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ROGER L. EMERSON

In 1750 Hume finished his second *Enquiry* and was probably finishing up a draft of the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. He was thirty-nine and had been thinking about religious topics since his teens and writing about them for over twenty years. Indeed, as he told Gilbert Elliot on 10 March 1751, "tis not long ago that I burn'd an old Manuscript Book, wrote before I was twenty; which contain'd Page after Page, the gradual Progress of my Thoughts on that head."¹

By 1751 his "Progress" had brought him to a very curious position. Formally he remained a Presbyterian willing to subscribe the Westminster Confession as his own beliefs, to attend church—if need be to instruct university students in Christian verities—and presumably to accept the discipline which his established church imposed upon its members. All that had to be true if he really expected to be considered for a university post. As late as 4 February 1752, he would express chagrin at being passed over at Glasgow when a new professor of logic was chosen.² Publicly, Hume had denied no tenets of the Kirk established by law, although his scepticism had found altogether too much to be based upon both reason and testimony. And, just as publicly, his scepticism had undercut the arguments which allowed for a belief in the validity of any and all reported miracles. Privately, he was clearly even less religious than he wished publicly to appear to be. He was a scoffer and jester, a ridiculer of "priests," among whom ministers might be numbered, and one who could reasonably be classed among the agnostics whom his age

called deists or atheists. Many, such as Francis Hutcheson, William Wishart, Jr., and others who wrote against Hume's works, had little reason to think him pious or a believer. But others, like the Rev. Messrs. Robert Wallace, Alexander Webster, and Patrick Cuming seem not to have been put off by his early works. Wallace at least remained a friend as did the Edinburgh *literati*, at least one of whom seems to have thought him a Christian even at the end of his life.³ Duplicity of this sort Hume may have found difficult to live with. In any case, in 1751 he chose to appear publicly, but anonymously, as the scoffer and jester that he was. The work in which he did so is "THE PETITION OF THE Grave and venerable BELLMEN (or Sextons) of the Church of SCOTLAND, to the Hon. House of Commons." to which was attached "A LETTER to a MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, with the foregoing PETITION." signed "ZEROBABEL⁴ MACGILCHRIST, / Bellman of BUCKHAVEN."⁵

The broadside squib was finished before 18 February 1751, presumably while Hume worked on the draft of the *Dialogues* and enjoyed the furore arising amongst the orthodox from his essay "On Miracles," which had appeared in 1748. It is thus reflective of more serious concerns with religion than those which it seems superficially to address: the schemes proposed for the increase in both the stipends of ministers and the salaries of schoolmasters. Behind the wit, there seems to be a clear intention to mock scripture, to cast doubt upon the lineage and functions of Christ the Saviour, and incidentally to point out foolishness in Freemasonry and the danger of joining too closely both politics and religion—a sin of which both Covenanters and Jacobites had been guilty. While Hume intended both to ridicule the schemes to raise salaries and to amuse his friends, he clearly had more serious ends in view. These his adopted *persona* helped him to accomplish, but they were ends which made it imperative to publish anonymously and to conceal his authorship. It should not surprise us that "the printers in Edinburgh refused to print it" (HL l 149). What should surprise us is that Hume would run the risks to his reputation and career which printing such a piece would entail. Edinburgh was a small world and authorship of anonymous pieces was usually soon guessed. Had it been revealed, then Hume would have been seen as an open mocker of the Bible and as the hypocrite which many then and now took and take him to have been. The hypocrisy of his stance should remind us all that his claims to candour and frankness must be taken with some salt.

The Petition ridicules the efforts made by the ministers and schoolmasters since 1746-1747 to raise their incomes, which had long been fixed. Their grievances were real, since the average minister's wage was fixed at about £45 *per annum* in addition to a manse, glebe, and other perquisites. Their income might in total amount to £60 but was in many cases less.⁶ Schoolmasters got somewhat less depending upon the size of their fee-paying classes, local endowments, perquisites, and provided housing. Few schoolteachers earned salaries of £20 a year. Many held other minor parish offices and some had

perks which augmented their wages but most made only as much as a skilled workman, well below what a gentleman or genteel scholar would think appropriate.⁷ Hume had thought himself poor on £40 a year and barely genteel when he had about £100. The grievances of both ministers and teachers were real enough and Hume does not look good ridiculing them.

The Scottish landowners justified their unwillingness to raise stipends and salaries by appeals to expediency and to the Act of Union which they said the increases would violate. They claimed that the ministers generally did not need higher stipends, that the means existed for raising those salaries which were really too low, and that the country could not afford to be more generous than it was. To raise salaries would "disturb the peace" and harm religion, which was better supported in Scotland than in England. To change the ministers' wages by a Parliamentary Act would imperil the Kirk. Under the Act of Union, it was not to be interfered with by the British Parliament, but to remain forever as it had been established under Scottish law in 1707. They had been less squeamish when patronage had been restored to them in 1712 by an act of that same Parliament.⁸ A similar argument was applied to Scottish private law. There were constitutional issues at stake, but one suspects the landowners were more honest when they said that the augmentations would harm property values and imperil the rights to impropriated tithes which many had acquired long before.

In *The Petition* we do not find the plump, jolly, witty, urbane man of the world arguing for the realities of benevolence, sympathy, and good will. The piece is witty but it supports the claims of the selfish, the grasping, and ungenerous who, for their own ends, would grind the faces of the poor. To find Hume turning their stone is a bit distasteful. But then, like many Scottish gentlemen, he tended to think that societies needed little more religion than would preserve order and that educating the lower orders beyond their station was an error. These views, like many he held, were rather more French and "philosophical" than British and Christian.⁹ The sexton in this piece was not untypical of those who everywhere did most for education in the eighteenth century. He was pious, biblically oriented, enthusiastic, narrow in outlook and unconcerned with the nonutilitarian and nonreligious ends which learning might have.¹⁰ Supporting education to produce more of his sort was not the aim of many *philosophes*.

Discussion of schoolmasters' wages had been protracted and was complicated by the existence of Episcopalian schoolmasters who as early as 1747-48 had tried to have subsidies given by the government to convert Scots to their form of church polity and to Whiggery.¹¹ The schoolmasters were unsuccessful and their cause made less of a stir than that of the ministers.

The controversy over the augmentation of stipends had come to a head at the General Assembly held in May 1750. An Assembly committee recommended that Parliament simplify the legal process which might allow

for increases on a case by case basis.¹² This would have cut the costs of litigation for ministers but might have resulted in many processes going forward without the knowledge of heritors (the landowning taxpayers of the parish). The committee also recommended the payment of interest on unpaid stipends and the rationalization of parish bounds, even the creation or suppression of parishes. These remedies would have cost the rate-payers money. Worse yet, they would have affected patronage rights including those of the Crown. Many landowners sitting as ruling elders in the General Assembly were outraged. They managed in May 1750 to get the recommendation watered down to a petition to do something to alleviate "The distressed Circumstances of many Ministers of this Church, arising from the Smalness of their Stipends, the Expence of Processes of Augmentations, and the dilatory Payments of Stipends."¹³ The remedy was left to Parliament. By October 1750, the landowners in twenty-six of Scotland's thirty-four counties had published their opposition to the proposed changes. The rest had probably entrusted their opposition to a national committee meeting in Edinburgh and acting both for Midlothian and the gentry in general. This was managed by the Earls of Morton, Lauderdale, and Hopetoun, Hopetoun's son, Charles Hope-Weir, Robert Dundas, Jr., and Archibald Murray.¹⁴ Parliament would not act against such formidable opposition and, in the end, did nothing.¹⁵

Fears that it might act fuelled controversy in the Scottish press until well into 1751. Hume's *Petition* was a contribution to that discussion and shows him trying in a Swiftian manner to influence, in a small way, the public life of his country. It also shows him solidly in support of the landed class from which he came and of one mind with his brother, John, and many friends, such as Gilbert Elliot and William Mure, who had opposed the passage of a resolution concerning stipends in the General Assembly.

If *The Petition* was mainly a political squib, the *Letter* which accompanied it was something else. It gives *The Petition* various contexts which define its larger significance. These are of several sorts. At a basic personal level, there are likely to be in-jokes involving Hume's close friends, such as General James St. Clair, Colonel Sir Harry Erskine, James Oswald, M.P., or the Reverend Henry Spens (Spence). *The Petition* has a local provenance—Buckhaven, Fifeshire—and hence would be associated by Hume's readers with facts about that real place. But there were other associations which Buckhaven had. It was an emblematic town which had appeared in satiric pamphlets before, a sort of Podunk on the Fife coast.¹⁶ The language and name of the purported author supply religious contexts in which the broadside should be considered. Those are two-fold at least. On the one hand, Hume leads us to the New and Old Testaments and to textual problems; on the other, he points us toward ideas about the association of politics with religion which we know Hume found ridiculous and dangerous. The *Letter* offers us the key to the hidden meanings of this text. As it does so, it shows us not only an artful Hume but one who

certainly knew his Bible better than we had thought and who was also willing to ridicule it.

The *Letter* attached to *The Petition* in Hume's broadside purports to be written by a pious workingman with a Highland name living in Buckhaven, Fife. The Bellman sees things in a providential and biblical framework so rigid that he even hesitates to use non-biblical words like "the POST."¹⁷ He would have men act for the glory of God, as "Men of that sacred Character" have done "throughout all Ages"—a comment which sorts ill with his petition's final comparison between sextons and Roman Catholic Cardinals.¹⁸ His arguments are laughable. They suggest that no real case exists for the augmentation of stipends, which is a cause supported by foolish, enthusiastic rustics. He says stipends should increase because:

- (1) it would glorify God for the bellmen to emulate their superiors, the ministers and teachers who, like the bellmen, are "also ecclesiastical Persons";
- (2) "it can be prov'd demonstrably, from Scripture and Reason, that the Cause of Religion is as intimately and inseparably connected with the temporal Interests and worldly Grandeur of your Petitioners, as with any of these Ecclesiastics whatsoever";
- (3) gravediggers "next after the Physicians, are the Persons in the World" most useful to heritors and inheritors;
- (4) though bellmen are ill-paid, they do more to reform and convert infidels "than all the Sermons in the World";
- (5) the music they make is all the instrumental music "left in our truly Reform'd Churches" other than that of the hymn-singing ministers and precentors.¹⁹

Knowing this is by Hume may make it funnier than it at first seems, but it is not obviously a rich Swiftian confection. What makes it notable are the ironies set up by the accompanying *Letter* and the *persona* of Zerobabel MacGilchrist.

MacGilchrist is a parody of the canting Puritan fanatic, and his Christian name Hume will later notice as one of many ridiculous names chosen by seventeenth-century fanatics.²⁰ Only such a one could find in "the Application of the reverend Ministers and learned Schoolmasters for an Augmentation of their Stipends and Sallaries" "a Kind of PISGAH Prospect opened to us of better Days."²¹ Though mean, and of low condition, he is useful, pious, and "not more richly endow'd than a primitive Apostle."²² The gravedigger is not learned enough to correct the solecism of the second and last paragraph of his letter in which he promises the Member of Parliament to

whom it is addressed, "in my own Name, and in that of all my Brethren, that he, amongst us, whom the LORD will bless with the comfortable Task of doing you the last Service in our Power, shall do it so carefully, that you never shall find Reason to complain of him."²³ So much for the surface of the joke. Beneath it there are the more serious concerns having little to do with its obvious and professed subject.

The simplest way to make this clear is to read the *Letter* backwards and then *The Petition* in the light of what has been revealed. So, we begin with Buckhaven.

Buckhaven was a small Fifeshire village in the parish of Wemyss. It was too small to possess its own Kirk, just as in an earlier satire it had had no college. If it had a church, then the Bellman belonged to a seceding sect; but then, no sectary could appeal for an increase in a salary fixed by the state.

In other ways Buckhaven was also unique. It is alleged to have been founded in the sixteenth century by Dutch sailors whose ship beached on this shore. Stranded, they settled with the permission of the Earl of Wemyss, the parish's principal heritor but not the patron of its church. The rights to appoint the minister vested in the Town Council of Edinburgh, at whom Hume may also be having a go. Its then-Lord Provost, George Drummond, was a noted evangelical who had aided in the prosecution of Hume's friend, Archibald Stewart, whom he had succeeded as Lord Provost in 1746.²⁴ All of these details, which many of his potential readers would know, increase the humour of his squib.²⁵

Buckhaven was not only founded by Dutchmen but as late as the 1790s it appears to have been a rather distinctive place. The *Statistical Account* mentions it, noting that its men married young and within the village, which still preserved unique customs. An inbred community of Lowland fisher-folk is not where one would expect to find a man with a Highland name like MacGilchrist. Dullards maybe, but not Highlanders. Zerobabel MacGilchrist was indeed an oddity.

Any petition from Fife would have gone to a local M.P. In this case there were several plausible recipients whom Hume might have wished to involve. It could reasonably have gone to Hume's good friend James Oswald of Dunikier, M.P. for Fife. Dunikier was about twelve miles from Buckhaven. There is a *prima facie* risibility in seeing Oswald, a friend of "Bubb" Doddington and a client of the Prince of Wales, as "the Instrument of the LORD in this holy Undertaking."²⁶ He was almost certainly opposed to the augmentation schemes and would have enjoyed the joke—or would he have been slightly embarrassed had it been printed in London without his knowledge and distributed to M.P.s? Hume we know sent it to both Gilbert Elliot and William Mure, who were also M.P.s, and perhaps to Archibald Stewart, who had been one. Its author was clearly proud of his joke, which was also shared with Dr. John Clephane, the army physician whom Hume had met on the

expedition to L'Orient.²⁷ We do not know that Oswald got a copy, which suggests that he might have been a butt of this joke. Of course this is speculative but it fits well with Hume's character and with his willingness about this time to play jokes in print on his friend James Fraser (HL I 146-149).

We know that another M.P. from Fife was not the person aimed at because Hume thought his squib fit to be read and enjoyed by General James St. Clair, Hume's old commander on the L'Orient Expedition and the representative of the Dysart Burghs, another Fifeshire constituency (HL I 149). That leaves two other candidates, Thomas Leslie, M.P. for the Perth Burghs, and General Philip Anstruther, who sat for Anstruther Easter, a riding which included four Fifeshire towns near to Buckhaven. Both were Squadron men whom Hume had no reason to favor, since this faction had been active in blocking his appointment to the philosophy chair in the University of Edinburgh which he had sought a few years earlier. Leslie does not appear in Hume's correspondence but Anstruther does and in ways which make him the most plausible recipient of this squib.²⁸

General Anstruther was odious to Scots because he had supported the Ministry over the Porteous Affair in 1736-1737; he even voted for the demolition of one of Edinburgh's old gates, the Netherbow Port. This was truly a slighting of the city and of Scotland, one bitterly resented by Scots. Anstruther had quarrelled with General St. Clair and with his heir, Colonel Sir Harry Erskine. He had opposed them politically in Fife and had actually had Erskine court-martialed when he had served under Anstruther's command in Minorca. From 1746 until 1753, when Erskine beat him out of his Fife seat, Anstruther was continually in the news and being slanged by Hume's friends as a tyrant, peculator, monopolist, and a generally obnoxious man.²⁹ In 1753, Hume was to rejoice in his political defeat and ironically to refer to him as "that renown'd Commander" (HL I 181). If Hume's pleasure was like that he attributed to his friend, Dr. Clephane, then it was composed of "Friendship" for Erskine and "Malice" toward Anstruther. He may well have felt these same emotions in 1751. To write the *Bellmen's Petition* and then send it to Anstruther would have been a trick worthy of Swift, whom Hume was seeking to emulate. He needed a Fife town and Buckhaven did very nicely.

The fact that Buckhaven was in the parish of Wemyss may have also pleased him for other reasons. The minister of the parish was Henry or Harry Spens, who was married to the widow of an unidentified Captain Hume of the Royal Navy. Spens was listed in the *Scots Magazine* as a member of the Committee to advise the Kirk on the scheme to augment the salaries of the ministers.³⁰ It is not unlikely that he favored the proposals. He was a friend of the Scottish Moderates, some of whom Hume knew by 1751, and eventually he would become a professor of divinity at St. Andrews. He was also a man with philosophical interests who spent some years translating Plato's *Republic*

into English. Hume may well have enjoyed giving him an ignorant parishoner.

We should also ask if Hume was having a bit of fun with the parish's chief heritor, who owned most of it, James, 5th Earl of Wemyss (1669-1756). The Wemyss family's politics had mingled religion and politics in ways Hume deplored just as did the covenanting tradition in which stood Zerobabel MacGilchrist. The Earl had been active in the Royal Company of Archers since 1714 and served as its Captain General from 1743 to 1756. His son, Lord Elcho (1721-87), also belonged to this Jacobite body which was the sovereign's nominal bodyguard in Scotland. Elcho saw service as a royal bodyguard but it was as the Commander of Bonnie Prince Charlie's Guards in 1745-1746. He was later to be a Captain and Colonel in a French regiment of foot which allowed him to make use of the education he had acquired at Angers, c. 1738-1740.³¹ Hume might have known him in France. That the parish more or less belonged to the Earl of Wemyss means that MacGilchrist would almost certainly be renting from, or working for, a Jacobite—in short, for a family whose politics were like his own but at the other end of the political spectrum. And, Hume may even be ridiculing the Wemyss family. That is less likely but it is a possibility not to be dismissed out of hand.

At just about the time Hume wrote the *Bellmen's Petition*, he also wrote a squib on James Fraser whose Jacobitical politics were ridiculed and associated with a number of Scottish and English titled gentlemen. Those sheets are also put into a religious context by the title "To the Right Honble the Lord-Chief Justice Reason...," a clear reference to an anti-deistical work by Bishop Thomas Sherlock.³² Hume's covering letter for this skit describes its butt as a "turbulent Patriot" while the notes accompanying the text identify Fraser as a Roman Catholic who Hume thought needed "Lenitives, Soporifics, Palliatives &c." approved of by Whig politicians (HL II 341f). He had Jacobites on his mind in 1750-1751 and the Earl of Wemyss and his son, Lord Elcho, were of that camp.³³

The Wemysses were also Freemasons. Indeed, the 5th Earl had been Grand Master of the Scottish Grand Lodge in 1743-1744. This means that he had been active in Masonry during the period in which Royal Arch Masonry was taking shape (c. 1700-1750).³⁴ Central to the Royal Arch Lodges was the legend of Zerubbabel, "the Provincial Grand Master" who presided over the building of the second Temple begun "in the year of discovery." More of this later. Elcho, probably also a Freemason, was cousin to Francis Charters of Amisfield who was the Scottish Grand Master in 1747. This connexion is interesting because it ties this noble family to recent Masonic developments in Scotland but incidentally to the rather ignoble Col. Francis Charteris of Amisfield (1675-1732), a "Runner of Sir Robert Walpole" who had been derided by the Tory wits and Hogarth. Grandfather to Lord Elcho, he was held by some to have succeeded as a gambler because he was a wizard; more cer-

tainly, he was a cheat and convicted rapist (1730) and a notorious religious hypocrite.³⁵ Lord Elcho was said to have inherited some of his traits. If Hume meant to associate Masonry, Fife, enthusiasm in politics, and religion, and used Zerobabel to do so, then, I think, the Wemysses may be pertinent to a reading of this satirical broadside.

If Buckhaven and Fife matter, the name "Zerobabel MacGilchrist" matters even more. Mossner tells us that *Gilchrist* means Christ's gillie or servant.³⁶ The prefix *Mac* means "son of." This name, son of Christ's servant, puts us in the cultural context of people primitive enough not to have fixed surnames, which was exactly the condition of some Highlanders in Hume's lifetime. They were and remained Alaisdir MacRobert MacIain, etc., or Alexander son of Robert the son of Ian. In short, we have a demeaning reference to begats and begetters. And that is the most famous context in which Zerubbabel exists for Christians. He shows up in the lineages of Christ given by Matthew (1:12) and by Luke (3:23) and in many places in the Old Testament where the return from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple is recounted. Hume could also have found him in the Apocrypha (1 Esdras 1) and in Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*. What no one, not even Josephus, could manage was to produce a perfectly clear and consistent account of him from these varied sources. *Zerobabel* is indeed an uncouth name but it allows Hume to point to the problems besetting the Hebraic and Christian revelations. Once again, we also find him associating the genealogy of a god with culturally primitive peoples, but in this case it is with the god whom his friends worshipped and the people are other Scots.

Zerubbabel is the first and almost the only name common to the lineages of Jesus given in the two synoptic gospels which listed his ancestors. The fact that neither John nor Mark did so did not go unnoticed. But a larger problem was why the lineages we have do not agree.³⁷ This was an ancient problem which had been commented on by the time of Eusebius (d. 342). In Matthew ten generations separate Jesus from Zerubbabel, while in Luke's account there are nineteen. Both lines go back to David but they come down from different sons: from Solomon in Matthew, from Nathan in Luke. Matthew takes the genealogy of the Messiah back only to Abraham while Luke goes back to Adam. The accounts are, therefore, very different and had had much discussion. Hume would have found a bit of this in Josephus,³⁸ and, doubtless, in countless other places had he bothered to look. Almost certainly he had.

There seem to have been standard ways of reconciling the accounts, but none could survive the implicit critique Hume was giving of them. Matthew was thought to have emphasized the Jewish nature of Christ, who had fulfilled the messianic prophecies and was the anti-type of Abraham, with whom God had entered into the Old Covenant which had made the people of Israel truly His own. Matthew's Christ is more royal. Luke, on the other hand, has a Christ who comes for all and who is the second (and more successful) Adam. He is

not so much Christ the King but Christ the propitiation for our sins willingly offered up by Himself, the Priest upon the Cross. He is still of the line of David, but David is cousin to us all and not first of all a Hebrew king and holy man.

Others had wondered if Luke had not given Mary's antecedents rather than Joseph's. This theory seems to date from the fifteenth century and to have been accepted by Luther as well as the Roman Catholics, but not by Calvinists. Another scheme derived the genealogies not from the natural sons and the blood line but from the inheritance of the Jewish crown. Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel and grandson of Jechoniah, was the inheritor, then, of Pediah, who married his deceased brother's wife. Or, Zerubbabel was the lineal descendant of Nathan through Neri but owed his royal title to Jeconiah, who was the king led away to Babylon. Some thought the legal rights to Davidic kingship were to be traced in Matthew, while Luke was more careful to get right the blood line. Whatever the arguments, the fact remained that the lists looked and were discrepant and contentious and had been so for centuries. For a Puritan to have assumed the name Zerubbabel showed a certain arrogance, but then not to be able to spell the name correctly clearly indicated Zerobabel's ignorance of his Bible.

The genealogical perplexities embodied in the lineage of Christ were similar to those that Hume had already encountered as an historian. The Tudors traced their lineage to Arthur and through him to the Trojan Brut, son of Aeneas and thence to Japheth and through Noah to the better known descendants of Adam.³⁹ The Campbell Dukes of Argyll could do the same. They, we should recall, were Highlanders. Campbell chiefs, in Gaelic, bore names like Red John of the Battles of the race of Diarmid—otherwise, John Campbell, the 2nd Duke of Argyll and 1st Duke of Greenwich (1680-1743).⁴⁰ Hume would comment on all this more generally in *The Natural History of Religion* and in his *History of England*.⁴¹ The Davidic lineages were mythic, imaginative structures and necessarily shifting and incoherent even in the scriptures which Ezra the Scribe had not quite sorted out and which Matthew the Publican (or tax collector) of Capernaum could not master nor Luke, the gentile physician and artist, clearly state. These scriptures were no better than what Hume could expect if his friends James Oswald, Dr. John Clephane, and Allan Ramsay sat down to compile a similar book out of discordant records. To name the Bellman *Zerobabel* was to point to all this muddling and to the doubts which it cast upon the *bona fides* of the Saviour. If one were going to be fanatical, it ought to be on better grounds than the Bible offered.

The fanaticisms Hume most feared were religious and political-religious enthusiasms which deprived men of life, liberty, property, and the security necessary to the enjoyment of these. He wrote about these in his *Essays* and in the *History of England*; he jested about such topics with his friends. Mad Covenanters, who wanted a Christian kingdom ruled by saints; Jacobites, whose religious views were different but no less inimical to liberty; and others

who joined politics and religion too closely—all were rightly to be feared and written down. So it is worth recalling that Zerubbabel was the last Davidic king in whom regal and religious functions merged.⁴² He was the “prince of Judah” (Hag. 1:14, Ez. 1:8) and the “governor of Judea” (Hag. 2:14; 2:2) whose spirit the Lord had “stirred up” (Hag. 1:14) and strengthened (Hag. 2:4) and to whom He had said through the prophet Haggai, “I am with you” (Hag. 2:4). Zerubbabel had been commissioned to lead the Hebrews home from Babylon (Ez. 4:3) and had been entrusted by the Persians with the Temple’s treasure (Ez. 2:68f). God promised him that he would live to complete the rebuilding of the Temple (Zech. 4:9) which he did (Ez. 6:15-22). He, like Zerobabel, also provided music for the Temple (Neh. 12:47). Zerubbabel compiled, or had compiled, genealogies of the returned Jews (Neh. 7:5), lists of begetters and of the begotten. “The last public act of this great man, whose name marks a leading epoch in Jewish history, was his causing the returned children of the captivity to keep the passover with joy, for the Lord had made them joyful” (Ezra 6:22).⁴³ The Bellman is more Jew than Christian in his outlook. His willingness to confuse religious and temporal interests is a throw-back to the seventeenth century when a covenanted people wished to be ruled by Christ the King—the type of whom Zerubbabel had long been considered (Zec. 3:7-10; 6:13). But this politics was also a throw-back to primitive times in which religious and political powers had not yet been separated.

The biblical Zerubbabel was an active figure, war leader, and governor but also one to whom the prophet Haggai had set out God’s promise to “destroy the strength of the Kingdoms of the heathen; and over-throw the chariots, and those that ride in them, and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother”(Hag 2:22). The son of Christ’s gillie cants about the glory of God and the “PISGAH Prospect” opened by placating the Kirk and its servants, but it is the prospect of apocalyptical war and repression that lurks in the biblical texts so familiar to Hume and his readers. One can well imagine that the Bellman applied to himself as well as to his namesake another of Haggai’s prophecies: “In that Joy, saith the Lord of Hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealthiel...and make thee as a signet, for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts” (Hag. 2:23). The Bellman may be a fool but, if there be something in a name, there is much to be feared from him and his mates.

Hume may have had an inkling of the philological meanings which *Zerubbabel* bore. Those he could have found in some learned commentary; perhaps some friend with a bit of Hebrew helped him. The first part of the name means “offspring.” Zerubbabel is literally the “offspring of Babylon” or Babel. Was this his way of telling us that Judaism was more the product of the Babylonians than of the God of Moses? This is not so far-fetched when one recalls that the Egyptians were frequently seen, by Toland and Voltaire among others, as the people who had given rise to many of the ideas of Judaism.

"Babel" also had another meaning in the Bible which Hume would have known because of its association with the story of the Tower of Babel. It was there that the language of the first men was confused or confounded and they quite literally began to babble to one another. "Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:9). Hume's Zerobabel is the offspring of confusion and is well named. Babel for the Babylonians meant "gate of God." Prefixed by "zero," it might mean "not the way to God" or "no way to God," certainly not one with Zerobabel as the guide.⁴⁴

All this sets up complex patterns of irony within the text but there is yet more, particularly when Zerobabel is set against the image of him found in the Apocrypha and Josephus. There Zerubbabel is a wise man whose judicious remarks on the strength of women and truth (they exceed the strength of kings and of wine: 1 Esdras 4:4-36)⁴⁵ helped to persuade Darius to allow Zerubbabel to lead the Hebrews out of Babylon to restore Jerusalem and the Temple—a decision which the Apocrypha also tells us Cyrus honored after his father's death. Slightly different accounts of this appear in Ezra (3:2, 4:24, 5:103, 6:8), Nehemiah (12:47), Zechariah (4:6-10) and Haggai (1:14; 2:4-9; 2:21-23). But, Hume would have found the story best told in Josephus's *Antiquities* (Bk II:1-5) which he probably read in William Whiston's translation. Josephus's account differs slightly from the Authorized Version and also drew upon classical historians as well as the Old Testament and apocryphal books of Esdras. His story stresses the rebuilding of the Temple and thus the events which made Zerubbabel important in the mythology of Masonry and particularly so in the very years leading up to the writing of the *Petition*.

In Masonic lore Zerubbabel was the most important of the three master Masons who presided over the building of the second Temple and who was involved in the recovery of the Secret Traditions of the Masons. It is those which are said to be particularly embodied in the ceremonies of Royal Arch Masonry.⁴⁶ These seem to have taken shape in Britain and France c. 1700-1726?-1746. By the last date, Zerubbabel and the legend of the Royal Arch had made their way into a variety of rituals, songs and toasts.⁴⁷ This may even have happened earlier in Scotland than elsewhere. Be that as it may, we know that by 1723, when James Anderson's *The Constitutions of the Freemasons* was published, Zerubbabel had secured his place as "The Provincial Grand Master in Judah" under Cyrus with a warrant datable to 536 B.C. to rebuild the Temple.⁴⁸ By 516 B.C. he had finished it and "celebrated the *Cape-Stone*." It was consecrated in 515 B.C. Anderson added: "and tho' It came far short of *Solomon's Temple* in Extent and Decoration, nor had in it the *Cloud of Glory* or Divine *SHECHINAH* and the holy Reliques of Moses, yet being rear'd in the *Solomonian Stile*, It was the finest Building upon Earth."⁴⁹ Thereafter the Provincial Grand Mastership was assumed first by Ezra the Scribe and then by

Nehemiah, the builder of Jerusalem's new walls and houses. We can imagine what Hume thought of this nonsense purveyed by Dr. Anderson, cleric of Aberdeen. Unfortunately, Hume is not known to have commented elsewhere on Masonry.

In addition to the formation of Royal Arch Masonry, the 1730s and 1740s also saw the publication of a number of Masonic catechisms and books purporting to reveal Masonic secrets. These were sparked in part by Masonry's rapid spread but also by its condemnation by the French monarchy and the Catholic Church in 1738.⁵⁰ In some of these volumes Zerubbabel also figures. In 1744, for example, Hume could have read *Le Parfait Maçon*, a French exposure which retold the story of the building of the Temple. It also went on to describe a fourth-degree Masonry not unlike that of the emerging Royal Arch lodges:

When the question arose of rebuilding the Temple of the Lord, Zerubabel chose from the three grades of Masonry [i.e., apprentices, craftsmen, masters] the most capable workmen; but as the Israelites had to suffer many obstacles & reverses during the course of their labours, at the hands of the Samaritans & other neighbouring nations, the work would never have been completed, had not this Prince taken the precaution of creating a fourth grade of Mason, whose number he limited to 753 chosen from among the most excellent artists; these not only supervised all the others, but they were also charged with watching the security of the workmen; they made their rounds every night, as much to forward the work, as to reconnoitre against ambushes, or forestall the attacks of their enemies. Their work being much more arduous than that of other Masons, they were awarded a more favourable rate of pay: & to be able to recognize them, Zerubabel gave them a sign & particular words.⁵¹

He in short created a new lodge as British and French masons were doing in this period. Is there any reason to think Hume had any of this in mind when he penned the *Bellmen's Petition*? I think there is.

First, Hume shared so many Masonic interests that it is difficult to believe he was uninterested or even unmoved by the aims of the Freemasons.⁵² Masons were for at least a qualified liberty, equality, fraternity, and the furtherance of knowledge, politeness, taste, and improvements. Some of their songs praised "the gentle laws of Epicurus" as the gospel Masons should follow.⁵³ They hated tyranny and despotism and at least called for benevolence. *Le Parfait Maçon* of 1744 called Masonry "moral" and as "useful as it is agreeable." Its author claimed "it would be, in my view, the best school for humanity" even though its ceremonies were little more than moral dramas not unlike passion plays. Hume also would have agreed with some of its critics.

The author of *Le Parfait Maçon* also condemned it intellectually for grounds that even look Humean: "Masonry, considered in the sense of a *mystery* is without contradiction, no more than a creation of the mind, & pure fiction supported by grand words void of meaning & by frivolous allusions which could only deceive simpletons."⁵⁴

The second reason why Hume would have been interested in Masonry is because he knew so many Freemasons. One of his most distinguished Masonic acquaintances was his old friend the Chevalier Ramsay, who was the last Grand Master in France before the suppression of the Freemasons in 1738. The Jacobite Chevalier Ramsay had actively promoted and proselytized for the order. One of his last Masonic projects was the proposed creation of an encyclopedia not wholly unlike what Diderot would eventually edit. The Chevalier Ramsay's *Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion* had been published in London in 1749 and was under discussion. It was even reviewed by the *Scots Magazine* in 1751.

Ramsay was not the only Grand Master whom Hume knew. The Earl of Morton, the President of the Edinburgh Philosophical Society, had been the Grand Master of the Scottish Grand Lodge in 1739; in 1741 he had the honor of presiding over the English Grand Lodge. Perhaps as many as two-thirds of the members of Hume's clubs were also Freemasons. Hume was not above having fun with his colleagues or with others whom he knew to be Masons.

In 1751 there were other reasons to be thinking about Freemasonry. The topic was in the air. In 1751 Pope Benedict XIV would issue a second and long awaited condemnation of Masonry. The Church objected to the secrecy of the order but secular governments tended to distrust Freemasons because they seemed vaguely subversive. On the Iberian peninsula these two strains came together in the Inquisitions of the Spanish and the Portuguese. Their persecutions of Freemasons had produced in 1746 a best-selling work entitled *The Suffering of John Coustos*;⁵⁵ it was printed by Hume's printer, William Strahan. Eventually it would see twenty editions before 1850 and was circulated in French as well. Hume would surely have been aware of it.

And then there were the Fifeshire connections to the Jacobite Earl of Wemyss and his unlikely tenant Zerobabel MacGilchrist, who built only burial chambers in the sodden Fifeshire soil. All that would have tickled Hume's fancy as much as knowing that one of Zerobabel's biblical brothers was named Simei (or Shemei) and had given his name in Dryden's *Absolom and Achitophel* to the hypocritical republican, Slingsby Bethel, who would take any oath to become Sheriff of London.⁵⁶ It is hard to believe that Hume would not have known of Zerubbabel's Masonic ties and not hard to believe that part of his joke was to pick an arch-Mason as well as a type of Christ. Hume's Edinburgh printers who refused to print the broadside may not have found it so funny to have such an important Masonic figure shown here as an absurd grave digger

and bell ringer to an odd village of 400 people, but Hume was a tease and was not above teasing his Masonic friends by ridiculing Zerubbabel.

What we have in the *Bellmen's Petition* is a broadside more interesting than it first appears. When Hume argued against the schemes for augmenting stipends, he revealed his own intense social conservatism and the limits which aristocratic elitism imposed on his form of enlightenment. That his social views were so widely shared by the gentry to which he belonged offered him some measure of protection for his religious deviance and allowed him to move at ease in his own society. But the broadside also shows us a writer who knew his Bible well enough to judiciously pick a very complex figure fraught with significance. Zerubbabel's story as told in the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and Josephus could not be made thoroughly consistent. Matthew's and Luke's use of Zerubbabel required special pleading to reconcile their genealogies. Since these problems had long been known, we should assume that Hume chose his name for the Bellman to cast doubt on the texts, on the prophecies, and on the consistency and veracity of the early accounts of Christ. Associating all this with a Highlander begotten by Christ's gillie not only denigrates the type of Christ but puts the biblical stories in the context of rude and barbarous peoples whose religions are rooted in fear and errors, which produce cruelty and superstition. Hume is here mocking scripture in print and thus breaking with his earlier practice in more serious works. But, if pressed and questioned, he might have said that not he, but absurd Puritans demeaned the Davidic Kings, Christ and Christianity. Here his precedent might well have been Butler's *Hudibras* rather than works by Swift or Dryden.

All this shows us a Hume who was in 1750-1751, despite his protestations to the contrary, a religious hypocrite willing to profess publicly Christianity as his own true belief but to deny it in private. In this respect he perhaps resembles Hobbes more than anyone else, but with a difference. Hume's world had to be freer. There was utility in allowing men to discuss anything even while they upheld, as a civic obligation, the established religion of their state. Kant would come to somewhat similar conclusions.

The setting given this squib points to the local figures on whom he may well have wished to play a joke. But, just as surely, it points to the connections between politics and religion which we know from other works that Hume found illicit and deplored.

Finally, we have in this piece some presumptive evidence of what Hume thought about Freemasonry. We do so because it is unlikely that anyone whom Hume wanted to read about Zerubbabel/Zerobabel in 1750-1751 would not know of his connections with Masonry. Hume would have agreed with the author of *Le Parfait Maçon*: it was nonsense but not harmful. If his friends or Philosophical Society colleagues wanted to play at such games, let them; but, let them also realize that Zerobabel's "PISGAH Prospect" might also include an apocalyptic vision of a world transformed, if not by the Lord of Hosts, at least

by the covenanted and sealed "unco' guid" who had so unsettled Britain in the seventeenth century.

NOTES

1 *The Letters of David Hume*, edited by J. Y. T. Greig, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), I 154; hereafter cited as HL.

2 For accounts of these attempts to become a professor, see R. L. Emerson, "The 'Affair' at Edinburgh and the 'Project' at Glasgow: The Politics of Hume's Attempts to Become a Professor," in *Hume and Hume's Connexions*, edited by M. A. Stewart and John P. Wright (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 1-22; M. A. Stewart, *The Kirk and the Infidel: An Inaugural Lecture* (Lancaster: Lancaster University Publications Office, 1995).

3 Alexander Carlyle, *The Autobiography of Dr. Alexander Carlyle*, edited by J. H. Burton (London and Edinburgh, 1910), 286f.

4 The standard spelling of this name in the Authorized Version of the Bible is "Zerubbabel." There are other eighteenth-century spellings and then there is the parodic one which Hume adopted and to which we will return later in this paper. Hume would have known that his spelling in this broadside differed from that of the King James version of the Bible. In the *History of England* he spelled the name "Zerubbabel," the King James Version's spelling. The spellings used here are those of the sources being quoted or of the King James Version.

5 This text was reprinted virtually without comment by J. V. Price in *The Ironic Hume* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 173-175. Price's text seems to have been the nineteenth century reprint which varies considerably from the original, copies of which are preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University, and the National Library of Scotland. I am grateful to both David Raynor and to M. A. Stewart for providing me with transcriptions of this text. The broadside, a single sheet printed on two sides, is briefly discussed by E. C. Mossner in *The Life of David Hume* (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1954), 235f; (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd ed., 1980). When Mossner wrote the *Life* he had not seen the Oxford copy of the squib; his comments in the second edition and his correction of the Bellman's name show that by then he had examined it. Quotations from the broadside are from the text printed above but the footnote references are to the Price text given in *The Ironic Hume*.

6 The finances are reviewed in the Scottish periodicals of which the *Scots Magazine* gives an adequate summary of the proceedings, for example: December 1748, 576-583; April 1749, 176-186; May 1749, 250-251; January 1750, 49-50; February 1750, 101; March 1750, 154-157; April 1750, 202-205 (the entry summarizing the opening of the debates); May 1750, 224-226, 248-252 (gives a list of those active for the Kirk); June 1750, 269-272 (statement of the landowners' case against the measure) and 300; July 1750, 346-347; August 1750, 394-395, 397-398; September 1750, 401-414 (contains the rebuttal of the Kirk's agents) and 453; October 1750, 501; May 1751, 216-219; July 1751, 325-330. The principal pamphlets published in connection with this business were collected in *A Collection of All the Papers Published in Relation to the*

scheme for Augmenting the Stipends... (Edinburgh, 1751).

7 Information about teachers' wages and perquisites can be gleaned from the various *Publications of the Scottish Council for Research in Education* and from *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, 21 vols., edited by Sir John Sinclair (Edinburgh, 1791-1799; 2d ed., edited by D. J. Withrington, I. R. Grant, *et al.*, Wakefield, 1978).

8 The act took from congregations and gave to the heritors the right to name the ministers when new appointments were to be made.

9 The best exposition of this case in relation to Hume is Harvey Chisick, "David Hume and the Common People," in *The Science of Man in the Scottish Enlightenment*, edited by Peter Jones (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 5-32; see also Chisick, "The Wealth of Nations and the Poverty of the People in the Thought of Adam Smith," *Canadian Journal of History* 25 (1990): 325-344, and *The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment: Attitudes Toward the Education of the Lower Classes in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

10 There is a growing literature on the Scottish Enlightenment of the religiously conservative which bears this out. See R. L. Emerson and P. B. Wood, "Science and the Glaswegian Enlightenment," forthcoming.

11 Thomas Firth Jones, *A Pair of Lawn Sleeves: A Biography of William Smith 1727-1803* (Philadelphia, 1972), 3-5.

12 Among the committee members who sided with Hume were some who had helped scupper his chances of an Edinburgh professorship (e.g., Robert Dundas, Robert Craigie) but it also included some of his friends such as the Earl of Marchmont and Charles Erskine.

13 "Act and Resolution concerning an Application to Parliament for an Augmentation to Minister's [sic] Stipends," in *The Principal Acts of the General Assembly... 1750* (Edinburgh, 1750), 7.

14 Hume sat in various clubs with Morton, Lauderdale, Hopetoun, and Murray.

15 *Scots Magazine* 12 (July 1750): 300.

16 See "The burgess ticket of Buckhaven given to Alexander Bryson, within the College thereof, upon the 32 day of Julius Caesar, 1698 years. Suits call'd, and the court lawfully fenced by Mother Greg.", a two-page pamphlet published in 1718. The Rev. Robert Wodrow referred to this as a "long standing Scottish joke." I thank David Raynor for this information.

17 Price, 175, n. 5.

18 Price, 173, 174.

19 Price, 173-174.

20 Hume, *The History of England*, 6 vols., edited by William B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983), 6: 62.

21 Price, 175

22 Price, 174.

23 Price, 175.

- 24 *Lord Provost George Drummond, 1687-1766*, edited by Michael Hook (Edinburgh: Scotland's Cultural Heritage, 1987), 21.
- 25 Buckhaven is noticed in Sinclair, 10:788-791, n. 8.
- 26 Price, 175.
- 27 Hume's letter to John Clephane of 18 February 1751 suggests that Clephane, Gen. James St. Clair, and William Mure had knowledge of his draft broadside. So too did Gilbert Elliot and Jack Stewart, the son of Archibald, once Lord Provost and M.P. from Edinburgh (HL I 149-150).
- 28 I thank David Raynor for suggesting to me that Anstruther was the most plausible recipient of this Petition.
- 29 *The House of Commons 1715-1754*, edited by Romney Sedgwick, 2 vols., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), I: 385-386, 396-397, 398, 402-403, 417-418; II: 13-14, 210-211, 402-403.
- 30 *Scots Magazine* 12 (May 1750): 249.
- 31 This information about the 5th Earl and his son derives from my unfinished study of the Edinburgh Musical Society to which they also belonged.
- 32 Sherlock's work was entitled *The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus before the Lord Chief Justice Reason* (London, 1729). Sherlock's work in defence of miracles would have been known to Hume as was his elevation to the Bishopric of London in 1748. Hume's 1750 skit can be found in HL II 340-342.
- 33 It may also be pertinent to note that the Earl's daughter was married to another Jacobite then in exile, Sir James Steuart of Goodtrees. Hume was later to read with respect the economic writings of this man.
- 34 Douglas Knoop and G. P. Jones, *The Genesis of Freemasonry* (London, 1978), 279-293.
- 35 Carlyle, 6, n. 3; *Dictionary of National Biography* entries for "Francis Charteris" and "David Wemyss, Lord Elcho." Col. Charteris is the leering old lecher "engaged in some private business" (*anglice*, masturbation) in the first plate of Hogarth's "A Harlot's Progress" (G. C. Lichtenberg, *Lichtenberg's Commentaries on Hogarth's Engravings*, translated by Innes and Gustav Herdon [London: Cresset Press, 1966], 9-13). The plate dates from 1732. Hume would not have been unwilling to have his readers notice that Zerobabel came from a parish presided over by a family tied to Walpolean corruption on the one hand and Jacobite treason on the other.
- 36 Mossner, 235, n. 5.
- 37 What follows is taken mainly from *The Interpreters Bible*, 12 vols., edited by G. A. Buttrick (New York, 1951, 1952), vol. 7, 253-254 and vol. 8, 81-84.
- 38 Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, translated by William Whiston (New York, 1890); *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 11:1-5.
- 39 Hume would have found this story in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, which was used by many Tudor apologists to glorify their patrons. In Scotland the great attack on such mythological histories had come only in 1729 with Father Thomas Innes' *Critical Essay on the Ancient Inhabitants*

of the Northern Parts of Britain, a work that discredited the mythical kings whose portraits had long adorned the walls of Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh. Such questions had much perplexed Scottish antiquaries like Sir Robert Sibbald (1641-1722), whose works Hume knew and used.

40 For a genealogy of the house of Argyll going back to King Arthur, see W.D.H. Sellar, "The Earliest Campbells—Norman, Briton or Gael," *Scottish Studies*, 17 (1973): 109-125.

41 The *History of England* begins by telling us (as Livy had told Hume) that "the history of remote ages should always be so much involved in obscurity, uncertainty and contradiction" that we should ignore it as fabulous or treat it only as agreeable art. The best one can do "is to consider the language, manners and customs" of barbarians who are all much alike in being "guided by caprice" from cruelty to cruelty (*The History of England*, 6 vols., I:1). In *The Natural History of Religion* (1757) Hume wrote:

An historical fact, while it passes by oral tradition from eyewitnesses and contemporaries, is disguised in every successive narration, and may at last retain but very small, if any, resemblance of the original truth, on which it was founded. The frail memories of men, their love of exaggeration, their supine carelessness; these principles, if not corrected by books and writing, soon pervert the account of historical events; where argument or reasoning has little or no place, nor can ever recal the truth, which has once escaped those narrations. (*The Natural History of Religion*, edited by H. E. Root [London, 1956], 25)

Hume then went on to apply these conclusions to the "fables of HERCULES, THESEUS, BACCHUS" whom some had related to Christ himself. Among barbarians, fear guides these fancies. Indeed, "Every image of vengeance, severity, cruelty, and malice must occur, and must augment the ghastliness and horror, which oppresses the amazed religionist" (*Natural History*, 65), as it must have the ancient Hebrews and early Christians too.

42 Zerubbabel's history can be conveniently found in sources like *The Critical and Expository Bible Cyclopedia*, edited by A. R. Fausset (London, 1893). Such works cite all the biblical sources and try, unsuccessfully, to meld them into a coherent short narrative. The following citations from the Authorized Version of the Bible have been drawn from the above and from *Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible...with Cruden's Concordance...* (New York, 1873).

43 Fausset, 737.

44 See the entries for "Babel" and "Zerubbabel" in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, edited by Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

45 These do not appear in the Old Testament books but are in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*.

46 Arthur Edward Waite, *A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, 2 vols. in one (New York, 1970; 1st ed., c. 1920), 485.

47 Knoop and Jones, 284, n. 39.

- 48 *Anderson's Constitutions of 1738*, edited by Lewis Edwards and W. J. Hughan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 22. I have not seen the 1723 edition but quote from the facsimile of the one issued in 1738 partly to reply to censures by the Pope and the government of France. This edition is the one most likely to have been known to Hume if he had read either.
- 49 Edwards and Hughan, 23.
- 50 A number of these texts have been collected and translated in *The Early French Exposures*, translated and edited by Harry Carr (London, 1971).
- 51 Carr, 197.
- 52 Perhaps the best account is in Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- 53 Paul Hazard, *European Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, translated by J. Lewis May (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 267-271, 268.
- 54 Carr, 200.
- 55 There is a modern edition of this work edited by Wallace McLeod (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).
- 56 *Absolem and Achitophel* was, of course, a poem about politics and power. The text linking him to Zerubbabel is I Chronicles 3:19.

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