

1989

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Recommended Citation

(1989) "Notes and Documents: Parody in the Chaldee Manuscript; Scott, Lockhart and an unpublished letter," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 24: Iss. 1.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol24/iss1/19>

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Notes and Documents



The Parodic Background of "The Chaldee Manuscript"

When "The Chaldee Manuscript," composed by James Hogg, John Wilson and John Gibson Lockhart, appeared anonymously in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* of October 1817, it amused some readers while shocking so many others that it was omitted from all copies after the two hundredth. In the November number, a replacement of the excised pages was promised. John Murray, an investor in *Blackwood's*, remarked that the clamor was "almost universal"; pamphleteers came to the defense of the pilloried writers, and John Graham Dalyell thought a duel was warranted—at the least a libel suit. Blackwood was out of pocket over this "indecent, irreverent, and blasphemous application of Scriptural language,"¹ and Walter Scott was not pleased that John Gibson Lockhart's sting of the Scorpion was exposed in this ill-advised jeu d'esprit. Tempers cooled gradually and sixty years later Margaret Oliphant could regard the

¹Margaret Oliphant, *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and His Sons*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh and London, 1897), I, 131.

whole thing as a "wild, witty...harmless joke" (I, 128, 130). But as late as 1932 John Buchan thought the verbal caper a "clumsy Biblical parody," a scarcely justified attack on "contemporary figures in a mood of ferocious banter."²

One might easily be tempted to trace this pretended translation from an ancient Chaldee manuscript to English echoes of the Bible. My friend, Paul Korshin, reminds me of such reverberations as appeared from 1681 to 1794 in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, Swifts' *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*, Pope's *The Dunciad*, and Blake's *The Book of Urizen*. But the "Manuscript" strikes me rather as the culmination of a little-known sub-species of satire which surfaced in the eighteenth century. Early examples would be a pamphlet of 1713 entitled *Champion of Rebellion* and another of 1736, *A New Ballad*, which serves as breathless journalistic stopgap while promising "another Gazette" about "the Land of Egypt" and "the Children of Israel." Thus the Jacobite menace is anticipated on the eve of Hanoverian takeover.

Biblical parallels are cautiously pursued by Robert Dodsley in his 58-page venture, *The Chronicle of the Kings of England Written in the Manner of the Ancient Jewish Historians* by Nathan Ben Saddi (Pseud; London, 1740). The style may be suggested by a passage, "And it shall come to pass when thou readest of the foolish Kings that have ruled over the Land, then shalt thy soul be troubled" (p. 7). The coverage ends with Elizabeth because later events as "too near our own Times" (p. 57) would be too difficult to treat impartially in a party-inflamed country. Dodsley died in 1764, and the anonymous continuator of the third "American" edition ventured to carry on to the reign of George III (Litchfield, 1791). He even indulged in naive simplicity, "Now it came to pass," and descended to jocularly, "And *Jamie* thought himself a bonny King, and a mickle wise mon. Howbeit he was a fool and a pedant" (p. 47).

After 1740 Scottish disturbers of the peace especially fascinated parodists, as in the sixpenny *Book of Simon, Prince of the Tribe of Lovat* (London, 1746). "How unhappy is Man? How miserable the Fate of the Sons of Men?...all is Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit" (p. 3). Simon, notorious Jacobite turncoat, boastfully presents himself as a crafty manipulator who invited Prince Charles "to come into the Land" (p. 21). But his hoary head must one day bow to "a well-merited Hatchet" (p. 24). Faithful to his prediction, the aged Highlander was decapitated in 1747.

Another Jacobite whose head proved to be expendable was William Boyd, Earl of Kilmarnock, reputed author of an eleven-page octavo pamphlet, *The Chronicle of Charles, the Young Man* (Edinburgh, 1745). This

²John Buchan, *Sir Walter Scott* (London, 1932), p. 175.

opens conventionally "AND it came to pass," and keeps to its parodic style thereafter. "*George the Usurper*" has a concubine and a warrior son, William. At first "the Lord was with Charles" (p. 11) who routed "the Host of Cope." So immediate is the coverage that Charles's remaining "Acts" cannot yet be recorded. Thus the narrative ends with Prince Charles Edward Stuart's victory at Prestonpans, six months before his defeat at Culloden.

That defeat suggested another resort to the Old Testament in *The Book of Lamentations of Charles, the Son of James; For the Loss of the Battle of Culloden*, eight pages in the one penny version and twenty-two in the expanded London printing of 1746. Both of these were pro-Catholic in satirizing those who "hate Priests" and "have forsaken the Worship of their Forefathers" while growing "fat with the Revenue of the Church" (Chap. 5): "Ye are now as Sheep without a Shepherd; your Princes are gone." All "sleep with their Forefathers" (Chap. 6).

So usual had Biblical parody become that *Alexis; or, The Young Adventurer. A Novel*, thirty pages (London, 1746), is almost startling by its simplicity. But it does have a two-page Key which identifies the shepherd Alexis as Prince Charles and Lachrymania as Culloden.

The victory of Culloden was celebrated even before April 16, 1746, when the outcome of the Jacobite invasion was at last determined. Before the bloody climax there appeared John Anderson's *The Book of the Chronicles of His Royal Highness William Duke of Cumberland; Being an Account of the Rise and Progress of the Present Rebellion* (Edinburgh, 1746). This opens, "And it came to pass in those Days, that the King of Great-Britain had War with the Kings of Spain and France," who were confederated "to dethrone George." At the head of a diversionary force was Prince Charles Edward Stuart, attended by concubines and female singers, by "uncircumcised Highlanders" (p. 23) and "an evil Spirit" (p. 5). So receptive were readers that an eight-page version of Anderson appeared in London as *Dathan's Account of the Rebellion: Being the First Book of the Chronicle of William the Son of George*. A second book soon followed, with a third promised "very soon." There was also a Glasgow edition (1790), "In Imitation of the Holy Writings." The Biblical Dathan was a rebel against Moses. As for eighteenth century Charles, he promised his "wild men of the mountains" that "ye shall ravage and spoil [the Egyptians] at your discretion, while the army of George is absent [on the continent]" (p. 7).

Jacobite concerns hardly exhausted parodic subject matter. Purporting to be "from the Original Hebrew," *The Book of Zaknim*, consisting of four chapters and 89 verses, appeared soon after 1778. The translator was the Reverend Alexander Geddes (1737-1802). It confessedly bore "a great

resemblance to what happened lately in our own country" particularly in *The Chronicle of Charles, The Young Man*, whose action is updated to the eighteenth year of George III, 1778.³ Abandoning things military and political, Geddes lampoons English and Scottish vicars apostolic.

Potential satirists' minds may well have been refreshed about the value of Biblical parody by the publication of George Charles' *An Impartial History of the Transactions in Scotland, in the Years 1715-16, and 1745-46* (Stirling, 1816; Leith, 1817). The Abbotsford library, which was available to James Hogg, had a copy and Edinburgh had a belated printing in 1818. As the product of provincial presses and little-known booksellers (George Charles suggests Hanoverian-Jacobite impartiality), the work was not reviewed by the Edinburgh press. The first volume, which concentrates on early Jacobite deeds, includes an account of Colonel Colin Campbell's placation of "disaffected clans." This may have suggested Campbell's dispersal of rebel conspirators about the year 1767 in Scott's *Redgauntlet* (I, 61-9). The *History* also quotes *The Chronicle of Charles, The Young Man*, concerning G—— the usurper, Charles being viewed as no "conquering enemy, but as a deliverer, and a father of his people...Now the rest of the Acts of Charles, and the Mercy that he shewed, and why he warred, are they not known throughout the Land of Cakes?" (*An Impartial History*, II, 67-9). The narrative is divided into two chapters of Biblical-length verses (28 and 38). The parodic tone, however, is slight. "Now it came to pass that...."

A sampling of these Jacobite parodies might predispose a reader to accept the opening of "The Chaldee Manuscript" where we find "And I saw in my dream, and behold..." (II, 89). Genesis reads similarly "And he dreamed, and behold..." (28:12); he "saw in a dream, and, behold..." (31:10); and "Pharaoh dreamed: and behold..." (41:1). In the "Chaldee" the phrasing is "And I looked, and behold... and I saw his name..." (II, 89).

Although any breakdown of joint authorship of "The Chaldee Manuscript" would be difficult at this late date, I rather favor Trevor Royle's conclusion in *The Story of Literary Edinburgh* (1980, p. 132): "Hogg wrote the first draft" which was then redrafted by John Gibson Lockhart and John Wilson. Hogg's leaning toward parody is evident in his *The Poetic Mirror, or The Living Bards of Great Britain* of 1816. His venom was less costly to William Blackwood over a two-year period than the acidity of Lockhart and some other contributors, and his acquaintance with Jacobite literature was soon manifest in the selection and notes of his

³Appendix V of *The Innes Review*, XIV, 2(1963), 131-164, with introduction by the Rev. William Anderson.

Jacobite Relics of Scotland (1819 and 1821), for which he had access to Walter Scott's own collections.

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Bibliographical Note

The rare pamphlets displaying the parodic trends in literature are not always helpfully catalogued. They have turned up in American libraries from Harvard to the Library of Congress, with the richest finds at Yale, and in British libraries from the British Museum to the National Library of Scotland and the University of Aberdeen.

Sir Walter Scott, John Lockhart, and Sir William Knighton: An Unpublished Scott Letter

On 26 December 1825 Sir Walter Scott wrote to Sir William Knighton, private secretary to King George IV, to introduce to Knighton his son-in-law and editor of the *Quarterly Review*, John Gibson Lockhart. The letter, marked "private and confidential," was sent from Scott to Lockhart for Lockhart's use at whatever time he deemed appropriate. Scott's high opinion of Lockhart's character and genius is well known, so the content of the letter offers little new information; however, the meeting resulting from the letter had an important impact on the political character of the *Quarterly Review* and the *Quarterly's* influence on public opinion. Scott's acquaintance with both Knighton and the King—and the King's great respect for Scott—made possible Lockhart's access to the Court; the political nature of reviewing—and the particularly sensitive political issues of the 1820s—made Lockhart's access to Knighton of especial significance. The *Quarterly* was founded in 1809 as a Tory counter to the Whig *Edinburgh Review*; Lockhart's access to Sir William Knighton and thus indirectly the King provided Lockhart with inside political knowledge and perspective (beyond the sometimes distorted views and heated rhetoric of the *Quarterly's* primary political writer, John Wilson Croker), and thus gave the *Quarterly* a critical position of authority in the political debates of the times. [The original letter from Scott to Knighton, now published for the first time, is in private ownership and is published by permission of the owner.]

Dear Sir William

My son-in-law Mr Lockhart whom I before named to you may perhaps wish to speak with you for half an hour on some highly confidential business. You will find him a man of the strictest honour as well as of talent and very desirous to merit your good advice & opinion.

I am dear Sir William

Very much your obedient servant

Walter Scott

Abbotsford
26 December

In a letter of 7 December 1825 Scott had already announced to Knighton (and thus to King George IV) that Lockhart would be assuming the editorship of the *Quarterly*: "His Majesty will not perhaps hear with entire indifference that my son-in-law, John Lockhart, has been tempted to change his views in this country, in order to become editor of the *Quarterly Review*. The talents which have been thought worthy of this trust are pretty generally admitted; and I can answer for his possessing that love of his Majesty's government and devotion to his person which are the best warrants for exercising the power now lodged in his hands in a proper manner. It is a great qualifying of the pleasure which I should feel on the occasion, that I must be deprived of my daughter's society, as they must of course reside in London."¹ Scott certainly wished to establish the credibility of Lockhart, not only because he was looking out for his daughter's welfare, but because he had a genuine confidence in the editorial/authorial abilities of Lockhart as well as his son-in-law's patriotism—especially his commitment to Tory politics. Also, Lockhart's reputation as a reviewer had spread rather infamously from his early collaborations with John Wilson at *Blackwood's Magazine*. No doubt Scott felt a need to defend to Knighton Lockhart's suitability for the position, just as he felt the need to warn Lockhart not to fall under the influence of the sometimes indiscrete notions of John Wilson Croker.

The immediate occasion that prompted the letter of introduction to Knighton was Lockhart's writing a review of Thomas Moore's *Life of R. B. Sheridan* for Lockhart's first number of the *Quarterly*, March 1826. Lock-

¹Scott, Sir Walter. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*. Ed. H. J. C. Grierson. 12 vols. (London, 1932-37), 9, 326-7. Further references will appear in the text.

hart believed that Moore had stooped to unjust—even scandalous—political accusations and personal attacks in his *Sheridan*. Moore's treatment of delicate matters required delicate treatment itself, Scott argues, and it certainly demanded a careful assessment of the available information. Scott had warned Lockhart of the need for caution when Lockhart first told him that the *Quarterly* intended to publish a review of Moore's work; the best course of action, advises Scott, is for Lockhart to see Knighton:

You will I know give Tom his full merits and treat him with that sort of liberality which may show that the censure which you bestow arises out of no narrow party feeling but is calld forth by the occasion. . . . There is one special reason for candour in respect to his merits because in order to blame him (which there is every reason for doing) for lending himself to circulate calumnies respecting the King you must show that you are neither an enemy of genius nor a tool of a party. I am aware that high-flying tories will not be pleased with this. Nevertheless fair pleading is the real way to serve a good cause.

Concerning what you are to have from Sir W[illiam] K[nighton] I think you should see him yourself. It is a very dangerous and slippery ground and you know what Shakespeare says

Two may keep counsel when a *third's* away. The said confidential Baronet is a solemn coxcomb (I think) with more craft than wisdom and what jumble might be made in pouring out information of consequence from such a gallipot into a crackd tumbler like your great publisher no one can say. Sir W. K. knows well enough who you are and you will of course find him accessible should you wish it. (*Letters*, 9, 340-41)

Later in the same letter Scott realizes that he has mistaken Lockhart's intentions, that Lockhart had expected a reviewer other than himself to deal with the issue, and Scott is "very sorry for it." Scott generally was very uneasy about the matter of reviewing along narrow party lines. Although a strong Tory himself, Scott was much more of a statesman and a gentleman than most of the periodical writers of the early nineteenth century, especially Croker: "I do not like Crokers stile in such things in the least—he is a smart skirmisher but wants altogether the depth of thought and nobleness of mind where the character of a Sovereign is to be treated. If you can get it into your own hands or can modify their article your own way I shall be much better pleased. He blunders about his facts too and in fact will never be more than a very clever confused sort of genius" (*Letters*, 9, 342). In his reply to Scott Lockhart agrees to do the article himself, accepting only "excellent hints" from Croker, and asks Scott for a letter of introduction to Knighton: "I quite agree with you as to Sir W. Knighton. Could you give me a line saying that I am your son-in-law &c & wish half an hour's conversation on a delicate subject. This would set me quite at my ease and I should not make use of it unless in case of necessity"

(National Library of Scotland [NLS] MS 868 f 239). On 26 December 1825 Scott sends Lockhart the letter of introduction to Sir William Knighton and again warns Lockhart to tread softly: "I am quite glad to hear you have got the article on Moore to yourself. I can hardly conceive a finer subject. I inclose a letter to Sir William Knighton which I think you should use and show him the passages in which the K[ing] is concernd. I hope they will be sure of their facts for it craves wary walking" (*Letters*, 9, 349).

Lockhart, of course, uses the letter according to Scott's advice. On 9 February 1826 Lockhart writes to Scott: "I have seen Sir Wm Knighton twice & nothing can be more thoroughly kind than his behaviour. I perceive that I have a delicate part to play between him & Croker; who does not act by me in that manner so openly as he should, & yet evidently desires to have the whole credit of whatever may be done in a certain quarter" (NLS MS 1583 ff 6-7).

When the March 1826 *Quarterly* is published, Lockhart writes to Scott to justify what turns out to be his "rough" treatment of Moore:

I am afraid you will think I have treated Moore too roughly but I could not help it. His book is full of baseness & it was impossible for the *Quarterly* to treat it silkily. Entre nous his treatment of the King was more unpardonable than anybody knows—for Croker took care to put him fully in possession of all the facts of the case long before the book was printed. First & last old Sherry (besides his sinecure) received from the priory purse upwards of £30,000 *in cash*. Croker & Sir W. Knighton both overlooked my paper ere it was published & I *heard* the notes of George IV *read*; for once or twice through inadvertence the style of "his Royal *highness*" was dropt & "T" took its place. Besides nobody else *could* have written those notes which prove the writer to be a very clever writer indeed. I was struck with the very singular strength & beauty of the style of *La Majeste*. (NLS MS 3903 ff 241-4)

In spite of Scott's warnings, what seemed to be Lockhart's careful research, and Lockhart's justifications, Scott was not pleased with the article. Scott's journal entry for 9 April 1826 records a displeasure that apparently he did not communicate so boldly to Lockhart: "Don't like his article on Sheridan's life. There is no breadth in it, no general views, the whole flung away in smart party criticism."²

Regardless of Scott's opinion of Lockhart's handling of the political storm surrounding Moore's *Sheridan*, Lockhart's relationship with Knighton was the source of much more good than bad. Lockhart's introduction to Knighton through Scott was the beginning of an amicable rela-

²Scott, Sir Walter. *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*. 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1890), 1, 173.

tionship for the two men, as well as a connection of mutual benefit. Knighton continued to be an important source for Lockhart's political perspective, and the *Quarterly Review* was a loyal medium for Tory/Crown opinion during the difficult years of Catholic emancipation and reform. Knighton—or "the Invisible" as he is sometimes known—makes frequent appearances in Lockhart's political drama, a drama played out both in the pages of the *Quarterly* and in Lockhart's correspondence with Scott.

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The James Hogg Society is expanding its publications program. Beginning in 1990 its existing journals, the *Newsletter of the James Hogg Society* and *Altrive Chapbooks*, will be combined and considerably increased in substance and volume into a new annual publication, *Studies in Hogg and His World*. This will include full-length and brief articles, reviews, and newly-edited Hogg texts. Full membership in the Society costs £12.50 or £6.50 for students (please add £2 for bank charges and figure current US or Canadian equivalent). Subscriptions and inquiries should be addressed to:

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