality. With these related speculations, Newton was hardly alone in an exegetical wilderness. In recalling the Christmas 1725 visit he had made to Newton, Stukeley writes of their shared conviction that the Temple was “older than any other of the great temples mention’d in history; and was indeed the original model which they followed.”⁷⁵ Yet Newton’s Temple archaeology must be regarded as a particular form of messianic history. As William Whiston’s comments reveal, it was a history of that which was yet to come:

As for Sir I.N.’s Description of *Solomon’s Temple*; [I think he should call it *Ezekiel’s Temple*; for he takes it principally from *Ezekiel*, who describes neither *Solomon’s*, nor *Zorebabels*, nor *Herod’s*, but the Jews *future Temple*] I reserve its examination till I publish my own Plan of all those Temples.⁷⁶

The felt urgency of the millennium impelled Whiston, in 1726, to undertake a lecture tour of London, Bristol, Bath, and Tunbridge Wells, in which he

⁷² Middleton, *A Defense of the Letter*, 140.

⁷³ Pearce, *A Reply to the Letter to Dr. Waterland*, 49.

⁷⁴ Newton, *Chronology*, 333.

⁷⁵ William Stukeley, *Memoirs of Sir Isaac Newton’s Life* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1936), 17–18.

⁷⁶ William Whiston, *A Collection of Authentick Records Belonging to the Old and New Testament* (London: Printed for the Author, 1727–28), 1070.

presented models he had had made of the Temple and Tabernacle. Whether Wood attended Whiston's lecture is not known, though it is likely he had seen *A Description of the Tabernacle of Moses and of the Temple at Jerusalem* (1731), the plan Whiston had promised to publish.

There can be no mistaking, in the specific terms of Wood's allegations, a concern with prophecy, the literal fulfillment of which Whiston made a campaign of demonstrating. "This I take to be my peculiar Business at present," Whiston writes of his lecture tour, "since I have, I think, plainly discovered, that it will not be many Years before the Messiah will come for the Restoration of the *Jews*, and the first Resurrection, when the last of these Temples, the Temple of *Ezekiel*, will be built upon *Mount Sion*, as the three former had been built upon *Mount Moriah*."⁷⁷ Whiston pursued a public debate with the deist Anthony Collins over the validity of scriptural prophecy. In his *The Literal Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies*, Whiston filled page after page of prophetic predictions listed beside their historic completions or conjectured fulfillment.⁷⁸ For Whiston, the purpose of interpreting prophecy was "for effecting a recovery and re-establishment of the long-lost truth, and setting up a kingdom wherein dwells righteousness."⁷⁹ It was a project of recovery akin to Wood's desire to restore the original "Lustre" of sacred Jewish architecture, which was understood as an architectural foretaste of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Whiston's reading of prophecy was not limited to the books of the Old Testament, nor was the coming of the millennium most clearly expressed in them. "Many were convinced that it was said in the ancient writings of the priests that at that very time the East would grow strong and men coming from Judea would come to power," Whiston writes of the messianic expectations expressed by Virgil in the fourth *Eclogue*. Whiston held it highly improbable that heathens would accept the coming of a new king from "the Jewish Prophecies, which they despis'd, rather than from the Sibylline Oracles, which they admir'd."⁸⁰ It is this prophetic source, the Sibylline Oracles, that proves central to Wood's argument. Wood alleges that it was while Vitruvius was composing his books on architecture that Augustus, newly become Pontifex Maximus, ordered the burning of over two-thousand "Prophetic books." Not only had Vitruvius incorporated Jewish wis-

⁷⁷ Whiston, *Memoirs*, 334.

⁷⁸ Stephen Snobelen, "The Argument over Prophecy: An Eighteenth-Century Debate between William Whiston and Anthony Collins," *Lumen* 15 (1996): 205.

⁷⁹ Newton, *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel*, 251–52.

⁸⁰ Whiston, *A Vindication of the Sibylline Oracles* (London: J. Roberts, 1715), 67.

dom into his *Ten Books on Architecture*, Wood continues, but by this “very remarkable incident,” the burning of “information” produced for the “Benefit of Posterity,” his patron Augustus had destroyed the evidence.⁸¹ “Can there be any doubt,” Wood concludes, “but that *Vitruvius* attributed to the *Grecians* whatever was found recorded, concerning *Architecture*, in the *Jewish History*?”⁸² The answer to Wood’s question depends on what Wood imagined to have been contained in those books committed to an ashen posterity.

The origin and nature of the *Sibylline Oracles* proved as difficult a question for ancient critics as it has for their modern counterparts. According to Marcus Terentius Varro, the original collection of oracles, jealously guarded in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, was delivered by the Sibyl of Cumae. These vaticinations she sold to Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (sixth century BC), but only after she herself had committed a number of them to the flames when her exorbitant price was not at first met. When the original Capitoline collection was destroyed by fire in 83 BC, the Senate ordered them to be replaced. This was done, writes Dionysius of Halicarnassus, by “carrying together oracles from many places.”⁸³ As with Wood’s concern for sacred knowledge being “carry’d from place to place,” this campaign was the source of all manner of literary intrigue. The restoration of the Sibylline books led not only to a rapid appreciation in the perceived value of those attributed to the Cumaean Sibyl, but also a ready supply of forgeries to meet demand. Dionysius relates how “those which are now extant have been scraped together from many places, some from the cities of Italy, others from Erythrae in Asia . . . and others were brought from other cities, transcribed by private persons. Some of these are found to be interpolations among the genuine Sibylline oracles, being recognized as such by means of the so-called acrostic.”⁸⁴ It is owing to these interpolations and promiscuous transcriptions that the meaning and intention of the extant oracles becomes very unclear. But it was also by them that they would eventually be used to convey a Christian message.

Confronting a body of critical opinion two millennia in the making, Whiston dedicated his *A Vindication of the Sibylline Oracles* (1715) to the brilliant classical philologist Richard Bentley, who was otherwise Middle-

⁸¹ John Wood, *A Dissertation Upon the Orders of Columns, and their Appendages; the whole constituting the orders of architecture* (London: James Bettenham, 1750), 21–22.

⁸² Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 177.

⁸³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities*, trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939), 4.62.6.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.62.6.

ton's sworn nemesis. Bentley made his reputation with his *Epistola ad Joannem Millium* (1691), in which he showed that the supposedly classical verses quoted by ancient Jewish writers which criticized idolatry could not be the genuine work of Sophocles.⁸⁵ In that same work, he ridiculed "men of elegant judgment who revere the oracles commonly ascribed to the Sibyl as the real effusions of that prophetic old lady, Noah's daughter."⁸⁶ For Bentley, it was precisely the clarity of the messianic themes expressed in the *Oracles* that made them appear suspicious. In response, Whiston considered it entirely reasonable that while God had given positive laws only to the Jews, He supported worship "among the heathens also, all along by these oracles till the light of the Christian revelation was spread over the world."⁸⁷ Whiston was not alone in crediting the *Sibylline Oracles* as authentic prophecy. In *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations* (1715–17), a work cited by Wood, Humphrey Prideaux developed a keen anthropological interpretation of the matter. Recognizing the great esteem in which the oracles were held by heathens, Prideaux suggests that Christian "Sibyllists" appealed to them as proof of Christian prophecy. Their zealotry led them to interpolate many additions, "thus adulterating the oracles truly received as *Sibylline* with those of their own invention." But Prideaux parted company with critics who, for the sake of "many spurious particulars," rejected the whole. Thus he concludes, "Celsus, the greatest enemy that Christianity had among the ancients, chargeth the imposture no farther than upon the interpolations, neither will I."⁸⁸

In their defense of the *Sibylline Oracles*, Whiston and Prideaux focus on the same related passage from Suetonius and Tacitus that speaks of the climate of messianic anticipation preceding the Jewish wars. Prideaux depicts a scenario in which the expectation that the prophecies of Daniel were to be speedily accomplished became diffused to all the Jews of the Diaspora, who spoke of it frequently with their heathen neighbors. Being "rumoured about" in this way, the expectations of a new king who would arise out of the East "at length insensibly grew into reputation, and were received among them as if they had been prophecies from their own oracles; and they most of them became engrafted among the oracles of the Sibyls, as if

⁸⁵ Grafton, *Forgers and Critics*, 73.

⁸⁶ Richard Bentley, *Epistola ad Joannem Millium*, ed. G. P. Goold (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962 [1691]), 5.

⁸⁷ Whiston, *A Vindication*, 82.

⁸⁸ Humphrey Prideaux, *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations* (London: R. Knaplock, 1718), 2: 494.

they had come from them.”⁸⁹ The ready acceptance of the *Sibylline Oracles* by the Christian Fathers and Apologists, which lent weight to the claims of their modern vindicators, was motivated by these messianic expectations. In the oracles, the “Shadows, Patterns, and Figures of Heavenly Things,”⁹⁰ which for Wood were written emblematically in the plan and parts of the temple, were expressed in a vatic medium of foreign inspiration. Yet as Justin Martyr writes, “Whatever things were rightly said among all men, are the property of us Christians.”⁹¹ The problem addressed by Wood’s Hypothesis, then, was to determine what properly belonged to whom.

RENDERING UNTO CÆSAR

Whiston writes in his comments upon the Book of Daniel, “Mr. *Mede* justly calls the Vision of the Image of Four Metals, and that Parallel one of the four Beasts, as understood of the *Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian*, and *Roman* Monarchies to be the A. B. C. of Scripture Prophecies, or the plainest Thing in the World.”⁹² Wood’s own purpose was to show how plainly this prophecy was reflected in the history of architecture. Having limned the elements, proportions, and rituals of the Temple at each stage in the translation of empire, Wood inserts a synopsis of the Daniel prophecy. Of the rise of Greek civilization, he writes, “Such was the general State of *Architecture*, in *Asia*, in the Time of the *Persian* Empire; but all this Magnificence was to have its Period, as it had in other Countries, which was foretold, long before it happened, by the Prophet *Daniel*.”⁹³ In Wood’s account, God “*transmitted the Power and Riches*” once rightfully belonging to the Jews from one empire to the next, and last of all to the Romans; and it was during their empire that the awaited sign of a new dispensation appeared. The Romans,

not long enjoyed [power and riches], before the PROPHET described by *Moses* arose: Then the *Vail* in the *Jewish Temple* was Rent, the Seat of GOD was made accessible to all Mankind, and

⁸⁹ Ibid., 2: 493.

⁹⁰ Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 75.

⁹¹ Just. 2 Apol. 13.4, cited in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of Catholic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 62.

⁹² William Whiston, “Remarks on Sir Isaac Newton’s Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel,” in *Six Dissertations* (London: Printed for John Whiston, 1734), 285.

⁹³ Wood, *The Origin of Building*, 169.

the Bounties he had, in their Turns, instructed so many potent Princes with, were divided into many Branches, and given to as many Kings, alluded to by the Horns of the fourth Beast mentioned in *Daniel's* Vision.⁹⁴

The rending of the veil marks the end of the dubious processes by which sacred knowledge was carried from place to place by builders of empire. With the rending of the veil, Wood writes, “a *New and Everlasting Covenant* immediately took place, and all Mankind became Partakers of it, by the Intercession of that MEDIATOR, who was promised at the Time of the *Fall*, who was always expected, often mistook, and as often represented by Impostures, the main Pillars and Supporters of Paganism, in the several Ages of the World.”⁹⁵ The perfection of sacred Jewish architecture belonged once, originally, and ever after to the kingdom of God. Heathen architects had adopted it to serve their own idols. In time, they not only claimed these structures to be of their own invention, but also “traduced the *Jews*.” Having exposed this traduction, Wood expresses satisfaction that he had proved his hypothesis: “Rendering unto Cæsar, the things which are Cæsars, and unto God, the things which are Gods.”

A FAIR AND CANDID HEARING

The charges Wood leveled against Vitruvius, denying him paternity of architecture, make for good courtroom drama. But his reliance on Danieline prophecy does not in itself provide sufficient “evidence” to convince those who “are inclined to admit of Facts, after a fair and candid hearing.”⁹⁶ A quick cross-examination is in order. By the time the second Capitoline collection was made there was a very wide commerce in counterfeit oracles attributed to Babylonian, Persian, Egyptian, and even Hebrew sibyls.⁹⁷ According to Suetonius’s account, in lines not cited by Wood, Augustus culled only those books the authorship of which was either “unknown or of no authority,” and spared the Sibylline ones only after he had made a “Choice out of them.”⁹⁸ Augustus’s destruction was perhaps less a furtive ruse than

⁹⁴ Ibid., 235.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 180.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 231.

⁹⁷ John J. Collins, *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 83.

⁹⁸ C. Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, trans. Mr. Hughes (London: Theodore Sanders, 1726), 2.31.

a necessary act of critical rejection. It is also necessary to consider Vitruvius's own comments on plagiarism, in which he not only lavishes praise on the ancients for transmitting their ideas to posterity but also emphasizes the importance of giving credit to past authors.⁹⁹ Vitruvius writes, "those who do not rely on their own ideas in their writings, but rather, with envious character, do violence to other men's work and glory in it, these people are not only to be criticized, but, because they have lived impiously, should even be prosecuted as criminals."¹⁰⁰

For his part, Wood was not consistent in following the critical procedure he articulated in the manuscript version of his treatise. "Because I would not have it suspected that I would take hold of any particular Work or the Writings of any particular Person to shew that the heathen Structures were copyed from the sacred Edifices of the Jews," he writes, Wood planned to demonstrate cases of plagiarism by reference to two independent authorities.¹⁰¹ Though the question remained: where were these corroborative sources to be found?

The manuscript version of his treatise presents a more nuanced and realistic view of the mistranslation of architectural theory than what ultimately appeared in *The Origin of Building*. Wood not only admits the soundness of Vitruvius's views, but also grants their second-hand claim to originality:

The writers since Vitruvius found so little to say new on the Subject of Building that their works are all a Repetition of his therefore heading in their paths I will follow him in the description of the Orders both in respect of their Antiquity and the Rules on which the Proportions were found holding that if there were more genuine accounts in the numerous volumes of antient history they would long before have been brought to light.¹⁰²

Vitruvius's method of composition bears a compelling analogy to the comments made by the sixth-century AD editor of the *Sibylline Oracles*. The editor's stated purpose was to set forth all those prophecies "which are found scattered and confusedly read and recognized, in one continuous and

⁹⁹ Pamela O. Long, *Openness, Secrecy, Authorship: Technical Arts and the Culture of Knowledge from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 32.

¹⁰⁰ Vitruvius 7 praef. 3.

¹⁰¹ John Wood, *The Origin of Building*, MS, Sir John Soane's Museum London, fol. 81.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, fol. 59.

connected book.”¹⁰³ Like the Vitruvian corpus, in the coherent arrangement of which resides Vitruvius’s own claim to originality, the *Sibylline Oracles* is an assembly of writings of disparate origin and intention.

It is Vitruvius’s borrowing from the Greeks, prone as they were to fable and fiction, and not plagiarism, that for Wood compromised the virtue of architectural history. Through “repetition,” the Vitruvian canon attained the status of gospel. Yet Wood remained hopeful that the original “Lustre” of sacred Jewish architecture would be restored—if only in a heavenly Jerusalem.

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¹⁰³ Cited in Collins, *Seers, Sibyls and Sages*, 185. Indra Kagis McEwen, *Vitruvius: Writing the Body of Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 7.