

# Antidocumentalist apologetics : Hardouin and Yeshayahu Leibowitz

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## ANTIDOCUMENTALIST APOLOGETICS: HARDOUIN AND YESHAYAHU LEIBOWITZ

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### RÉSUMÉ

*On peut identifier dans plusieurs confessions, sinon dans toutes, trois stratégies apologetiques qui entreprennent de résoudre les conflits entre la documentation religieuse et les sciences et valeurs « profanes »: une première concilierait les deux, une deuxième (fondamentaliste) exclurait de la conscience tout ce qui est extérieur aux traditions et documents religieux et façonnerait la conscience des fidèles exclusivement d'après ceux-ci, alors qu'une troisième sacrifierait la documentation religieuse à la science et aux valeurs extérieures, ne retenant qu'une tradition religieuse souple et capable de se renouveler. Le P. Hardouin (1646-1729) et le philosophe religieux contemporain, le professeur Yeshayahu Leibowitz, sont les porte-parole de cette troisième et très radicale stratégie. Hardouin proposa des « paradoxes » niant l'authenticité, et par conséquent l'autorité intellectuelle, de toute la patristique et de tous les actes des conciles de l'Eglise qu'il tenait pour des contrefaçons, et, par des scrupules hypercritiques, de toute l'histoire du monde classique et médiéval. Il ne retenait que peu de textes classiques, la Vulgate et la tradition constante et vivante des apôtres ainsi que l'Eglise romaine l'a toujours connue et ainsi que les évêques de Rome l'exposent. Par cette thèse critique Hardouin élimina des conflits avec la science (historique) susceptibles d'affaiblir la religion. Leibowitz part d'une définition non cognitive de la religion qui lui permet de considérer ses monuments, et surtout la Bible, comme des instruments propédeutiques. Leurs métaphores, paraboles et commandements doivent suggérer les qualités inconnais-sables et ineffables de Dieu et inspirer et diriger l'homme vers l'adoration. En conséquence, ce que ces instruments religieux disent de scientifique sur le monde et sur Dieu est dépourvu d'autorité et ne doit ni empêcher, ni influencer la spéculation philosophique et la recherche scientifique parmi les fidèles qui sont ainsi libérées au point de pouvoir assujettir les instruments d'instruction religieuse les plus sacrés à une critique qui est nécessairement basée sur les sciences et les valeurs extrinsèques à ces documents et à la tradition religieuse.*

Father Paul Auvray has remarked in his astute and modest biography of the late 17th-century orientalist and Bible critic, Richard Simon, that Simon's problem was to reconcile what he knew about religion's texts with what fidelity and ecclesiastical discipline obliged him to believe about

them.<sup>1</sup> His was merely one painful instance of the perennial dilemma, within and without Catholicism, of coordinating the tradition in which a scholar and his public live with its founding documents, its authorized ecclesiastical histories and monuments, as well as the exterior, archeological documents related to them. Only Karaites and the most radical Protestants might be willing to sacrifice the matrix of communal, cultural and ecclesiastical traditions within which religious lives are enmeshed to the letter of their authentic founding documents. A religious tradition in full vigor may indeed dispense with monuments of its own past and live upon the word of its prophets or sages, but that is really living in a religious present rather than a religious past, with a tradition rather than in it.

Once a tradition has ceased to be the exclusive compendium of its adherents' interests, its defenders tend to appeal to external confirmations of its historical and speculative elements. Thus, when an apologist proposes to demonstrate the 'evident excellence' of his tradition and texts, he does so in relation to secular and even profane (*i.e.* disapproved) values and documentation which have acquired prestige, even among the believers in his public, and which appear to have rendered the traditional values suspect or frankly unacceptable. He will attempt to reinforce the authority of the tradition that he upholds by demonstrations of the antiquity of its founding documents and by citing the witness of external documents that his readers are disposed to believe authentic and truthful. He will try to gloss the intertextual inconsistencies within the canon and to provide motives for faith and practice by alleging the harmony of their articles with the secular norms of thought and conduct which the faithful have in fact adopted or would prefer to adopt. Inadvertantly such apologists risk ossifying their tradition in its own texts, discovering hitherto unremarked intertextual conflicts, periodizing both text and tradition in the light of exterior sources, and casting doubt upon their claims regarding the natural world and its history. The apologist's deference to what is exterior to the tradition intensifies the conflicts between the values that the faithful actually hold most profoundly and those embodied in the tradition. Religious criticism, from the days of Apion, Lucretius and Celsus, exploited these conflicts of values and of documents, though never so consciously perhaps as did the antireligious polemicists of the French 18th century.

We shall examine the strategies of defence that were invented to deal with such conflicts. Wolfson has shown that there are apologetic themes that were common to several religious traditions<sup>2</sup> and we have argued that

<sup>1</sup> P. AUVRAY, *Richard Simon (1638-1712). Etude bibliographique avec des textes inédits*, Paris, 1974, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> H. A. WOLFSON, *Religious philosophy, a group of essays*, Reprint: New York, 1965, p. 218f.

attacks upon religious traditions necessarily share certain themes;<sup>3</sup> we shall contend here that apologetic strategies may be common to the most divergent religious positions, and we propose to prove that contention by a comparison of two apologists who represent antipodal religious positions.

## I

There are two familiar apologetic strategies in 18th-century France — we are intentionally restricting the discussion to the place and period with which we are most familiar without implying that French apologetics were in any way unique, as indeed we believe they were not — which have counterparts in contemporary Jewish circles. One strategy would reconcile the contradictions among the documents of the religious tradition, read them as narrowly as necessary to avoid conflicts with natural science and with the exterior historical record, while interpreting them freely enough, whenever possible, to discover anticipations of ideas and values in vogue. In principle, such a strategy, whose foremost exponent was Dom Augustin Calmet in the vast *Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament* (1707-1716) that he and his brothers in Senones compiled, and in the more suggestively titled *Dictionnaire historique, géographique, chronologique, critique et littéral de la Bible* (1721) drawn from the commentary, grants equal honour to exterior learning and values and to the religious tradition, documents and values, but in practice either the sacred or the profane side of the equation, and sometimes both, is sacrificed to the process of reconciliation by limited or deformed exposition.<sup>4</sup> Elements of this strategy are to be found in many if not most of the classical Jewish Bible commentaries, but the most comprehensive attempt at conciliation before the still widely disseminated commentaries of S. R. Hirsch (1880) and of J. M. Hertz (1936) was the aptly titled *Conciliador* (1632) of Menasheh Ben Israel. Since science, natural and historical, is a self-correcting discipline, the work of conciliation must be renewed at frequent intervals.

A second apologetic strategy, which may be associated with the anti-rationalist countercurrents of the Enlightenment that Sir Isaiah Berlin has studied,<sup>5</sup> attacks learning and reasoning in principle while upholding the

<sup>3</sup> B. E. SCHWARZBACH, *Voltaire's Old Testament criticism*, Geneva, 1971 *passim*. More precisely, we argued that Voltaire was writing in the tradition of both the antagonists and the apologists of revealed religion, that although original in many of his analyses of the Old Testament, the general lines of his attack were, inevitably, analogous to those of Lucretius, Apion, Julian, Celsus, Hobbes and Spinoza, even though each one's target was quite different.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., see *ibid.*, p. 116-122.

<sup>5</sup> "The Counter-Enlightenment" and "Hume and the sources of German anti-rationalism", in *Against the current*, New York, 1978.



letter of religious documentation (or the traditional interpretations, without discerning a distinction between them) and unquestioning faith. Pascal, in his disdain for Descartes's rationalist physics, the fideists, in their depreciation of philosophy, and especially the controversialists who adopted the argument of Bellarmine, Jacques Davy Du Perron and Simon, according to which the Bible was either unintelligible when read by exclusively scientific methods, or an inadequate basis for doctrine when it is not inimical to orthodox faith and sound morals,<sup>6</sup> were all, in some regards, exponents of such a fundamentalist position. In Jewish circles, inheritors of the *Hatam Sofer's* (R. Moshe Sofer [1762-1839]) 'orthodoxy' still hold out, with some success, against penetrations into their intellectual universe by natural science, historical and philological scholarship and the values which they inevitably entail.

The third, and by far the rarest, apologetic strategy may be characterized as antidocumentalist. It accepts the exterior documentation and secular values which the first approach would reconcile and the second would try to ignore, and frankly attacks or limits the authenticity or authority of the religious documents called into question. This strategy is the inverse of both of the others: the conciliation of the first approach is refused while the exterior sources of knowledge denigrated by the second are adopted in preference to those of the tradition. This gambit was considered iconoclastic and even heretical in early 18th-century Paris where it was launched by Father Jean Hardouin (1646-1729), the contentious chronologist, professor of theology and librarian of the Jesuit Collège Louis-le-Grand, and is no less iconoclastic and doctrinally suspect — we do not presume to decide questions of Jewish orthodoxy but merely refer to a substantial body of indignant criticism<sup>7</sup> — in contemporary Jewish circles as it has been propounded by the equally contentious religious philosopher, Prof. Yeshayahu Leibowitz.

Certain versions of an antidocumentalist religious position are very old. Ancient reformist sects commonly denied the authenticity and authority of elements of the documentary tradition which they could no longer regard, for their own philosophical or ethical reasons, as normative. As is well known, gnostic and Manichaean sects denied the canonicity of gospels

<sup>6</sup> See SIMON, *Histoire critique du vieux testament*, Rotterdam, 1685, I.ii-v, vii, xvi-xvii; *Histoire critique du texte du nouveau testament*, Rotterdam, 1689, p. 280-284; J. D. DU PERRON, *Réplique à la réponse du sérénissime roy de la Grande Bretagne*, Paris, 1620, IV.vi.1098.

<sup>7</sup> See the bibliography in our "Halakhah et valeurs séculières, La philosophie religieuse de Y. Leibowitz", *Nouveaux cahiers*, No. 61 (Summer 1980), note 5, and, among other articles, B. Y. YOEL, "In the shade of a double heritage" (Hebrew), *Ha-Do'ar* (26 Tishrei 1978), p. 705 and (3 Heshvan 1978), p. 11; Y. R. EZION, "Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz's point of view" (Hebrew), *Mabu'a* (Winter 1977), p. 136-162.

accepted by their 'parent' sect as inerrant, or regarded them as being, partially or in their totality, of an inferior degree of inspiration. Closer to our period we find expansions of St. Paul's contention (Romans VI.19) that the religious message of the Old Testament was necessarily revealed in metaphor and that its law was abrogated by Jesus who spiritualized its theology. Calmet and the Reformed apologist Jacques Abbadie argued in surprisingly similar terms that the 'truths' revealed to the ancient Jews were in fact 'proportioned' to their intelligence and experience of the world.<sup>8</sup> The many scientific and historical errors, as well as the passages of dubious propriety and taste (by 18th-century standards) were heuristic and needed no longer command belief nor serve as norms of conduct. This argument does not derogate from the status of the text as an instrument of revelation while permitting selectivity within the religious tradition by effecting an internal periodization which, in turn, implies hierarchies of authority. This argument is extended much further in Lessing's *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* where the expectation is entertained that even the New Testament message will eventually be transcended by a purified deism. On the plane of text criticism as well, hypotheses were proposed that would permit a ranking of texts according to their authority.

While the ascription of authority to texts is a purely theological decision, it is a fundamental notion that authority is related to provenience, a question that entered the scientific domain with Simon. (Even before him, when books were accepted for reading in the first- and second-century churches on the strength of their supposed apostolic associations, the relation between authority and provenience was implicitly recognized.) Two Jesuits, Lessius and Aménus, were censured in 1586 by the faculties of Louvain and Douai for having held that the Bible may contain materials which do not derive directly from the inspiration of God. But because these texts were determined to be in consonance with the spirit of those that were fully revealed, a scientific determination in principle, they were approved by the Church. Simon represented this as an application of the *Ratio studiorum* of the Jesuit order, and he quite approved.<sup>9</sup> His own theories regarding the Old Testament suppose diverse degrees of authenticity and inspiration which were betrayed by the lacunae, defects and accretions which had accumulated during the centuries of its oral transmission and the natural vicissitudes of generations of hand copying. Auvray ascribes Simon's tolerance of a weaker theory of Biblical inspiration to a proudly humanist tradition that refused to exclude from the sacred canon books and passages to whose composition and transmission well intentioned men had piously added their own touches.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See his *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne*, Rotterdam, 1712, I.239, 357.

<sup>9</sup> *Histoire critique du texte du nouveau testament*, p. 280-284.

<sup>10</sup> AUVRAY, p. 175.

There is no point in reviewing here the 19th-century attempts to distinguish inspired Biblical fragments from their accompanying and all too human detritus since Emil G. Kraeling has already done this with much precision.<sup>11</sup> It was necessary to find ways of denying that the categories of directly inspired and utterly profane were exhaustive, lest the critics fall into the trap of the 18th-century polemicists and apologists who, extraordinarily, agreed that the Scriptures were either inspired and inerrant in their totality or, if that could not be sustained, lacked religious and normative value in their totality.

Hardouin produced a radical variant upon these 17th-century retractions from the integrity and authority of religious documentation. He was a scholar of such redoubtable erudition that, according to the often cited remark of his very learned contemporary, Bishop Pierre-Daniel Huet, none of the extraordinary opinions which he had occasion to sustain (e.g., the scientific validity of Pliny's natural history, the attribution of Dante's *Commedia* to a 15th-century disciple of Wycliffe<sup>12</sup>) ever succeeded in undermining his reputation.<sup>13</sup> Hardouin took upon himself the charge of refuting modern atheists, among whom he counted Descartes, Malebranche, Janse-  
nius and Antoine Arnauld. His definition of atheism was rather special, and the posthumously published *Athei detecti* (*Opera varia* [Amsterdam, 1733]) exposed it so extravagantly that Voltaire compared it to the works of François Garasse, the 17th-century Jesuit who persecuted the poet Théophile de Viau.<sup>14</sup> It seems to have been his polemic against these 'atheists' that prompted the famous 'paradoxes', the extreme theological and scholarly positions which earned several of his works condemnation in Rome despite their intrepid defence of what he perceived to be the interests of his Church and of the papacy.

<sup>11</sup> *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, New York, 1965, chapter IX, and R. E. CLEMENTS, *One hundred years of Old Testament interpretation*, Philadelphia, 1976.

<sup>12</sup> See *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des sciences et des beaux arts*, Aug. 1727, Art. LXXVI, p. 1516-1534.

<sup>13</sup> "Il a travaillé quarante ans à ruiner sa réputation sans pouvoir en venir au bout." *Ibid.*, 1734, p. 111. See also R. P. PALMER, *Catholics and unbelievers in eighteenth-century France*, Reprint: Princeton, 1939, p. 65-69 and the bibliography in his notes. Especially interesting and apparently well informed is Auguste Lacotte-Joltrois in MICHAUD, *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne*, s.v. "Hardouin" who discusses Hardouin's contributions to historical and numismatic learning, and H. LA COMBE DE PREZEL, *Dictionnaire des portraits historiques* (Paris, 1768), II. 178ff. for anecdotes about this remarkable scholar. Also see Vacant and Mangenot, ed., *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, s.v. "Hardouin", and CARLOS SOMMERVOGEL, S.J., *Bibliographie de la Compagnie de Jésus*, s.v. "Hardouin". It should be obvious that Palmer's chapter suggested this study.

<sup>14</sup> *Dictionnaire philosophique*, "Athée, athéisme" (1764).

We shall deal with a posthumously published text, *Ad censuram veterum scriptorum prolegomena* (London, 1766), which appears to be an introduction to a long, unknown work that may never have been written, and would have treated the transmission of Patristic and conciliar documents. The text of the *Prolegomena* was surely written after 1714 because it mentions Hardouin's monumental edition of conciliar materials, *Conciliorum collectio...* (ed. prin. Paris, 1714-1715), as well as an episcopal pastoral letter of 1712. *Ad censuram* appeared in suspicious circumstance, 37 years after Hardouin's death, almost accompanied by César de Missy's refutation<sup>15</sup> and was eventually translated into English<sup>16</sup> for no evident reason except its outlandishness. One may suppose that some Protestant controversialists chose to set this extravagant statement of the Catholic position before the public in order to discredit it. Under the circumstances one might even suspect a fabricated text. However texts that Hardouin had authorized, and the criticism that they provoked, guarantee the authenticity of the main lines of the apologetic contained in *Ad censuram* if not every word of its text nor its completeness,<sup>17</sup> and that will suffice for the purposes of this paper.

Hardouin was confident that he recognized theological truth, a limited number of propositions relating to god formulated in a theological language that excluded philosophical terminology and values (II. 3-4). These propositions were announced by the Roman Church, are preserved faithfully in its tradition, and may all be found in the Vulgate text. Whoever holds other propositions, or expresses those propositions in a philosophical jargon employing such terms as nature, natural light, reason or truth — evidently already favorite expressions in the language of the early Enlightenment — which Hardouin regarded as tainted with pantheism, is by his definition an atheist. Descartes and Malebranche were atheists because they

<sup>15</sup> *De J. Hardouini prolegomenis*, London, 1766.

<sup>16</sup> *The prolegomena of Jean Hardouin*, tr. Edwin Johnson (Sydney, 1909). We shall cite this edition by chapter and paragraph.

<sup>17</sup> Hardouin's notorious 'paradoxes' — a polite term for iconoclastic scholarly opinions — were announced in his *Chronologiae ex numinis antiquis restitutae prolusio de numinis Herodiadum* (1693). For confirmation, see "Lettre d'un ex-jésuite... touchant les ouvrages faussement attribués aux Pères de l'Eglise et le fameux système du P. Hardouin", *Bibliothèque raisonnée* (July-Sept. 1728), Art. VI, p. 71-78, and the criticism of Hardouin's *Opera selecta* in the *Nouvelles de la république des lettres* (Sept. 1709), p. 294-299. Hardouin was even obliged to retract his 'paradoxes' regarding the authenticity of the works attributed to the Fathers (*ibid.*, Jan. 1709, p. 95-101). That did not prevent him from writing *Ad censuram* some time after 1714. So many of Hardouin's works remained unpublished at his death — some, such as the *Athei detecti*, appear in the posthumous *Opera varia* (1733) — that it is gratuitous to assume that no more unpublished texts remained after 1733 and that therefore the *Ad censuram* must be spurious. Lacatte-Joltrois suspected that an abbé Olivet was responsible for the communication of the manuscript of *Ad censuram* to England.



were philosophers, while Jansenius, Arnauld and Pascal were atheists because, like Luther and Calvin, they defended propositions condemned by the Church. Hardouin's second thesis was that the theology and ritual of the Church had remained completely unchanged since the period of the apostles. This alleged uniformity of faith and practice — apart from the divergences of heretical sects — is an understandable apologetic in a classical age which, according to Jacques Barzun's persuasive argument, regards the preponderance of opinion among right-thinking contemporaries and ancestors as, in itself, a cogent reason for assent to propositions.<sup>18</sup> The allegation, a principal theme in Bossuet's polemics, that the tradition of the Church was 'constant and uniform', in contrast to the creeds and practices of the Protestant Churches which exhibited 'variations', sustained the truth of the Catholic religion and supplied motive for faith and devotion.

The consistent application of his first principle obliged Hardouin to reject the more philosophical of the Church Fathers such as Augustine, Bernard and, especially, Thomas Aquinas toward whom Hardouin nourished remarkable animus. The support that the 'heretical' Protestants and Jansenists found — Hardouin did not contest their reading — in the writings attributed to the Fathers, especially Augustine, Bernard and Thomas, alerted him to the heresies contained in the works attributed to all the revered Fathers and saints.

The second proposition obliged Hardouin to rewrite ecclesiastical history which was thought by everyone else to bear witness, in its canons and anathemas, at the very least to a progressive refinement and precision of the articles of faith and practice, if not to the radical innovations and reversals of course that the Protestant historians and polemicists had detected and such of their heirs as Voltaire and Jean Lévesque de Burigny, the author of the *Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne* (a clandestine manuscript written between 1733 and 1734, apparently not circulated before 1756 and finally published in 1766<sup>18a</sup>) were to broadcast. The reasons for Hardouin's opposition to ecclesiastical history are not explicit in *Ad censuram* but a critic a generation later, Henri Griffet, introduced his account of Hardouin's system with several general remarks concerning "l'histoire ecclésiastique [qui] est souvent liée avec l'histoire profane par rapport à divers événements sur lesquels la vérité ou la fausseté de l'une influerait nécessairement sur l'autre; d'ailleurs, les histoires profanes ou ecclésiastiques rapportent souvent les mêmes faits avec des circonstances et des époques tout à fait différentes".<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Classic, romantic and modern*, Reprint: Garden City, 1961, chapter III.

<sup>18a</sup> See our "Sur l'attribution de deux textes 'clandestins' à Jean Lévesque de Burigny", to appear in the *Revue d'histoire littéraire de France*.

<sup>19</sup> *L'insuffisance de la religion naturelle*, Liège, 1770, t. I, p. 196.



Hardouin's solution to his difficulties with the treacherous documentation of his sect and the exterior documents that served as its control was to deny the authenticity of both categories of offending texts. The reservoirs of poorly disguised atheism that he identified in the Patristic literature could hardly have been stocked by men whom the Church had beatified! Furthermore, the legalist in Hardouin recalled that the Church had never had occasion to conduct a formal examination of the purported writings of the saints for possible heresies. Each major religious order had adopted several of the Fathers, usually members of its order or its special inspiration, and had edited and reedited their works and defended their doctrines, thus inadvertently lending them their own prestige. For his part, Hardouin proposed that the Church repair the omission by charging a commission of disinterested experts (*i.e.*, members of his order) with such an examination.

He held, to the astonishment of his contemporaries, that not only was all the Patristic literature fraudulent, but that it and the monuments of Church history were all forged by a coterie of plotting, atheistical but inept monks at about the time of the invention of printing. They employed imitations of ancient hands, apparently ancient papers and inks, in order to counterfeit documents that would authorize their atheism (III. *passim.*). To complete and circumstantiate their theological writings, these monks invented an ecclesiastical history that included heresies and schisms as well as a complementary secular history. The monks of Corbie were the specialists at forging ancient medals and coins. Few of the ancient literary texts, even the most famous of them like Horace, were authentic or correctly attributed. All of them were planted in libraries across Europe and soon afterwards 'discovered', sometimes innocently, sometimes by accomplices, and then edited and disseminated throughout the Christian world by the newly invented printing press. All Europe was successfully duped for almost three hundred years until the astute Father Hardouin, with his expertise in chronology and palaeography, exposed the plot.

According to Hardouin the Vulgate alone was authentic for the Old Testament (but that did not prevent his recourse to the Hebrew text to justify his paraphrases<sup>20</sup>) and was the original text of the gospels and of the epistolary books of the New Testament. The early Church conserved Jesus's theological teachings quite well by tradition and consequently had no need of documents outside the Bible to support its authority, and it retained those traditions and the primitive discipline with admirable constancy to his own day. He compared the Church to the Judaism of the second temple period when Bible and oral traditions, supplemented by an occasional *ad hoc* decision by the high priest, sufficed as rules of faith and practice. (Hardouin

<sup>20</sup> *Paraphrase de l'Ecclésiaste*, Paris, 1729, and *Le livre de Job, selon la Vulgate paraphrasé...*, Paris, 1729.

underestimated the diversity of faith and practice to which the Mishnah and even the later books of the Bible testify, and obtusely ignored the legislative activity of the rabbis which had already been recognized by Simon.<sup>21</sup>) Hardouin's Catholicism is profoundly antiliterary and as hostile to intellectual authority (except that of the bishop of Rome) as it was to philosophical jargon. This was the Enlightenment, if not necessarily the enlightened, side of a faithful son of the Church in the early 18th century.

Hardouin's position, caricature that it was of the antiliterary and anti-speculative currents of thought in the 17th century, eliminated by a single stroke the necessity of conciliating the exterior historical record with religious traditions. He had nearly eliminated the former and limited the latter so severely that there hardly remained points of contact between them, or at least such was the claim of *Ad censuram*. The price of obviating conciliation was the sacrifice of the depth and breadth of the philosophical tradition of his sect as well as the radical impoverishment of the secular historical corpus by the hypercritical standards of documentary and evidential authenticity which he demanded, impartially, of it as well as of the ecclesiastical texts. Even after the restriction of the Bible to the Vulgate texts of both testaments, problems of intertextual consistency remained, most notably among the gospels, as well as anachronisms in Biblical history (*viz.* the corpus of post-Mosaic verses in the Pentateuch discovered, rediscovered and expanded by Ibn Ezra, Tostatus, Spinoza, Simon and Jean Leclerc<sup>22</sup>), narratives that drive credulity to the limit, and precepts, metaphors and emblematic actions that offend moral and aesthetic values. Short of attacking reason itself, as the 16th- and 17th-century pyrrhonists and skeptics had done, or seeking to transcend morals and aesthetics as a mystic might have done, Hardouin's strategy would have been of little avail.

This indeed seems to have been the case. The 18th-century anti-Biblical polemicists — this is not true of their 17th-century inspirations, Spinoza and Orobio de Castro whose point of departure was the Hebrew text, nor of Simon and Leclerc whose textual repertoire included all the ancient texts and translations, none of whom could be reckoned an anti-Biblical polemicist — found ample materials in the Vulgate text and in pious translations derived from it. Even if those of their arguments which were derived from

<sup>21</sup> *Comparaison des cérémonies des juifs et de la discipline de l'Eglise*, Paris, 1681, particularly chapters XI and XII that deal with the *halakhic* productivity of post-Christian Judaism.

<sup>22</sup> See SCHWARZBACH, *Voltaire's Old Testament criticism*, chapter III, and A. LODS and P. ALPHANDÉRY, "Jean Astruc et la critique biblique au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse* IV (1924), p. 214f., J. PEDERSEN, "Auffassung vom Alten Testament", *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentalische Wissenschaft*, v. 49 (1931), E. RENAN, "L'exégèse biblique et l'esprit français", *Revue des deux mondes*, 1 Nov. 1865, F. STUMMER, *Die Bedeutung Richard Simons für die Pentateuch Kritik*, Münster-in-W., 1912.

the (highly unreliable) exterior record then available are put aside — this would apply principally to Voltaire's historical 'controls' on the Bible — they still created a devastating critique of Biblical materials that Hardouin's apparatus could not have obviated. In addition he preferred Pliny to contemporary natural science, or was so literary in his approach to natural science that he was largely oblivious to progress made during his life-time, so his apparatus was not designed to deal with the conflicts between the Bible's very detailed teachings about the world and cosmology and the descriptions and reconstructions that Voltaire and M<sup>me</sup> du Châtelet, to pick the two most scientifically oriented of the anti-Biblical polemicists, marshalled against them. His apologetic strategy, applied within his limits, could only have been effective against a certain class of anti-Catholic polemics, the historically oriented Reformed ones which are reflected in the *Encyclopédie* (e.g., 'Décrétales (fausses)') and in Voltaire (e.g., the articles 'Messe', 'Reliques' and 'Zèle' which first appeared in the Kehl edition of his works<sup>23</sup>). In fact, his strategy remained ineffective because his paradoxes convinced no one. The Voltaire articles just cited are largely drawn from Isaac de Beausobre, a moderate and learned Huguenot pastor in Berlin writing in the early 1730s, who does not even take the trouble to refute Hardouin and to argue that the ecclesiastical documentation that he cites is indeed authentic, though he uses every means at his command to measure its veracity.

Palmer, who has saved Hardouin from obscurity, attributes to him a desire to liberate the Church from the constraints of its documentary tradition. Were it not tied to its texts it might be free to elect and to formulate its own modification and even modernization, all the while insisting upon its rigorous traditionalism. Hardouin's apologetic offered a flexibility which might have accommodated the Church to the impending crisis of desacralization and avoided the century-long conflict with republican regimes.

We are not aware of evidence bearing upon Hardouin's ultimate intentions. His perceptions of crisis were clearly reflections of the 16th-century Protestant defections and the 17th-century Jansenist dissidence rather than premonitions of the republican and antireligious tendencies of what has been called the High Enlightenment. The Hardouin of the *Ad censuram* is a reactionary. That is what makes him so curious from our point of view. Had he been a liberal, as Palmer implies, or a reformer, then his antidocumentalist campaign might best have been construed as the heritage of the ancient sects' rejections of documents with which they could no longer abide. We suspect that Palmer inadvertantly read into Hardouin's naïve

<sup>23</sup> See SCHWARZBACH, "Voltaire et les huguenots de Berlin: Formey et Isaac de Beausobre", in Brockmeier, Desné and Voss, ed., *Voltaire und Deutschland*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979, p. 106f.

programme the famous liberality, complaisance and cynical strategic vision attributed to his order by the *Provinciales*, the 18th-century anti-Jesuit polemics and folklore.

## II

Hardouin was not without influence although we are not aware of another apologist of the period so radical in his denial of the value of religious documentation, unless it was Johann Christian Edelmann who came from an entirely different milieu and was regarded as so radically heterodox that he can hardly be reckoned an apologist for a tradition in the sense employed here.<sup>24</sup> However another Jesuit, Isaac Berruyer, was reputed Hardouin's disciple, apparently for doctrinal reasons unrelated to the theme of this paper. He evinces an antidocumentalist bias of a different nature in his *Histoire du peuple de Dieu depuis son origine jusqu'à la naissance du messie* (1728). He announced in the preface that he has refused to draw upon any source exterior to the Bible. Berruyer accomplished his stunt by completing narratives from complementary Biblical passages and by an unacknowledged suppression of contradictions and anachronisms. He made an honest attempt not to impose Catholic dogma upon the Old Testament which he largely succeeded in reading as a series of Jewish books rather than as a fabric of prophesies and 'types' of Jesus. He reserved such an interpretation for a different plane of reading. Berruyer provoked scandal among his contemporaries because, among other offenses, he admitted a level of reading which denied a fundamental element of the contemporary Catholic tradition, one that had been reaffirmed by the Council of Trent, the coordination of Bible (including the Old Testament) and Catholic tradition.

There may be some validity in associating Berruyer with the freer currents of 18th-century thought, even though we have not detected in his *Histoire* the slightest trace of impiety and hardly a trace of skepticism. His Biblical history is extremely free, almost novelistic, with invented dialogues inserted at various points, just as Thucydides was wont to insert into his narrative what the principal actors should have said when he had no definite information about what they did say. Treating the Bible with a novelist's imagination was not without precedent; there had been 17th-century Biblical epics in France.<sup>25</sup> But poetry and history claim different

<sup>24</sup> See W. GROSSMANN, *Johann Christian Edelmann; From orthodoxy to enlightenment*, La Haye, Paris, 1976, p. 115: "For Edelmann the two great opposites are the 'living god' and the 'Bible as idol' ('Bibel Götze')..."

<sup>25</sup> See R. A. SAYCE, *The seventeenth-century Biblical epic*, Oxford, 1955.



degrees of license. When Berruyer's *Histoire* usurped poetry's license without abandoning its own objectives — actually instruction was always a common purpose of poetry and history and is certainly among Berruyer's intentions — one may suspect, as Palmer does,<sup>26</sup> that by example rather than by precept Berruyer taught that one need not be enslaved to the letter of the documentary tradition, that one may ignore Patristics and reshape the meaning of the founding documents that he retains according to the needs and tastes of the moment, and then designate that new meaning as tradition. Every sect reinterprets the Bible according to its needs and tastes and, unless it is disingenuous, believes that it has uncovered hidden secrets or obvious doctrines which rival sects have been too obtuse or too obstinate to recognize. Writing after the objective of scientific interpretation of the Old Testament text had been announced, practised and defended by Grotius, Simon and Jean Leclerc, Berruyer must have been disingenuous in ignoring it so blithely, and he differs from the usual pattern of arbitrary Biblical interpretation in one important regard, he substracts rather than discovers Christian theology and soteriology in the Old Testament.

### III

Since the Jews have long regarded themselves as 'The People of the Book' and have been regarded in Christian circles as devotees of 'the letter that kills', it is surprising to find among them an antidocumentalist with anything at all in common with Hardouin and Berruyer.

Yeshayahu Leibowitz has been a chemist, biologist and neurophysiologist who settled in Israel before World War II. Since his retirement from active scientific pursuits he has devoted himself vigorously to the religious philosophy and political-religious polemics in which he has been engaged since 1943, the date of the earliest of his collected essays.<sup>27</sup> He brings to his religious philosophy a wide repertoire of propositions that he knows or believes as a scientist, as well as the conviction that any result yielded by scientific methods is irresistible to those who assent to the method. Unlike Hardouin, Leibowitz's model of knowledge derives from the natural sciences rather than from the corpus of ancient and ecclesiastical documents. The more 'modern' conflict of (natural) science with religious texts

<sup>26</sup> PALMER, p. 68-76.

<sup>27</sup> A short bibliography of Leibowitz's books dealing with religious philosophy: 1) *Torah u-Mitzvot ba-Zman ha-Zeh* (1953/1954); 2) *Yahaduth, 'Am Yehudi u-Medinat Yisrael*, Tel-Aviv: Schocken, 1976 — an overlapping collection with (1); 3) *Hitpathuth ve-Torashah — Pirkei Yesod*, 1978, not consulted; 4) *Emunato shel ha-Rambam*, 1980; 5) *Sihot 'al Pirkei-Avot ve 'al ha-Rambam*, Tel-Aviv, Schocken, 1974; 6) *Emunah, Historia va-'Arakhim*, Jerusalem: Akademon, 1982.



of all degrees of authority is implicit in several of the essays and is resolved to his satisfaction in one, 'Torah u-mada', which first appeared in a daily newspaper, *Ha-Aretz*, in July 1972 as a sharp lesson in the philosophy of science addressed to members of a symposium on science and religion who had, too facilely, reconciled the two.<sup>28</sup> Though the documents of ancient history do not figure prominently in his essays, he explicitly accepts them on the same plane as the findings of natural science, though he does not discuss their relative truth value.<sup>29</sup> These materials of literary archaeology, more critically read and interpreted than they would have been in the 17th- and 18th-centuries when antiquity was often naïvely confused with literal, historical truth, play the role in respect to the Old Testament that the monuments of Roman and Byzantine history played in respect to early ecclesiastical history, that of a standard against which the veracity of the religious texts, both founding documents and canonical histories, was tested.

Leibowitz's point of departure lies in the assumption that religion is a noncognitive phenomenon. It requires an unqualified worship of a god so completely hidden and transcendent that he is inaccessible; no theology (etymologically, god-talk) is appropriate, nor is any science of religion possible. Religion and its documents betray their function when they offer natural-scientific or historical information, or when they propose or reinforce ethical norms. The only values which religion may, and in fact must, admit are those of worship and obedience, and they may assume any sufficiently demanding form since God is divinely indifferent to the modes and even the fact of his worship. Ethics, which are connected with religion in so many religious philosophies and apologies, take the interests of man, and the politics of the community, as their ultimate value. Ultimate values tend to conflict; while religion and morality may coexist in principle because of their different objects, their applications engender conflicts. Leibowitz's paradigm for such conflicts is the would-be sacrifice of Isaac.

The Bible plays an important rôle in the Leibowitzian spiritual economy. It is neither inerrant nor is it revealed in the theophanous sense that naïve representatives, past and present, of Jewish orthodoxy held and hold. Its function is to lead men to the recognition and worship of God. That function may indeed be accomplished in second rate literature, by means of third rate philosophy (both Leibowitz's denigrations), and in spite of scientific errors. He regards the Bible as a religious literature in the sense of Bultmann, a propaedeutic body of metaphors, parables and commandments. Since the Bible does not accomplish its task by the transmission of true information, not even of the sort that is scientifically unattainable, it need

<sup>28</sup> *Ha-Aretz*, 14 July 1972; *Yahaduth...*, p. 361f.

<sup>29</sup> See the essays, "Ha-Mada' ve-Dath Yisrael", *ibid.*, p. 337f., and "Kedushatam shel Kitvei ha-Kodesh", *ibid.*, p. 346f., etc.

not be defended on that score and its conflicts with natural science and archaeological discoveries must be admitted in intellectual honesty and may then be disregarded in religious economy. Similarly, there are alternate and indeed secular sources for ethics and aesthetics so the Bible need not be minded for values in either domain. In its non-religious aspect, Leibowitz announces, the Bible is merely one archaeological document among many others and as susceptible to source- and form-criticism as any of them. Those who would look for Jewish law in the Bible rather than in the living and expanding *halakhic* tradition are berated as Karaites, while those who would mine the Bible for elements of speculative philosophy or theology are castigated as Lutherans.

Speculative rabbinic literature fares no better. Leibowitz is frankly eclectic and accepts no intellectual authority, not even that of Maimonides whom he admires above all others and whom he has expounded (and interpreted somewhat in his own image<sup>30</sup>). Since one cannot know anything about God, no speculative opinions can be authoritative.

Needless to say, Leibowitz's denigration of the non-religious aspect of Jewish literature, from the Bible through the philosophers, has been regarded as heretical by 'orthodox' critics who refuse to admit the partial desacralization it effects, or rather that sacred and secular qualities can adhere simultaneously to their religious texts. His attack upon the tyranny of the sacred texts, the 'Bible-worship' into which men tend to fall, is only a subsidiary theme in his work, but the polemic is so ferocious and unexpected in a religious writer — the most apt, and possibly the only apt, comparison is, again, Johann Christian Edelmann —, especially one in his milieu, that it takes on the tone of an attack upon the Bible itself, one that appears to accept many of the premises of the Enlightenment attacks upon the Bible.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See the review of *Emunato shel ha-Rambam* by Zeev Haroi (?) in 'Iyun, 30, No. 2 (1981), 141-149.

<sup>31</sup> We translate short extracts from the essay 'Kedushatam shel Kitvei ha-Kodesh' and regret the distortions of Leibowitz's argument that the abridgement entails. The reader is urged to read the complete essay, and others.

"Much ink has been spilt and many pens broken in the discussion in which a part of the religious community has been engaged against Bible criticism, *i.e.*, against the position that regards the Bible merely as a collection of literary testimonies and historical monuments susceptible to philological analysis and evaluation from the points of view of factual faithfulness, spiritual elevation, intellectual content and educational potential for the individual, the nation and mankind. This approach appears to many in the religious camp to be questioning the faith and destroying religion because of the conclusions which it is likely to reach or to which it has already led. ... While in other religious circles the arguments revive the hoary confrontation of faith and science, this time between faith and historical-philological science, after the analogy of the real or imagined confrontation of faith and natural science. ... What is interesting in the dispute is that the 'religious' spokesmen, without realizing it, are

It is Leibowitz's attack upon religious documents (in their secular aspect) that bears comparison with Hardouin. Both denigrate the written word in favour of a living tradition, the apostolic tradition as conserved in Rome for Hardouin, and for Leibowitz *halakhic* practice, democratically created and continually recreated by pious Jews whom it draws toward the worship of God and for whom its demands are the occasions for demonstrations of obedience to God. Hardouin rather more simplymindedly sought to demonstrate that most of the religious corpus was inauthentic and therefore nonauthoritative, while Leibowitz grants historical authenticity, if not to the degree asserted by traditional Jewish dogma, and denies intellectual authority. For him only religious suggestivity remains, and it is precious. These are fighting apologetic gambits, and both Hardouin and Leibowitz are extremely contentious literary personalities, prepared to undertake disputes with natural allies within their own religious community the better to urge their apologetic upon the unbelievers.

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standing on the same grounds as the secularist opponents with whom they want to differ: both ask what is the nature and content of Scripture from a historical and philological point of view and they only differ in regard to the answer that they give, or hope to give, to this question. This discussion lacks any religious meaning. ... [Another point of view] that aspires to become the basis of a generation's education and to form its cultural identity is the ideology of the Bible as a treasury of mankind's highest values, which they declare the epitome of the substantial content of Judaism. ... What this position has in common with the banal religious conceptions is that both regard the Bible as the basis of Judaism, though one interprets Judaism in a secular fashion and the other in a religious fashion. This discussion is tasteless and mere semantic quibbling. ... Our generation, to the extent that it regards itself as a link in the historical chain of Israel — and this pertains to the secular as well as to the religious sectors of the nation — can only attach itself to the tradition of *halakhic* Judaism, whether completely, partially, erratically or even merely to its echo, because that is the Judaism that has reached us as a living reality, and we have no practical ties with the Judaism of the scrolls upon which a 3000-year-old literature is written. The paradox, not to say the absurdity, of Ben Gurion-style Judaism, which attempts to revive Judaism, is that it attaches itself to archaeology and not to what has remained alive and active in the crucible of the history of the Jewish people. ... But seeing the Bible itself as the 'Book of Books' in the sense of its function as a contributor to the education of mankind, to the shaping of the self-image of man and the acquisition of humanistic social values is nothing but narrow chauvinism. In addition, this 'Bibliolatry' admires the Bible in a sense that it never carried in Judaism, a strange fusion of religious apostasy and Christian mentality: apostasy because it wrenches the Bible out of its religious context, and Christianity in so far as it, from its very inception, seized upon the Bible as an instrument with which to attack Judaism. As poetry and literature there are certainly monuments of world literature that surpass the Biblical texts; as philosophy, Plato and Kant are more important; as history, Thucydides is more interesting and profound since the Scriptures are excluded from an ethical context by their theocentrism, their confrontation of man with god and not with man; and as a pedagogical instrument, Sophocles's *Antigone* and Kant's *Theory of ethics* may surpass it. The meaning of Bible derives exclusively from its being *Holy Scriptures*..."

It is hard to find traces of the influence of Hardouin's antidocumentalist apologetic, apart from Berruyer, if indeed there is a connection between the two in that area. According to Monod, the abbé de Villefroy, in his *Lettres de M. l'abbé de \*\*\* à ses élèves pour servir d'introduction à l'intelligence des divines Ecritures & principalement des livres prophétiques relativement à la langue originale* (Paris, 1751), shows himself a disciple of Hardouin,<sup>32</sup> but we are not convinced. Villefroy certainly regards the Vulgate as a more accurate text than the Septuagint, but he also accepts the modern Hebrew text of the Bible as generally adequate — Hardouin regarded it as a forgery! — and holds that some of the prophesies have a double sense, the first of which does not relate to Jesus.<sup>33</sup> This reads like attenuated Simon or timid Berruyer but not at all like Hardouin.

As for Leibowitz's influence, it is still too soon to predict anything at all, especially since he has recently taken extreme, and extremely unpopular, political positions. He has always attacked the Israeli religious parties, their complaisance regarding the State's violations of religious law and the special privileges and subsidies that they have demanded. To be impartial, he has also attacked the State for the favoritism it accorded the religious parties (exemptions from military service for yeshivah students and for 'religious' women, subsidies for the yeshivah and the like) as the price of their support in all pre-Likud governments. Beyond these somewhat partisan matters — which are matters of principle for Leibowitz and lack thereof in his opponents — he has been an implacable moral conscience recalling the shames of Kiviah (1953) and the subsequent acts of reprisal undertaken by the State. Since the Six-Day War he has criticized the gradual expansion of the State into the conquered territories and we understand that in recent interviews he has expressed the most ferocious criticism of the 'Shlom Ha-Galil' war and occupation which are generally supported by the religious community. When his political positions will have proven themselves wise or misguided and forgivable, and when the passions aroused by Shlom Ha-Galil subside, the orthodox Israeli community may find the equanimity to re-examine his religious philosophy.

Leibowitz has attracted disciples, philosophers like Asa Kasher and J. Levinger who admire his independence and eclecticism, as well as followers in the scientific community who accept, or aspire to accept, the burden of *halakhah* that Leibowitz offers them as an alternative to the burden of dogma with all its inherent conflicts with science, but we are not aware of any disciple who has assumed Leibowitz's animus towards reli-

<sup>32</sup> See A. MONOD, *De Pascal à Chateaubriand, les défenseurs français du Christianisme*, Paris, 1916, p. 391n.

<sup>33</sup> T. I, p. 17-18.



gious texts of all sorts, or who has publicly admitted the validity of Bible criticism, a question treated with great discretion in Israel, outside the universities.

As long as source-criticism can be ignored and the findings of natural and historical science be quarantined off from the scientific propositions found in the Bible and in rabbinic literature, Leibowitz is not necessary. But when modern intellectual values eventually penetrate Israeli orthodoxy, when it becomes necessary to justify a segregation of the spiritual material in the Bible, which one would wish might retain a normative value, from the archaeological material which one would prefer to exclude from the burden of faith while accepting the reverence that its antiquity and role in the national conscience cast upon the spiritual material, then some sort of Leibowitzian, antidocumentalist apologetic will become more attractive. Leibowitz's system will of course accomplish the desired segregation but, as we have suggested elsewhere, at the price of the most radical paradoxes.

Curiously Leibowitz's paradoxes are not so different from Hardouin's, or at least many of them, inevitably, lie in the same domain. For Leibowitz history is merely a Faustian model of ethical and religious aspiration and struggle where what is conquered for morality and religion is not an eternal trophy for mankind or for a people. What is painfully gained is inevitably lost in the relapses of mankind and communities, so history can never warrant religion (or a national territorial claim) and must be extracted from religion. Analogously Hardouin would unravel all the certainties and attributions of classical history and letters, just what make them classical, in order to liberate ecclesiastical history, which hardly exists since rite and dogma have not changed since apostolic time. The same question remains for both apologists, whether they can, more properly, whether a community can still retain an unsupported sense of antiquity sufficient to yield motives for faith, whether a modern community can live in a religious present? Is participation by act or by faith in a 'living tradition', *halakhic* or apostolic, enough?