

# Jews and Christians United

*The 1701 Prosecution of Oliger Paulli and his Dutch Printers*

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## Abstract

Numerous religious texts were printed that would have been censored, elsewhere including Jewish religious texts. Yet freedom had its limits. In August 1701, Amsterdam's judiciary council ordered the books authored by the Danish visionary Oliger Paulli, who advocated for a new religion uniting Jews and Christians, to be destroyed. In addition, the council sentenced Paulli to twelve years, imprisonment and later to permanent banishment, while two of his printers received hefty fines for printing his books. While earlier accounts have explained Paulli's arrest by pointing to his heretical ideas, Paulli had publicly been advocating his views without causing scandal for years. The present chapter explores an alternate reason for his arrest, focusing on his printing connections that year, which caused Amsterdam's authorities to associate Paulli with some of Amsterdam's most outspoken religious dissenters and critics of religious authority.

**Keywords:** Oliger Paulli (1644-1714), religious nonconformism, clandestine printing, Messianism, Socinianism, Jewish-Christianity

In 1695, the Danish merchant Oliger Paulli's urge to unite all world religions into one church became so strong that he decided to abandon his wife and children and establish himself in Europe's greatest laboratory of religious enthusiasms and heterodox printing, the city of Amsterdam.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paulli claimed that his move to Amsterdam was on divine order. Oliger Paulli, *Noachs duyve of goede tydinge uyt Canaan* [...] (Amsterdam: n. p., 1696), 319, 731, 878.

If, in the end, his church did not conquer the world, it was not because he failed to see his fervent writing into print. Based on revelatory experiences, inspired dreams, autodidactic studies, as well as his own amateurish scriptural translations, Paulli's publications focused on uniting Christendom and Judaism, combining criticism of contemporary religious institutions, doctrines, and practices. In addition to establishing his church, Paulli aimed to restore the Jewish people to their promised land and to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple. To that end, Paulli appealed to Christians to join Jewish Passover celebrations, to Jews to abandon their own synagogues for Paulli's "Jehovan Church," and to European monarchs to support his project. The restoration of the Jews and their Temple, Paulli believed unsurprisingly, would be accompanied by the arrival (in 1720, in his estimation) of the Messiah. Until that time he himself would serve as the Messiah's "Voorloper" (precursor) and governor of the "Kingdom of Israel."<sup>2</sup>

In 1701, Paulli's religious mission to Amsterdam's Jews and Christians came to a sudden end. Two of Paulli's printers were fined for printing his books, and Paulli was arrested and sentenced to twelve years imprisonment, after which he was to be banished from the Republic altogether.<sup>3</sup> The court ordered his books to be "retrieved and ripped to pieces."<sup>4</sup> Committed to Amsterdam's *rasphuis*, Paulli remained there until in May the following year, when his own and his family's efforts to have him released finally succeeded.<sup>5</sup> On May 24, Paulli was picked up from prison by his brother, a Danish diplomat, and taken to Hamburg, never to return to the Dutch Republic.<sup>6</sup>

2 "Rijck Israels." Oliger Paulli, *Moses neemt de decke af* [...] (Amsterdam: n.p., 1697), 19. In an early version he claimed the king of England would become the stadholder of a rebuilt Jerusalem (e.g. Paulli, *Noachs duyve*, 451–453). On his refusal to call himself Messiah, see Andreas Stübel, *Aufgefangene Brieffe, welche zwischen etzlichen curieusen Personen über den itezigen Zustand der Staats und gelehrten Welt gewechselt worden. Der zweyten Ravage Achten Pacquet* (Wahrenberg: Johann Georg Freymunden, 1701), 812.

3 Stadsarchief Amsterdam (hereafter SAA) 5061 (Archieven van de Schout en Schepenen, van de Schepenen en van de Subalterne Rechtbanken): 157 (Schoutsrol), no pagination (19 July 1701).

4 "sullen werde opgehaalt en aen stukken gescheurt." SAA 5061: 350 (Confessieboeken, verhoren der preventieven), 240–244 (24 and 27 August 1701). Quotation on 244.

5 Johann Georg Gichtel, *Theosophia Practica* [...] vol. 6 (Leiden: s.e., 1722), 1469–70.

6 Oluf Nielsen, *Kjøbenhavns historie og beskrivelse*, vol 6, *Kjøbenhavn under Kong Frederik den Fjerde* (Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gads, 1892), 99. Paulli states that he was released in June 1702: Paulli, *Manna das ist, so die itzige Jüden* (s.l., n.p., 1704), 262.

Despite much recent scholarship on early modern Jewish-Christian relations, on the forms, terms and consequences of conversion, Jewish-Christianity and on other early modern religious fusions and syncretism, our eccentric Danish visionary and his ambition to unite Judaism and Christianity have received scant scholarly attention.<sup>7</sup> Paulli has long been an anecdotal curiosity at most, or a colorful ornament to others' stories. Heinrich Graetz, for instance, who mentioned Paulli briefly in his monumental *History of the Jews*, characterized him as a "Danish enthusiast" and his designs to return the Jews to Palestine as a "hobby."<sup>8</sup> Paulli was taken more seriously in 1904 by Frank Hecquet-Cramer and in 1927 by Nathan Gelber, who argued that Paulli was one of the earliest Zionists.<sup>9</sup> In his 1952 classic *Philosemitismus im Barock*, Hans Joachim Schoeps presented Paulli as one of the main representatives of what he called early modern philosemitism (despite Paulli's harsh criticism of Judaism and design to convert the Jews).<sup>10</sup> Yet, until the doctoral dissertation of one of the authors of this article, Paulli has largely remained a marginal figure.<sup>11</sup>

7 On early modern Jewish-Christian relations, in particular in the Low Countries, see J. van den Berg and Ernestine G. E. van der Wall, eds., *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988). On early modern Jewish-Christianity see Richard Popkin, ed. *Christian-Jews and Jewish Christians* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994). On Jewish-Christianity in early modern Amsterdam see Alexander van der Haven, "Jewish-Christianity and the Confessionalization of Amsterdam's Seventeenth-Century Portuguese Jewish Community," *Cadernos de Estudos Sefarditas* 20 (May 2019): 117–43.

8 Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 3rd enl. ed., vol. 10 (Leipzig: Leiner, 1896), 264. See also J. Zwarts, "Paulli, Holger of Oliger," *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, ed. P.J. Blok, P.C. Molhuysen, vol. 6 (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1924), 1102.

9 Frank F. Hecquet-Cramer, "Holger Paulli: A Danish Forerunner of Zionism in the Seventeenth Century," *The New Era* 4, no. 4 (1904): 171–74; Nathan M. Gelber, *Zur Vorgeschichte des Zionismus: Judenstaatsprojekte in den Jahren 1695–1845* (Vienna: Phaidon, 1927).

10 Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Philosemitismus im Barock* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr/Siebeck, 1952), 53–67.

11 Jeannine Kunert, *Der Juden-Könige zwei: Zum deutschsprachigen Diskurs über Sabbatai Zwi und Oliger Paulli* (Erfurt 2019), [https://www.db-thueringen.de/receive/dbt\\_mods\\_00038413](https://www.db-thueringen.de/receive/dbt_mods_00038413); Kunert, "I who knows no Hebrew: On the Relation of Language, Identity and Millenarian Expectations as Exemplified by Oliger Paulli," in *Language as Bridge and Border – Linguistics, Cultural, and Political Constellations in 18th to 20th Century German-Jewish Thought*, ed. Sabine Sander (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2015), 51–59. Two exceptions are 'local' studies of Paulli: Walter Rustmeier, "Oliger Pauli oder der Plan einer Apostolischen Gemeinde zur Vereinigung der Juden und Christen in Altona," *Schriften des Vereins für Schleswig-Holsteinische Kirchengeschichte* 19 (1963): 69–87; Klaus Jockenhövel, "Oliger Pauli in Friedrichstadt," *Mitteilungsblatt der Gesellschaft für Friedrichstädter Stadtgeschichte* 16 (1980): 3–9.

This essay aims to further rehabilitate Paulli's role in Amsterdam's colorful religious and printing landscape of the turn of the eighteenth century by exploring the precise circumstances of the arrest and punishment of Paulli and his printers. Schoeps, who had not consulted Amsterdam's legal records, had assumed that the cause of the legal proceedings against Paulli and his printers had been the natural consequence of the blasphemous claims in the 1701 book, *Beeker der swymelinge*, which Paulli had co-authored with Moses Germanus, a convert to Judaism.<sup>12</sup> Paulli had been publishing the same beliefs as the *Beeker* propagated for a number of years, in plain sight. His first known Amsterdam publication, *Noachs duyve of goede tydingen uit Canaan* (1696) already contained most of the heretical ideas mentioned in the interrogation records five years later, and contemporary media reports show that Paulli's "blasphemies" had evidently been well-known for some time.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to Paulli's arrest, however, a new theme had emerged in his publications: a new understanding of the Messiah as glorified on the cross, which he claimed to have realized through an "improved" scriptural translation of Jesus's last words.<sup>14</sup> Paulli's translation efforts and theological speculations overlapped with those of others such as the dissident Mennonite Carel Cats. Working with printers and publishers of the works of Amsterdam's most notorious heterodox Jewish and Christian dissenters, Paulli became guilty by association. Despite Paulli's own criticism of these groups, his detractors associated him with Amsterdam's Socinians and with the followers of Baruch Spinoza, who were despised by the city's Jewish and Christian leaders alike. The latter, as the legal records suggest, were particularly bothered by these groups' disrespect for worldly and religious authority over the individual mind. Ironically, then, Paulli succeeded in uniting Amsterdam's Jews and Christians, but only against the Danish religious entrepreneur himself.

12 Moses Germanus and Oliger Paulli, *De beeker der swymelinge* [...] (Amsterdam: Weduwe van Hendrik Boterenbroot, 1701). Schoeps (*Philosemitismus*, 65, n.1) depends on a source, evidently written by a converted Jew, who did seem to have knowledge of the records of Paulli's interrogation in Amsterdam: Israel ben Jehuda, *Sendschreiben eines pollnischen Rabbinen* [...] (s.l.: n.p., 1704), 25. On the reasons for his arrest: Schoeps, *Philosemitismus*, 57, 61, 63.

13 Paulli's *Triumph triumph in den afgehouden steen zonder handen* [...] (Amsterdam: n.p., 1697) was mockingly reviewed by the widely read Rotterdam *Boekzaal*. The reviewer quoted from Paulli's book so extensively that he complained that his hand hurt from copying Paulli's words. Anon., *De boekzaal van Europe* (Rotterdam: Pieter van der Slaart, 1699), 351–69. Paulli, *Triumph*.

14 Paulli, *Ons levens behoudt* [...] (Amsterdam: Johannes Smets, 1699).



Figure 1: Jan de Ridder, portrait etching (1694-1706) of Olliger Pauli. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

## The Life and Beliefs of a Wealthy Visionary

Oliger Paulli was born Holger Paulli to a well-established Copenhagen family in 1644. He claimed that his paternal grandfather Hans Paulli, mayor of Schwerin in Mecklenburg, had been a Jew who had converted to Christianity. Like his claim that the Danes were direct descendants of Abraham, this assertion was the product of Paulli's messianic desire for Davidic descent.<sup>15</sup> A more likely Jewish connection is represented by his uncle Philippus Adolphus Fabricius, professor of oriental languages in Rostock, who had studied Hebrew with a rabbi in Holland and who was representative of a wider Christian interest in Jewish religion and in the Hebrew language.<sup>16</sup> This connection to Judaism found its way to young Holger. At age twelve (Paulli would later claim), he had a religious experience. He made a covenant with God and received a new name, *Oli-ger*, the combination of two Hebrew words: *oli*, meaning "my little child that is still suckling the breast" (according to Paulli, the vision took place shortly after the death of his mother), and *ger*, meaning "stranger" or "prose-lyte."<sup>17</sup> Although he was ridiculed for this name – he was mocked as "O-lieger" ("oh-liar," in Dutch) – he used the name Oliger as his official name from as early as 1681, in the period that his investments in the Danish West Indian and Guinean Company made him the fortune that would later allow him to become a full-time visionary and disseminate his views in print.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout his mercantile career, Paulli later claimed, he had visions and dreams of divine origin, as well as miraculous experiences. For example, he claimed to have foreseen a number of historical events, such

15 On the claim about his grandfather see: Andreas Stübel, *Aufgefangene Brieffe*, 807. Paulli claimed that in his maternal line he is a descendent of Zimran, son of Abraham and his third wife Keturah, and in his paternal line an offspring of the tribe Juda and so of king David's house. Oliger Paulli, *Den seer grooten dagh Jizreels [...]* (Amsterdam: n.p., 1698), 230–31. On the Danes as descendants of Abraham: Paulli, *Triumph*, 1182–83.

16 On Paulli's uncle, see Paulli, *Noachs duyve*, 807. On Christian Hebraism see e.g. Allison P. Coudert, "Five Seventeenth-Century Christian Hebraists," *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Allison P. Coudert and Jeffrey S. Shoulson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 286–308.

17 Paulli, *Kurtzer Bericht, an alle Puyancen von Europa [...]* (s.l.: n.p., 1704), 18–19. Throughout his work Paulli also comes up with different meanings, often by applying *gematria* (e.g. Paulli, *Den seer grooten dagh Jizreels*, 222, where adding 'Danus' to his name results in the same numerical value as 'angel').

18 In a document of the West Indian and Guinean Company from that year Oliger Paulli signed official documents with his transformed name. Missive til det Vestindiske og Guineiske Compagnies Directeurer fra Oliger Paulli. September 1681, Royal Library Copenhagen, Bibliotheca Danica, Bibl. II, sp. 1063. On "O-lieger:" Paulli, *Moses neemt de decke af [...]* (Amsterdam: J. Smets, 1700), 182–83.

as the 1665 Great Fire of London.<sup>19</sup> He also asserted that he had died and was resurrected, and that his corpse (unlike that of Lazarus) had never reeked.<sup>20</sup> In 1685 God appeared to Paulli in London, promising to remain loyal to his covenant with Abraham.<sup>21</sup> God appeared to him again in Paris, helping him overcome all the mockery, and advise Joseph Viera, whom we will encounter later, that he “should make known to the Jews of Amsterdam that the true kingdom of Israel was near.”<sup>22</sup>

After settling in Amsterdam, on Christmas Night in 1696, Paulli had gone out for a nocturnal walk along the city’s canals when God appeared to him on a cloud, dressed in a white garment embroidered with Hebrew letters, stretched down his hand for Paulli to kiss and gave Paulli the mission to unite Maimonides and Paul.<sup>23</sup> Paulli’s books are filled with accounts of dreams he believed to be divinely inspired but which are also revealing of more psychological matters, such as a dream he had about a violent conflict between him and his brother, in which he poked out his brother’s right eye.<sup>24</sup>

Some of Paulli’s early ideas, such as the political restoration of the Jews to the Land of Canaan, became less central over time, while others such as ‘correcting’ Bible translations became more prominent, but the core of Paulli’s religious ideas did not dramatically evolve over his Amsterdam years.<sup>25</sup> Of these, four stand out. The first, already mentioned above, was his ambition to convert all of humanity – Christians, Jews, Muslims (‘Turks’), and pagans to the true religion, his own “Jehovan Church.” He emphasized that all previous religions had “not been the true church or true Israel of God,”<sup>26</sup> and, in letters to the authorities and by employing the instruments Amsterdam’s printing industry offered, such as newspaper advertising, Paulli spared no effort to convince the inhabitants of Amsterdam to join his church.<sup>27</sup>

The second core tenet of Paulli’s beliefs was his chiliasm. Paulli’s eschatology, borrowing freely from many of contemporaries’ beliefs, was a this-worldly political scenario in which a European monarch would assist in

19 Paulli, *Triumph*, 233. On p. 234 he mentions a number of other historical events he claims he had prophesied.

20 Paulli, *Noachs duyve*, 829–31.

21 Paulli, *Triumph*, 285.

22 Ibid.

23 Schoeps, *Philosemitismus*, 58.

24 Paulli, *Triumph*, 439.

25 Only his attitude to Amsterdam’s religious communities became more negative, likely because his failure to reign them into his project.

26 Paulli, *Noachs duyve*, 21, 243, 268.

27 Schoeps, *Philosemitismus*, 57.

creating a single church and provide the military means to repatriate the Jews to their homeland and build the Temple; he appealed personally to both King William III and the French Dauphin to take up the responsibility.<sup>28</sup> Having rejected, in a vision, the crown of Poland God had offered him, Paulli would become the king of Israel. Paulli believed that in 1720, after the Temple had been rebuilt and all the tribes of Israel had been reunited, the messiah would come. While he never explicitly claimed it, his assertion of Davidic descent and the promise of becoming the king of Israel, strongly suggest that he expected to be the messiah himself.

Central to Paulli's religious reform was his rejection of the Trinity, for which he found no basis in Scripture and which he considered a man-made lie. God's true essence, Paulli asserted, was His "Eenig Eenigste Eenigheid" ("single sole unity") in one person.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, Paulli fiercely attacked the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed and Mennonite churches. But he also sought to develop a theology distinct from other anti-trinitarian groups in Amsterdam, who refused to join him.<sup>30</sup> Most notable among them were the Jews, whom he chided for listening "to your erring rabbis,"<sup>31</sup> and the Socinians, who could be found at the margins of various Churches and heterodox circles.<sup>32</sup>

Paulli found a crucial argument for his anti-trinitarianism in Jesus's cry from the Cross – "My God, my god, why have you forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) – which he believed had been falsely translated, a mistake that had become a central dogma after the council of Nicaea in the year 325. Paulli claimed he had consulted with rabbi Joachim Eleasar (who, as we will see, would offer a different interpretation) and a certain Pieter Visvliet who had learned Hebrew, that the correct translation was "My God, my God, how have you glorified me" (later revising "glorified *me*" to "glorified *us*").<sup>33</sup>

The fourth central motif in Paulli's writings is directly related to Paulli's chiliastic beliefs and his anti-trinitarianism. While Paulli wanted to convert

28 See e.g. the dedications to William III of Great Britain and the French Dauphin that precede the body text of *Triumph*.

29 Paulli, *Noachs duyve*, 21.

30 This theology can be found throughout Paulli's publications. Paulli argued that Socinians regarded Jesus as "minder God" (a lesser God), while he believed he was the "tweeden waere Adam, dien beloofden Davids soon" ("the second true Adam, the promised son of David"). E.g. Germanus and Paulli, *Beeker der swymelinge*, 99.

31 "luisterende naar UE UE dwalende Rabbinen." Paulli, *Triumph*, 60.

32 For a criticism of these see for instance: Paulli, *Triumph*, 463, 488, and 738.

33 Paulli, *Moses neemt de decke af*, 159–60. Paulli assumed that these words had been in Hebrew, in which *sbkh* means 'to praise' or 'to glorify,' rather than Aramaic root *sbk*, which indeed means 'forsake.'



the adherents of all religions to his new church, he was preoccupied with Jews, and he was sure that Jews were far more likely to accept his vision than that of the post-Nicaean Christian churches, who had tried to woo them with a false, trinitarian image of Christ and the belief that the Messiah had been abandoned by God.

## Paulli's Reception in Amsterdam

Paulli conceived of his project no less as a reform of Judaism than of Christianity. The comparison of Paulli by the chronicler (but not lover) of contemporary Judaism Johann Jacob Schudt in his *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*, which categorized Paulli as a Judaizer, to Absalom, contained a kernel of truth:

Oliger Paulli kissed the Jews in Amsterdam often, telling them, dear people, how fortunate you are. It appears that because he wanted to become the king of the Jews, as Absalom did with the same intention, he kissed them to steal their heart and draw them to him.<sup>34</sup>

Like Absalom to his father's subjects, Paulli tried to endear himself to Amsterdam's Jews not as an outsider, but as one of their own. He told them he was a Danish converso and also had miraculously turned 'ger' at the age of twelve. Another indication that he regarded himself as a Jewish reformer of Judaism is his claim that a Frenchwoman had had a vision of him, in which he hammered his project for the Jews' Restoration to the doors of an Amsterdam synagogue, in a Luther-like attempt to reform his own religion.<sup>35</sup>

And like the great reformer of Wittenberg, Paulli took Hebrew studies seriously, seeking out a Hebrew instructor among Amsterdam's Portuguese-Jewish community.<sup>36</sup> Although it is not known whether he received this help or not, Paulli read rabbinic and Kabbalistic texts, as well as more recent

34 [...] Oliger Pauli habe zu Amsterdam off die Juden geküsst und gesagt, Ihr lieben Leuth, wie seydt ihr so glücklich; Es scheineth, weil er der Juden König werden will, daß er die Juden, wie Absalon auß gleicher Absicht thate, küsset, umb ihr Hertz zu stehlen und an sich zu ziehen [...]. Johann Jacob Schudt, *Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten* vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Wolfgang Christian Multzen, 1718), 317.

35 Paulli, *Triumph*, 47; Schoeps (*Philosemitismus*, 65) assumes that Paulli in fact truly nailed his chiliastic project on the synagogue doors and refers to Paulli's *Das wahre Arcanum Regium* (1701), 4. We have not been able to verify this source.

36 Namely Viera, who was to teach Paulli and his children Hebrew. Paulli, *Triumph*, 60.

Jewish writings such as Menasseh ben Israel's *Hope of Israel*, whose messianic hopes are echoed in Paulli's works.<sup>37</sup> Paulli's engagement with Jews and Judaism was no doubt also transformed by living, for the first time, in a city with a large, diverse, and dynamic Jewish community. Within a year of his arrival in Amsterdam, Paulli had attended Jewish ceremonies "at the house of one of the most prominent Jews," as well as a gathering of several rabbis at the house of his "good friend" Joseph Vieira.<sup>38</sup> He also discussed the divine name 'Adonai' with an Ashkenazi rabbi, who initially disappointed him by refusing to confirm one of Paulli's ideas about Hebrew but with whom he later had a more satisfactory encounter at the "Jewish school."<sup>39</sup> Another Ashkenazi rabbi, chief Rabbi Levi, responded, at least that is what Paulli wrote, to one of Paulli's technical questions regarding Hebrew with "Oh if we would just know that! And he let know that if that would be discovered, the kingdom of the Messiah would come," after which God promptly revealed the answer to Paulli.<sup>40</sup>

It is unclear whether Paulli's efforts received any positive Jewish reactions in his Amsterdam years. While he boasted of having converted several Jews (which might not have endeared him to others), the Christian theosophist Johann Georg Gichtel reported in a letter to a friend in April 1701 that while Paulli "believed" he was in a dialogue with Amsterdam's Jews, "the Jews just laugh, take his money to borrow, and disappear."<sup>41</sup> Paulli mentioned hostile reactions, too, such as one Rabbi Eleasar's call for Paulli's books to be burned.<sup>42</sup>

What we know about Paulli's relationship with Joseph Vieira and his wife, and with a proselyte called Moses Germanus, suggests that, alongside the hostility, some Jews were more ambivalent toward Paulli. When Christians from the established Churches had told him his chiliastic visions "had only been a fantastic dream", Paulli contacted "the pious Joseph Viera." Vieira's

37 Paulli, *Den seer groote dagh Jizreels*, 925. See on Menasseh ben Israel's 'translation' of Judaism to contemporary Christians: Sina Rauschenbach, *Judaism for Christians: Menasseh ben Israel (1604-1657)*, transl. Corey Twitchell (Lanham, MD: Lexington books, 2019).

38 "in het huys van een der vornaamsten Ioden." Paulli, *Noachs duyve*, 244-45.

39 Paulli, *Triumph*, 301-304.

40 "Ach, das wir das wusten! En gaf gelijk te kennen, dat wanneer dat selve ontdeekt wierde, het Rijck van de Messias zoude komen." Paulli, *Triumph*, 40.

41 Paulli claimed e.g. that he had converted a Jewish emissary from Tripoli, rabbi Boas. *Moses neemt de decke af*, \*\*\*3. Citation: "und meinet den Juden das Wort zu sprechen, die seiner nur lachen, nehmen Geld von ihm zu Lehen, und machen sich unsichtbar" (16 April 1701). Gichtel, *Theosophia Practica*, 1411.

42 Germanus and Paulli, *Beeker der swymelinge*, 90, 99.

brother came to call on him and “ensured me that these were not fantasies, and declared me and my house a royal and pontifical worthiness.”<sup>43</sup> Vieira himself sent a letter to Paulli suggesting his visions had no divine origin, but later tried to reassure Paulli by claiming that he had not written that letter himself. A claim made by Paulli in 1704 suggests that the visionary had indeed succeeded in making some kind of impression on Vieira. In *Irrendes Israel wieder zurechtgebracht*, written when Vieira had, like Paulli himself, resettled in Hamburg, Paulli claimed that Vieira’s wife Sara, the daughter of Isaac Orobio de Castro, “had seen me in a night vision glorified beyond all measures and heard a voice loudly claiming three times: ‘Do what Paulli tells you.’”<sup>44</sup>

Paulli’s encounter with Moses Germanus further complicates our understanding of Paulli’s relationship with Amsterdam’s Jews. Born as Johann Peter Späth, Moses Germanus had converted to Judaism in the year Paulli arrived in Amsterdam. This was after a series of other conversions, from Roman Catholicism to Lutheranism, back to the Roman Church, and, before he took shelter under the wings of the *shekhinah*, he had also been a Mennonite and Socinian.<sup>45</sup> Paulli and Germanus had met at a Socinian dispute and began a complicated relationship. On the one hand they disagreed about Jesus Christ, who Germanus claimed had not even existed.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, they shared much of the same criticism of Amsterdam’s established Christian churches, and, as Paulli claimed, Germanus eventually adopted Paulli’s view of Jesus Christ.<sup>47</sup> Germanus likely did change his mind, for in *’t Groote Hosianna selfs van Joden uytgeroepen* (1701), addressed to Paulli, printed by Paulli’s printer Johannes Smets, and probably also

43 This was on July 11, 1697. Paulli, *Triumph*, 37–38.

44 “hat mich in einem Nacht Gesichte über alle Massen verherrlicht gesehen, und eine Stimme zu drei unterschiedlichen Zeiten ruffen hören dies lauts: Was Paulli euch saget das thut. Was Paulli euch saget das thut. Was Paulli euch saget das thut.” Paulli, *Irrendes Israel wieder zurecht gebracht* (s.l.: n.p., 1704), 22. On 6 Adar 5450, “Joseph David Vieira” and Sara Orobio de Castro were married in Amsterdam: SAA 5001 (Dooop- Trouw- en Begraafboeken): 696–437 (8 February 1690). On Orobio de Castro see Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro* (Oxford; New York: Published for The Littman Library by Oxford University Press, 1989); *Isaac Orobio: The Jewish Argument with Dogma and Doubt*, ed. Carsten Wilke (Berlin; Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).

45 Allison P. Coudert, “Judaizing in the Seventeenth Century: Francis Mercury Van Helmont and Johann Peter Späth (Moses Germanus),” in *Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe: Studies and Documents*, ed. Martin Mulrow and Richard Henry Popkin (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 71–121.

46 Paulli, *Moses neemt de decke af*, 112, 152–53; Paulli, *Irrendes Israel*, 60.

47 Paulli, *Moses neemt de decke af*, 95, 153.

financed by Paulli, Germanus recognized the importance of the person of Jesus but denied his divinity.<sup>48</sup> *De beeker der swymelinge*, Paulli's last printed work before his arrest, was, so Paulli claimed, the result of his collaboration with Germanus, who had written the text until p. 51, and Paulli, who had composed the rest.

Whatever the precise nature of Paulli's relationship with Amsterdam's Jews was, it is clear that among Amsterdam's established churches he found only ridicule and outright hostility. Other Christians, however, did seem to have been attracted to Paulli's ideas and charisma. Paulli claimed that he had saved a woman from the despair induced by predestinarian beliefs (she had been declared incurable by her ministers), and had brought three atheists back into the fold.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, Johannes Robijn, a schoolmaster at the Latin school who reportedly helped Paulli with his Dutch, was sufficiently besotted with Paulli that he named his child after him.<sup>50</sup> Paulli also recounts in his books numerous instances in which others, usually women or girls, had inspired dreams about him. The young girl Veronica van der Sande, who lived in the same quarters as Paulli, dreamt in 1697 of messily entangled clockwork chains, after which a voice said that they were as confused as Paulli's books would be. Paulli took the dream as a sign of divine approval and printed her testimony statement in *Triumph* together with that of a certain Johan Schmid with whom she had shared her dream.<sup>51</sup> Paulli also reported that "the wife of a certain eminent person" had dreamt of him lying as if he were dead, wearing a crown.<sup>52</sup> Another example are the dreams of the bookkeeper of his cousin Petrus Corsinius, who also lived in Amsterdam.<sup>53</sup> In one of the bookkeeper's dreams Paulli ascended a pulpit in Lubeck and, instead of preaching, blew smoke from a pipe. Although this dream like that of van der Sande could very well be read as reflecting the confused impression Paulli made on his audience, Paulli believed that the smoke "applied to the present state of the so-called religions today, which

48 Moses Germanus, *'t Grootte Hosianna* [...] (Amsterdam: Johannes Smets, 1701).

49 Paulli, *Moses neemt de decke af*, \*\*\*3.

50 On Robijn and Paulli, see J.C. van Slee, *Geschiedenis van het Socianisme in de Nederlanden* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1914), 272. On the child "Pieter Oligier" see SAA 5001: 108 (26 June 1698).

51 Paulli, *Triumph*, 298–299.

52 Paulli, *Triumph*, 413.

53 Paulli's cousin ridiculed him by arguing that divine appearances have disappeared since the time of the apostles. Paulli reciprocated by sharing with his cousin his supernatural revelations about the courtship between his cousin's love interest, a mademoiselle from Hamburg, and a long-wigged and blue-caped gentleman. Paulli, *Triumph*, 407.

will disappear as smoke from a pipe.”<sup>54</sup> These strange reports show how Paulli interpreted these dreams according to his desire, but suggest also that the eccentric visionary somehow succeeded to enter the dream lives of others.

If we are to believe Gichtel, who had lived in Amsterdam since 1668 and knew the nonconformist scene well, Paulli found growing audiences for his religious message.<sup>55</sup> Even the author of a mocking review of *Triumph*, written in the Fall of 1699 in the Rotterdam *Boekzaal*, characterized Paulli as the “man, whose brain has been bumped out of its skull” and his book as the “grotesqueries of insane Oliger Paulli,” but acknowledged that Paulli was “well-known in Amsterdam.”<sup>56</sup> Paulli also found appeal among other non-conformists such as Germanus. While both Gichtel and the Lutheran mystic Friedrich Breckling (1629-1711), who initially had been attracted to Paulli, eventually rejected him, others enthusiastically continued to support him.<sup>57</sup> Heinrich Bernhard Köster, a returnee from the New World, revered Paulli in at least three books (two printed by Paulli’s publisher Smets), as a “Danish Hosea.”<sup>58</sup> Another example is Johann Elias Müller, who also wrote a book supporting Paulli after his banishment, defending, like Köster had done, Paulli’s translation of Jesus’s last words.<sup>59</sup>

## The Road to Paulli’s Arrest

In 1700, in *Moses neemt de dekke af*, Paulli appealed to Amsterdam mayor Jan Corver for help. Apparently because of a legal suit about an inheritance – his challengers must have emphasized his unacceptable religious views

54 “applianceerde op den tegenwoordigen staet van de hedendaghse gewaenden Religien, die als rook uit een pijp sullen verdwijnen.” Paulli, *Triumph*, 390.

55 Gichtel, *Theosophia Practica*, 1470. For another report see Hecquet-Cramer, *Holger Paulli*, 173.

56 “Laat ons liever met de man, wiens hersenen uit hun leger gestoten zijn, een innig medelijden hebben;” “buitensporigheden van de krankzinnigen Oliger Paulli.” “De man is te Amsterdam, waar hij woont, wel bekend.” Anon., *De boekzaal van Europe*, 351–369, there 369, 367, and 353.

57 On details and sources on these relationships, see Kunert, *Juden-Könige*, 369–78.

58 Heinrich Bernhard Coster, שמא ישראל יהיה אלהינו ידוע אהר, *Deut. 6. v. 4 – Marc. 12 v. 26*, 34, 35. (s.l.: n.p., 1700); Coster, *Die Monarchie des kommenden Schilo* (Amsterdam: Johannes Smets, 1701); Coster, שכניה *Der Hebreer Schechina* (Amsterdam: Johannes Smets, 1701). A fourth edition of the latter book, dated from 1704, suggests ongoing interest in Paulli.

59 Johann Elias Müller, *Ánâ an Oliger Paulli, Der mir ein lieber Bruder geworden ist [...]* (s.l.: n.p., 1703).

– Paulli feared that his books would be burned.<sup>60</sup> There is no evidence that those fears were based on facts. Instead, it seems that Paulli's fate and that of his books were sealed several months before his arrest a year later, in April 1701. On the 28th of that month, the day his Jewish collaborator Moses Germanus was buried in the Portuguese cemetery at Ouderkerk, Amsterdam's Reformed Church council and the city's watchdog for dangerous religious activities reported on Paulli for the first time. A report in the Church archives, titled "Oliger Paulli, N. Testament bij Jan Rieuwertz," stated that one of its ministers:

had been requested to present [to the authorities] the booklet of Oliger Paulli as containing blasphemous claims, having been printed together with a New Testament by Jan Rieuwertzszn, because it distorts the [New Testament] text in many places, so that the damaging beliefs that these two propagate, can be stopped.<sup>61</sup>

The report on 12 May following confirms that the city's legal officers had retrieved the printed New Testament from the house of Jan Rieuwertzsz, where it had been bound.<sup>62</sup>

Three months later, on July 19, two printers of Paulli's books, Johannes Smets and the widow of Hendrik Boter en Broodt, were each sentenced to pay the considerable sum of 3,000 guilders for having printed blasphemous literature.<sup>63</sup> The crossed-out title of Paulli's *Beeker der swymelinge* in the verdict of Boter en Broodt proves they meant the Dane's work.<sup>64</sup> Not long after that, on August 11, a third printer, Jan Groenewoud, appeared in front of Amsterdam's Reformed Church consistory and expressed his concern that his printing of Paulli's works could seriously damage his business. The consistory advised him to stop his presses immediately and alerted the

60 Paulli, *Moses neemt de decke af* (Amsterdam: J. Smets, 1700), \*\*\*2.

61 "werd versocht het Boekje van Oliger Paulli als godslasterlicke stellingen behelsende met een [het] N. Testament bij Jan Rieuwertzsz gedrukt wordende, daer in veele plaatsn van den text seer verdraeit overdoor de Heeren Burgermeesteren voor te dragen, op dat het schadelick [gevoelen] in die beide voort te setten, magh belet worden." SAA 376 (Archief van de Hervormde Gemeente; Kerkenraad) 17 (Minutes), 145 (28 April 1701).

62 This is also a corrective. Rieuwertzsz had not been the printer of the books, but the binder. Ibid.

63 On Smets: I.H. van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse boekhandel 1680-1725*, vol. 4 (Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holtema, 1967), 125–26.

64 SAA 5061: 157 (Schoutsrol), no pagination (19 July 1701).

authorities. These then confiscated all copies printed already.<sup>65</sup> This seems to have spared Groenewoud a similar fate to that of his colleagues Smets and Boter en Broot. The church council also requested the city's burgomasters to "take action regarding Oliger Paulli so that he cannot harm or seduce anyone anymore."<sup>66</sup> Not much later the authorities indeed followed up, and Paulli was arrested, interrogated, and together with his books sentenced on August 27, 1701.

Until then Paulli had avoided the attention of Amsterdam's religious and lay leaders. The direct connection between Paulli's work, a controversial New Testament translation, and a notorious publisher definitely brought an end to that. The translation the church consistory referred to was that of Carel Cats, who was part of the liberal circle around the controversial Mennonite leader Galenus Abrahamsz de Haan and had already been in conflict with his congregation. Cats, a former Catholic, had been imprisoned in Rome for street preaching against the Roman Church and had apparently failed to shed his rebellious attitude after arriving in the free Dutch Republic.<sup>67</sup> When he received permission to preach to the Flemish Mennonite congregation, Cats showed his gratitude by preaching that any form of church organization should be rejected and that, if Jesus would have come to church, he would not have been greeted as respectfully as the rich were. The church leadership retracted Cats's permission to preach, upon which he returned the next Sunday, ascended the pulpit, and tried to discuss John 8:2, "early in the morning he [Jesus] came again to the temple."<sup>68</sup>

Rieuwertsz was no less notorious than Cats. Like his father Jan Rieuwertsz the elder, Rieuwertsz had been one of Spinoza's closest associates in Amsterdam. He had been the main force behind the clandestine project of publishing Spinoza's posthumous works, including the *Ethics*. After Spinoza's death, Rieuwertsz the younger became one of the central figures of Amsterdam's Spinozists and printed the work of many of

65 SAA 376: 17: 153 (11 August 1701). On Groenewoud see Van Eeghen, *Amsterdamse boekhandel*, vol. 3 (1965), 142–43 (there spelled as Groenewoudt).

66 "op Oliger Pauli sodanige ordre gestelt, dat niemand meer in schaade of verleijdinge door hem kan gebracht werden." SAA 376: 17, p. 153 (11 August 1701).

67 Carel Catz, *Het Nieuwe Testament of Verbond van onsen Heere Jesus Christus: op nieuws uyt het Grieks vertaalt met de verscheide Griekse lesingen vergadert uyt meer als 100 verscheide Griekse afschriften des Nieuwen Verbonds* (Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertz, 1701). SAA 5061: 350, f. 121v.

68 R.B. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam*, vol. 3 (Amsterdam: Ten Have, 1971), 327–28.

Amsterdam's most outspoken religious dissenters and critics of religious authority.<sup>69</sup>

While Paulli unsurprisingly abhorred Spinoza, he seems to have become guilty by association with Rieuwertsz, well-known for his direct connection to the philosopher and his legacy, and his willingness to print books that were scandalous to orthodox Christians and Jews alike.<sup>70</sup> Paulli's associate Moses Germanus had a similar experience when, in 1699, he had (without any evidence) been attacked in print by Johann Georg Wachter as a Jewish Spinozist.<sup>71</sup>

Several sources closer to Paulli also show how the Dane became suspected of being part of this subversive subculture: the interrogations of Cats (21 May and 25 June of 1701), Paulli himself (24 and 27 August 1701) and a follower of Paulli, Clemens Schonewalt (November 1702 and September 1703). Schonewalt, also called Christiaan Jensen van Glovesteijn, was a foreign student (likely a fellow Dane, or a German) who since late 1700 had been lodging in the residence of widow Boter en Broot. Schonewalt often claimed that he would free Paulli – he apparently made these statements when Paulli was still in prison – and that Paulli would be a prophet greater than those of the Bible. Even in interrogation he did not deny that claim, though he tempered it by stating that “if he [Pauli] makes true what he writes, he would be a prophet.”<sup>72</sup>

Together, these documents confirm that Amsterdam's secular and religious authorities, after discovering the connection between Paulli, Cats, and Rieuwertz, grew worried about precisely those things that made Amsterdam's Spinozists and Socinians notorious: challenging the authorized Dutch Bible translation, rejecting religious and secular authorities, and doing both by publishing blasphemous material, not in the learned Latin of the elite, but in colloquial Dutch. Because religious nonconformists challenged particular passages of vernacular translations, often to undermine religious orthodoxy, it should not come as a surprise that Rieuwertsz

69 See Steven Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 215–40. On his other printing activities, see Van Eeghen, *Amsterdamse boekhandel*, vol. 4: 64–66.

70 Paulli characterized Spinoza's philosophy with “gruwelen” (horrors). Paulli, *Triumph*, 185.

71 Johann Georg Wachter, *Der Spinozismus im Judenthumb [...]* (Amsterdam: Johann Wolters, 1699).

72 “en indien hij waar maakt 't geen hij geschreven heeft, dat hij een profeet zoude worden.” SAA 5061: 352, f. 2 (23 November 1702). On other attempts to acquire Paulli's release see Nielsen, *Kjøbenhavn*, 6: 98.



and his father had published a number of such translations, not only of the Christian and Jewish scriptures, but also the insufficiently anti-Islamic Qur'an translation (from the French) of Hendrik Glazemaker, the leading translator of philosophical literature into Dutch and the very man who would later also translate Spinoza for Rieuwertsz.<sup>73</sup>

Paulli and Cats's "corrected" translations, discovered together in Rieuwertsz's residence, were part of this wider body of literature.<sup>74</sup> The example mentioned earlier was the translation of Mat 27:56 and Mk 15:34, which appeared in the work of both and which some attributed to Paulli (it was likely the other way around).<sup>75</sup> In any case, during his interrogation on 24 August 1701, Paulli's questioners tried to gauge what his attitude was to translation of Scripture, and received unequivocal answers. When asked whether he had "declared all other religions nil and of no value," Paulli, in addition to referring to his personal encounters with God, resorted to "the Hebrew text" on which he argued he based his claims, stood by his claim in the extended title of *Moses neemt de decke af* that, in contrast to the Jews "all contemporary Christians have been beguiled by their translated Bibles, in which they follow a false Jesus."<sup>76</sup> Cats's interrogators were interested in translation, too, and inquired into some of his alternative translations that appeared to "diminish the divinity of Christ."<sup>77</sup> In Schonewalt's case the authorities did not mention the issue of translation, but showed great interest in his plan to publish his commentaries on "certain chapters of the New Testament."<sup>78</sup>

73 Gary K. Waite, *Jews and Muslims in Seventeenth-Century Discourse: From Religious Enemies to Allies and Friends* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 98–100.

74 From Cats's interrogation report another detail emerges that further connects him and Paulli, namely that his translation had been printed by Paulli's printer Smets (it had appeared with Rieuwertsz's name only). SAA 5061: 350: ff. 121v–123v (21 May 1701), there f. 121.

75 The reason is likely that Paulli's translation had been published a year before Cats's New Testament. Paulli, unsurprisingly, argued to have been first. Paulli, *Kurtzer Bericht*, 99. For the suspicion that Cats had derived his translation from Paulli see Van Slee, *Geschiedenis van het Socianisme*, 272.

76 "alle andere Religen nil en van geender waarde verklaart;" "Segt, dat ik mij hij hem dat hij fondementeer op gronde op de Hebreuse text;" "hedendaagse Christenen daer en tegen dat sij betoovert sijn door haer overgesete bijbels waer in sij een valsche Jesus volgen." SAA 5061: 350, f. 240v–244v (24 August 1701), and 252 (27 August 1701), there f. 243v resp. f. 241.

77 "andere texten tot verklyninge van de Godheid Christi." SAA 5061: 350: f. 160v–162v (26 June 1701), there: f. 160v.

78 "eenige capitullen van 't nieuwe Testament," SAA 5061: 352, f. 1-2v (23 November 1702), there f. 2.

In the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, whose Dutch translation had in all likelihood been published by Rieuwertsz, Spinoza had written that “laws dealing with speculative problems are entirely useless,” and this plea for the freedom of individual thought was wholeheartedly embraced by Rieuwertsz and other Dutch Spinozists.<sup>79</sup> Spinoza was both cautious to avoid directly criticizing the authorities and explicitly averse towards religious fervor. By contrast, Paulli, Cats, and Schonewalt openly attacked those worldly and religious leaders standing in the way of their religious truths. Paulli, strangely, was not asked about his public activities, but Cats was pressed in detail regarding his clandestine and semi-clandestine gatherings (one of which was held in a horse stable).<sup>80</sup> His interrogators referred to a claim that he allegedly had made that those who “take away the freedom of speaking in gatherings take away God’s commandment.”<sup>81</sup>

In both Cats’s and especially Schonewalt’s case, the interrogators focused much on public criticism of the authorities. When asked about “the threats and rebellious words against the authorities,” Cats shrewdly answered that he had meant *other* authorities. But he was also pressed about his accusation that his church leaders were “not a church consistory of Christ.”<sup>82</sup> Paulli’s disciple Schonewalt also displayed great hostility towards the municipal authorities. His interrogators’ informers, apparently the children of his landlady, the printer of Paulli’s *Beeker der swymelinge* widow Boter en Broot, told them that Schonewalt had pretended “to be a great lord, yes a king, who would protect her [Boter en Broot] against the officer [the bailiff]” and had advised her to cease paying taxes. Schonewalt’s claim to royalty further suggests that he might have wanted to be Paulli’s prophesied royal redeemer.<sup>83</sup> Schonewalt’s second interrogation, in September 1703, focused on his remarks about the widow’s legal troubles, which were presumably those caused by her printing of Paulli’s *Beeker*. Schonewalt had allegedly claimed that the authorities had invaded her house without any evidence

79 Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise; A Political Treatise*, transl. R.H. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), 265.

80 SAA 5061: 350, f. 122, 123v (21 May 1701).

81 “de vrijheyte van spreken in de vergadering weg neemt godts gebod wegneemt.” SAA 5061: 350, f. 160 (26 June 1701).

82 “drigementen en oproerige woorden tegens de overigheden.” SAA 5061: 350, f. 160v (26 June 1701), “geen kerkenraet kristi waren.” *Ibid.* f. 160.

83 SAA 5061: 352, f. 1 (23 November 1702).

and taken everything away, “acting worse than an enemy would.”<sup>84</sup> He had also compared the actions of the bailiff to those of the Spanish inquisition, arguing that the officer acted “against his oath, duty, and character, and that he was his public enemy.” The court’s verdicts he characterized as “partial, offending the honor of God, making judgments in favor of the powerful, and suppressing the small.”<sup>85</sup> In arguably his boldest claim, he asserted that “printers had the freedom to print anything, and need not to ask permission from the minister and the bailiff.”<sup>86</sup>

The three suspects’ challenges to the theology of the authorized Bible translation and their stoking of unrest in the city were transgressions because they were public, above all because they had spread their blasphemous views in print. Each was asked precise details about the printing of their subversive works. Paulli’s interrogators listed his books and asked him to confirm that they were his. Cats was asked who was involved in the printing of his clandestine translation. It turned out that not only locals had subscribed, like Rieuwertsz, who had ordered 25 copies, and a German and a Mennonite minister, but also people from all across the Republic. Cats’s interrogators also asked him about his attitude towards the authorized States translation, whether he had changed many texts in the New Testament and had printed them “against the true translation that has been approbated by the Lords States,” and why Smets’s name, which had been clearly printed on Paulli’s title page, was absent on that of his *Nieuwe Testament*.<sup>87</sup> In Schonewalt’s case, the authorities wanted to find out precisely what he had printed and what he had intended to print with widow Boter en Broot.

Yet their crime, it seems, was not merely printing blasphemy but printing a particular kind of blasphemy. We find the first indication for this in the text of the sentence of the printers they shared (Smets had printed Paulli and Cats, Boter and Broot had printed Paulli and Schonewalt), each of whom were fined 3,000 guilders “for printing blasphemous books

84 “slimmer handelt als een vijand soude doen.” SAA 5061: 352, 219-220 (these are actually five pages, pages 219 and 220 appear twice – to avoid confusion we will not refer to page numbers when referring to this interrogation) (11 September 1703).

85 “tegens sijn eed, pligt, en character, en dat hij sijn publique vijand waar;” “partijdig, dat men gods eere krenkt, dat men groote personen ‘t regt toe wijst, en klijnen drukt.” Ibid. Schonewalt’s accusation that Amsterdam’s legal system unfairly favored the rich echoes Cats’s similar accusation against the Mennonite congregation.

86 “de drukker vrijheid hebben om alles te drukken, en dat niet hoeven te vragen na ‘t verbot van de dominees en officier.” SAA 5061: 352 (11 September 1703).

87 “tegens de ware oversettinge die bij de Heeren Staaten is geaprobeert.” SAA 5061: 350, f. 160v (26 June 1701); on Smets see SAA 5061: 350, f. 121 (21 May 1701).

following the placard.”<sup>88</sup> This placard refers to the one issued by the States of Holland in 1653, prescribing a fine of 3,000 guilders for printing Socinian works “triple the usual fine of 1,000 guilders for ‘licentious’ (uncontrolled) printing.”<sup>89</sup> In addition to denying the Trinity, Socinians were reputedly dismissive of religious institutional authority, and in the last decades of the century, Socinian and Spinozist ideas displayed so many similarities, from anti-trinitarianism to their anti-authoritarian attitude, that Dutch authorities considered Socinian and Spinozist “heresies” as practically identical.<sup>90</sup>

Schonewalt’s interrogation did not contain any theological discussions, likely because he prudently abstained from discussing any of it. By contrast, Cats’s interrogation report states that he was suspected of denying the resurrection of the dead, that Jesus had not been “surrendered by the Father but only been admitted to the death on the cross,” and of claiming the eternity of heaven and earth.<sup>91</sup> Paulli confirmed the accusation that he had called “on p. 58 of [*De beeker*] the doctrine of the three persons or trinity an idolatrous doctrine” with an anti-trinitarian exegesis of a passage from Colossians and one from Hebrews.<sup>92</sup> In short, Paulli and Cats, and by extension Paulli’s follower Schonewalt, were associated with the dangerous free thought of the Dutch Socinians and Spinozists. It seems therefore that although his increased popularity also might have played a role, Paulli’s prophetic career in Amsterdam was brought to a premature end because of his associations with Dutch Socinians and Spinozists and their printers – ironically, despite the fact that Paulli abhorred both.

88 “over het drukken van godtslasterlijke boeken in gevolge van het plakaet.” SAA 5061: 157 (no pagination, 19 July 1701).

89 John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration, and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and “Early Enlightenment” Europe* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 173.

90 The Utrecht placard that had followed that of Holland in 1655 defined them as both “blasphemers” and “disturbers of the public peace.” Ibid. For instance, the printer of the Spinozist novel *Philopater* was punished in 1697 with a fine of 3,000 guilders, “according to the placard against printing Spinozistic books.” Jonathan I. Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 319.

91 SAA 5061: 350, f. 161 (26 June 1701) f. 161; “hij daer niet stelt dat Christies niet door god de vader is overgegeven maer alleenlijk toegelate tot de dood des kruyses.” f. 162v.

92 “Gevraagd of hij in ’t selve boek p. 58 de leere van drij persoonen, of drij eenigheit een afgodische leere noemt.” SAA 5061: 350, f. 240 (24 August 1701).

## Concluding: A Jewish Paulli

In prison, Paulli seems to have come to the same conclusion. In the opening words of the *Considerationes*, written during his imprisonment to instruct his lawyer, Paulli put up a defense that aimed to dissociate him from those Christian heresies:<sup>93</sup>

In the first instance, the lawyer should state that it is true that I had sent the said book to the widow Booter en Broot to have it printed, but without noting that it was a Jewish book, especially since the so-called book “De Beeker der swymeling” is a concept from Moses German[u]s and not from Oliger Paulli.<sup>94</sup>

Paulli’s claim that the idea for the book originated with his Jewish collaborator rather than himself was a cunning deflection of guilt, because Moses Germanus was now dead and could not be called to testify let alone suffer any consequences.<sup>95</sup> His second argument was more clever still: *De beeker*, he said, was not a Christian book at all, but a Jewish one. Its denial of orthodox Christian doctrine therefore did not technically constitute Christian blasphemy. As a Jewish book, it simply upheld one of the core tenets of Judaism: the indivisible nature of God.

Paulli could be intentionally provocative (“but Calvin is dead and Paulli is still alive, even though he is not as learned as Calvin”, his prison writings note elsewhere), but his Jewish strategy had potential.<sup>96</sup> While it was the policy of Amsterdam’s magistrates to protect the Christian religion from being attacked, it also safeguarded the integrity of each of the city’s recognized

93 Only a German version from 1702 survives, ostensibly a translation of the Dutch. Paulli, *Considerationes von Oliger Paulli in Sachen des im Druck ausgegebenen und aufs Holländisch De Beeker der Swymeling genandten Buchs [...]* (s.l.: n.p., 1702).

94 “In der ersten Instanz hatt der H. Advokatus vor zu tragen, daß es wahr sey, daß ich Endesbenander besagtes buch, umb es drucken zu lassen, der Wittiben Booter en Brot zugestellet habe, jedennoch ohne dabey zu melden, daß es ein Jüdisch Buch sey, zumahlen das so genandte Buch De Beeker der Swymeling, ein Concept von Moses Germans, und nicht von Oliger Paulli ist.” Ibid., 3.

95 Originally, Paulli had argued that Moses Germanus had composed the first 51 pages of the *Beeker* and he the rest. While Schoeps (*Philosemitismus*, 68) proposes that Paulli had written the entire *Beeker*, Kunert, by pointing at the differences in style, supports Paulli’s argument about the first 51 pages (Kunert, *Juden-Könige*, 385).

96 “aber Calvin ist tot und Paulli lebe noch, obwohl er nicht so gelehrt sei wie Calvin.” [11].

confessions, including the Jewish ones.<sup>97</sup> As a result, the city magistrates controlled and reinforced doctrinal orthodoxy, including in the Jewish case the doctrine of Divine indivisibility and unity which in a Christian context would have been heretical.

Of course, a Jewish *Beeker* creates new, Jewish problems, and rabbi Eleasar's call to burn Paulli's books shows that these already existed. Eleasar's initial disagreement with Paulli was friendly, as if between two fellow anti-Christian polemicists. In response to Paulli's reading of Christ's last words, Eleasar expressed his contempt for Christian scripture by claiming that "because of [their] ignorance of the Hebrew language," the early Greek Christians had wrongly transliterated the כ in שׂכח as a ב. The Hebrew God, Eleasar stated, indeed had forsaken Jesus. Eleasar's deeper issue with Paulli, as Paulli himself reported, was that:

all of my [Paulli's] work and Moses Germanus's letters are not only in vain, but should also be burned *with love* because of the misfortune it will bring forth, for we must fear that the Jews and Christians would come into conflict when a Jesus is declared of whom neither the Jews nor the contemporary Christians have ever heard.<sup>98</sup>

The danger posed by Paulli's religious reforms, Eleasar's words as channeled by Paulli suggest, lay in the way they threatened to generate internecine strife over Paulli's new Jesus instead of a harmonious union of Jews and Christians. Thus, for the sake of the adherents of both religions, it was better for Paulli to remain a Christian heretic and Jewish *kofer* than to become the Messiah for both. Likewise, his book *De beeker* was regarded by Jews and Christians not as a work transcending the Jewish-Christian divide but as a cup of poison. Therefore, in order to prevent such dangerous material to come out, Amsterdam's magistrates gladly sacrificed some of the city's inhabitants' freedom of expression by putting pressure on and even prosecuting Paulli's printers.

97 On contemporary Dutch legislation regarding Jews, see A. H. Huussen Jr, "Legislation on the Position of the Jews in the Dutch Republic, c. 1590-1796." *The Legal History Review* 69, no. 1/2 (2001): 43-56. On the city of Amsterdam's role in protecting and enforcing Judaism in Amsterdam, see Van der Haven, "Jewish-Christianity and the Confessionalization," 122-23.

98 "alle mijne arbeyt, neevens Mosis Germans brieven niet alleen vergeefs syn, maer behoorden ook uyt liefde verbrandt te werden, wegens het onheyl soo daer uyt ontstaen kost, mits men vreesen most dat de Joden en Christenene teegen malkanderen mochten gaende worden in 't verkondigen eenene Jesum van dewelke de Joden noch de heedendaegsche Christenen noyt gehoort hadden." Paulli, *Beeker der swymelinge*, 90.

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