

Satire, Fantasy and Writings on the Supernatural by Daniel Defoe

The Conduct of Christians Made the Sport of
Infidels (1717)

A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish
Spy at Paris (1718)

Edited by
David Blewett



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SUPERNATURAL BY DANIEL DEFOE

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Volume 5:

THE CONDUCT OF CHRISTIANS MADE THE
SPORT OF INFIDELS (1717)

A CONTINUATION OF LETTERS WRITTEN BY A
TURKISH SPY AT PARIS (1718)

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INTRODUCTION

The Conduct of Christians made the Sport of Infidels

In a fictitious letter from Kara Selym Oglan, a Turkish merchant at Amsterdam (actually an Armenian of Christian parentage raised as a Muslim), to Muli Ibrahim Esad, the Grand Mufti at Constantinople, the writer denounces the conduct of Christians, particularly British Christians, as he has witnessed it during his stay in England. As is appropriate in writing to so high a spiritual authority as the Mufti, he writes in an elaborately flowery style. (Defoe, who goes on to exploit this device more extensively in *A Continuation of Letters written by a Turkish Spy*, keeps it up with considerable skill and inventiveness.)

Defoe's strategy in this pamphlet and in the *Continuation* is, evidently, to allow his 'Turkish' protagonist to discover by his own unprejudiced observation of Christian, and especially English, ways, the painful truths that Defoe has frequently insisted on in other writings. One of these is the shocking tolerance in England for rebelliousness and betrayal within family life. Another is the extreme and astonishing factiousness of sects and parties in England: 'they are the most wrangling, contentious, self-divided People in the Universe'.¹ (It is a theme that Defoe has often laboured in the *Review* and was the basis of the doctrine of Moderation in politics that he shared with his erstwhile patron Robert Harley.) A third is the fatal propensity of the English for profane swearing and taking the name of God in vain – asking God, precisely, to 'damn' the swearer, as no doubt He might feel inclined to do. Oglan hits independently upon the same arguments against it that Defoe himself has used in the past. For example, the habit of profane swearing is encouraged by the wrong and dangerous practice of

¹ *The Conduct of Christians made the Sport of Infidels*, below, p. 32. Further references are given in the text.

imposing solemn oaths on university students and others, such as it will be impossible for them to keep, thus teaching them to take serious oath-taking lightly. Further, this habit of treating solemn oath-taking lightly leads, very naturally, into a readiness for perjury – for which the English are notable above all other peoples. (The factiousness and the propensity for barefaced perjury, as the reader will discover, will be amply illustrated in Oglan's account of the Bangorian controversy.)

The subtle humour of *The Conduct of Christians* lies to a great extent in the idea that, though the Turks were popularly associated with cruelty and barbarity, Oglan, who reveals a tender conscience and propensity to be shocked by Christian ways, displays a piety rarely found in Europe. It adds to the cleverness of Defoe's satire, moreover, that the pious Oglan himself, as a representative of Islam, unwittingly reminds the reader of its darker side. It seems clear to him that, in the case of such a disloyalty to the sovereign as was shown by the defecting ministers in the Whig party split of 1717, the Turkish method (that is, giving the defectors their quietus 'by the more easy and indisputed Authority of the Bow-string', p. 34) was much the simplest and best.

All this sets the stage for Oglan's account of 'the late scandalous Quarrel among the CLERGY', the extraordinary pamphlet war known as the Bangorian Controversy. In 1716 Benjamin Hoadly (1676–1761), recently consecrated Bishop of Bangor, published an attack on the non-jurors, entitled *A Preservative against the Principles and Practices of the Non-jurors*, and then in the following year a startling sermon on *The Nature of the Kingdom or Church of Christ*, which he had preached before King George I on 31 March 1717. The first of these two publications was intended as a reply to the posthumous publication of some papers of George Hickes, one of the most celebrated and uncompromising of the leaders of the non-jurors, for whom the Church of England was in schism from the non-juring church, not the other way round.² Like other non-juring clergymen, Hickes, having already sworn an Oath of Allegiance to James II, had scrupled to take a new oath to the new monarchs William and Mary in 1689 and consequently had been deprived by Act of Parliament of the deanery of

2 Cf. G. V. Bennett, *The Tory Crisis in Church and State 1688–1730: The Career of Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester* (Oxford, 1975): 'For the Nonjurors the conforming Church of England was no Church at all; it had apostatized from its distinctive doctrine by adhesion to a usurper' (p. 10).

Worcester in the following year.³ The non-jurors constituted a minority but a still significant number of the High Churchmen, those who held an elevated sense of the authority of the Church, the claims of the episcopate and the nature of the sacraments.

Hoadly, on the other hand, the quintessential Low Churchman and a pugnacious pamphleteer, held an Erastian notion of the Church, denying any real authority to the established church and the sacerdotal nature of the priesthood. His fateful sermon on *The Nature of the Kingdom or Church of Christ*, published by royal command, concisely stated Hoadly's extreme latitudinarian principles, and occasioned the uproar that broke out. In it he argued that the text, 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36), meant that the true church is in heaven and that in spiritual matters Christ alone is the law-giver to his subjects and the only judge of their behaviour. It follows in Hoadly's exposition that, since Christ left no visible human authority to take his place, anyone claiming absolute authority to interpret or to judge in religious matters would be displacing the authority of Christ and, consequently, the Church of Christ would be so in name only, the authority having passed to the new absolute authority that had usurped the power to interpret and to judge. He thus implicitly denied apostolic succession and with it the power of excommunication, forgiveness of sins and the authoritative interpretation of doctrine. Neither doctrine nor a sacramental religion meant very much to Hoadly, for whom what mainly mattered was sincerity. Hoadly's concept of sincerity meant the unrestricted exercise of private judgement by the individual Christian, the cardinal principle of Protestantism, which ultimately saw no need for intercessors between Christ and his people. He may be said to have practised what he preached, for in the seven years he was Bishop of Bangor he failed to visit his diocese.

The Lower House of Convocation,⁴ which was predominantly High Church, appointed a committee, with Dr Thomas Sherlock, the Dean of Chichester, as chairman, to examine Hoadly's sermon. Its report, published on 10 May and probably written by Sherlock, found against Hoadly, not surprisingly, on the grounds that the tendency of the sermon was in the

3 Hickeys was sent by the non-juring bishops to the Court of St Germain's to obtain the *cong  d' lire* from James II for two consecrations, his own included. James, who consulted the French hierarchy and the Pope over the matter, eventually gave his permission at the behest of the Pope. In 1694 Hickeys was consecrated the titular Suffragan Bishop of Thetford by non-juring bishops. See J. W. C. Wand, *The High Church Schism* (London, 1951), pp. 32–3.

4 Strictly speaking, the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury. The York Convocation met separately.

first place 'To subvert All Government and Discipline, in the Church of Christ; and to reduce His Kingdom to a State of Anarchy and Confusion' and in the second 'To impugn and impeach the Regal Supremacy in Causes Ecclesiastical; and the Authority of the Legislature, to enforce Obedience in Matters of Religion by Civil Sanction'.⁵ These charges make it readily apparent that in the eyes of the lower clergy the government of the Church and the government of the country were inextricably interconnected. Hoadly was seen as dangerous not just because his theology was heretical but because his extreme latitude in ecclesiastical matters would open the door to toleration for Dissenters. In fact, Hoadly, like the majority of his fellow bishops in the Upper House, appointed in many cases for their Whig sympathies, was in favour of repealing the Corporation Act and the Test Act,⁶ the two main disabling statutes against Dissenters. Had it not been for the split in the Whig administration, when Charles Townshend, supported by his brother-in-law Robert Walpole and others, went into opposition, the Stanhope / Sunderland ministry would have been able to put through the repeal of these acts. As it was, the less onerous Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts⁷ were repealed in 1719. Hoadly had in the past defended Dissenters over the matter of occasional conformity and had tangled with High Churchmen such as Atterbury and Sacheverell. To avoid the embarrassment to the Government of the censure of a bishop by the Lower House of Convocation, the Whig ministry moved quickly. Convocation was prorogued a few days after the publication of the Report of the Lower House, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, on instructions from the King. It did not sit again (except formally) for 135 years.

Even before the prorogation of Convocation, Dr Andrew Snape, the Provost of Eton, had written in strong terms to Hoadly, attacking his position on the doctrine of the Church. Thwarted in their attempt to censure him in Convocation, Hoadly's enemies now escalated the pamphlet warfare, which eventually involved some fifty-three writers and over

5 *The Works of Benjamin Hoadly*, 3 vols (1773), Vol. II, pp. 452, 499.

6 The Corporation Act, passed in 1661 by the 'Cavalier Parliament', required, *inter alia*, all members of municipal corporations on taking office to affirm that they had received the Sacrament of Communion according to the rites of the Church of England within the last year. The Test Act, passed in 1673, required all holders of office under the crown to receive the Sacrament according to the usage of the Church of England. Non-Anglican office-holders took the sacrament 'occasionally', that is, once a year, in order to qualify for office.

7 The Occasional Conformity Act, passed in 1711, was a failure in operation. It attempted to impose fines on civil or military officers who, having taken the Sacrament to qualify for office, were then discovered at a conventicle. The Schism Act of 1714 forbade Dissenters to keep schools or engage in tuition.

200 pamphlets. Snape was quick to return to the field. He wrote a second letter to Hoadly, published on 28 June 1717, accusing him of falsehood, namely of adding ‘*evasive Words*’ to the sermon in the interval between writing and preaching it, in order to soften and to obscure the meaning of what he said, and suggesting that Hoadly lied when he claimed that no one had seen the sermon during that period of time.⁸ Snape charged that Hoadly had shown his sermon to ‘*a certain Person*’ who had ‘*with difficulty prevail’d upon*’ Hoadly ‘*to insert*’ the evasive Words, ‘*by Way of Caution*’.⁹ Hoadly responded instantly in the *Daily Courant*, vehemently denying these charges and demanding that Snape supply proof of his statements by producing the person who had told him the name of the ‘*Living Man, who, He affirms, hath testified that the Sermon was preach’d with his Knowledge, and submitted to his Correction*’.¹⁰ Snape did so in the same paper on the following day: ‘I hereby declare, that I first receiv’d that Account from a Worthy Divine [identified in the margin as Dr Hutchinson], who assur’d me, he heard the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of *Carlisle* declare, That he had spoke with the Person who advis’d my Lord of *Bangor*, upon Reading his Sermon, to insert such Words as *Absolutely*, &c. That some Days after, the same Divine did again assure me, he had heard the same Worthy Prelate a second Time declare that Matter to be true, and that he would justify it to all the World.’¹¹ The declaration is signed by A. Snape and countersigned by W. Carliol. [William Nicolson, Bishop of Carlisle] with the attestation: *This is true.*

The importance of the ‘evasive Words’ that Snape, Nicolson and undoubtedly many others were so certain that Hoadly had added to his sermon lay in what they perceived as a crucial shift of emphasis. In his sermon Hoadly said that Christ left behind him ‘no *Interpreters*, upon whom his Subjects are absolutely to depend’ and he denied that the Church possessed an ‘absolute *Vicegerent Authority*’ or had ‘an *absolute Authority to interpret* any written, or spoken Laws’.¹² The inclusion of the words *absolutely* and

8 In his second letter (pp. 66–7), Snape suggested that Hoadly had learned ‘his evasive and equivocal way of writing from a Jesuit He kept in his Family, as his intimate Companion and Confident’ and who had taught him to have ‘a mental Reservation’ when he uttered ‘a Solemn Appeal to God in a Lie’ (Hoadly, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 385). Francis de la Pillonnière was a former Jesuit priest, converted to the Church of England, who lived in Hoadly’s household.

9 See *A Collection of Papers Scatter’d lately about the Town in the Daily-Courant, St. James’s-Post, &c. With Some Remarks upon them. In a Letter from the Bishop of Carlile to the Bishop of Bangor* (London, 1717), p. 5.

10 Hoadly in *A Collection of Papers*, p. 6.

11 Snape in *A Collection of Papers*, pp. 9–10.

12 Hoadly, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 404.

absolute permitted Hoadly to claim that he did not deny all authority to the Church, only absolute authority.¹³ And of course it looked as if he were attacking the Roman Catholic Church, not the Church of England. As Nicolson remarked, 'Had I heard the Epithets of *Absolute* and *Infallible* given to that Authority against which his Lordship so earnestly inveigh'd, I should immediately have suppos'd him to have been declaiming against the Pope and the Church of *Rome*; whereas I understood the whole Bent, Design and Purpose, of his Discourse, to be in Favour of the Dissenters, and Derogation of the Authority of the Establish'd Church of *England*'.¹⁴

Hoadly emphatically denied the charge and demanded that Nicolson name the man who had claimed he had advised Hoadly to modify his sermon by the addition of certain words, adding that it would be impossible to do so 'because I know there is no such Person in the World'.¹⁵ Nicolson was now put in a very awkward position, from which he tried in vain to wriggle free. As Oglan rightly observes, 'The new Defendant acquitted himself most scandalously ill; he prevaricated; contradicted himself; shuffled; equivocated; in a Word, he left no Stone unturn'd to disengage himself from the Noose in which he was taken' (p. 40). His first attempt was to assert that he had not affirmed that words had been added to the sermon before it was preached, but rather 'before it was *Publish'd*'.¹⁶

Nicolson's prevarication only made matters worse and left him open to Hoadly's scornful retort: 'If what the Bishop declared to be True, in the *Post-boy* of *Saturday* last, be True; then, he did Affirm to Dr. *Snape* what he allow'd him, after reading it, to publish. If what he advertis'd Yesterday be True; then he did not Affirm what Dr. *Snape* layeth to my Charge; and the Doctor must again vindicate his own Honour, and Justice. This I am sure of, that Both cannot be True; because the One denies, what the Other affirms.'¹⁷ Nicolson, left with little choice at this point, finally identified his informant as Dr White Kennett, Dean of Peterborough and a friend of Hoadly's, who immediately wrote to Nicolson to repudiate the charge, denying that he had given any advice to Hoadly about his sermon. Nicolson, full of injured pride and resentment, attempted to save face: 'But, – will Mr. Dean, who furnish'd me with the Materials of this Piece of History, support my Testimony with his own? By no Means. He peremptorily avows, in his Letter to me by last *Wednesday's* Post, That *he had no*

13 Hoadly, *Works*, Vol. II, pp. 417ff, 484.

14 Nicolson in *A Collection of Papers*, p. 7.

15 Hoadly in *A Collection of Papers*, p. 12.

16 Nicolson in *A Collection of Papers*, p. 14.

17 Hoadly in *A Collection of Papers*, p. 22.

*Manner of Correspondence with the Lord Bishop of Bangor about the Preaching and Publishing his late Sermon.*¹⁸ Kennett, in a second letter to Nicolson, attempted to pass the whole sorry episode off as a slip of memory: 'I presume your Lordship forgot the Person from whom you first receiv'd this Notion, till at last you began to conclude that you heard me speak of it my self . . . Your Lordship under these Thoughts talkt of it, till you verily believ'd it, and till you imagin'd that I my self had inform'd you of it.'¹⁹ But Kennett had, as Defoe observed, 'expos'd the Bishop as a dotting old Man, who had heard somebody say the Words, but did not know who; and had nam'd him to them, having told the Story so often, 'till he believ'd it to be true' (p. 40).²⁰

Nicolson is not the only one discredited; the strong sense conveyed by Oglan's account is that the petulant behaviour of all concerned had brought the 'Nazarene Religion', particularly the leaders of the Established Church, into contempt. *The Conduct of Christians* was published at the end of July 1717, when the Bangorian Controversy was well into its fourth month and at a fever pitch of excitement with daily – sometimes hourly – charges, denials and counter-charges in the *Daily Courant* and the *St James's Evening Post*. In that month alone seventy-four pamphlets were published. It has been said that the controversy grew so bitter that business in the City and trading on the Exchange came to a halt for a day or two and many shops were shut.²¹ The controversy raged on for over a year, attracting a host of commentators, both clerical and lay. Of these the most skilful were Thomas Sherlock and, above all, the non-juror William Law, whose *Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor* (1717) are unmatched in English polemics.

A Continuation of Letters written by a Turkish Spy at Paris

In a Memorandum to Robert Harley, written in the summer of 1704 shortly after Harley had been appointed Secretary of State, Defoe wrote to advise him on setting up an intelligence network and to suggest how this might be best done. He mentioned with approval 'a book in eight volumes

18 Nicolson in *A Collection of Papers*, p. 17.

19 Kennett in *A Collection of Papers*, p. 34

20 As G. V. Bennett has observed, 'What the truth of the matter was will probably never be proved. Certainly Hoadly and Kennett were firm, while Nicolson contradicted himself continually' (*White Kennett 1660–1728, Bishop of Peterborough: A Study in the Political and Ecclesiastical History of the Early Eighteenth Century* (London, 1957), p. 143). White Kennett's role in the controversy is discussed on pages 139–45.

21 Hoadly, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 429.

published in London about 7 or 8 years ago called *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*. While the book is pure fiction, he said, the 'moral is good'. The spy, a 'settled person of sense and penetration, of dexterity and courage', would be an invaluable source of information, and the intelligence he could provide would more than justify the expense on the part of the Turkish government. Defoe quickly moves from the fictitious instance to the actual situation, pointing out to Harley the superiority of the French system of intelligence, set up by Cardinal Richelieu, 'the greatest master' of the arts of 'silence and secrecy' in the world. In short, 'the French outdo us at these two things, secrecy and intelligence'.²² The lesson is that the English must bring their own intelligence gathering up to the French level if they ever expect to defeat them on the battlefield.

Fourteen years later, following the defeat of Louis XIV by Marlborough and Prince Eugene in the War of the Spanish Succession, and then the death of Louis in 1715, he turned again to the book he had admired and wrote a satirical *Continuation of the Letters written by a Turkish Spy at Paris*. In *The Conduct of Christian made the Sport of Infidels*, published a year earlier, Defoe had satirised the absurd and demeaning public display of leading clergymen in the furious Bangorian Controversy. Now in *A Continuation* he paints on a broader canvas, ridiculing not simply the vanity, squabbling and illogicality of the English priests and bishops, but the hypocrisy and foolishness of Christians in general, whose fractiousness and infighting, often along religious lines, made them vulnerable to the Turks. In the *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* he found an ideal vehicle for the kind of satire at which he excelled and which suited his talents at role-playing and impersonation. Mahmut, a devout Muslim, grave and courteous in demeanour, sends back reports to Istanbul on the extraordinary behaviour of European Christians, observing not just the hypocritical ceremonies, idolatry and cynicism of the 'Nazareens', but their eagerness to attack one another, often with great ferocity, though they claim to be of the same religion. In his first letter home he writes of his desire to return to his own country from his captivity among the Christian strangers, 'that I may not die among Dogs, and be blended in Earth with Infidels, and Enemies of *Mabomet*',²³ and this ardent longing to escape at last from the barbarian Nazareens is heard again several times in his letters.

22 *Political and Economic Writings of Daniel Defoe* (London, 2000), Vol. 1, ed. P. N. Furbank, p. 159.

23 *A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy*, below, p. 60. Future references will be included in parentheses in the text.

In both *The Conduct of Christians* and *A Continuation of Letters written by a Turkish Spy* the writer is a Turk, and the Turks at the time were a byword for cruelty and barbarity. Yet paradoxically it is the Christians in these two works whose behaviour is seen as hypocritical, disingenuous, self-serving and often cruel. Defoe enjoyed making the point that our tribal prejudice against those thought to be our adversaries blinds us not only to the goodness of many individuals among them but also to the wickedness of many of those we think of as our own sort of people. As he put it in the *Review* for 25 September 1708, 'let the Nation or the Profession be what it will ... I am ready to acknowledge, that in matters of punctual Dealing, Honesty of Trade, and the like; even the *Turks* are a Shame to some Christians'.

But while there might be decent and honest individual Turks, Defoe was never in doubt that the powerful Ottoman thrust into the heart of Europe in the 1680s represented the greatest possible danger to Christian Europe. In his *Appeal to Honour and Justice* (1715) he recalled the famous Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683, about which he had fallen out with his friends who, like the Whigs in general, 'were for the Turks taking it'.²⁴ In the Nine Years' War (1688–97),²⁵ fought during the time Mahmut was advising the Turkish authorities in *A Continuation*, the French had formed an alliance with the Turks against the German Emperor. The Emperor was engaged in two wars at once, one against the French, fought with a confederation of allies including England, and the other against the Turks. Hence, it was very much in the French interest to keep the Germans tied up on their eastern front fighting the Turks so that the French could take on William III, who led a coalition of English, Dutch, Swedish and other Protestant powers.

Defoe bitterly exposes the folly of the Christians, who by fighting one another gave an advantage to the Turks. Mahmut observes that 'these *Nazareens* are the grossest Hypocrites in the Universe' since they 'pretend to weep and mourn for the Calamities of Mankind', while committing 'infinite Violences', often against their fellow Christians. 'A flagrant Instance of it ... is before thee', he reports, 'in the daily Sollicitations of the *French* Ambassador at the Port, to encourage the *Ottoman* Ministry to carry on the War against the *Nazareen* Emperor, and prevent the Projects of Peace that were on Foot'. The French receive with 'secret Joy ... the News of the Grand Vizier's Successes on the Frontiers' (p. 139). Defoe's satire on European and Christian self-destruction is expressed in Mahmut's gleeful

24 *An Appeal to Honour and Justice* (1715), p. 51

25 Sometimes called the War of the League of Augsburg, the War of the Grand Alliance and, in America, King William's War.

amazement at the French victories over other Christian nations: 'I sit in my little Retreat, and laugh at the Madness of these Infidels, who thus weaken and destroy one another, leaving thereby an open Door of Victory to the Arms of the Grand Seignior' (p. 142).

One of the most notorious instances of Christian savagery was the French devastation of the Palatinate. The French invasion of this mainly Protestant area was intended to intimidate Germany, but had the opposite effect, since it united the German princes. As a result, although Philippsburg fell to the French on 1 November, the French decided to retreat from the Palatinate, systematically ravaging the area as they left, in part to prevent the German troops from relieving the fortress. The devastation was on an unprecedented scale; even the churches were destroyed, as Mahmut observes: 'Nor do they spare even the Mosques or Temples of their Worship. So that these *Nazareens* are the most barbarous of all Nations in the World; for though they all profess the same Religion, and worship the great crucifyed Messiah; yet they permit their licentious Troops to destroy the Places set apart for his Service' (p. 73).

Following his account of the atrocities that had taken place – 'the Desolation made, the Ruin of innumerable Families, the Destruction of flourishing Cities, fine palaces, the Murthers of Men, ravishing of Women, and all Manner of Desolations' – Mahmut reports with horror that the French king has ordered a 'Feast of Thanksgiving ... to God in all the Frontier Towns' for the victory: 'The true Sense should have been, for completing the Ruin of the most flourishing Country in that Part of the World, and scattering an hundred thousand Families of miserable Inhabitants to seek their Bread; besides the Murther, Ravishments, and inimitable Cruelties practised by the Soldiers in the Action'. Defoe's irony is compounded by the fact that it is the Turkish observer, the representative of a greatly-feared 'barbarian' nation, who sees and points out what is reprehensible, namely, that the Christians believe that 'the great ONE GOD, who has created the World' sanctions their behaviour: 'that they can think it acceptable to his divine Purity, and to the Perfection of his Being, to destroy his Creatures, and depopulate his Creation; or that he can accept Thanks offered up to him for Actions, which, it is most certain, his Nature abhors' (p. 75). And in his next letter he comments caustically that 'they say here, that the *French* have been very merciful in the manner of their burning of these Cities, (*viz.*) in that they gave the People Notice some Days before to remove; and they pretend [claim] now it was great Clemency, that seeing the Inhabitants did not flie, as they were ordered to do, they did not burn them alive with their Houses' (p. 77). The corrosive irony of this remark is bitterly expressive.

In one of his earliest letters, Mahmut provides us with his reaction to a Feast of Thanksgiving, the *Te Deum* sung for the French victory at Philippsburg, which left him dismayed at 'the ridiculous folly of such a polite Nation' as the French. He admits that the 'Voices were indeed excellent' and 'the Harmony of them was admirably fine', though better suited to 'Occasions of Mirth and Delight, not for the debauching the Mind with corrupt Ideas in Religion', but he is deeply shocked at the extravagant accompaniment, the 'innumerable sorts of Instruments of Musick, such as Fiddles, Base-Viols, Hautboys, Fifes, Cymballs, Timbrels, Harps, Organs, &c.' which 'continu'd about half an hour, and then went off (as it all begun) with Drums, Trumpets, Kettle-Drums, and 50 pieces of Canon from without'. What can the clamour of Christian celebration, he asks, have to do 'with the sacred thing called Religion'? Such extravagance is proof in Muslim eyes that Christianity has degenerated from its original 'purity and ... rectitude of Principle' so that 'it is now one of the greatest pieces of confusion and Buffoonry on Earth' (pp. 62–3).

Mahmut takes the customary Muslim position that Islam, as the last of the great revelations of God, has replaced earlier forms of religion, which had become corrupt over time. His treatment of both Christianity and Judaism rests on the premise that in their original institution these religions were admirable, but that corrupt interpretations and practices have gradually crept in so that modern forms of the religion bear little resemblance to the purity of the originals. Defoe's satiric strategy in his attack on the corruptions in religion throughout *A Continuation* is to force us to see ourselves and our complacent assumptions about the superiority of our civilisation and religious beliefs from the outsider's point of view.

Roman Catholicism rather than Protestantism, not perhaps surprisingly, is the main target. While Mahmut mocks the scandalous proliferation of Protestant sects where 'every Man sets up a Religion of his own' (p. 70), he expresses his sympathy for French Huguenots and the Waldenses in France and the Savoy. He commends the moral superiority of the Huguenots – 'a sober, zealous People; much more upright and devout than the Followers of the Pope' (p. 82) – and he clearly thinks equally well of the Waldenses, 'a painful, honest, industrious People' (p. 119). But it is really their theological superiority that elevates them in his eyes. They 'embraced the Christian Religion from the pure and primitive Times of it; when it must be confess'd the pure Doctrine of *Jesus*, the Son of *Mary* was more sincerely adhered to, than it has been since the Papal Hierarchy; for since that, it has been corrupted with Traditions, Innovations, and humane Inventions, till it is quite degenerated into a Mass of Error and Superstition' (pp. 119–20). Mahmut's most savage irony is reserved for papal worldliness and for the popes

who 'often are most wretchedly scandalous, drunken, perjur'd, lewd, and, in a Word, turbulent, bloody, and superlatively wicked' (p. 68). The famous cynical remark,²⁶ attributed to Pope Leo X about the amount of money so easily raised by the sale of indulgences, previously reported by Mahmut in the *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, is recounted in the *Continuation* with the added comment that 'if the Sovereign Pontiff, the supreme Mufty of the *Nazareens*, has declar'd the whole System of the Religion of their great Prophet, to be but a religious Cheat, a holy Fable; what need we any further Testimony?' (p. 69). It is not entirely surprising that the only Roman Catholics he speaks well of are the Quietists,²⁷ the followers of the Spanish priest Miguel de Molinos (1640–97), who for a while became a cult figure in Rome, attracting the support of the Pope and a number of future cardinals. Molinos published a *Spiritual Guide*, which advocated spiritual passivity and repudiated more active expressions of piety such as confession, mortification, penance and the recitation of the rosary. Mahmut sees Quietism as a 'return to the first Principles of their Prophet Jesus', a reform of the Church that closely resembles Protestantism: 'if ever the Popes and popish Tribe were like to turn Hugonots, now was the Time' (p. 220). Elsewhere, his views are at one with those of Pierre Jurieu (1637–1713), the French Calvinist theologian, whose acerbic and aggressive attacks on the Roman Catholic Church, which led to his having to flee France, are mentioned with approval in Book I, Letter IX.

Defoe's satire on the absurdities of Christianity when seen through the eyes of an orthodox Muslim is extended to Judaism, which from the Muslim point of view has also passed through a process of degeneration following its original institution by Moses. At first admirable, Judaism has become 'prophaned and corrupted' (p. 131) over time, above all, by the rabbinical development of the Oral Law. He admonishes his friend, Simon Ben Habbakkuk, for wasting his time in studying the Talmud and other works of Jewish scholarship, 'employing thy fruitless Years in a production, which, when thou hast finished, will be of no profit, either to thy self, or any one else' (p. 93). And to Amurath Zahabbezin, 'a proselyted Jew, reconciled to the Doctrine of Mahomet' (p. 130), he explains that Islam has replaced Judaism which has 'destroyed the Law': 'Had not the *Jews* thus degenerated from the first Institutions of God's Law, exhibited by *Moses*,

26 'Quantum nobis prodest haec fabula Christi'. The story of Leo's remark is a favourite of Defoe's. See *Royal Religion* (1704), p. 5; the *Review*, 14 July 1705; *The Secret History of the October-Club*, Part II (1711), pp. 65–6; and *A New Family Instructor* (1727), p. 202.

27 Mahmut's praise of Molinos and laudatory comments on Quietism are out of keeping with Defoe's own generally hostile attitude towards the followers of Molinos (see Explanatory Note 13 to Book IV of *A Continuation*, below, p. 275).

doubtless *Mahomet* and all the Empire of the faithful Mussulmen, had been *Jews* to this Day' (p. 131).

Mahmut's delight that the hypocritical and ferocious Nazareens are tearing one another to pieces while 'professing to be all Followers of the Prophet *Jesus* the *Nazareen*, their Messiah, and Teacher' (p. 76), does not blind him to the relative strength of the various armies and his estimation of the progress of the war is carefully calculated. Defoe's principal concern in beginning his *Review* in 1704, not long after the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession, was to caution his fellow countrymen not to underestimate the military capacity of the French. It was highly dangerous to despise the enemy, to consider the French weak and effeminate, when they are very far from contemptible, and may be too powerful to be overcome. In the first issue of the *Review*, discussing the French nation, he cautions his readers to remember that 'whatever the *French* were in former Days, however effeminate their Kings or People, It must be own'd the Case is altered with them, and we find them to our loss, a Bold, Adventurous, Wise, Politick and Martial People; that their Honesty is as much better'd as their Bravery I won't Determine, and let no Man forejudge me for giving too great an Encomium to our Enemies; I am not considering them as Enemies, but as a People'.²⁸ Although Mahmut can be scathing about many of the practices of the French king (even to his going to bed superstitiously surrounded by relics (p. 80)), he emphasises the ambition and the strength of Louis XIV, whom he calls 'the greatest of all the Kings of the Christian Nations' (p. 66): 'He is in Person a most glorious Prince, wise, politick, enterprising, boundless in Ambition of Glory and Empire, undaunted in his Attempts of the greatest Kind, and never disappointed, or to seek in his Measures' (p. 72). And his daring and judgement are backed up by the quality of his fighting men: 'He is surrounded with three hundred thousand Veteran Soldiers, led by the most experienced Officers in these Parts of the World; he is absolute Master of his Councils, and perfectly well serv'd in all his Commands; to make the least Slip or Mistake in his Service, is to lose the Honour of Serving' (p. 72).

Many of the points that Defoe makes elsewhere in his writings about the superiority of the French, particularly in military preparedness and prowess, are repeated in Mahmut's observations about the King of France's constant success and increasing power. French military superiority had been achieved in a number of ways. Colbert's administrative and financial reforms, begun in 1661 when he became the chief minister under Louis XIV, within ten years had turned around French finances and made France, the largest

²⁸ *Review*, 19 February 1704, in Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the Affairs of France*, ed. John McVeagh (London 2003), Vol. 1, p. 10.

nation in Europe, economically powerful, while the energy and skill of Louvois, the war minister, created the strongest army in Europe. At a time when siege warfare was one of the chief means of conducting war, France was fortunate in Vauban, the brilliant military engineer who revolutionised the science of fortification and the siege. Finally, with a highly centralised government able to make decisions without extensive consultation, the French often had the advantage of speed and surprise over the comparatively slow-moving coalition of forces arrayed against them. But French military preparedness, however thorough, would have been insufficient without able commanders in the field. France was particularly well served by brilliant generals such as the Mareschal de Catinat and the Duke of Luxembourg, whose victories in the Savoy and the Spanish Netherlands are celebrated in *A Continuation*. England, as Defoe liked to point out, suffered from the reluctance of the upper classes to serve in the field, in contrast to France, where the nobility sought military honours. In two numbers of the *Review* devoted to this topic, Defoe quotes the imaginary retort of 'an English Nobleman' when asked where he made his last campaign: 'Campaign, Sir, d—n, ye Sir, I never make Campaigns, *I am a Person of Quality*, Sir, it's below my Dignity to make Campaigns, let the Mercenaries go abroad that fight for Pay, I scorn the Drudgery of the War'. The Army, like the Church, is seen as a fit occupation 'only for younger Brothers'.²⁹ Mahmut makes a similar point when he suggests that much of the French success is attributable not so much to their troops, of whom he has a poor opinion (p. 98), as to their officers: 'There is a Saying which is made use of, when they talk of the *French* and *English* Nations by way of comparison, (*viz.*) that of the *French*; *If the Soldiers will but follow, the Officers will always lead*; and that of the *English*, *If the Officers will but lead, the Soldiers will always follow*', and he wryly adds, 'so that by the way, an Army of *English* Soldiers, led by *French* Officers, would be invincible' (p. 67).

Mahmut's comments on French military superiority are part of Defoe's important theme of learning from one's enemies. In a letter written to the Kaimacham (Governor of Constantinople) he comments again on the need for experienced officers: 'The new Vizier wants not that I should tell him, how weak a Body the best Soldiers in the World are in the Field, if led on by unexperienced Officers; if an Army of Hares with a Lion to their General, was esteemed by the Ancients of more Use than an Army of Lions with a Hare to their General; then the placing unexperienced Officers at the Head of the best and bravest Cavalry of the *East*, is nothing less or more than a sacrificing the bravest Men in the *East* to the Fury of their bar-

²⁹ *Review*, 18 and 20 November 1708, in *Defoe's Review*, ed. Arthur Wellesley Secord, 22 vols (New York, 1938).

barous Enemies' (p. 105). And he goes on to point out that the French defeat the Germans, not only by the excellence of their commanders, but also because they are better mounted. Only recently, he says, the King ordered the *Gens d'Arms* to change their horses for heavier ones, a practice he recommends to the Grand Vizier. In another letter he raises the need for the latest military knowledge and weapons, citing as always the French, who are 'at this Time, the Teachers of their Enemies' (p. 164). Just as the Janizaries discarded the pike for the gun, so now they need to take up the recent French invention, the bayonet (devised by Vauban only a few years earlier). In words that closely reflect Defoe's own thinking, Mahmut warns that it ought not to be below the dignity of the Kaimacham 'to learn all the Improvements of the Art of War from Infidels and Enemies' (p. 165).

While the power of France and the brilliance of Louis and his generals enlivens Mahmut's account of the events in the period from 1687–93, his presentation of French greatness is undercut by two French characteristics that come through in his account. For Defoe, of course, the French willingness to enter into an alliance with the Turks against their fellow Christians was perfidy. Mahmut cannot conceal his amazement at their behaviour, even though the alliance is highly advantageous to the Turks:

The *French* are now at War with the *Germans*, as the Grand Seignior also is; and this War is carried on with such Cruelty and Rage, that nothing is more grateful to them here, than to hear of the Victories which the Mussulmans Armies get over the *Germans*; and tho' Jesus, the Son of *Mary* is their own Prophet too, yet when thousands of his Followers are cut down by the Sword of *Mahomet*, they Boast and rejoyce in the News, albeit at other times they style the faithful Mussulmans their common Enemies. (p. 100)

Equally shocking about the French, to Mahmut's mind, is their hypocrisy. Louis appears devout when he is planning to unleash his 'implacable Fury' (p. 100), persecutes the Huguenots by the notorious Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and supports the exiled Stuarts largely as a means of fomenting trouble in England.

As early as the third letter of Book I, the question of why Louis had not intervened to prevent William of Orange from invading England is raised. Louis was not only 'a sincere Friend to the *English* King', James II, but his own self-interest was involved: 'Prudence, and Policy of State required that he would by no means have suffer'd the said *English* King to have been so Invaded; seeing he knew perfectly well that the Prince of *Orange* was not only a warlike Prince in himself, but was also a profess'd Enemy to the Greatness and Ambition of *France*' (p. 66). In fact, as Mahmut discerns,

Louis's move into Germany in early September 1688, intended to intimidate the Emperor and to encourage the Turks, was badly miscalculated. Had the French troops, instead, 'hover'd over the *Dutch* Frontiers' (p. 67), the Dutch would not have been able to escort William of Orange to the shores of Britain, a daring manoeuvre that neither James nor Louis had foreseen and which entirely altered the subsequent course of events.³⁰ Under James II, a friend of Louis XIV's, Britain, as Mahmut perceives, was at least potentially an ally of France; under William III, Britain became the leading power in the Grand Alliance against 'the Exorbitance of the *French* Greatness, which begins to be terrible to *Europe*'. Mahmut's admiration for the greatness of Louis is tempered by the admission that 'nothing but the infatuation and unaccountable indolence of this great Monarch' could have 'brought this great Affair to pass'. He reports all this strange news to one 'well acquainted with the state of things in these parts of the World', the italic emphasis a deliberate hint that he prefers to say no more. 'It seem'd very strange, that the King of *France* should stand still and look on, in a matter which so nearly concern'd his Friend and Allie, and in effect himself, and not prevent a mischief big with such dangerous Events' (pp. 66–7). Mahmut hints at the hypocrisy in Louis XIV's treatment of the Stuarts and through Mahmut Defoe conveys his message to the Jacobites, namely, that France will never be a reliable ally for their cause. This was as true in 1718 when the *Continuation* was published as it had been from 1688 until the death of Louis XIV in 1715.

The counterweight to French greatness was William III and the Confederation of which he was the leader. Louis's success, a major theme in *A Continuation*, is balanced by Mahmut's presentation of William, who from the first pages appears as a rising star who might one day eclipse the Sun King. In Letter VIII of Book III William is called the 'the greatest and most formidable Enemy the King of *France* has in the World' and 'a Man whose Character rises in the World like a new Star (in a Constellation) never discovered before' (p. 182). And in the first letter of Book IV, although we hear of the 'encreasing Power of the King of *France*', the King of England is quickly described as 'a resplendent Star, encreasing in Magni-

30 John Childs, in *The Nine Years' War and the British Army 1688–1697* (Manchester and New York, 1991), points out that 'If Louis had moved towards the Lower Rhine or the Spanish Netherlands or, even better, taken no military action at all, then the States-General would probably have refused William of Orange permission to mount his expedition' (p. 23). Sir George Clark in his account of 'The Nine Years War, 1688–1697' in *The Rise of Great Britain and Russia 1688–1715/25*, Vol. VI of *The New Cambridge Modern History* (Cambridge, 1970), describes Louis's move into Germany as 'psychologically as well as geographically' (p. 226) important for William's expedition.

tude; a Prince, whose martial Genius fills the World with Expectations, gives Vigor and Spirit to the Soldiery, is the Life of the Confederacy, and is not to be discouraged by the greatest Repulses' (pp. 211–12).

The dramatic struggle between these two formidable enemies is not fully played out in *A Continuation*, which ends with Volume I, although both the Table of Contents and the first page indicate that a subsequent volume had been planned. Volume I takes the story through to the end of 1693, a year of great victories for the French but one that was disastrous for William and the Confederate allies. We cannot now know certainly what cut off the story prematurely, but it may have been, as John Robert Moore has suggested, because of the success in the following year of *Robinson Crusoe*: 'The venture itself was dropped (like several other journalistic and historical ventures of Defoe's) in the blaze of success which followed the publication of *Crusoe* on April 25, 1719'.³¹

Frontispiece, Title Page and Preface

The frontispiece to Defoe's *A Continuation of Letters written by a Turkish Spy* is the most noticeable of several physical features carried over from the original *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, designed to foster the appearance of continuity between the two works. Copied with only minor changes from the original volumes, the frontispiece, which alludes to aspects of the life of Mahmut in the original letters, is largely inexplicable to readers of Defoe's *Continuation* unfamiliar with the original. It is therefore helpful to an understanding of Defoe's book to see it in relationship to its immensely popular predecessor. The first volume of *L'Espion du grand Seigneur*, published anonymously in France in 1684–6, purported to be a translation into French of the Italian version of letters originally written in Arabic by Mahmut, a Turkish spy in the employ of the Ottoman Sultan, living in Paris disguised as a Moldavian priest and going by the name of Titus. The actual author, Giovanni Paolo Marana (1642–93),³² was a political refugee from

31 Quoted in Joseph E. Tucker, 'On the Authorship of the *Turkish Spy*: An *État Présent*', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 52 (1958), p. 36.

32 See William H. McBurney, 'The Authorship of *The Turkish Spy*', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 72 (1957), pp. 915–35. Both Pierre Bayle and the French Royal Censor, François Charpentier, ascribed the work to Marana. Cf. Tucker, 'On the Authorship of the *Turkish Spy*', pp. 34–47. The title page of the first French edition (1684) claims that *L'Espion du Grand-Seigneur* was translated 'de l'Arabe en Italien Par le Sieur Jean-Paul Marana, Et de l'Italien en François par ***'.

Genoa living in France, whose subterfuge of a double translation was a protective device designed to provide anonymity and to avoid any official reprisal. Drawing upon contemporary fascination with the Orient fed by the many travel accounts of the time, Marana hit upon the clever idea of providing reports in the form of letters of a foreign observer,³³ whose comments on the social and political events he witnesses and the views of those he lives among are conveyed with a detachment, often ironic, that satirises the complacency, hypocrisy and inconsistency of the readers' world. In the Preface to Volume I of the *Letters* Marana tells us how he found the letters, 'a great Heap of Papers', lying in the corner of the room in the lodging into which he had just moved. Many of Mahmut's letters were official, written in his capacity as a spy in Paris to his political masters at home, but they were interspersed with personal letters to his brother, his cousin, a number of colleagues and a few intimate friends. The character of Mahmut – shy but curious, sceptical, prudent, humane, liberal and witty – gradually emerges. He had been enslaved as a young man in Sicily by Christians but he had used his captivity to acquire a knowledge of Greek and Latin authors, logic and history. His political and religious views, a reflection of Marana's, are liberal. The *Turkish Spy* is the most important early expression in a popular form of the Enlightenment aspirations of Marana's contemporaries, Bayle and Fontenelle in France and Locke and other members of the Royal Society in England. A fervent admirer of Descartes, Mahmut advocates the education of women and is scathing about Christian dogma and ritual. His attack on the authority and what he sees as the superstition of the Roman Catholic Church is a major theme and his hostility towards Christianity includes the Huguenots, whom he considers narrow-minded, though he is sympathetic to their suffering under Louis XIV.

With the publication of the first volume of *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* in England in 1691, the frontispiece portrait of *Mahmut The Turkish Spy Ætatis suæ 72*, engraved by F. H. van Hove (fl. 1679–1702), made its appearance. The drawing is based upon the sketch of Mahmut given in the Preface to Volume I: 'a Native of *Moldavia*, habited like an *Ecclesiastick*, greatly studious, of small Stature, of a very coarse Countenance, but of surprizing

33 And inadvertently created a new literary genre. Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721) and Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* (1762) are among the best known examples of a genre that includes Gatiens de Courtliz, *Memoires de messire J. B. de La Fontaine* (1699, trans. as *The French Spy*, 1700); Ned Ward, *The London Spy* (1698–1700); Charles Gildon, *The Golden Spy* (1709); Captain Bland, *The Northern Atalantis: or York Spy* (1713); The Marquis d'Argens, *Lettres juives* (1736–8) and his *Lettres chinoises* (1739–40); and Joseph Addison, *Spectator* numbers 50 and 557.

Goodness of Life ... he had always a Lamp Day and Night burning in his Chamber; had but few Moveables, only some Books, a small Tome of St. *Austin*, *Tacitus*, and the *Alcoran*, with the Picture of *Masaniello*, whom he praised very much, calling him the *Moses of Naples*'. This is how he appears in the first frontispiece, a bearded figure with a pen in his right hand, dressed in his disguise as a Moldavian priest, sitting before his table covered with geometrical instruments, papers and an hour glass. On the floor are bags of money, scrolls and a celestial globe. We can make out the names of the three books shown in the sketch. A lighted lamp hangs above the table, burning even though it is daylight, and a mirror, a watch and a picture of a fisherman hang on the wall. This is Masaniello, the Amalfi fisherman who from 7 to 16 July 1647 became the improbable leader of the revolt against Spanish misgovernment in Naples, and whose life is recounted in Volume III, Letter VII. For several days he became the effective ruler of the City, replacing the hated Viceroy, Count D'Arcos, and a powerful symbol of the liberty of the people against the oppression of authority. In just over a week he was dead, though after a short while his mutilated body was dug up in order that he could be given a magnificent funeral, which Count D'Arcos attended. Masaniello is in many ways an emblem of the *Letters*, the humble but heroic figure who stands up to official repression, and it is fitting that his picture hangs in Mahmut's room and is depicted in the frontispiece. This is the frontispiece, re-engraved by an unknown artist, that made its way into Defoe's *A Continuation*.

The provenance of the drawing of the imaginary Mahmut adds an important detail to our knowledge of him. The *Italian* (as Marana is referred to in the Preface to Volume III):

being acquainted with the *Secretary* of *Cardinal Mazarini*, and frequenting his House, he saw a *Picture* hang in his *Closet*, with this *Inscription* at the Bottom, TITUS DE MOLDAVIA, CLERICUS. Ætatis suæ LXXII. He ask'd the gentleman who this *Titus* was, who inform'd him, that he was a great *Traveller*, and understood many *Languages*, especially the *Slavonian*, *Greek* and *Arabick*; on which account *Cardinal Richlieu*, and his Successor *Mazarini*, had made great Use of him; and, That the Latter had caus'd that *Picture* of the *Moldavian* to be drawn, and hung up in his *Closet*, from whence he had it. Our *Italian* being satisfy'd, after some Discourse about him, That this *Stranger* was the very *Arabian*, whose *Writings* he had so happily found, got leave of the Gentleman, to have a Draught of the *Picture* taken, by a skilful *Limner*, which he afterwards plac'd in the *Front* of his *Translation*.

The implication of this description is that Mahmut, during his forty-five years living a precarious life in disguise in Paris as a Turkish spy, was nonetheless under the protection of the highest French authorities (not entirely surprising of course, as the French and the Turks were allies).

The frontispiece in the *Continuation*, which differs from the original frontispiece in the omission of the names on the spines of the three books identified in the earlier frontispiece and in some details such as those of Mahmut's dress, is only one of the means by which the resemblance between the original and its *Continuation* by Defoe is maintained. The title page of the *Continuation*, too, in its layout, double-ruled frame, choice of fonts, rules and text resembles the earlier title pages. Notable in this respect are the words 'Turkish Spy' in large black letter; the description of the contents ('Giving an impartial Account to the Divan at *Constantinople* of the most Remarkable Transactions of *Europe*, and discovering several Intrigues and Secrets of the Christian Courts; especially of that of *France*'); and, set between rules, the claim that the work was 'Written originally in Arabick, Translated into Italian, and from thence into English', all of which have been copied more or less exactly from the earlier title pages. Beyond the title page the mimicking of the original volumes is kept up. 'A TABLE OF THE LETTERS and *Matters* contain'd in this Volume' follows the familiar format of the original and the letters themselves, which are dated by the moon (rather than the month) as well as by the year (another practice carried over from *The Turkish Spy*), give every appearance of being by the writer of the first eight volumes.

The continuity of the *Continuation* from *The Turkish Spy* was strengthened by the fact that, aside from the first volume published in Paris in French, *The Turkish Spy* thereafter appears to have become an entirely English publication. Its publication history is curious. The first English translation of Volume I was published in London by J. L. [John Leake] in 1687 (followed by the second to sixth editions of the same volume in the years 1691–4), while the second volume of *The Turkish Spy* was published by John Leake for Henry Rhodes in London in 1691. It consisted of the 1687 translation of Volume I and a second volume in English for which there was no French (or Italian) original. In the following three years (1691–4) the remaining six volumes were published, all of them in London and all in English. Marana lived until 1693 and would therefore have been able to write further volumes of *The Turkish Spy* (as he had promised). But, surprisingly, when the later volumes were published for the first time in French in 1696 they appeared in Cologne³⁴ (four volumes) and in Amster-

³⁴ Probably an imprint of convenience for Paris or for Amsterdam. See McBurney, 'The Authorship of *The Turkish Spy*', p. 921, n. 16.

dam (two volumes) as translations from the English edition (1691–4). No trace of a French or Italian original of these volumes has ever been found, even though when the second volume was published in London in 1691 it was accompanied by a preface³⁵ in which the editor claimed that the year before a certain Daniel Saltmarsh had found in Ferrara a copy of the original ‘Italian Translation’ of *The Turkish Spy*. ‘A LETTER from Mr. Daniel Saltmarsh, to his Friend in London, concerning the Italian copy of the *Turkish Spy*’ is printed after the preface to lend an air of authenticity to the claim. But Saltmarsh appears to be as much a hoax as the Italian volumes he claims to have found.

Defoe’s *Continuation of Letters written by a Turkish Spy* preserved not only the formal properties of the *Letters*, but also the pattern of military and political news interspersed with observations on a variety of topics, especially religion and science. As a spy for the Ottoman authorities in Constantinople, Mahmut’s principal task was to send reports of military alliances and engagements and any other information that might be useful to the Porte. Joseph Tucker estimated that the accounts of the ‘political and military history of seventeenth-century Europe’ made up a ‘generous proportion’ of the *Letters*.³⁶ In the *Continuation*, letters on the progress on the Nine Years’ War constitute the majority of the letters (about 44 per cent) and contain much of Defoe’s satire on French military greatness, which so impressed and appalled Mahmut. As we have seen, Mahmut’s other letters express his ardent desire to be replaced in order that he might return home in his old age; his reaction to Christianity, particularly the ceremonies and dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church; to Judaism, about which he is surprisingly well-informed if generally hostile; and to various natural events such as the series of earthquakes that occurred in the last decade of the seventeenth century, as well as to phenomena such as divining by rods in order to detect gold and silver.

The Preface, too, maintains the appearance and stance of the introductory sections addressed ‘To the Reader’ of the original volumes. It begins, apologetically if conventionally, with the supposed translator’s regretting his failure to convey the nobility of the ideas or the lofty expression of the original. To render ‘the Eloquence, the Spirit, the sprightly Turns, and the happy Genius of our accomplish’d, inimitable *Arabian*’ (p. 45) is beyond the translator’s capacity and the limitations of the English language. Here

35 Arthur J. Weitzman, in his edition of *The Turkish Spy*, refers to the ‘lying preface’ of the second edition. See *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, selected and edited by Arthur J. Weitzman (New York, 1970), p. 232.

36 Tucker, ‘On the Authorship of the Turkish Spy’, p. 75.

he follows the preface of the first volume of the *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*: 'if the Translation be not Elegant as the *Arabick*, do not accuse the Author, seeing it is not possible to reach the Force and Beauty of the Original'. Moreover, if Mahmut sometimes speaks in ways that might give offence to Christians, the translator has no option but to follow: 'the Continuation must fall into the same Method ... either *Mahmut* must be a *Turk* or no *Turk*' (p. 46). Whereas the original *Turkish Spy* was an actual translation (if not from the Arabic), the *Continuation* of course is not. But the pretence that it is a translation is kept up in order to maintain the link with the 'former Volumes of this Work' (p. 46).

A Note on an Historical Source

The *Continuation*, published in 1718, recounts events that took place between 1687 and 1693, so that there is a gap of twenty-five to thirty-one years, a generation, between the actions and the telling. As the military history of the Nine Years' War, the principal historical subject, is complicated, contemporary sources of information were required. The chief of these, *The Present State of Europe, Or, The Historical and Political Monthly Mercury*,³⁷ furnished details not only of the military engagements but also for a number of the more speculative subjects that Mahmut discusses in letters to his family or to friends and colleagues. Defoe, drawing frequently upon *The Present State of Europe* for the military history, came across other material that was useful to him in conveying the realistic detail and capturing the flavour of the earlier period. The Explanatory Notes indicate the passages that are indebted to the account in *The Present State of Europe*.

37 Translated by John Phillips from the French journal, *Mercurie historique et politique* (published in Holland) the *Monthly Mercuries* (as they were known) provided a fairly comprehensive monthly summary of the military manoeuvres and engagements as well as miscellaneous news, gossip and observations from the major European capitals. Phillips began his translation in July 1690 and continued it until his death in 1706. In 1692 he brought out *The General History of Europe from November 1688 to July 1690*, a retrospective volume designed to cover the first two years of the Nine Years' War, also based on the *Mercurie historique et politique*.