

James Bruce and His Copies of Ethiopic Enoch

Ariel Hessayon

On Sunday, 27 April 1794 a corpulent six foot four (1.93m) Scotsman died as a result of having fallen down the stairs at his home the previous evening. Entertaining guests with his “usual hospitality and elegance,” he had slipped—possibly in the midst of an apoplectic fit—and sustained deadly injuries to his forehead and temples. This “celebrated Abyssinian traveller,” James Bruce (1730–1794) of Kinnaird, having survived “many perils in distant regions” met his end when least expecting it.¹ He was buried in the church of Larbert, near Falkirk, his epitaph inscribed on an imposing cast-iron obelisk proclaiming to posterity that Bruce had spent his life “*performing useful and splendid actions*” including discovering the “*fountains of the Nile*” and traversing the “*deserts of Nubia*”:

By the unanimous voice of mankind,

His name is inrolled with those,

who were conspicuous

For genius, for valour, and for virtue.²

Some sixty or so years later, however, his grave had become neglected and scarcely accessible through uncut grass and tangled weeds. Indeed, it was remarked that this “rude

* I am most grateful to the participants of the 10th Enoch seminar (Florence, 10–13 June 2019) as well as to my colleagues at Goldsmiths who took part in our virtual departmental seminar (1 April 2020) for their helpful and constructive comments. In particular I have benefited from the advice of my respondent Leslie Baynes, as well as Gabriele Boccaccini, Ted Erho, Lorenza Gianfrancesco, Crawford Gribben, Lionel Laborie, Ralph Lee, Diego Lucci, Loren Stuckenbruck, Daniel Taylor, and Francis Watson. I am also grateful to Verónica Calsoni Lima for photographing documents in the Bodleian Library; to Rebecca Higgins at Leeds University Library; and to Laura Callery and Francis Lapka at the Yale Center for British Art. Needless to say, I remain responsible for any mistakes or shortcomings.

¹ *Oracle* (3 May 1794); *Sun* (5 May 1794); *London Packet* (2–5 May 1794); *Whitehall Evening Post* (3–6 May 1794); *The Edinburgh Magazine* 5 (June 1795) 417; *The European Magazine* 45 (1802) 351–52; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.clxxviii–clxxix; *The Annual Review* 4 (January 1805) 14; *New Annual Register* (January 1808) 89–90; *The Annual Review and History of Literature* 7 (January 1808) 268; *Christian Journal* 2 (1818) 254. Accounts of Bruce’s height vary, but all agree that he was an exceedingly large man for the period at over 6 feet tall.

² Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.ccclvii–ccclviii.

monument” marking Bruce’s “last resting-place” symbolised the “cold contempt and cankerous criticism” that had beset his reputation.³

*

In this essay I want to investigate what happened to the manuscripts that Bruce brought back from his travels, particularly four copies of the book of Enoch. Since Gabriele Boccaccini has solved the “mystery” of Bruce’s “fourth” manuscript copy of Ethiopic Enoch (Vat. et. 71) in his recent ground-breaking article,⁴ I will deal relatively briefly with that document here. Instead my focus is on the copy that Bruce gave to Louis XV (BnF Éthiopien 49) together with those he transported to the British Isles (MSS. Bodl. Or. 531 and Bruce 74). The first section covers the period from September 1769 to June 1774 and deals with, among other things, Bruce’s travels in North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Ethiopia; his acquisition and commissioning of manuscripts; journey to France and then the Italian Peninsula; gifts of plant seeds and documents to important figures and institutions; his social network; and reactions to his boasts, embellishments and lies. The second section covers from July 1774 to December 1787 and gives particular attention to Bruce’s knowledge of non-European languages, his unsuccessful attempt to complete a translation of Ethiopic Enoch, and his other scholarly interests. The third covers from January 1788 to April 1794 and focuses on the composition, publication, and critical reception of Bruce’s *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* (1790), particularly with regard to increasing interest in Ethiopic Enoch. The fourth and final section briefly assesses Bruce’s legacy as well as providing an answer to the important question of why no European undertook a complete translation of Ethiopic Enoch during his lifetime.

³ *Caledonian Mercury* (October 18, 1858).

⁴ G. Boccaccini, “James Bruce’s ‘Fourth’ Manuscript: Solving the Mystery of the Provenance of the Roman Enoch Manuscript (Vat. et. 71),” *JSP* 27 (2018) 237–63.

For this study I have consulted a wide range of sources, notably contemporary travel narratives, diaries, memoirs, biographies, correspondence, newspapers, periodicals and auction catalogues, as well as records of the British Museum, Bodleian Library, and British and Foreign Bible Society. Moreover, my discussion should be situated within broader contexts—particularly European attitudes towards Africa and its inhabitants coupled with exploration and missionary activity within that continent; the acquisition of manuscripts written in non-European languages by private collectors, university libraries and national museums as well as the choices made by governmental treasuries and their advisers as to which manuscripts they should purchase; the prestige accrued by individuals and institutions from possessing these artefacts; transnational and cross-confessional scholarly engagement with these texts; and their eventual translation, dissemination, appropriation and repurposing not just by artists and poets but certain Protestant nonconformists. It should also be placed against a wider backdrop of the Jacobite risings, Seven Years’ War, Anglo-French War and French Revolution. As we shall see, Bruce’s arrogance, vanity and tetchiness, combined with a tendency to exaggerate his own exploits, would have significant repercussions for the initial reactions throughout Western Europe to his scarcely believable accounts—and with them his claim to have brought back “all the Abyssinian books of the Old Testament,” including several copies of the book of Enoch.⁵ Yet in this instance, for all the rambling prose and preposterous anecdotes that went into fashioning his outsized self-image, Bruce was telling

⁵ Bruce, *Travels*, 1.489.

the truth; even if he was also hiding part of it.⁶ Such was the fate of this intrepid Scottish Marco Polo.⁷

The Prophecies of Enoch

Bruce was thirty-nine years old when he reached Ethiopia. Beforehand he had travelled widely exploring antiquities at numerous locations in Western Europe, North Africa, and the Levant between 1762 and 1769—including Paestum, Algiers, Diana Veteranorum, Thignica, Tunis, Carthage, Zaghouan, Thysdrus, Sufetula, Palmyra, Baalbek, Thebes, Karnak, and Luxor. By his own account, his journey through North Africa in particular was “continually attended with every kind of danger, hardship, and difficulty.” Besides being “constantly parched with heat, or dying with extreme cold” he was always in fear of local nomadic Arabs, “the most brutal set of barbarous wretches” that Bruce believed ever existed. He had also dabbled in espionage and diplomacy, serving ineptly as consul-general at Algiers.⁸

⁶ On Bruce, see Francis Bond Head, *The life of Bruce, the African traveller* (London, 1830); James Augustus St. John, *The Lives of Celebrated Travellers*, 3 vols. (London, 1832; repr. New York, 1835) 2.233–301; A. Crichton, “Memoir of Bruce,” in William Swainson, *The Natural History of the Birds of Western Africa* (Edinburgh, 1837) 1.17–84; Thomas Thomson, ed., *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*, 5 vols. (Glasgow, Edinburgh & London, 1853–55) 1.327–39; “Scotch Travellers in Africa,” *The Scottish Review* 5 (April 1857) 98–101; Robert Lambert Playfair, *Travels in the footsteps of Bruce in Algeria and Tunis* (London, 1877); E. Ullendorff, “James Bruce of Kinnaird,” *Scottish Historical Review* 32 (1953) 128–43; J.M. Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary. The Life of James Bruce of Kinnaird* (London, 1968); A.A. Moorefield, “James Bruce: Ethnomusicologist or Abyssinian Lyre?,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 28 (1975) 493–514; R. Pankhurst, “The Medical Activities in Eighteenth Century Ethiopia of James Bruce the Explorer,” *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 17 (1982) 256–76; A. Verhaagen, “James Bruce et l’Abyssinie, terre d’arcanes,” *Civilisations* 37.1 (1987) 231–74; R. T. Wilson, “Ornithological exploration in the Afrotropics. 2. James Bruce of Kinnaird, Esq., FRS,” *Tauraco* 2 (1992) 63–72; Miles Bredin, *The Pale Abyssinian: A Life of James Bruce, African Explorer and Adventurer* (London, 2000); Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770–1840: “from an Antique Land”* (Oxford, 2004) 54–101; M. van Wyk Smith, ““Would the real James Bruce please stand up?” Bruce’s *Travels to discover the sources of the Nile* (1790) in Alexander Murray’s edition of 1813,” *English Academy Review* 29 (2012) 208–32; R. Mitsein, ““Come and triumph with your Don Quixote”: or, how James Bruce travelled to discover the Nile but found Scotland instead,” *Studies in Travel Writing* 18.1 (2014) 1–17; Anke Fischer-Kattner, *Spuren der Begegnung: Europäische Reiseberichte über Afrika 1760–1860* (Göttingen, 2015) 101–214.

⁷ Cf. St. John, *Lives of Celebrated Travellers*, 2.300–1.

⁸ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.ccliii–cclviii, cclxxii–cclxxx; John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, 8 vols. (London, 1817–58) 1.149; Alexander Murray, *Account of the Life and Writings of James Bruce, of Kinnaird* (Edinburgh, 1808) 29–61, 189; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 39–54; Nigel Leask, “Bruce, James, of Kinnaird (1730–1794),” *ODNB*.

Bruce's motive for going to Ethiopia—regarded by his first biographer as the “oldest, and indeed ... only Christian kingdom in Africa,” but one whose inhabitants were “sunk in the deepest ignorance and superstition”—has been the source of speculation.⁹ Yet judging from a sympathetic contemporary observation that he had a “natural genius for travelling into the most unknown parts,” it seems straightforward: the pursuit of glory, wealth and knowledge.¹⁰ Indeed, this fervent and long-standing desire for recognition is evident in a letter Bruce wrote from Nazareth in April 1768:

having all my life been by Nursery intrigues kept unknown to the half of the world and most unworthily misrepresented by the other ... I endeavour to Recommend myself to public notice.¹¹

Heading down the Red Sea, his route took him through Jeddah to Al Luhayyah. But Bruce's claim to have embarked on two further voyages, including sailing south down the Red Sea to Mocha and Bab-el-Mandeb, have been strongly disputed to the extent that a modern authority considers them fictitious and the details plagiarised.¹² At any rate, in September 1769 Bruce and his party reached Massawa before eventually arriving by way of Aksum at the Imperial capital Gondar in February 1770.¹³ Initially disguised as an Arabic-speaking Syrian physician named Yā'eqob [Yagoubé] because of the apparent Ethiopian policy of executing or banishing Europeans,¹⁴ he was just one of a handful of Westerners known to have

⁹ Cf. Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 57, 59–60, 64; Ullendorff, “James Bruce,” 130; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 16.

¹⁰ Johann David Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1794) 2.365.

¹¹ D. Cumming, “Seven unpublished letters of James Bruce of Kinnaird,” *Geographical Journal* 137 (1971) 44–45.

¹² Cf. Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.clxix; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 61–63, 68; “On the credit due to Bruce's Travels,” *Monthly Magazine* 24 (December 1807) 449; J. R. Wellsted, “Notes on Bruce's Chart of the Coasts of the Red Sea,” *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 5 (1835) 286–95; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 65–71, 311; I. Friis, “Carsten Niebuhr and James Bruce: Lifted Latitudes and Virtual Voyages on the Red Sea ... ?,” in *Early Scientific Expeditions and Local Encounters. New Perspectives on Carsten Niebuhr and the “Arabian Journey,”* ed. Ib Friis, Michael Harbsmeier, and Jørgen Baek Simonsen, Scientia Danica (Viborg, 2013) 222–50.

¹³ Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 66–75; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 72–87, 100–09.

¹⁴ *General Evening Post* (8–10 September 1774); William Jones, ed., *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 13 vols. (London, 1807) 4.318; John Leyden, *A Historical & Philosophical Sketch of the Discoveries & Settlements of the Europeans in Northern & Western Africa* (Edinburgh, 1799) 435; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 64; Samuel Gobat, *Journal of a Three Years' Residence in Abyssinia* (London, 1834) 130. Yā'eqob or Yagoubé is the equivalent of Jacob.

successfully entered the somewhat isolated mountainous kingdom in the space of about 135 years.¹⁵ Since most of his 16th- and 17th-century predecessors had been Iberian Catholic delegates, soldiers and missionaries, Bruce was probably the first Scotsman and Protestant to visit Ethiopia.

According to published extracts from the account book of Luigi Balugani (1737–1771), a Bologna-born artist who accompanied Bruce on his journey, between December 1770 and January 1771 Bruce employed several professional scribes at Gondar to copy the Ethiopic Old Testament. Furnished with quires of parchment, supplied with ink and paid in salt—as was apparently customary—their names and the respective portions of text they were assigned are recorded as Adigo Aytcho (Pentateuch), Weleda Yesous [Walda Iyasus] the younger (Joshua and Judges), Confu (Chronicles) and Weleda Selasse [Walda Śellāsē] (Jeremiah).¹⁶ Quite possibly additional scribes were involved since no mention is made in these published extracts of other biblical books preserved in what are now MSS. Bruce 73 and Bruce 75. Yet it appears that Bruce did not commission a copy of the Psalms. This is less puzzling than it might seem, since an edition was already available to European readers—Hiob Ludolf’s parallel Latin/Ge‘ez *Hoc est: Psalterium Davidis* (Frankfurt am Main, 1701).¹⁷ So perhaps Bruce wished to avoid the time and expense of having a copy made, although he afterwards claimed that he merely forgot to purchase what was a “favourite book” among Ethiopians.¹⁸ Moreover, although Bruce recounted in his *Travels* that one of his servants had

¹⁵ Among Bruce’s predecessors were the French apothecary Charles-Jacques Poncet (1655–1706) and the Bohemian Franciscan Remedius Prutky (*fl.*1753). See V. Nersessian and R. Pankhurst, “The visit to Ethiopia of Yohannes T’Ovmacean, an Armenian jeweller, in 1764–66,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 15 (1982) 79–104; I. Friis, “Travelling Among Fellow Christians (1768–1833): James Bruce, Henry Salt and Eduard Rüppell in Abyssinia,” in *Early Scientific Expeditions*, 161–63.

¹⁶ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 7.411–12; James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, ed. Alexander Murray, 8 vols. (3rd ed.; Edinburgh & London, 1813) 7.427–28. These manuscripts are explored fully in Ted Erho’s “James Bruce’s illusory “Book of Enoch the Prophet.”

¹⁷ James Townley, *Illustrations of Biblical Literature*, 2 vols. (London, 1821) 1.148.

¹⁸ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 2.416 n.; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 297–98; William Beloe, *The Sexagenarian*, 2 vols. (2nd ed.; London, 1818 [1817]) 2.47; J.J. Halls, ed., *The Life and Correspondence of Henry Salt, Esq. F.R.S. &c.*, 2 vols. (London, 1834) 1.325. On returning to Kinnaird, Bruce had Ludolf’s Ethiopic Psalter bound in the same red Morocco cover as his five-volume Ethiopic Old Testament. See, A

acquired the “prophet Enoch” for him at Adwa (MS. Bruce 74), that is prior to his arrival at Gondar, it seems likely that some of these scribes or their associates made three further copies of Ethiopic Enoch for Bruce (BnF Éthiopien 49, Vat. et. 71 and MS. Bodl. Or. 531).¹⁹

Following expeditions to the Ṭisesāt Falls and then to locate the source of the Blue Nile around Geš Abbāy, a swampy region to the south of Lake Tana, Balugani died from dysentery at Gondar in February 1771. Three months later there was civil war. After an inconclusive battle at Serbraxos [Sarbakusa], during which Bruce brazenly but falsely claimed to have commanded a detachment of imperial cavalry atop a huge Sudanese charger, the young Emperor Takla Haimonot’s chief minister Mika’él was deposed.²⁰ Although Bruce was to insist that there were two further engagements at the same site, that he was present at all three, and that they resulted in the death of two kings, some witnesses later maintained that two of the battles at Serbraxos had preceded his arrival at Gondar while Bruce himself “never went out to war.”²¹ At any rate, given the political instability at the Imperial capital Bruce prudently set out to depart from Ethiopia in December that same year with what must have been a sizeable retinue of servants considering the weight of his baggage.²² His own extraordinary account of crossing the Nubian Desert by camel caravan in November 1772 seems barely credible, for if true it was a reckless and near fatal adventure that could have been avoided by taking a safer route.²³ By mid-January 1773 Bruce had reached Cairo with a

catalogue of a valuable collection of Oriental literature, collected by James Bruce, of Kinnaird, ... which will be sold by auction, by Mr. George Robins (London, 1842) 3–4.

¹⁹ Bruce, *Travels*, 3.199.

²⁰ Bruce, *Travels*, 3.587–602; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 97–101; Henry Salt, *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (London, 1814) 335–36, 338; Francis Head, *The Life of Bruce the African Traveller* (London, 1830) 418–19; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 134–38, 163–66, 192–205; Friis, “Travelling Among Fellow Christians,” 168–69.

²¹ *The Scots Magazine* 35 (1773) 287; *Morning Chronicle* (14 July 1773); *Lloyd’s Evening Post* (12–14 July 1773); George Annesley, Viscount Valentia, *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt*, 3 vols. (London, 1809) 2.177.

²² By the time Bruce reached the ruins of the ancient Nubian capital of Meroë his party apparently consisted of nine people: himself, a guide (Idris), three Greek servants, an old Turkish Janissary (Hadji Ismael) and some Nubian camel drivers. In an alternative version that Bruce related, the servants were transformed into slaves.

²³ *The London Magazine* 43 (August–September 1774) 430–31; *The Scots Magazine* 36 (September 1774) 470; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 6.467–504; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 107–10.

remarkable tale of how he had survived; his camels and all but one of his servants had supposedly perished from cold, thirst, and hunger in the desert and he had been forced to throw away his drawings, papers, books, and scientific instruments (all subsequently retrieved without difficulty or discernible damage).²⁴ Fortunately for Bruce's companions, on retelling the story in his *Travels* due to his courageous leadership they survived their distressing ordeal to drink water from the River Nile—although on this occasion too Bruce had to temporarily leave his baggage behind.²⁵

Some months later and apparently seriously ill, Bruce proceeded to Alexandria from where he sent the naturalist Georges-Louis Comte de Buffon (1707–1788) rare species of birds “preserved in their feathers” and types of grain hitherto unknown in Europe. Bruce then took passage to Marseille where he arrived towards the end of May.²⁶ Suffering from Guinea-worm disease in his leg but opposing amputation by a French surgeon (or so he was to claim), “wounded” in his left arm—possibly due to a rough voyage rather than being pierced by a poisoned lance at Serbraxos as he was also to claim—Bruce was brought from ship to shore upon a litter and quarantined. Afterwards, still bed-ridden, he wrote to his lawyer intimating that he was close to death yet began recovering.²⁷ His arm healed while the Guinea-worm was “entirely extracted” after two attempts (it had broken off on the first occasion).²⁸ About

²⁴ *London Chronicle* (17–19 June 1773) 584; *General Evening Post* (19–22 June 1773); *St James's Chronicle* (19–22 June 1773); *Gentleman's Magazine* 43 (1773) 295, 431; *The Scots Magazine* 35 (1773) 287; Leeds University Library, BC Trv/LOB, endleaves; *The London Magazine* 43 (1774) 430; *Annual Register, or a view of the History of Politics* 16 (1774) 106–7.

²⁵ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 6.500–5.

²⁶ *Gazzetta di Parma* 25 (22 June 1773) 198; *Mercurio Historico y Politico* (June 1773) 139; *Morning Chronicle* (1 July 1773); *Notizie del Mondo* 53 (3 July 1773) 417; *Lloyd's Evening Post* (5–7 July 1773); Otto Sonntag, ed., *John Pringle's correspondence with Albrecht von Haller* (Basel, 1999) 304; *The European Magazine*, 21 (1792) 330–31.

²⁷ Cumming, “Seven unpublished letters,” 45–46; *General Evening Post* (3–6 July 1773); *Lloyd's Evening Post* (5–7 July 1773); *The Scots Magazine* 35 (1773) 286–87; *Gazzetta di Parma* 29 (20 July 1773) 229; *Gazzetta di Parma* 30 (27 July 1773) 238; *London Magazine* 43 (1774) 431, reprinted in Paul Tankard, ed., *Facts and Inventions. Selections from the Journalism of James Boswell* (New Haven, 2014) 56; Bruce, *Travels*, 5.60–61; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 112.

²⁸ *Morning Chronicle* (14 July 1773); *Lloyd's Evening Post* (12–14 July 1773); *Gentleman's Magazine* 43 (1773) 501; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 117.

the same time a friend placed a story in the newspapers so as to assure Bruce's relatives in Scotland that he was still alive.²⁹

Journeying north from Marseille to Paris Bruce spent several days with Buffon at his house in Montbard, who later praised his guest: "Nothing seems to have escaped his curiosity, and his abilities have embraced everything."³⁰ Further press releases and letters enable us to trace Bruce's subsequent movements. Thus from Versailles on 5 September 1773 it was reported first in a French gazette and then in several English, Italian, Spanish and North American newspapers that Bruce had presented several rare plant seeds to the Royal Garden, among them a cereal called teff which could be used to feed cattle and as a substitute for bread in times of necessity. Moreover, through the king's secretary Pierre-Augustin Guys (1721–1799), who was also an academician of Marseille, Bruce had presented "an Abyssinian Manuscript which contains the Prophecy of Enoch" to Louis XV.³¹ This news reached Sir John Pringle (1707–1782), a Scottish physician and then president of the Royal Society, who on 1 October wrote from London to inform his correspondent at Göttingen the biblical scholar Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791) that Bruce's gift, "what is called an Old Ethiopic Version of the pretended Prophecy of Enoch" was apparently in the Royal Library at Paris.³²

²⁹ Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 2.364.

³⁰ Georges-Louis Leclerc Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux* (Paris, 1774) 3.ii; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (1 April 1775); *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries* (London, 1775) vol. 3, part I, 328; *Literary Magazine* (August 1788) 103; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 276–77.

³¹ *Gazette de France* (6 September 1773) 323; *Lloyd's Evening Post* 2531 (17–20 September 1773); *London Chronicle* (18–21 September 1773); *London Evening Post* (18–21 September 1773); *Craftsman or Say's Weekly Journal* (25 September 1773); *Notizie del Mondo* 76 (21 September 1773) 617; *Mercurio Historico y Politico* (September 1773) 13–14; *Gaceta de Madrid* 38 (September 1773) 333; *The Scots Magazine* 35 (September 1773) 491; *Pennsylvania Gazette* 2345 (1 December 1773) 2; *Maryland Gazette* 29.1474 (9 December 1773) 2; *Virginia Gazette* 1168 (16 December 1773) 1. The North American newspaper references are cited in C. Townsend, "Revisiting Joseph Smith and the Availability of the Book of Enoch," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 53.3 (2020) 55. See also, Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 7.168.

³² Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 2.365; cf. Sonntag, ed., *Pringle's correspondence with von Haller*, 299.

Receipt of Bruce's donation had been gratefully acknowledged by Jérôme-Frédéric Bignon (1747–1784), keeper of medals and antiquities, at the beginning of September:

I just received, Sir, the Ethiopian manuscript that you had presented to the King, and which the King, by deigning to accept it, ordered to be deposited in the Library. Since nothing matters more to me than to see this precious deposit, which it has pleased his Majesty to entrust me with, to grow and embellish itself with the rarest works, it is my honour to give you particular and hearty thanks for the one with which you just enriched it. If your business brought you to Paris, you would see for yourself the consideration we make of it by the distinguished place it will always occupy among our other treasures.³³

Although Bruce had by now departed for Italy, his idiosyncratic understanding of Enoch and the books under his name are recorded in a note written in French enclosed with the codex and addressed to Louis XV.³⁴ This was transcribed by Carl Gottfried Woide (1725–1790), a London-based Prussian scholar then in Paris primarily to study Coptic manuscripts, who first recorded examining Ethiopic Enoch in his diary on 13 October.³⁵ Some months later Woide communicated Bruce's note to Michaelis and also translated it into English.³⁶ According to Bruce, in the seventeenth century an Ethiopian monk named Gregorius had arrived in Europe pretending that his "mother country" had possessed the "Book of Enoch" from an early period in history when the Ethiopians were still pagan; that is even before the introduction of the books of Moses during the reign of Solomon.³⁷ Evidently Bruce was referring to Abba Gregorius [Gorgoryos] (1595–1658), whom Hiob Ludolf (1624–1704) had met at Santo Stefano degli Abissini (Rome) in 1649 and who subsequently assisted Ludolf in his study of

³³ Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, MS 0639.1, Bignon to Bruce (2 September 1773); noted in Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.clviii and Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 114. For Bignon, see *Almanach Royal* (1773) 392.

³⁴ Bibliothèque Nationale, Éthiopien 49, fols. Ar–Dv; Hermann Zotenberg, *Catalogue des Manuscrits Éthiopiens (Gheez et Amharique) de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1877) 47.

³⁵ Bodleian Library, MS Clar. Press d. 11, fols. 11r–14r; British Library, Add. MS 48,702, fol. 118r; *The English Review* 16 (1790) 183.

³⁶ Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 3.94–98.

³⁷ Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 10, fol. 135r, printed in Richard Laurence, ed., *Libri Enoch Prophetæ versio Æthiopica* (Oxford, 1838) ix.

the languages and history of Ethiopia conducted at the court of Duke Ernst of Saxe-Gotha.³⁸ Although Bruce knew some of “learned” Ludolf’s work, even consulting “Ludolf’s dictionaries” when attempting to read Ethiopic Enoch at Gondar, his anecdote concerning Gregorius’s report of Enoch seems an embellishment.³⁹ So too the next detail, namely that on hearing the news Louis XIV’s minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683) ordered the German Dominican Johann Michael Wansleben (1635–1679), who was then searching for Arabic manuscripts in Egypt, to enter Ethiopia and “get as many books as he should find, and principally the Book of Enoch.” While Wansleben never accomplished this mission, he was in Egypt between 1672 and 1673 in Colbert’s service.⁴⁰ Perhaps tellingly, Gregorius, Colbert and Wansleben are omitted from Bruce’s account of the book of Enoch in his published *Travels*.⁴¹ But his story regarding another man was not. For in both his note and *Travels* Bruce related the failed attempt by the renowned French Humanist Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637) to acquire Ethiopic Enoch.⁴² Thus far Bruce’s knowledge of *Enoch* clearly derived from his reading of Ludolf, afterwards supplemented with Pierre Gassendi’s biography of Peiresc.⁴³ But what he said next was taken from elsewhere.

Having explained that in Ethiopia he had found the book of Enoch to be a canonical text placed just before Job in the Bible—here probably referring to the copy acquired for him at Adwa (MS. Bruce 74), Bruce continued by clarifying that there were actually four different books of Enoch. Jerome had seen one; the Rabbis still possessed one; Jude had quoted from a “third” book in his Epistle which must have been canonical but was no longer extant; while

³⁸ Hiob Ludolf, *Iobi Ludolfi ... ad suam Historiam Aethiopicam antehac editam Commentarius* (Frankfurt upon Main, 1691) 28–35.

³⁹ Bruce, *Travels*, 1.489, 1.497, 3.199–200.

⁴⁰ Johann Michael Wansleben, *The Present State of Egypt*, trans. M.D. (London, 1678); see also, A. Bausi, “Johann Michael Wansleben’s manuscripts and texts: An update,” in *Essays in Ethiopian Manuscript Studies*, ed., A. Bausi, A. Gori, D. Nonsitsin, and E. Sokolinski (Supplement to *Aethiopica* 4; Wiesbaden, 2015) 197–244.

⁴¹ Bruce, *Travels*, 1.488–89, 497–500.

⁴² Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 10, fol. 136r, in Laurence, *Libri Enoch*, ix–x; Bruce, *Travels*, 1.497.

⁴³ Pierre Gassendi, *Viri Illustris Nicolai Claudi Fabricii de Peiresc* (Paris, 1641) book V, 269–70; Pierre Gassendi, *The Mirrour of true Nobility & Gentility*, trans. W. Rand (London, 1657) book V, 89–90.

the Sabians held a “fourth Book of Enoch.” Furthermore, these Sabians had a “great respect” for the books of both Enoch and Seth, regarding them as genuine works by antediluvian patriarchs. According to Bruce, Sabianism was the “most ancient religion of the world,” which “from the beginning” had been mixed with Judaism but was eventually destroyed by Muhammad. When the Ethiopians converted from Sabianism to Judaism they retained their reverence for Enoch, acknowledging him to be the “Patriarch of both nations.” For proof he stated that the Jews of Ethiopia accepted Enoch as canonical although their book differed from the text known to the Rabbis, adding that it was not admitted into the canon of either the Coptic Church of Alexandria or the Greek Orthodox Church.⁴⁴ Besides seemingly distinguishing between what we know today as *I Enoch* and later Jewish traditions of Enoch, here Bruce was elaborating on what were fairly common contemporary understandings of Sabianism. Thus in a published dissertation on the “Religion of the Sabeans” Bernard Picart (1673–1733) had cited an Arabian writer who said that the Sabians were the “most antient People in the World, and received their Religion from *Seth* and *Enoch*, to whom they attribute some Books.” These Sabians, moreover, highly prized a book written by Enoch in Chaldaic which discussed morality. Similar information was provided by Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) in his *General Dictionary*, who also supplied the source: “*Kissaeus*,” i.e. Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Kisa’i, compiler of an anthology entitled *Tales of the Prophets*.⁴⁵ Thereafter this material was incorporated within encyclopedia entries.⁴⁶

As to the contents of Ethiopic Enoch, Bruce had evidently been unable to understand it at first since he likened it to the book of Revelation—thereby again betraying his dependence

⁴⁴ Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 10, fols. 136r–38v, in Laurence, *Libri Enoch*, x–xi; cf. Bruce, *Travels*, 1.498, 500.

⁴⁵ Bernard Picart, *The ceremonies and religious customs of the various nations of the known world* (7 vols., London, 1733–39) 7.153, 155; Pierre Bayle, *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical* (London, 1734) 1.226; cf. Thomas Stanley, *The History of the Chaldaick philosophy* (London, 1662) 83. For a modern translation of the relevant passage, see Reeves/Reed, *Enoch*, 101–3.

⁴⁶ E. Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: or, an Universal Dictionary*, 2 vols. (London, 1751–52) 2, s.v. “Sabæans”; John Barrow, *A Supplement to the New and Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (London, 1754) s.v. “Sabæans.”

upon Ludolf who, at the Bibliothèque du Roi, had examined a text obtained by Peiresc in 1636 purporting to be the prophecy of Enoch (but actually authored by one Yeshāq) called the “Revelations of Enoch.”⁴⁷ Written in the “pure Ethiopian language,” or Ge‘ez, Enoch was the “most classical” book of the Ethiopians and indeed the “most curious” and rarest thing he had brought from his travels. Because it was “not to be found in any library of Europe” Bruce presented it to Louis XV as a token of gratitude, so he claimed, for being granted two passports to France, where he was “obliged” to go for his health during wartime.⁴⁸ When he wrote his *Travels*, however, this had been expanded to a public demonstration of thanks for the “many obligations” Bruce had received from “every rank of that most humane, polite, and scientific nation”—particularly the sovereign, who had given him what a visitor to Bruce’s museum would describe as “a great old astronomical quadrant of brass,” about three-foot radius and weighing sufficient for a camel’s load (rather than the 10 men Bruce once claimed were needed to carry it on their shoulders). At first glance it is remarkable that in return for a quadrant Bruce would give what he called in print “a very beautiful and magnificent copy of the prophecies of Enoch” to a rival power which had fought against and been defeated by the British and their allies only a decade previously in the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763).⁴⁹ Indeed, the Arabist and bigamist Edward Wortley Montagu (1713–1776), who had met Bruce in Egypt, criticised him in a letter to an unknown correspondent for giving the “bread plant” [teff] to the French, which would be prejudicial to English agriculture and might have

⁴⁷ Hiob Ludolf, *A New History of Ethiopia*, trans. J.P. (London, 1684) 269; Ludolf, *Historiam Aethiopicam*, 347. This work transmitted the teachings of Abba Bakhayla Mikâ’êl-Zosimus and was said to contain “some very clear discourses of the Mysteries of Heaven and Earth, and the Holy Trinity.”

⁴⁸ Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 10, fols. 136r–38v, in Laurence, *Libri Enoch*, xi–xii. For the passports, see Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 22, 32.

⁴⁹ Bruce, *Travels*, 1.497–98; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.cclxxix, 1.65–66, 7.361; John Bonnar, “Parish of Larbert,” in *The New Statistical Account of Scotland ...* vol. VIII, *Dunbarton—Stirling—Clackmannan* (Edinburgh & London, 1845) 351; William Nimmo, *The History of Stirlingshire*, 2 vols. (3rd ed.; London, 1880) 1.324. He apparently had the quadrant inscribed: “With this instrument given by Lewis XV. Mr. Bruce proceeded to the sources of the Nile, it being carried on foot, upon men’s shoulders, over the mountains of Abyssinia.” See *General Evening Post* (8–11 April 1786).

damaging consequences in a future military conflict.⁵⁰ Yet Bruce's motive appears transparent: he sought patronage and preferment—preferably royal, papal or aristocratic—as well as international recognition. Hence writing from Bologna to his lawyer on 20 October 1773, ostensibly aggrieved about a long-running dispute with an ironworks company mining coal on his estate, he complained that like Christ he had not been received as a prophet in his own country (cf. John 4:44). He had been carried in “Triumph” through France and Italy receiving more “honours and distinction” than had ever been shown a British subject. Even “among savages” Bruce had been conferred more consideration than he merited. Yet in Scotland he had received little respect and “often barely Justice.”⁵¹

Bruce's interest in *Enoch* must also be contextualised within the wider framework of his intellectual pursuits. Among them were his passion for exploring, whether the physical remains of ancient cultures in Western Europe, North Africa, and the Levant (drawings begun by Balugani survive for several sites),⁵² or geographical marvels such as the Tisesāt Falls and source of the Blue Nile. Then there was collecting, both manuscripts in oriental languages and curiosities generally, such as those displayed in Bruce's museum at Kinnaird—of which more shortly. Moreover, like his fellow Freemason the Comte de Buffon, Bruce was an enthusiastic student of natural history, particularly of the flora and fauna of “Egypt, Arabia, Abyssinia, and Nubia,” which comprised the fifth volume of his *Travels*. In addition, Bruce was “very fond” of astronomy and undertook detailed measurements of latitude and longitude in Africa, together with observations on the moons of Jupiter.⁵³

⁵⁰ *The European Magazine* 21 (1792) 330–31, 333, 417, 418; *The European Magazine* 22 (1792) 5; John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, 6 vols. (London, 1812) 4.646–48 notes.

⁵¹ Cumming, “Unpublished letters of James Bruce,” 47.

⁵² Adolf Oppé, *English Drawings—Stuart and Georgian periods—in the collection of His Majesty the King at Windsor Castle* (London, 1950) 30. Many of the drawings in the Royal Collection at Windsor can be seen at <https://www.rct.uk/collection>.

⁵³ *General Evening Post* (8–11 April 1786); Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 7.355–80; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 284, 478–96; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 36. According to Murray, Bruce afterwards erected a temporary observatory at Kinnaird.

That Bruce was a Freemason requires comment; some sensational accounts of his life and travels regard it as of huge significance, even to the extent that it supposedly explains why he went to “such great lengths” to obtain multiple copies of Ethiopic Enoch.⁵⁴ Because there is no firm evidence to support this suggestion it can be completely rejected. For whereas another prominent Freemason certainly displayed curiosity about the book of Enoch during the 1790s, there is nothing concrete to connect Bruce’s initiation into Freemasonry with his interest in Ethiopic Enoch. Instead, there are merely a couple of tenuous links insufficient to support a plausible argument. Firstly, there is Bruce’s acquisition at Thebes in January 1769 of a Coptic manuscript (MS. Bruce 96) containing two works “full of their dreams” that he called “Gnostic.”⁵⁵ Taken in conjunction with Bruce’s published description of Ethiopic *Enoch* as a “Gnostic” book this is intriguing, especially since throughout the entire five volumes of his *Travels* he only uses the word Gnostic when referring to this Coptic codex and Enoch.⁵⁶ Gnostic, and its cognates Gnosticism and Gnosis, first occur regularly in the English language during the early modern period.⁵⁷ Although employed as an adjective in the sense of relating to knowledge, the more common usage was as a noun to indicate those ancient Christians that heresiologists like Ireneaus condemned for their claims to have attained superior spiritual knowledge. Moreover, Gnostic was generally intended as criticism rather than compliment. Doubtless this was Bruce’s meaning too. So treatments of Gnosticism within the framework of legendary Masonic history can be disregarded as evidence that

⁵⁴ Graham Hancock, *Sign and the Seal. The Quest for the Lost Ark of the Covenant* (New York, 1992) 182–83; Andrew Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels. The forbidden legacy of a fallen race* (Rochester, VT, 1996) 12; Abba Yahudah, *A Journey to the Roots of Rastafari: The Essene Nazarite Link* (Bloomington, IN, 2014) 4.

⁵⁵ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.xcii, 1.cclxxiii–cclxxiv, cccxli, 2.29–45, 7.123–24, 7.127 note, 129; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 362; *Catalogue of ... Oriental literature ... sold by auction ... Robins*, 35–36.

⁵⁶ Bruce, *Travels*, 1.497, 1.499, 5.13; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 2.422, 2.423, 7.129.

⁵⁷ The earliest known usages are “Gnostici” (1563), “Gnostikes” (1607), “Gnosticks” (1641), “Gnosticism” (1669), and “Gnosis” (1703). See *Oxford English Dictionary*; Henry More, *An Exposition of the seven epistles to the seven churches* (1669)99, and the appended *An Antidote against Idolatry*, sig. O2r.

Bruce sought out these documents (which he struggled to read) in fulfilment of some Masonic quest to obtain secret knowledge.⁵⁸

Secondly there is Bruce's intriguing notion that the Sabians possessed a fourth book of Enoch. Some fifteen years afterwards he elaborated in his *Travels*: Sabianism was the primary pagan religion of the East which was subsequently adopted by the shepherds of North-East Africa. Furthermore, vestiges of an "ill-understood" Sabianism persisted among the polytheistic inhabitants of regions around Ethiopia, who worshipped the stars, moon and wind.⁵⁹ Almost a century later, in language reminiscent of Bruce, the American physician Albert Mackey (1807–1881) incorporated "Sabianism" within his discussion of the "primitive freemasonry of antiquity," describing "worship of the sun, moon, and stars" as a deviation from "true worship" of the "Supreme God," the "Grand Architect of the Universe." Accordingly, Mackey denounced Sabianism as "the most ancient of religious corruptions."⁶⁰ Even so, the earliest published reference I am aware of discussing Sabianism in relation to Freemasonry is *The Round Towers of Ireland* (1834) by the "antiquarian enthusiast" Henry O'Brien (1808–1835).⁶¹ Interestingly, in this elaborate work which was ridiculed by most contemporary reviewers (one Freemason excepted), O'Brien quoted a lengthy passage from "one of the most extraordinary productions that has ever appeared in England." He was referring to the second edition of Richard Laurence's translation of Ethiopic Enoch, particularly chapter 59 concerning the "first and last secrets in heaven above"; i.e. the winds, moon, stars, thunder and lightning. Indeed, O'Brien went so far as to speculate if Laurence's

⁵⁸ Cf. George Smith, *The use and abuse of Free-masonry* (London, 1783) 320; Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (Charleston, 1871) 266, 270, 273, 287, 542, 553–68; Albert Mackey, *The History of Freemasonry its legends and traditions its chronological history*, 7 vols. (New York & London, 1898–1906) 2.371–81.

⁵⁹ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 2.327, 2.333, 2.397, 2.401–2, 2.426–27, 2.445, 3.11, 3.195, 3.242, 6.369, 7.136.

⁶⁰ Albert Mackey, *The Symbolism of Freemasonry* (New York, 1869) 26–28, 195, 230–31, 336, 357; cf. Albert Mackey, *An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1894) 1.26, 94.

⁶¹ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 2nd series, 1 (1834) 299; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 2nd series, 2 (1834) 365–67; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 2nd series, 4 (1835) 553; W.W. Wroth, revised Marie-Louise Legg, "O'Brien, Henry (1808–1835)," *ODNB*.

careful highlighting of the words “secret” and “concealed” indicated that he was a Freemason.⁶² But it must be stressed that Mackey and O’Brien both wrote long after Bruce was dead. Consequently 19th-century attempts in print to connect Sabianism with the antecedents of Freemasonry cannot reasonably be taken as evidence that Bruce’s conception of Sabianism was influenced by orally transmitted Masonic lore.

In sum, discussions about the relationship between Bruce’s Freemasonry and his attitude towards Ethiopic Enoch are best served by taking into account lively modern scholarly debates; notably those concerning what forms the Enlightenment took (Radical or otherwise), and how Freemasonry can be accommodated within it.⁶³ It is noteworthy that Bruce had been initiated into the Canongate, Kilwinning No. 2 Lodge at Edinburgh on 1 August 1753. Other members of this prestigious lodge included aristocrats, military and naval officers, civil servants, bankers, lawyers, surgeons, academics, publishers and architects, not to mention the poet Robert Burns (1759–1796) and James Boswell (1740–1795).⁶⁴ So Freemasonry should be envisaged here, to quote Richard Sher, as “a fraternal cosmopolitan organization that encouraged and spread enlightened principles and provided another homosocial milieu for Scottish men of letters.”⁶⁵

*

On reaching the Italian Peninsula Bruce made his way to Bologna, where about mid-September 1773 he was welcomed by an aristocratic friend Marchese Girolamo Ranuzzi

⁶² Henry O’Brien, *The Round Towers of Ireland; or the mysteries of Freemasonry, of Sabianism, and of Budhism* (London, 1834) 244, 401–2, 463 note, 475–77; Lawrence, *Book of Enoch* (2nd ed.) 62–63 (chapter 58 in the first edition). Thus far I have found no evidence to suggest that Laurence was a Freemason.

⁶³ Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York, 1991); M.C. Jacob, “The Radical Enlightenment and Freemasonry: where we are now,” *Philosophica* 88 (2013) 13–29.

⁶⁴ “Notices of eminent members of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge of Scotland,” *The Freemasons’ Quarterly Review* (September 30, 1841) 297–98; Allan Mackenzie, *History of the Lodge Canongate Kilwinning No. 2. Compiled from the records, 1677–1888* (Edinburgh, 1888) 78, 237–47.

⁶⁵ Richard Sher, *The Enlightenment & the Book. Scottish Authors & Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland & America* (Chicago & London, 2006) 108.

(1724–1784). In early October he was reported to have been carried from Bologna to Porretta Terme, albeit with the loss of a horse. After several weeks hydrotherapy treatment at Porretta’s thermal springs he recovered the use of his scarred left arm and right leg.⁶⁶ Sufficiently restored, Bruce returned to Bologna from where he wrote to his lawyer about the wealth of material he had gathered, bragging that “all Europe” expected an account of his successful travels.⁶⁷ The boasting did not stop there for Bruce also pretended to be a professor and, with Balugani dead, claimed many of his former companion’s unfinished drawings of North African and Levantine antiquities as his own. Unfortunately for Bruce, his correspondence with the artists he employed to complete the landscape backgrounds and figures for Balugani’s drawings survives.⁶⁸ Outraged by this deceit and exasperated by Bruce’s “extraordinary stories,” one of Balugani’s friends eventually exposed the fraud so that it became common knowledge among Italian connoisseurs.⁶⁹ Unperturbed, Bruce had these drawings bound in leather in forty volumes and then sent to the naturalist and explorer Joseph Banks (1743–1820) at London, in the hope that Banks would use his influence so that this considerable number of “drawings of architecture and natural history” would evade duty and inspection at the Custom House.⁷⁰ Afterwards, Bruce repaid Balugani by almost entirely

⁶⁶ Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 114; *Notizie del Mondo* 81 (9 October 1773) 663; *Gazzetta di Parma* 41 (22 October 1773) 328; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 277; Paul Hulton, F. Nigel Hepper, & Ib Friis, *Luigi Balugani’s Drawings of African Plants: from the collection made by James Bruce of Kinnaird on his travels to discover the source of the Nile 1767–1773* (New Haven, 1991) 42.

⁶⁷ Cumming, “Unpublished letters of James Bruce,” 47.

⁶⁸ Davide Zanotti (d.1808) and Vincenzo Martinelli (1737–1807) apparently drew the landscape backgrounds, while Emilio Manfredi (d.1801) and Giacomo Zampa (1731–1808) drew the figures. Yet other contemporary accounts suggest that Balugani’s drawings were completed by Giuseppe Manfredi under the supervision of Count Zini, or the Florentine draughtsman Zucchi. See Hulton, Hepper & Friis, *Balugani’s Drawings*, 35–36, 50–51.

⁶⁹ Emanuele Greppi & Alessandro Giulini, eds., *Carteggio di Pietro e di Alessandro Verri*, 12 vols. (Milan, 1910–28) 6.198; *The European Magazine* 21 (1792) 420, partly reprinted in Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, 4.649 note; *Monthly Review* 2 (June 1790) 184–86; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (18 November 1790); *Gentleman’s Magazine* 60 (November 1790) 973; Anon, *Copy of a letter from Bologna, dated March the 15th, in the year 1778, wrote by a first-rate designer* ([London, 1790?]) 1–6.

⁷⁰ Warren Dawson, ed., *The Banks Letters. A Calendar of the manuscript correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks* (London, 1958) 177; Victoria Manners and G.C. Williamson, *John Zoffany, R.A. His life and works. 1735–1810* (London, 1920) 54–55.

expunging him from his *Travels*; an abominable erasure of the truth, to paraphrase one later critic.⁷¹

Journeying south by way of Pistoia, Bruce arrived at Florence in late October. There he was presented by the diplomat Sir Horatio Mann (1706–1786) at the court of Peter Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany, to whom Bruce gave a “curious collection” of Ethiopian plant seeds together with what were said to be Bruce’s own engravings and observations.⁷² This resulted in the successful cultivation of teff and a treatise on the subject by the director of the botanical garden in Florence.⁷³ Turning from natural history to medicine, about this time Bruce also wrote on Guinea-worm disease with his comments published in an Italian gazette.⁷⁴ By mid-November he was in Rome where his immoderate behaviour created a sensation. Seeking a woman named Margaret Murray (c.1749–1785)—to whom he had been betrothed prior to his appointment as consul-general at Algiers—Bruce learned that she had instead converted to Catholicism and married Marchese Filippo Accoramboni. This Italian nobleman reportedly laughed off his wife’s former engagement by saying that travellers often lie. Furious, Bruce demanded satisfaction, challenging Accoramboni to a duel; a violent outcome only avoided by the intercession of Abbé Peter Grant (1708–1784), an important figure at the Scots College in Rome, and a written apology from the Marquis.⁷⁵ Yet there was also a sequel to the affair. Following Margaret’s death at Rome Accoramboni confined their

⁷¹ Salt, *Voyage to Abyssinia*, 337–41. Salt noted that Balugani is mentioned only three times in Bruce’s *Travels*.

⁷² *Notizie del Mondo* 85 (23 October 1773) 693; *Gazzetta Toscana* 43 (23 October 1773) 169; *Notizie del Mondo* 87 (30 October 1773) 712; *Gazzetta Toscana* 44 (30 October 1773) 173; Sonntag, ed., *Pringle’s correspondence with von Haller*, 303; W. S. Lewis, ed., *The Yale edition of Horace Walpole’s correspondence*, 48 vols. (New Haven, 1937–1983) 23.527 n. 14. The root of one of these plants reportedly had medicinal properties useful in the treatment of dysentery.

⁷³ Attilio Zuccagni, *Dissertazione concernente l’istoria di una pianta panizzabile dell’ Abissinia ... sotto il nome di Tef* (Florence, 1775); S.H. Costanza, J.M. de Wet and J.R. Harlan, “Literature Review and Numerical Taxonomy of *Eragrostis tef* (T’ef),” *Economic Botany* 33 (1979) 414.

⁷⁴ *Notizie del Mondo* 93 (20 November 1773) 759–60.

⁷⁵ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.cccxxii–cccxxv; Greppi & Giulini, eds., *Carteggio di Verri*, 6.147, 150; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 114, 247–49; Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, 4.646 note; Head, *Life of Bruce*, 507–10; J. F. S. Gordon, *Journal and Appendix to Scotichronicon and Monasticon* (Glasgow, 1867) 1.62; John Gibson, *Lands and Lairds of Larbert and Dunipace parishes* (Glasgow, 1908) 41 n.; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 36, 275, 277–80; Boccaccini, “Bruce’s ‘Fourth’ Manuscript,” 249–52; Clotilde Prunier, “Grant, Peter (1708–1784),” *ODNB*.

daughter within a convent to prevent her becoming romantically entangled. The daughter fell into “convulsion fits” and died suddenly. The bare details of this story were recorded by watercolourist and collector George Cumberland (1754–1848) and reworked together with a character that may have been partly modelled on Bruce into his utopian fable set against an African backdrop, *The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar* (1798).⁷⁶ This is noteworthy because among Cumberland’s friends was William Blake (1757–1827), whose depiction(s) of Enoch are discussed elsewhere in this volume.

Probably through a combination of Abbé Grant’s favour, who was friendly with the Pope, and a letter of introduction to Cardinal de Bernis (1715–1794) from the French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs the Duc d’Aiguillon (1720–1788), Bruce secured two audiences with Clement XIV.⁷⁷ According to an Italian gazette, French periodical and some English newspapers, Bruce was reportedly received with “great Distinction” by “His Holiness,” most likely between 3 and 11 December 1773. At the second audience the Pope found “pleasure” in questioning Bruce “minutely” on his travels to Ethiopia and other parts of the world, generously honouring him with a gift of some fine gold and silver medals on his departure.⁷⁸ Bruce himself claimed that the Pope told him: “fortunate is the sovereign who has a subject like [you], able to speak thirteen languages.”⁷⁹ Some months later a French gazette added a crucial detail, possibly derived from Bruce since it contains characteristic hyperbole. Here Bruce was said to have amassed about 6,000 manuscripts, including a good copy of the book of Enoch which he had presented to the Pope when passing through Rome.

⁷⁶ George Cumberland, *The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar: An African Tale*, ed. Gerald Bentley (Montreal & Kingston, 1991) xiv–xv; *Illustrated catalogue of the exhibition of portraits on loan in the New Galleries of art, Corporation buildings, Sauchiehall Street* (Glasgow, 1868) 6–7; Francis Greenacre, “Cumberland, George (1754–1848),” *ODNB*.

⁷⁷ Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 246; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 277; Boccaccini, “Bruce’s ‘Fourth’ Manuscript,” 253–55.

⁷⁸ *Notizie del Mondo* 101 (18 December 1773) 824; *Daily Advertiser* (10 January 1774); *London Chronicle* (8–11 January 1774); *The London Magazine* 43 (1774) 52; *Journal historique et littéraire*, 1 (February 1774) 138–39; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 115. The medals were engraved with the Pope’s likeness and seen by Murray at Kinnaird.

⁷⁹ Bonnar, “Larbert,” in *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, VIII.351.

Together with the researches of Woide, of which more shortly, it was hoped that that the learned would finally settle the question whether this ancient apocryphal work was written by a Jew or Christian.⁸⁰ But the most important evidence, recently brought to light by Boccaccini, is the correspondence between the brothers Pietro Verri (1728–1797) and Alessandro Verri (1741–1816).⁸¹

Writing from Milan on 2 March 1774 Pietro informed Alessandro at Rome that he had spoken to Bruce at lunch, who regaled him with tales of his Ethiopian adventure—stories which sounded like fables to the sceptical Pietro. Moreover, Bruce said that he had given the Pope the book of Enoch quoted by Jude and that it was written in an Ethiopian language. Yet Monsignor Leonardo Antonelli (1730–1811) was unable to find anyone in the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith [Propaganda Fide] capable of understanding it, and so apparently urged Bruce to translate the text.⁸² A few days later Pietro wrote to Alessandro again about a supposed altercation between Bruce and some customs officers at the border, declaring that Bruce “seems a very imaginative person” prone to “much exaggeration.” Jestingly Pietro added that he was tempted to create a copy of the book of Enoch himself to compete with Bruce’s version; they would be “equally legitimate.”⁸³ On 9 March Alessandro responded confirming that Bruce had presented a “so-called book of Enoch” to the Pope, which he discussed with Monsignor Antonelli. Alessandro also believed that Bruce had attempted to converse with an Ethiopian in the Propaganda Fide but had not been understood at first. Greatly angered, Bruce ended up speaking Arabic because he had command of that language. Evidently this encounter severely damaged Bruce’s credibility, prompting Alessandro to conclude that anyone listening to Bruce recount his wanderings “has

⁸⁰ *Gazette et avant-coureur de Littérature, des Sciences et des Arts* 27 (April 1774) 2–3.

⁸¹ Boccaccini, “Bruce’s ‘Fourth’ Manuscript,” 255–61.

⁸² Greppi & Giulini, eds., *Carteggio di Verri*, 6.191.

⁸³ Greppi & Giulini, eds., *Carteggio di Verri*, 6.192–93.

conceived some mistrust” since “his stories sound like fables and he talks a lot even without being solicited.”⁸⁴

Nonetheless Bruce did present Clement XIV with a genuine version of Enoch in Ge‘ez. Splendidly written on vellum in triple columns, this exquisitely produced high-status cultural artefact was evidently specially created for Bruce as a presentation copy since besides containing a great deal of rubrication it also has a highly unusual feature; namely, the addition of two separate title-pages reading “The Book of Enoch the Prophet” and then “Enoch.”⁸⁵ As Boccaccini has shown, sometime between early December 1773 and late April 1775 this document was entrusted by the Pope to Antonelli. This is apparent from a two and a half page letter preserved on the fly-leaves of the codex. It was written by the orientalist Agostino Antonio Giorgi (1711–1797) and addressed to Antonelli shortly before he was appointed a cardinal. Here Giorgi requested the opportunity to see the “famous Ethiopic manuscript” for a few days, while acknowledging that he lacked the ability—not to mention the patience and time—to produce a complete translation of what was “believed to be the book of Enoch.”⁸⁶ Even so, Giorgi did provide an inexact Latin version of certain passages, notably what appears to have been a preface, the opening phrase (“Dixit bened[ictionem] ipse Henoch”) and extracts from what he designated chapters seven and eight (*1 En 6–7*). He also supplied some marginal notes in Italian, including a discussion of the Ge‘ez word for beloved which he thought was connected etymologically to the scapular worn by Ethiopian monks. Evidently Giorgi focussed on *1 Enoch 6–7* since this portion of the text corresponded to some of Syncellus’s excerpts, an author whom he cited through Johann Albert Fabricius’s *Codex*

⁸⁴ Greppi & Giulini, eds., *Carteggio di Verri*, 6.195.

⁸⁵ Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, Vat. et. 71, fols. 2r, 3r, <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.et.71>; Angelo Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e Vaticanis codicibus edita* (Rome, 1831) 5.100. I am most grateful to Leslie Baynes and Ted Erho for discussing the contents of this manuscript, and to Erho for the translation.

⁸⁶ Vat. et. 71, fly-leaves; T. M. Erho and L. T. Stuckenbruck, “A Manuscript History of *Ethiopic Enoch*,” *JSP* 23 (2013) 93; Boccaccini, “Bruce’s ‘Fourth’ Manuscript,” 240–42.

Pseudepigraphus VT. Giorgi thus seems to have worked directly from Ge‘ez while referring to the Greek to help him with what must have been an unfamiliar language.⁸⁷ Although it is unclear whether he made further progress with his Latin translation (a later account stated that someone—probably Giorgi—completed a “great part” until chapter fifty-four), his work represents the second or third earliest translation of a portion of Ethiopic Enoch. Yet despite Giorgi’s efforts the Ethiopic manuscript gifted by Bruce remained neglected for roughly half a century until it was purchased for the Vatican Library by the philologist Angelo Mai (1782–1854) about 1825.⁸⁸

Questions remain, however, as to why no further progress was made with this copy of Ethiopic Enoch (now Vat. et. 71) and why Bruce omitted to mention his donation in print. With regard to the former, it may be that besides Giorgi there was no one sufficiently capable or motivated to undertake the task during the Pontificate of Clement XIV. But under his successor Pius VI (1775–1799), especially from the second half of the 1780s, there was renewed emphasis on Catholic proselytizing in Ethiopia. Thus in 1789 the Propaganda Fide published the Ge‘ez and Amharic alphabets together with the Lord’s Prayer, Ten Commandments and other material. This superseded a similar publication of 1631 likewise issued by the Propaganda Fide, and was doubtless connected with the mission of Michelangelo Pacelli da Tricarico, which departed from Mocha [modern Yemen] across the Red Sea in November 1789.⁸⁹ As Boccaccini has observed, this missionary activity was sponsored by Cardinal Antonelli.⁹⁰ With regard to the latter, here the political context needs to be highlighted. In his *Travels*, published in April 1790 and dedicated to the “wise,

⁸⁷ Vat. et. 71, fly-leaves; Fabricius, *Codex Pseudepigraphus VT*, 1.179–82.

⁸⁸ Mai, *Scriptorium*, 5.100; Erho and Stuckenbruck, “Manuscript History of *Ethiopic Enoch*,” 93–94; Boccaccini, “Bruce’s ‘Fourth’ Manuscript,” 242–44.

⁸⁹ *Alphabetum Aethiopicum, sive Abyssinum* (Rome, 1631); *Alphabetum Aethiopicum sive Gheez et Amharicum* (Rome, 1789); *The Analytic Review* 7 (August 1790) 476; *Viaggi in Etiopia del Michelangelo Pacelli* (Naples, 1797) 53.

⁹⁰ Boccaccini, “Bruce’s ‘Fourth’ Manuscript,” 245.

merciful, and just” George III whose reign would “for ever be a glorious [era] in the annals of Britain,” Bruce presented himself as a loyal and noble Hanoverian subject descended from great and glorious Scottish kings who was appalled by the notion of regicide. Moreover, Bruce assumed the character of a vehemently anti-Catholic enemy of religious bigotry and superstition.⁹¹ Although his fear of king-killing was evidently genuine (the Bastille had been stormed on 14 July 1789 while Louis XVI would be guillotined on 21 January 1793), Bruce’s love for Margaret Murray remained undiminished despite her conversion to Catholicism. Since the exiled Jacobite “Young Pretender” Charles Edward Stuart (1720–1788) and his young wife Princess Louise of Stolberg-Gedern (1752–1824) were living at Rome in 1773 and indeed treated courteously by Clement XIV—despite the Pope refusing to recognise Bonnie Prince Charlie’s claim to the throne, Bruce prudently omitted his audiences with Clement XIV from his *Travels*.⁹² Instead he adopted the guise of anti-Catholic Hanoverian loyalist.

On leaving Rome Bruce departed for Tuscany, arriving at Cortona on 26 December 1773. There he looked at various collections of antiquities and made a great impression on his hosts, who were enraptured by this “valorous,” “witty,” and “erudite” traveller. So much so that Bruce, “an adornment of Europe,” was made a member of the Etruscan Academy.⁹³ Afterwards he was also named a corresponding fellow of the Academy of Agriculture.⁹⁴ By 11 January 1774 Bruce was back at Florence where he was in the company of Johan Joseph Zoffany (1733–1810), a painter who included Bruce in his group portrait “The Tribuna of the Uffizi” (1772–77).⁹⁵ A few days later Zoffany wrote to Joseph Banks at London concerning

⁹¹ Bruce, *Travels*, vol. 1, “Dedication”; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.cxciv, 1.1–7, 1.25, 1.108, 4.395, 5.271, 6.122; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 26–27, 30, 77, 108, 114, 137, 169, 198, 209, 239, 246.

⁹² Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 278, 280; Boccaccini, “Bruce’s ‘Fourth’ Manuscript,” 254, 262–63.

⁹³ *Notizie del Mondo* 101 (18 December 1773) 824; *Gazzetta Toscana* 1 (1 January 1774) 211–12; *Gazzetta Toscana* 5 (29 January 1774) 19; Boccaccini, “Bruce’s ‘Fourth’ Manuscript,” 259.

⁹⁴ *Gazzetta Toscana* 12 (19 March 1774) 46.

⁹⁵ Dawson, ed., *Banks Letters*, 177; Mary Webster, “Zoffany, Johan Joseph (1733–1810), *ODNB*.

this huge-sized “great man, the wonder of the age, the terror of married men [doubtless alluding to Marchese Accoramboni] and a constant lover.”⁹⁶ Bruce then went to Milan, and perhaps also Venice, before going to Paris.⁹⁷ On 21 June 1774, after an interval of twelve years, he had returned to London.⁹⁸

*

Meanwhile Carl Gottfried Woide had been making progress with the copy of Ethiopic Enoch given by Bruce to Louis XV held in the Bibliothèque du Roi at Paris (BnF Éthiopien 49).⁹⁹ Educated at the universities of Frankfurt an der Oder and Leiden, afterwards minister of the Reformed German chapel in the Savoy (London) and the Dutch chapel Royal at St James’s Palace (Westminster), Woide was extolled as “a man of most profound and various erudition.” Skilled in “almost every ancient and every modern language,” he was acquainted with a number of eminent scholars both in Britain and continental Europe. Moreover, Woide was commended for his piety, zeal, and industry, not to mention his extensive charitable activities despite often lacking ready money.¹⁰⁰ He was also a diligent diarist and prolific correspondent. Through the patronage of Frederick Cornwallis (1713–1783), Archbishop of Canterbury and the recommendation of Robert Lowth (1710–1787), then Bishop of Oxford, Woide had been written a letter of introduction on 29 April 1773 by the Prime Minister Frederick North [Lord North] (1732–1792), enabling him to consult “some very valuable Manuscripts in the King’s Library at Paris.” Praised as a “gentleman of a very fair character

⁹⁶ Manners and Williamson, *John Zoffany*, 54.

⁹⁷ Greppi & Giuliani, eds., *Carteggio di Verri*, 6.191, 192–93, 195, 198; Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, 4.646 note; *Gazette et avant-coureur* 27 (April 1774) 2–3; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.cccxv; Cumming, “Seven unpublished letters,” 48.

⁹⁸ *Public Advertiser* (5 July 1774); *Middlesex Journal* (2–5 July 1774); Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 115; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 282, 286.

⁹⁹ Zotenberg, *Catalogue des Manuscrits Éthiopiens*, 47.

¹⁰⁰ *Public Advertiser* (4 June 1790); *The European Magazine*, 17 (June 1790) 405–6; Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, 9.9–14; James Townley, *Illustrations of Biblical Literature*, 3 vols. (London, 1821) 1.101–6; BL, Add. MS 48,710, fols. 1–5; Edgar Sheppard, *Memorials of St James’s Palace*, 2 vols. (London, 1894) 2.244, 247; W. P. Courtney, revised S. J. Skedd, “Woide, Charles Godfrey (1725–1790),” *ODNB*.

and extensive erudition,” Woide was working on a new edition of a Coptic dictionary that would be “very useful for the advancement of Oriental Literature.”¹⁰¹ Having crossed the English Channel between Dover and Calais, Woide arrived at Paris on 29 September—just a few weeks after Bruce’s departure.¹⁰² Judging from his diary and extant papers, Woide was mainly interested in Coptic versions of Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets.¹⁰³ But his diary also records a preoccupation with Ethiopic Enoch between 13 October 1773 and 14 February 1774.¹⁰⁴

On 13 October Woide noted the essential features of the Paris manuscript in his diary: its size (small folio or large quarto), number of sheets, arrangement of text into columns, types of ink used (black, yellow), and consecutive title-pages: “The Book of Enoch the Prophet” and “Enoch.”¹⁰⁵ These separate title-pages indicate that like Vat. et. 71, Bibliothèque Nationale, Éth 49 was intended as a presentation copy for a high-status European reader; an impression reinforced by the great care with which the large Ethiopic letters have been rendered in two columns on 63 leaves. However, as Ted Erho has observed, because of scribal mistakes Woide struggled with the title-pages, rendering each word wrongly by confusing the vowel order and mistaking letter forms.¹⁰⁶ Despite his rudimentary knowledge of Ge‘ez Woide persevered, completing an entire transcription of Ethiopic Enoch by about mid-February 1774.¹⁰⁷ Nor was Woide helped by scribal errors in Bibliothèque Nationale, Éth 49, including disarrangement and what he took to be the misnumbering of

¹⁰¹ BL, Add. MS 48,710, fol. 15r–17v; Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 3.78–82; Mathurin Veyssière de La Croze, revised Carl Gottfried Woide, *Lexicon Ægyptiaco-Latinum*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1775) 1.x–xi.

¹⁰² BL, Add. MS 48,702, fols. 111r–12r.

¹⁰³ Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 8; Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 9; Carl Gottfried Woide, “Mémoire de M. Woide, sur le Dictionnaire Cophte qu’il va publier à Oxford, & sur les Sçavans qui ont étudié la Langue Cophte,” *Le Journal des Sçavans* (June 1774) 340–41.

¹⁰⁴ BL, Add. MS 48,702, fols. 118r, 124v, 137v, 138v, 139r, 139v, 141r, 144r.

¹⁰⁵ BL, Add. MS 48,702, fol. 118r. I am most grateful to Olaf Simons for his help in deciphering Woide’s difficult handwriting.

¹⁰⁶ Ted Erho, private communication.

¹⁰⁷ Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 10, fols. 10r–133v. Although Richard Laurence subsequently found a number of errors in this copy the scribe may again have been at fault rather than Woide; see *Book of Enoch*, vii–viii.

certain chapters.¹⁰⁸ From his correspondence with Johann David Michaelis dated Paris, 30 January 1774 it is clear that by this point Woide had correctly identified the important verse (*I En* 1:9) cited in Jude 14–15.¹⁰⁹ Significantly, about this time Woide also began the first translation of passages from Ethiopic Enoch. Thus with the help of Ludolf’s *Lexicon* he made several attempts at rendering the preface into Latin,¹¹⁰ later translating it into English:

In the Name of God Almighty who is pitifull, gracious; far from wrath, and of great mercy, I ordered a copy of the book of Enoch, the blessed Prophet, and this dear Parable will be a usefull present for ever and ever, Amen.¹¹¹

In addition, Woide drafted Latin translations of portions of chapters one, three, fourteen and eighteen. This now corresponds to *I Enoch* 1:1–3; 2:1–3; 14:1–4; 18:1–12; and 18:13–15.¹¹²

Returning to London Woide continued working on Ethiopic Enoch, polishing his notes into a paper that he delivered before the Society of Antiquaries on 10 March 1774.¹¹³ Here Woide provided both an English translation of Bruce’s account addressed to Louis XV (discussed previously), and his own observations which, like Bruce’s remarks, he appears to have translated from French.¹¹⁴ According to Woide, the book of Enoch was divided into a “great many chapters” designated by old Greek letters, as was apparently usual practice among Ethiopians. Although the opening eighteen chapters were well marked, the scribe had committed some manifest faults in numbering the remaining chapters. Moreover, the

¹⁰⁸ Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 10, fol. 4r; Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 11, fol. 4r-v.

¹⁰⁹ Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 3.83–84.

¹¹⁰ Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 11, fols. 3r, 17r, “In nomine Optimi maximi, miseratoris et clementis, longinqui ab ira et multi misericordia et justii, describendum ego curavi Librum Henochi Prophetae benedictionis, et donum auxilii erit parabola cara in secula seculorum, Amen.”

¹¹¹ Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 10, fol. 3v; cf. MS Clar. Press d. 10, fol. 143r, “In the name of God, merciful, & placable, ~~abundant in mercy & righteous~~, long suffering & abundant in mercy & righteous, I will transcribe the book of Enoch the prophet. May his benediction & the gift of his assistance be with his beloved for ever & for ever. Amen.”

¹¹² Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 11, fols. 17r–19v. Laurence considered this to be “a slight attempt at literally rendering into Latin a few detached passages; an attempt which sufficiently evinces, that [Woide’s] knowledge of Ethiopic was too imperfect for the completion of such a task”; *Book of Enoch*, vii.

¹¹³ BL, Add. MS 48,702, fols. 147v–48r; Society of Antiquaries of London, Minutes, vol. 13 (entries dated 16 December 1773, 10 March 1774), cited in Susanne M. Sklar, *Blake’s Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre: Entering the Divine Body* (Oxford, 2011) 48.

¹¹⁴ Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 10, fols. 3r–6r, 135r–38v, printed in Laurence, ed., *Libri Enoch*, v–viii, ix–xii; cf. Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 11, fols. 3r–5v, 7r–10r, 11r–14r.

“bookbinder” had wrongly placed chapters 63 to 67 in the middle of the 95th chapter. Woide continued:

The Abyssinians think this book to be an antediluvian monument, and a canonical book. This is too much. But it is very probable that it is the Book of Enoch known and quoted by the Fathers.

As proof, Woide provided several examples. Thus in the beginning of the first chapter of the manuscript it is said that the angels showed everything to Enoch; and that “he heard from the Angels all what he said.” Furthermore, the text “speaks often of Angels, of Uriel, Gabriel, Michael, and some others.” It also “speaks of the division of times and days” in the same manner as the “Apocryphal Book of Enoch” possessed and quoted by the Church Fathers. Finally, and crucially, Woide found in the manuscript “an imitation of the Passage of St. Jude, which is exact enough.”¹¹⁵

Besides the minutes of the Society of Antiquaries, no further evidence has yet come to light regarding the reception of Woide’s findings. But on 8 April 1774 Woide wrote to Michaelis from London with some brief comments concerning the Parisian manuscript’s physical properties and reporting that he had read his paper to the antiquaries. In addition, he provided what seems to have been the original French version of this notice which Woide had already given to Jean-Augustin Capperonnier (1745–1820), a librarian at the Bibliothèque du Roi and afterwards a joint keeper of printed books. Also included was Bruce’s “Mémoire sur le Livre d’Enoch.”¹¹⁶ On 15 May Woide wrote again, this time to L’Abbé André Barthélemy de Courçay (1744–1799), another employee of the Bibliothèque du Roi. Woide informed de Courçay that he never intended to publish the original book of Enoch, but was considering making available a summary or extracts from it. Nor was Woide aware that Bruce was planning to issue the book himself. Indeed, since in Woide’s view Bruce was the most able person to bring the work before the public he would not prevent him from doing so.

¹¹⁵ Bodl., MS Clar. Press d. 10, fols. 3r–6r, printed in Laurence, ed., *Libri Enoch*, v–viii.

¹¹⁶ Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 3.86–87, 91–98.

However, if Bruce decided not to publish the book of Enoch then Woide hoped Bruce would not mind if he did so instead. In an undated letter from about the same time Woide added that a learned person had encouraged him to publish the book and that he hoped to discuss the matter with Bruce on his return to England.¹¹⁷

It is important to emphasise that about seven months after he had begun working on Ethiopic Enoch, Woide had restricted the dissemination of his findings. Instead of print he had resorted to oral communication and private correspondence. Nor when he published an article in *Journal des Sçavans* (June 1774) on his research for a new edition of a Coptic dictionary did he reveal anything except that he had copied the “famous manuscript of Enoch” given by Bruce to Louis XV.¹¹⁸ As we shall see, Woide probably wanted to avoid antagonising Bruce. Even so, about summer 1774 Michaelis published the sixth part of his *Orientalische und Exegetische Bibliothek* which included a section on the book of Enoch based on Woide’s research. Michaelis’s contribution therefore represents the first printed discussion of Ethiopic Enoch in Western Europe. Here Michaelis made public the relevant extract from Woide’s letter of 30 January together with Woide’s communication to Capperonnier, including Woide’s Latin translation of the preface to the Parisian manuscript. For good measure Michaelis added Bruce’s “Mémoire sur le Livre d’Enoch,” even supplying a critical note.¹¹⁹ Michaelis’s discussion was subsequently noticed in a learned periodical issued at Göttingen and given fuller treatment in a French equivalent published at The Hague.¹²⁰ The following year another French journal published an article on Michaelis’s *Orientalische und Exegetische Bibliothek* reproducing elements of Bruce’s account and

¹¹⁷ BL, Add. MS 48,711, fols. 125r, 125v.

¹¹⁸ Woide, “Mémoire ... sur le Dictionnaire Cophte,” 342.

¹¹⁹ Johann David Michaelis, *Orientalische und Exegetische Bibliothek* (Frankfurt am Main, 1774), part vi, 224–32.

¹²⁰ *Göttingische Anzeigen von Gelehrten Sachen*, 2 (1774) 875 (25 August 1774); *Bibliothèque des Sciences, et des Beaux Arts*, 42 (July–September 1774) 229–33.

Woide's observations.¹²¹ Besides these printed notices there were then five versions of Ethiopic Enoch in Western Europe by summer 1774. Of these the best known was held in the Bibliothèque du Roi at Paris, while Woide kept his transcript of this manuscript in London.¹²² Another was at Rome, perhaps already in Antonelli's library. The other two remained in Bruce's possession, to whom we now return.

The Return of "His Abyssinian Majesty"

Upon arriving in England, Bruce was swiftly granted a private audience with George III and Queen Charlotte on the evening of 30 June 1774. The following day Bruce was presented to George III at St James's Palace and given the honour of kissing his monarch's hand.¹²³

According to Bruce's first biographer, at one of these meetings Bruce presented two large folio volumes of what he claimed were his drawings to the king—although, as we have seen, they should be credited to Balugani and other hands.¹²⁴ The question remains, however, why did Bruce not take this opportunity to give George III another gift? He could have given him, for instance, one of his two remaining copies of Ethiopic Enoch (MS. Bodl. Or. 531) which, though lacking the title-pages and preface, like BnF Éthiopien 49 and Vat. et. 71 he had clearly commissioned with the intention of donating to a high-status European recipient. The answer may be politics. Perhaps Bruce was frustrated at not being granted a minor title let alone a knighthood in recognition of his exploits, possibly due to his failings as consul-general at Algiers.

¹²¹ *Journal des Beaux-Arts et des Sciences* 2 (May 1775) 199–207.

¹²² Following Woide's death his library was publicly auctioned on 21 February 1791. Some of his manuscripts, including his transcript of the Parisian copy of Ethiopic Enoch together with his notes, became the property of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press. On completing his English translation of MS. Bodl. Or. 531 Laurence examined Woide's transcript. Afterwards this transcript and the relevant notes became part of the Bodleian Library's collections on 31 January 1922. See, *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (17 February 1791); Lawrence, *Book of Enoch*, vii–viii.

¹²³ *Public Advertiser* (5 July 1774); *Middlesex Journal* (2–5 July 1774).

¹²⁴ Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 115; Oppé, *English Drawings*, 30; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 283–84; Hulton, Hepper, & Friis, *Balugani's Drawings*, 35–36.

On 5 July 1774 Sir John Pringle wrote from London to the Swiss biologist Albrecht von Haller (1708–1777) with “a general sketch of Mr Bruce’s adventures in Abyssinia” together with his own observations on Ethiopian flora, fauna and manners—“the most barbarous set of mankind.” On the subject of religion, Pringle observed that “such a set of unworthy Christians” had in their canon “all our books of the Bible, & over & above the prophecies of Enoch.”¹²⁵ Three days later Pringle wrote to Michaelis reporting that he had met Bruce, accompanying him to the Queen’s drawing room and afterwards to dinner. Besides providing an account of Ethiopian history, geography, language, religion and customs, Pringle noted that Bruce had “brought home a compleat translation of the whole Bible in the literary Abyssinian ... with the prophecies of Enoch over and above; a book no less canonical, than the rest.”¹²⁶ However, a few weeks later and having seen Bruce frequently, Pringle informed von Haller that Bruce was not as communicative as he could have wished: “He means to publish all himself, & I can see is not willing to let out much, lest some body collecting all that he has said should forestall him in his design.”¹²⁷ While Bruce may have jealously guarded particular information for fear of a competitor writing an account of Ethiopia based on his tales, he remained voluble. Indeed, one of his anecdotes concerning the supposed Ethiopian practice of eating steaks cut from the thicker parts of a living animal was soon ridiculed by Horace Walpole (1717–1797), fourth earl of Orford, who wrote facetiously to one of his correspondents that during his time “in the Court of Abyssinia” Bruce “breakfasted every morning with the maids of honour on live oxen.”¹²⁸ Addressing an aristocrat, another letter writer complimented Bruce’s drawings as “the most beautiful things you ever saw,” adding that Bruce’s “adventures” were “more wonderful than those of Sinbad the sailor and

¹²⁵ Sonntag, ed., *Pringle’s correspondence with von Haller*, 301–4.

¹²⁶ Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 2.403–4; reprinted in *Commercial & Agricultural Magazine* 1 (1799) 315.

¹²⁷ Sonntag, ed., *Pringle’s correspondence with von Haller*, 307, 38.

¹²⁸ Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 2.388–89; Lewis, ed., *Walpole’s correspondence*, 24.31, 30.60; cf. *The European Magazine* 21 (1792) 417.

perhaps as true.”¹²⁹ The newspapers too talked of Bruce’s representation of Ethiopia as “very barbarous and savage,” its inhabitants “ferocious” in times of war but “sunk in sloth and voluptuousness” in times of peace.¹³⁰

Yet Bruce was not the only celebrity traveller entertaining polite society in summer 1774. For he had to compete for attention with Omiah (c.1746–1779), a native of Tahiti, who had chosen to sail to England aboard a vessel commanded by Captain Tobias Fourneaux. With tattooed hands, and having learnt a few stock phrases—“How do you do?”—Omiah, accompanied by Joseph Banks and the Swedish naturalist Daniel Solander (1733–1782), was presented to members of the royal family at Kew on 17 July.¹³¹ That same month Omiah and Bruce were dinner guests of William, Duke of Gloucester (1743–1805). Bruce claimed he was able to hold some conversation with Omiah, who elsewhere was commended both for his polite table manners and “innocent native Freedom.”¹³² Afterwards Bruce pitied “this poor fellow,” who had lost all sense of time and been taught nothing of value by his educators; “he will only pass for a consummate liar when he returns; for how can he make them believe half the things he will tell them?”¹³³ For his part Omiah had his likeness engraved for *The London Magazine*, his portrait painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds and his voice appropriated for a satirical poem purportedly addressed by him to the “Queen of Otaheite.” Omiah eventually returned to Tahiti where he was on the losing side of a battle fought among islanders and died soon after.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Twelfth Report, Appendix, part X. James, first Earl of Charlemont. Vol. I. 1745–1783* (London, 1891) 322.

¹³⁰ *London Chronicle* (19–21 July 1774) 66; *General Evening Post* (16–19 July 1774); *London Evening Post* (16–19 July 1774); *Middlesex Journal* (16–19 July 1774); *Public Ledger* (19 July 1774); *Craftsman or Say’s Weekly Journal* (23 July 1774); *Gazette et avant-coureur* 61 (August 1774) 1.

¹³¹ *The London Magazine*, 43 (August–September 1774) 363–64; *Annual Register* (1774) 61–63.

¹³² *London Evening Post* (23–26 July 1774); *Morning Chronicle* (27 July 1774); *General Evening Post* (26–28 July 1774); *The Weekly Magazine or Edinburgh Amusement*, 25 (1774) 189; *York Courant* (26 July 1774) 2.

¹³³ Annie Raine Ellis, ed., *The early diary of Frances Burney 1768–1778*, 2 vols. (London, 1889) 2.25.

¹³⁴ Anon., *An Historic Epistle, from Omiah, to the Queen of Otaheite* (London, 1775); *The London Magazine* 44 (1775) 496–97; *The London Magazine* 46 (1777) 306–8; J. Mulholland, “Impersonating Islanders: Inauthenticity, Sexuality, and the Making of the Tahitian Speaker in 1770s British Poetry,” *The Eighteenth Century* 57 (2016) 343–63.

From London Bruce headed north to Scotland. Probably en route he spent a day with Hugh Percy (1742–1817), second Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle. Also present was the Church of Ireland bishop Thomas Percy (1729–1811), who afterwards recorded details of their meeting in the flyleaves and margins of a copy of the Portuguese Jesuit missionary Jerónimo Lobo’s *A Voyage to Abyssinia*. Here Bruce represented the inhabitants of Ethiopia as sunk into “a most deplorable degree of ignorance.” They had supposedly “lost almost all their ancient books” and few could read, even among the clergy. Even so, Bruce left the country laden with both “his writings & Treasures.” And on his return to Europe he visited the French court where Bruce “made presents of many curiosities to the King of France (particularly y^e MS. Book of Enoch, so much inquired after by our Literati for many ages, to y^e King of France’s Library).”¹³⁵

On 6 August 1774 Bruce reached Edinburgh.¹³⁶ Three days later he met James Boswell, a member of the same masonic lodge as Bruce, who described him as a “tall stout bluff man in green and gold,” bad-tempered, “impatient, harsh, and uncommunicative.” As for Ethiopia, Bruce reportedly called it a “barbarous, mountainous country!” Having dug information from him “as from a flinty rock with pickaxes,” Boswell went to see the philosopher David Hume (1711–1776) on 15 August to obtain additional details of Bruce’s travels. From the assembled company he got the idea of comparing the “savage manner of eating in Abyssinia with that of the Cyclops in Virgil.”¹³⁷ Later that same month Boswell published “Some Account of the very extraordinary Travels of the celebrated Mr. Bruce” in the *London Magazine*. Here Bruce was portrayed as being of “a firm mind, a determined countenance, and robust constitution; sagacious; observing, and a very good draughtsman.” Even so, Boswell conceded that some

¹³⁵ Leeds University Library, BC Trv/LOB; see also, Beale, “Bishop Percy’s Notes on *A Voyage to Abyssinia*,” *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, Literary and Historical Section 16 (1975) 39–49.

¹³⁶ Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 3.100; *Public Advertiser* (18 August 1774); *The Weekly Magazine or Edinburgh Amusement* 25 (1774) 223.

¹³⁷ William Wimsatt and Frederick Pottle, eds., *Boswell for the defence 1769–1774* (New York, Toronto & London, 1959) 260–63, 267, 271; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 287–89.

people had found Bruce “close and reserved” and that when “teased with idle or ignorant questions” he had repulsed these “troublesome” interlocutors.¹³⁸ Meanwhile having spent a couple of weeks or so in Edinburgh, Bruce set out before 24 August to his family’s country seat at Kinnaird, Stirlingshire.¹³⁹

On 13 October 1774 Woide wrote to Michaelis from London regarding Bruce’s copy of the entire Ethiopic Bible including the book of Enoch. He hoped that when Bruce returned to the capital in the winter he would learn more about whether the traveller had had sufficient time to translate the text. Even so, Bruce was very unhappy with the librarian of the Bibliothèque du Roi for making the copy of Ethiopic Enoch at Paris (BnF Éthiopien 49) accessible without his knowledge and even feared that Woide would make it available to the world.¹⁴⁰ Also in October 1774 the orientalist William Jones (1746–1794) wrote to his friend and fellow orientalist Henry Albert Schultens (1749–1793) concerning Bruce’s travels and a report—probably derived from Woide—that Bruce had “brought with him some Æthiopic manuscripts, and among them the Prophecies of Enoch, but to be ranked only with the Sybilline oracles.”¹⁴¹

On 15 December Boswell recorded in his journal that the “great traveller” had dined at Edinburgh with the judges John Maclaurin (1734–1796) and James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (1714–1799). He was somewhat hurt that he had not been invited, most likely because Bruce had been displeased with the way he had been depicted in Boswell’s piece for the *London Magazine*—particularly the comparison with the cyclops Polyphemus: “Forbidding in appearance, in speech to be accosted by no one.” Boswell apologised but “could see plainly

¹³⁸ *London Magazine* 43 (1774) 388–91, 429–31; *General Evening Post* (8–10 September 1774); Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 289–90.

¹³⁹ *The Weekly Magazine or Edinburgh Amusement* 25 (1774) 319; *The Scots Magazine* 36 (September 1774) 501.

¹⁴⁰ Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 3.105–6.

¹⁴¹ A. M. Jones, ed., *The works of Sir William Jones*, 13 vols. (1807) 1.221–22; reprinted in Lord Teignmouth, *Memoirs of the life, writings and correspondence, of Sir William Jones* (5th ed.; London, 1815) 156, with original Latin at 556–57; Michael J. Franklin, “Jones, Sir William (1746–1794),” *ODNB*.

that he did not like me; probably because I had given the public a good dish of his travels, better dressed than he could give himself.” Moreover, he regarded Bruce as “a rough-minded man,” a “curiosity” from whom he had extracted a “good essay,” and “there was enough.”¹⁴² Yet Boswell could not resist returning to Bruce in a further pseudonymous contribution for the *London Magazine*: “On the Advantages which Great-Britain may derive from the Discoveries of Travellers in the Reign of his present Majesty” (February 1775). Here he began mockingly:

What a prodigious noise has been made about the wonderful acquisitions to our knowledge by the travellers of the age in which we live! ... Surely the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, and the *Adventures of Jack the Giant Killer*, are as entertaining as ... the *Travels of Mr. Bruce*.

Having made some references to giants—Patagonian and Cornish—he concluded by ridiculing Bruce’s claim that Ethiopians ate the flesh of living animals by envisaging the benefits of “eating meat raw” (no noisy butchers to disturb “our morning slumbers”).¹⁴³

In early February 1775 Bruce was back in London.¹⁴⁴ That same month Bruce sent “Some Observations upon Myrrh” that he had made in Ethiopia in 1771 together with specimens to the Scottish physician William Hunter (1718–1783). These were subsequently read before the Royal Society, a body to which Bruce was later admitted as a fellow—possibly through Hunter’s sponsorship.¹⁴⁵ By the beginning of March 1775, however, Bruce was reportedly “dangerously ill” and it was feared he would die at his house in Leicester Fields.¹⁴⁶ But the news proved to be false, much to Bruce’s amusement. Indeed, he continued attending social engagements, prompting the writer Frances Burney (1752–1840) to provide a

¹⁴² Charles Ryskamp and Frederick Pottle, eds., *Boswell: the ominous years 1774–1776* (New York, Toronto & London, 1963) 45–46; *London Magazine* 43 (1774) 431; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 290.

¹⁴³ *London Magazine* 44 (1775) 74–76; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 290–91.

¹⁴⁴ Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 3.109.

¹⁴⁵ James Bruce, “Some Observations upon Myrrh, made in Abyssinia, in the Year 1771,” *Philosophical Transactions* 65.ii (1775) 408–17; Helen Brock, “Hunter, William (1718–1783),” *ODNB*. Bruce was elected a fellow of the Royal Society on 11 January 1776 and admitted 14 March 1776. See, Thomas Thomson, *History of the Royal Society* (London, 1812), appendix, lv.

¹⁴⁶ *Morning Post* (1 March 1775); *Public Advertiser* (1 March 1775).

vivid picture of “His *Abyssinian Majesty*,” a “Majestic Personage” standing more than six foot high, “the tallest man I ever saw,” “extremely well proportioned in shape” and with a “handsome and expressive face.” This “Great Lyon” or “man-mountain” was imperious, haughty, vain and proud in certain company yet at other times convivial and humorous when relaxed.¹⁴⁷ Nonetheless, Bruce soon gained a reputation for telling “many strange stories” and was suspected of being a great liar.¹⁴⁸ On 26 March Pringle told Boswell that Bruce was considered a “brute” and “not fully believed.”¹⁴⁹ Then on 1 April Bruce had dinner with his cousin, fellow Old Harrovian and MP Gerard Hamilton (1729–1796), nick-named “Single-Speech,” and the lexicographer Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), author of *The Prince of Abissinia* (1759), otherwise known as *Rasselas*. In the evening Johnson related his impression of Bruce to Boswell: “he is not a distinct relater. I should say that he is neither abounding nor deficient in sense. I did not perceive any superior sense.” For good measure Johnson added that the MP Richard Jackson (c.1721–1787), sometimes known as “sensible” or “all-knowing” Jackson, “did not believe Bruce.”¹⁵⁰ Nor did the diplomat Sir William Hamilton (1730–1803), who considered Bruce’s journey through Ethiopia an imposture.¹⁵¹ A few years later Johnson also reportedly declared that when he had first conversed with Bruce “he was very much inclined to believe” that he had been to Ethiopia, but that afterwards he had “altered his opinion.”¹⁵² For his part, Bruce returned to Scotland by mid-June 1775.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Ellis, ed., *Early diary of Frances Burney*, 2.7–8, 13–17, 21, 42, 46; Frances Burney, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, 3 vols. (London, 1832) 1.295–329; Lars Troide, ed., *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney: Volume II. 1774–1777* (Montreal, 1990) 44–45; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 292–93; cf. Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 116.

¹⁴⁸ Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service, L 30/14/408/40; Lewis, ed., *Walpole’s correspondence*, 28.204, 30.60, 15.331.

¹⁴⁹ Ryskamp and Pottle, eds., *Boswell: ominous years*, 98.

¹⁵⁰ Ryskamp and Pottle, eds., *Boswell: ominous years*, 112, 114, 138; James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, 10 vols. (London, 1848) 5.272–74; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 293–94; Martyn J. Powell, “Hamilton, William Gerard [called Single-Speech Hamilton] (1729–1796),” *ODNB*.

¹⁵¹ Dawson, ed., *Banks Letters*, 262.

¹⁵² *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 59.i (1789) 544; *The European Magazine* 11 (1787) 199; Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, 9.145.

¹⁵³ Anke Fischer-Kattner, *Spuren der Begegnung: Europäische Reiseberichte über Afrika 1760–1860* (Göttingen, 2015) 109.

It was probably at home in Kinnaird that Bruce began working on what appears to have been a French translation of Ethiopic Enoch from the two manuscript copies still in his possession. On 24 October 1775 Woide drafted a letter to Bruce from London asking on behalf of some friends whether “they could hope to see the book of Enoch very soon.” Woide assured Bruce that he would leave publication of the translation to him, although this promise was seemingly omitted from the fair copy that Bruce received. He also took the liberty to beg a favour: Woide was working on a new edition of a Coptic dictionary and asked Bruce for a copy of a few lines from the Coptic manuscript written on papyrus that he had acquired at Thebes (MS. Bruce 96). If Bruce obliged then Woide would honour his “name and character” with “a grateful heart.” Evidently Bruce consented since Woide transcribed the two Gnostic treatises in Sahidic contained within the manuscript (MS. Clar. Press d. 13). So as to remain on good terms with Bruce, Woide had doubtless relinquished any plans he may have had for publishing a translation of Ethiopic Enoch in exchange for access to Bruce’s Coptic document.¹⁵⁴

On the same day that Woide wrote to Bruce from London, Louis Journu de Montagny (*b.1732*) wrote to Bruce from Bordeaux saying that he—not to mention all of Europe—was looking forward to seeing the book of Enoch in translation. Accordingly, he hoped that Bruce would not let this enterprise languish.¹⁵⁵ On 15 November 1775 de Montagny wrote to Bruce again. Regarding Bruce’s translation:

Your seventh chapter of Enoch surpasses the understanding of the present age. That generation of men, sprung from the angels who caressed pretty girls, has been a favourite idea in ancient times ... I have no great faith in giants, either ancient or modern; but I suspect, along with many authors, that ... *giants*,

¹⁵⁴ BL, Add. MS 48,710, fols. 100r–101v. A slightly different version of this letter was printed in Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 262–63. For the Coptic treatises, see Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 3.105–6, 123; Beloe, *Sexagenarian*, 2.49; E. Crégheur, “Pour une nouvelle histoire de la découverte et de l’état primitif du codex Bruce (1769–1794),” *Journal of Coptic Studies* 16 (2014) 47–68.

¹⁵⁵ Yale Center for British Art, MS 0669, de Montagny to Bruce (24 October 1775); see also Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.clxiii.

should be rendered brutes, bullies, or rascals, and that, if they were thought to be descended from the angels, it was only in consequence of the fear which these knaves had excited in the weak people over whom they tyrannised, who, in the course of time, through ignorance, ascribed to them a supernatural strength and origin. The antideluvian prophet, whom you are about to introduce into Europe, will not succeed. I am sorry that the church, during the five first precious ages, did not put him among the sacred books. You would then have embraced him heartily, perhaps even more so than the apocalypse. I should be very much delighted to converse with the author of that book, or with any of them who, in those times, were reckoned the best informed. How much nonsense, magic, divination, and priestcraft, should I discover in those ages! Ignorance is the mother of fraud and tyranny, as fear is the mother of gods, and audacity, of kings. The humour of drowning mankind, in order to preserve them from being eaten, deserves particular notice.¹⁵⁶

On 5 March 1776 de Montagny wrote once more saying that since Bruce had been kind enough to send him “the little fragment of Enoch” he had heard nothing more of Bruce’s translation. He therefore checked the “public papers” regularly for news of its publication, playfully adding that his obsession with giants had not influenced his friendship with the exceedingly tall Bruce.¹⁵⁷ Then on 24 May 1776 de Montagny wrote yet again, clarifying that he had just been joking about the number, origin and size of the giants and that he was not being serious when he suggested that Bruce’s translation would be badly received. Continuing in the same mollifying tone de Montagny encouraged Bruce to complete the task since there were people in France eager to read it.¹⁵⁸

Bruce was evidently stung by de Montagny’s initial criticism, abandoning his partial translation of Enoch, which elsewhere he called “a strange Rhapsody.” In a letter to William

¹⁵⁶ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1. cccxxxii–cccxxxiii, cccxxxvi–cccxxxvii. Murray dated this letter 15 September, but since de Montagny tended to employ Arabic numerals to indicate the month I think that here he used “9^o” to mean November. I have as yet been unable to trace the original, so it may still be in the possession of Andrew Bruce, 11th Earl of Elgin.

¹⁵⁷ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1. cccxxxix; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 261.

¹⁵⁸ Yale Center for British Art, MS 1394, de Montagny to Bruce (24 May 1776); partly printed in Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1. cccxxxv note; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 257 n.

Hunter dated 15 February 1776 he claimed to have translated “half Enoch.”¹⁵⁹ This is possible. But it is more likely—judging from de Montagny’s earlier letter of 15 November 1775—that Bruce managed only chapter seven (*I En* 6–7).¹⁶⁰ Doubtless Bruce had picked this portion of text to begin with since he could check it against Syncellus’s Greek excerpts, which were then also available in Latin and English versions. De Montagny’s reference in one of his letters to gigantic beings of 40,000 cubits that were half angelic and half human in nature suggests that Bruce had made an attempt to engage with Ethiopic Enoch directly.¹⁶¹ And when he eventually composed his *Travels* Bruce clearly drew on the excerpt he had sent de Montagny for a summary of some of its contents:

the book of Enoch is ... a Gnostic book, containing the age of the Emims, Anakims, and Egregores, supposed descendents of the sons of God, when they fell in love with the daughters of men, and had sons who were giants. These giants do not seem to have been so charitable to the sons and daughters of men, as their fathers had been. For, first, they began to eat all the beasts of the earth, they then fell upon the birds and fishes, and ate them also; their hunger being not yet satisfied, they ate all the corn, all men’s labour, all the trees and bushes, and, not content yet, they fell to eating the men themselves. The men ... were not afraid of dying, but very much so of being eaten after death. At length they cry to God against the wrongs the giants had done them, and God sends a flood which drowns both them and the giants.¹⁶²

According to Bruce this synopsis exhausted about “four or five” of the opening chapters, which amounted to less than a quarter of the book.¹⁶³ Although his first biographer suggested that Bruce had translated “about 18 chapters” into English until “weary of the subject” he “proceeded no further,” this assessment seems overly generous since there is nothing here to

¹⁵⁹ Helen Brock, ed., *The Correspondence of William Hunter, 1740–1783*, 2 vols. (London, 2007) 2.212–13; Sir Charles Illingworth, *The Story of William Hunter* (Edinburgh & London, 1967) 107.

¹⁶⁰ Lawrence, *Book of Enoch*, 5–6.

¹⁶¹ Yale Center for British Art, MS 1394.

¹⁶² Bruce, *Travels*, 1.499.

¹⁶³ Bruce, *Travels*, 1.499.

indicate that Bruce progressed beyond a couple of chapters.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, had Bruce's unfinished translation been preserved then he would doubtless have referred to it. It should also be emphasised that Bruce provided a self-justificatory explanation for not completing the endeavour: "my curiosity led me no further. The catastrophe of the giants, and the justice of the catastrophe, had fully satisfied me." For good measure he added that Woide—who died on 12 May 1790, just three weeks after the publication of Bruce's *Travels*—had translated the Paris copy of Ethiopic Enoch (BnF Éthiopien 49), but "I know not why, it has no where appeared." Supposedly Woide was "not much more pleased with the conduct of the giants" than Bruce was.¹⁶⁵ This was disingenuous. Bruce knew that Woide had not published a translation of Ethiopic Enoch so as to retain his favour and he was subsequently criticised for self-importance and inaccuracy.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, at least one scholar became exasperated with Bruce's inability to deliver and urged Woide to complete the task instead. This was the Swedish orientalist Jakob Jonas Björnsthåhl (1731–1779) who wrote to Woide in French from Constantinople on 17 October 1777 asking if Bruce had published his translation of Enoch yet; and if not, was Woide going to let his transcript go to waste. Ethiopic and Coptic went well together so he should get started on a translation.¹⁶⁷

While Woide appears to have developed a basic understanding of Ge'ez, it seems to have presented a stumbling block for Bruce. This is crucial since Bruce's lack of proficiency in Ge'ez largely explains why he failed to produce a complete translation of Ethiopic Enoch. Moreover, to appreciate the extent of Bruce's comprehension of Ge'ez some discussion of his knowledge of non-European languages is required. We have seen the claim that he

¹⁶⁴ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 2.425 note. Murray may have arrived at the figure through a misunderstanding of Bruce's statement: "It is not the fourth part of the book; but my curiosity led me no further." For Murray initially reckoned that Ethiopic Enoch consisted of 90 chapters divided into six sections, with the first part (chapters 1–18) corresponding to Bruce's summary.

¹⁶⁵ Bruce, *Travels*, 1.499–500; *Public Advertiser* (12 May 1790).

¹⁶⁶ *The English Review* 16 (1790) 55–56, 183.

¹⁶⁷ BL, Add. MS 48,706, fol. 25v.

supposedly spoke thirteen languages. Besides French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese—not to mention subsequent biographers’ assertions that he could read Greek and Latin and also knew Hebrew, Chaldean, and Syriac,¹⁶⁸ a number of sources affirm that he was able to converse fluently in Arabic (although whether in the dialect associated with the Maghreb or Mecca is unclear).¹⁶⁹ All the same, in the estimation of both a critic and supporter he was less competent dealing with written Arabic and made mistakes transliterating it.¹⁷⁰ By his own account on arriving in Ethiopia Bruce had to communicate in Arabic with the aid of an interpreter. But because of his reportedly “extraordinary facility in learning languages” Takla Haimonot soon raised him to prominence in admiration of his “genius” for mastering tongues so quickly. So skilled did Bruce allegedly become in the literary language of Ethiopia that within a matter of months he claimed to have presented the Emperor a biblical book written in Ge‘ez “with his own hand, and finely embellished with all sorts of figures.” In conversation with Pringle at London Bruce added that the “common language” of Ethiopia was “very easy to learn, as having a great deal of regularity in the conjugation of their verbs, the adjectives being without genders.”¹⁷¹ Yet we have seen that reportedly Bruce was unable to converse with an Ethiopian in the Propaganda Fide. This is difficult to reconcile with an eyewitness statement that Bruce conversed in Amharic “very well” with two Armenian merchants at Cairo—unless the Ethiopian addressed Bruce in Tigre while Bruce spoke Amharic.¹⁷²

Additional information comes from the testimony of a man who knew Bruce at Gondar.

Many years later he declared that:

¹⁶⁸ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.clxxxii; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 131; *The European Magazine*, 45 (1802) 352; *New Annual Register* (January 1808) 90–91; *The Annual Review and History of Literature* 7 (January 1808) 268–69; Bonnar, “Larbert,” in *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, VIII.350–51.

¹⁶⁹ Greppi & Giulini, eds., *Carteggio di Verri*, 6.195; *London Magazine* 43 (1774) 389; *General Evening Post* (8–10 September 1774); Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 2.393; Sonntag, ed., *Pringle’s correspondence with von Haller*, 302; *The European Magazine* 45 (1802) 347; *The Literary Panorama* 8 (1810) cols. 141, 328.

¹⁷⁰ *The European Magazine* 21 (1792) 420; Jones, ed., *Works of Sir William Jones*, 2.212–13; Cumming, “Unpublished letters of James Bruce,” 49 n. 4.

¹⁷¹ *London Magazine* 43 (1774) 390; *General Evening Post* (8–10 September 1774); Sonntag, ed., *Pringle’s correspondence with von Haller*, 301–2; Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, 2.392–93, 399–400.

¹⁷² *The Edinburgh Magazine* (April 1786) 271; *Literary Panorama*, 8 (1810) col. 141.

Mr. Bruce did not speak the Tigré language, nor much of Amharic; that he could read the characters in the books of the country on his first arrival, but did not possess any great knowledge of the Geez, though in this respect as well as with regard to Amharic, he considerably improved himself during his stay in the country.¹⁷³

There are also Bruce's interpreters to consider. Among them were Yusuff, an Amharic and Tigre speaker; Georgis, an Arabic speaker; and Bruce's Greek servant Michael (*fl.*1790).¹⁷⁴ The last accompanied his master on their return journey to Cairo and later, according to one damaging account, denied knowledge of Bruce's claim to have discovered the sources of the Nile.¹⁷⁵ This "ill founded insinuation," however, was firmly rejected by the Moravian missionary, jeweller and watchmaker John Antes (1740–1811), who had spoken frequently with Bruce and Michael at Cairo—both at his own home and at the house of a French merchant where Bruce lodged. Indeed, in Antes's view Michael was "a simple fellow, incapable of any invention" who usually agreed with Bruce on the main points of the traveller's account—although he never mentioned "the bloody banquet of live oxen among the natives."¹⁷⁶ Another of Bruce's interpreters was a young Ethiopian called Abu Rumi (*c.*1750–*c.*1819). In Edward Ullendorf's judgement this name "appears to be an Arabicized corruption of Abraham."¹⁷⁷ He was said to have mastered Persian, Italian, Greek and other languages. Besides being the "instructor of Bruce," Abraham—or Abram as he was also known—afterwards travelled to Jerusalem, Syria, Armenia, Persia and India.¹⁷⁸ At Calcutta

¹⁷³ Salt, *Voyage to Abyssinia*, 334–35; cf. George Annesley, Viscount Valentia, *Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt*, 3 vols. (London, 1809) 2.177.

¹⁷⁴ Valentia, *Voyages and Travels*, 2.105, 178; *The Literary Panorama* 7 (1810) col. 442; Salt, *Voyage to Abyssinia*, 335.

¹⁷⁵ François de Tott, *Memoirs of Baron de Tott, on the Turks and the Tartars*, 3 vols. (Dublin, 1785) 3.222 n.; John Trusler, *The habitable world described* (London, 1790) 267.

¹⁷⁶ *General Evening Post* (8–11 April 1786); *The Edinburgh Magazine* (April 1786) 268, 271–72; *The European Magazine* 9 (1786) 255; *Literary Magazine* (August 1788) 106; Dawson, ed., *Banks Letters*, 178–79; John Antes, *Observations on the manners and customs of the Egyptians* (London, 1800) 17–20; *The Literary Panorama* 8 (1810) cols. 137–42; John Antes, *Extract of the narrative of the life of ... John Antes* (London, 1811) 12–13.

¹⁷⁷ Edward Ullendorf, *Ethiopia and the Bible* (repr. ed.; Oxford, 1988 [1968]) 63–66.

¹⁷⁸ *Summary Account of the Proceedings of the British & Foreign Bible Society* (London, 1816) 118; *Proceedings of a meeting ... of the American Bible Society* (New York: J. Seymour, 1816) 174.

in March 1784 he met Sir William Jones, who questioned him closely on a variety of topics. Jones thought Abraham's "answers were so simple and precise, and his whole demeanour so remote from any suspicion of falsehood" that he publicised their conversation. This included details about Gondar; the "savage diet" of rural folk and soldiers, who made "no scruple of drinking the blood and eating the raw flesh of an ox"; Ethiopian languages, learning, and sacred books—notably "the Prophecy of Enoch"; and information about Bruce, who Abraham recalled was a physician and explorer of the sources of the Nile. Moreover, according to Abraham, Bruce "understood the languages, and wrote and collected many books." This prompted Jones to hope that Bruce would "publish an account of his interesting travels, with a version of the book of Enoch, which no man but himself can give us with fidelity."¹⁷⁹ Abraham remained three years with Jones. In later life he went to Cairo. There he translated the Bible from Arabic into Amharic together with the Chargé des Affairs to the French Consul in Egypt, Jean-Louis Asselin de Cherville (1772–1822), over the space of ten years.¹⁸⁰

If Bruce knew some Amharic and less Ge'ez upon his return to Europe, it seems that he got better at both with the assistance of Ludolf's grammars and dictionaries.¹⁸¹ So much so that in the third and fourth books of his *Travels* he used manuscripts in his possession to write a digressive chronicle of the reigns of various Ethiopian monarchs. But it was one thing to provide a history "interspersed with his own reflections and observations," quite another to undertake a translation from Ge'ez that would withstand scrutiny. And Bruce had "not been

¹⁷⁹ Jones, ed., *Works of Sir William Jones*, 2.33–34, 4.314–19; Teignmouth, *Memoirs of Sir William Jones*, 307, 430; *Asiatick Researches: or, Transactions of the Society, Instituted in Bengal* 1 (1788) 383–86; *The Scots Magazine* 51 (December 1789) 646–48; *The European Magazine* 16 (December 1789) 406–7; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (22 January 1790); *Gentleman's Magazine* 60 (March 1790) 224.

¹⁸⁰ Townley, *Illustrations of Biblical Literature*, 1.151; William Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean, from MDCCCXV to MDCCCXX* (3rd ed.; London, 1824) 198–203; Léon Laborde, *Voyages en Abyssinie* (Paris, 1838) 28–29; William Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 5 vols. (London, 1904–1910) 2.23.

¹⁸¹ Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 434.

trained to the drudgery of verbal criticism.”¹⁸² In short, he lacked the meticulousness and patience necessary for scholarship.¹⁸³ Even so, we shall see that Bruce was able to identify and mark the important verse (*I En* 1:9) cited in Jude 14–15 in one of his two remaining copies of Ethiopic Enoch (MS. Bodl. Or. 531).¹⁸⁴

It should also be observed that although Bruce discontinued his translation of Ethiopic *Enoch*, several printed notices served to draw increased attention to the book. Thus in some parallel French and English exercises it was stated that the Ethiopians were great lovers of learning and had two universities. One was at Axum, where there was a fine library belonging to the king. The other was at “Embie,” which reportedly held “manuscripts of Enoch, Abraham, Solomon, and Esdras, written with their own hands.”¹⁸⁵ A compiler of a Persian, Arabic and English dictionary was better informed. Remarking that the “books of Enoch have long enjoyed great reputation in the East,” he added that lately that “ingenious and enterprising traveller Mr. Bruce” had “discovered the prophecy” during his stay in Ethiopia and brought back several copies to Europe.¹⁸⁶

Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile

Proud of the numerous artefacts and texts he had acquired on his wanderings, Bruce built a large room adjoining his mansion-house to display them. In September 1792 a visitor described a tour, accompanied by Bruce, through this museum which had its own librarian.

¹⁸² Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.clxvi, clxxiii–clxxv; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 119, 126–27.

¹⁸³ According to one anecdote, upon the request of an eminent clergyman Bruce volunteered to undertake a literal translation of a number of texts from the Pentateuch of the Ethiopian Bible so that “they might be compared with the English version.” Apparently “he did do this, but they were unfortunately mislaid among his numerous papers.” This sounds like a convenient excuse for not fulfilling his promise. See Beloe, *Sexagenarian*, 2.46.

¹⁸⁴ Bodl., MS Bodl. Or. 531, fly-leaf, fol. 1r; Bruce, *Travels*, 1.499.

¹⁸⁵ Louis Chambaud, *Themes François & Anglois* (London, 1776) 187; cf. *Geography for Youth* (London, 1782) 115; William Perks, *The Youth’s General Introduction to Guthrie’s Geography* (London, 1792) 386.

¹⁸⁶ John Richardson, *A Dictionary, Persian, Arabic, and English* (Oxford, 1777) 58; cf. James Murray, *The Magazine of the Ants* ([Newcastle], 1777) 4, “the prophecy of Enoch, which is said to have been lately brought from some of the unfrequented tribes of Arabians.”

Besides the many “curiosities” were some book-cases, the panels at the base ornamented with designs in the style of “Herculaneum fresco figures.” In one cabinet were Bruce’s collection of “Abyssinian and Arabian” manuscripts, some “written upon parchment of goat-skins” and transcribed by priests. Among them was doubtless Bruce’s personal copy of the book of Enoch (MS. Bruce 74), although he took pleasure in showing a multi-lingual translation of the Song of Solomon “beautifully” executed in Ethiopic characters, in what Bruce maintained were ten different tongues; “each in a different-coloured ink” (red, blue, green, yellow, etc.).¹⁸⁷ As for the other copy of Enoch, Bruce had given it away some four years previously. This can be seen in the elegantly written inscription on the fly-leaf which declared that at London on 4 June 1788 Bruce had presented it to John Douglas (1721–1807), a Scottish-born Doctor of Divinity recently appointed Bishop of Carlisle, “as a token of his respect and Gratitude, begging him to place it in any Collection at Oxford, he may think proper”:

This small volume was brought from Abyssinia by M^r Bruce, who found it in the Canon of the Scriptures of that church, placed immediately before the Book of Job.—From whence it came to them, is uncertain.—It was a Book received all over the East in the time of Sabaeism, as well as by the Sabaeans, as by the Jews, and with it another called the Book of Seth, which is now no longer extant. On forming the canon of the Scriptures, the first general Council is said to have purposely omitted the Epistle of Jude, as mentioning this Book of Enoch, which they accounted Apocryphal.—Afterwards the Council of Trent re-admitted the Book of Jude, but left Enoch excluded as before.

The Passage alluded to, is the 14th. and 15th verses of the Epistle of Jude, and answers to the 2nd. chapter of the Ethiopic manuscript, marked with a small black cross.—

In the beginning of this century the learned Pieresc endeavored by all means to get this Book into his hands, and he was at a very considerable expence about it; instead of which, a false Manuscript was

¹⁸⁷ John Lettice, *Letters on a Tour through various parts of Scotland* (London, 1794) 492–97; Bonnar, “Larbert,” in *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, VIII.351; Fischer-Kattner, *Spuren der Begegnung*, 467 n. 175; Nimmo, *History of Stirlingshire*, 1.323–25. According to Alexander Murray the languages were “Amharic, Falashan, Gafat, Agou of Damot, Agou of Lasta or Tcherets, Agou and Galla.” An excerpt from this manuscript was reproduced in facsimile in the first edition of Bruce’s *Travels*. It is now held at the Bodleian Library, MS. Bruce 94. See Bruce, *Travels*, vol. 1, between 400–1; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (3rd ed.) 2.408 note; *Catalogue of ... Oriental literature ... sold by auction ... Robins*, 17–18.

imposed upon him.—This was afterwards discovered, and the Book placed in the Library of Cardinal Mazarin.

D^r. Woide of the University of Oxford, translated this present Book, in the year 1774, but has not yet published it.¹⁸⁸

Some six weeks later on 18 July 1788 and with the support of Joseph Banks, then president of the Royal Society, the trustees of the British Museum approved the loan of some of Bruce's oriental manuscripts on condition that the public had regulated access to them.¹⁸⁹ Among the borrowed Ethiopic manuscripts were a copy of the Old Testament in five volumes—including *Enoch*; a multivolume History of Ethiopia; the Chronicle of Axum [*Kebra Nagast*, i.e. "The Glory of Kings"]; and the Song of Solomon.¹⁹⁰ They can be placed there on 3 January 1789. For on that day Woide responded to a letter from Bruce asking him to go immediately to the British Museum and there locate a thin volume marked on the back "Histoire d Abissinie," in which he was to check the length of the reigns of certain Ethiopian kings. Although Bruce's tone was peremptory, Woide obliged. Indeed he went so far as to copy the two last leaves of the book as an added gift. Doubtless retaining Bruce's favour remained important to Woide despite, as he confided to another correspondent, this "troublesome task."¹⁹¹ But the frustration of not having his manuscripts to hand so as to check minor details in the "Annals of Abyssinia," which were to be included in his forthcoming travels, evidently proved too much for Bruce. Accordingly on 28 April 1789—little more than nine months after lending them—Bruce retrieved his manuscripts through

¹⁸⁸ Bodl., MS Bodl. Or. 531, fly-leaf.

¹⁸⁹ British Museum Central Archive, CE 3/7, 1991–92; BM CE 4/2, 668r-v; Dawson, ed., *Banks Letters*, 177–78; Murray, *Life and Writings of Bruce*, 116–17 n.; *Catalogue of ... Oriental literature ... sold by auction ... Robins*, 3–5, 9–12, 12–16, 17–18.

¹⁹⁰ One version of the *Kebra Nagast* is now Bodl., MS. Bruce 93, while another copy Bruce had made is Bodl., MS Bruce 87. In Ted Erho's view the other manuscripts referred to here can probably be identified as Bodl., MSS Bruce 71–75, 88–91, and 94. See, Sir Wallis Budge, trans., *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek (Kēbra Nagast)* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1932; reprinted, Cambridge, ON, 2000) xviii.

¹⁹¹ BL, Add. MS 48,706, fol. 70r-v; BL, Add. MS 48,710, fol. 99r; BL, Add. MS 48,711, fol. 113v.

Peter Elmsley (1735/6–1802), a well-known Scottish bookseller operating in the Strand, London.¹⁹²

Meanwhile, Bruce had been working intermittently on an account of his travels for nearly a dozen years, transcribing or arranging his journals and sometimes even drafting a few pages before becoming distracted by “more pleasurable avocations.”¹⁹³ All the same, he received occasional encouragement to complete this task which was expected to bring him both “lasting fame” and “a great sum of money,” as well as silencing whispers that he had never reached the sources of the Nile.¹⁹⁴ “Advent’rous” Bruce was even the subject of an anonymous ode published in May 1786 inviting the “bold traveller” and discoverer of those “coy fountains” to reveal the mysteries of Africa.¹⁹⁵ Its creator was the poet William Hayley (1745–1820), someone then unknown to Bruce but a friend and later patron of William Blake.¹⁹⁶ Hayley was also author of an *Essay on Old Maids* (3 vols., 1785), a work which drew on purported fragments of the book of Enoch and introduced the character Kunaza, the patriarch’s beautiful virgin daughter who had resisted the advances of Pharmarus, inventor of magic—unlike her sister Kezia who was seduced by Semiexas “prince of the licentious angels.”¹⁹⁷

Yet Bruce procrastinated, attributing the delay in publication to a combination of time-consuming law suits, ill health and the premature death of his second wife; a “melancholy

¹⁹² BM, CE 3/8, 2004; BM, CE 4/2, 667; BM, CE 4/2, 668v; Dawson, ed., *Banks Letters*, 178; Neil Chambers, *Joseph Banks and the British Museum: the world of collecting, 1770–1830* (London & New York, 2007)93; O.M. Brack, “Elmsley, Peter (1735/6–1802),” *ODNB*; cf. Bruce, *Travels*, 1.489; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.clxii note; *Annual Review* 7 (Jan 1808) 268.

¹⁹³ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.clxv; James Fennell, *An Apology for the life of James Fennell* (Philadelphia, 1814) 269.

¹⁹⁴ *Morning Post* (14 August 1778); *General Evening Post* (8–11 April 1786); cf. *Gentleman’s Magazine* 59 part i (1789) 544.

¹⁹⁵ Bruce, *Travels*, vol. 1, “Ode to James Bruce,” reprinted in *Public Advertiser* (5 June 1790). *Annual Register, or a view of the History of Politics* 32 (1790) part ii, 145–46, and *The European Magazine* 17 (1790) 392–93; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.10.

¹⁹⁶ William Hayley, *Memoirs of the life and writings of William Hayley, Esq.*, 3 vols., London, 1785) 1.343–44.

¹⁹⁷ William Hayley, *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids*, 3 vols. (London, 1785) 2.6–37; cf. Marsha Keith Schuchard, *Why Mrs Blake Cried. William Blake and the Sexual Basis of Spiritual Vision* (London, 2006) 271.

event” which “left him in solitude.”¹⁹⁸ His young friend James Fennell (1766–1816), who had turned to acting on the Edinburgh and London stages after squandering his inheritance gambling, subsequently added that Bruce was affluent and hence lacked the “usual incitation to writing”: money.¹⁹⁹ But after supposedly meeting privately with George III together with the urgings of his old friend Daines Barrington (1727/28–1800), judge and antiquary, Bruce was persuaded to finish the project. Accordingly he wrote the narrative part of his travels first and then added various reflections and supplementary material, notably a translation of the “Annals of Abyssinia” from the original manuscripts.²⁰⁰ Bruce’s method of composition was a combination of writing and dictation. For the latter he relied on the services of several people. Thus for what became volume one—which included his account of Ethiopic Enoch—from mid-May 1788 Bruce dictated at a residence in Buckingham Street, London to the future architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764–1820), whose uncle the Moravian missionary John Antes had supplied Bruce with money during the latter’s residence in Gondar and afterwards met him in Cairo. It was not a successful partnership. According to Latrobe, his work required “the most persevering attention, as well as a great quickness of pen.” Having laboriously transcribed Bruce’s words (the introduction alone filled nearly 100 folio leaves), he then copied most of it before correcting nine folio volumes based on the annotations of Barrington and the Bishop of Carlisle as well as his own judgment. Nor was Latrobe’s “very tedious and disagreeable task” facilitated by what he called Bruce’s “uncouth” style, which he likened to the conversation of a Scotsman who had left the Highlands late in life. To make matters worse, on 28 June 1789, having finished what Bruce had wanted, Bruce then placed Latrobe in an awkward situation by avoiding payment. After ignoring letters from both

¹⁹⁸ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.clxv, 66–68; *The Edinburgh Magazine*, 5 (June 1795) 416.

¹⁹⁹ Fennell, *Apology*, 269–70; Joseph Knight, revised Nilanjana Banerji, “Fennell, James (1766–1816),” *ODNB*.

²⁰⁰ Fennell, *Apology*, 271; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.clxv–clxvi, 68; David Philip Miller, “Barrington, Daines (1727/8–1800),” *ODNB*. Bruce may already have translated “a considerable part” of the “Annals of Abyssinia” by mid-February 1776; see Brock, ed., *Correspondence of William Hunter*, 2.212–13.

Latrobe and his uncle and then belittling Latrobe's contribution, Bruce told him to get five guineas from the bookseller Elmsley (to whom Bruce owed money). As a result Latrobe initiated legal proceedings.²⁰¹

Another of Bruce's amanuenses was William Logan, possibly a young Scottish clergyman, who served him from 1786 until Bruce's death.²⁰² The actor James Fennell also helped; certainly in February 1789 and perhaps also the summer months of 1787 and 1788. Fennell, however, was reluctant to take much credit restricting his acknowledged involvement to making Bruce's Scottish words more palatable to English ears.²⁰³ Through this process of writing, dictation and editorial amendment the first—albeit still to be expanded—manuscript copy of Bruce's travels was completed by spring 1788.²⁰⁴ Meanwhile, preparations had already begun to publish the work in English as well as a German translation, although the latter project was temporarily abandoned.²⁰⁵ In mid-October 1787 Horace Walpole reported that Bruce was "printing his travels," which Walpole supposed would prove that Bruce's "narratives were fabulous."²⁰⁶ Nearly three months later in January 1788 a correspondent of Thomas Percy informed him that the intended dedicatee of Bruce's "Abyssinian Tour" was Daines Barrington, the only person who was sufficiently credulous for the author's purpose. On 17 April 1788 another of Percy's correspondents told him that the manuscript of Bruce's travels was in London, where it was to be printed in a 3-volume

²⁰¹ John C. van Horne and Lee Formwalt, eds., *The papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Series IV. Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers*, vol. 1, 1784–1804 (New Haven, 1984) 18-19; Benjamin Henry Latrobe to Thomas Jefferson (Washington, 12 August 1817), <<https://founders.archives.gov/?q=nile&s=1111311121&sa=&r=72&sr=>>>, A. Abrahams, "The MSS. of Bruce of Abyssinia," *Notes and Queries* (25 October 1924) 295–96; Reid, *Traveller Extraordinary*, 303–4; Gillian Darley, "Latrobe, Benjamin Henry (1764–1820)," *ODNB*.

²⁰² Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.cccxlix note.

²⁰³ Fennell, *Apology*, 264–66; Charles Hulbert, *The African traveller; or, select lives, voyages, and travels, carefully abridged from the original publications of Bruce ...* (London, 1817) 21–22.

²⁰⁴ Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (3rd ed.) 1.cccl note; cf. Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.cccxlix note, where "spring 1778" is evidently a misprint.

²⁰⁵ Dawson, ed., *Banks Letters*, 779.

²⁰⁶ Lewis, ed., *Walpole's correspondence*, 31.255.

quarto edition “with many copper plates.”²⁰⁷ Yet the cost of this “elegant and extensive” edition was expected to be “too high for many readers.”²⁰⁸

Early the following year Bruce came into conflict with his London-based publisher Thomas Cadell the elder (1742–1802) who, apparently because of delays in finalising the manuscript, seems to have been disinclined to purchase the travels at the original asking price of £3,000. Consequently, as Barrington wrote to Percy on 20 February 1789, Bruce resolved to “print his work at his own home in Scotland.” Fennell, by his own account, was despatched late at night to Glasgow to “procure the necessary apparatus and workmen.” But despite producing a specimen it soon became apparent to Bruce that he would have to publish by conventional means.²⁰⁹ Accordingly, after some negotiation, Bruce drew up a contract with George Robinson (1736–1801) of Paternoster Row, London, who agreed to publish the travels in an edition of 2000 copies for £6,666.²¹⁰ A further contract was signed between April and May 1789 with two Scottish printers, James Sibbald (1747–1803) and James Ruthven of Edinburgh. Even so, matters did not progress smoothly. Sibbald became ill in June, prompting Bruce to substitute Ruthven’s name for Sibbald’s on the title-page. Then Bruce became dissatisfied with a batch of yellowed and underweight paper supplied by a local paper mill at Auchendinny. Furious, he accused Sibbald of sabotage, calling him an “Arch rascal.” Legal proceedings ensued, at the conclusion of which Bruce’s claim for £216

²⁰⁷ John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, 8 vols. (London, 1817–1858) 7.4, 493.

²⁰⁸ *A Voyage to Abyssinia, by Father Jerome Lobo ... by M. Le Grand ... Translated from the French by Samuel Johnson* (London, 1789) 9.

²⁰⁹ Fennell, *Apology*, 271–72; Nichols, *Illustrations*, 8.273; Catherine Dille, “Cadell, Thomas, the elder (1742–1802),” *ODNB*.

²¹⁰ Barrington put the figure at £6,500; a German periodical inflated it to £8,000; while a Scottish periodical subsequently reduced it to £6,000. See, *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 14 (January 1790) col. 108; *The Edinburgh Magazine* 5 (June 1795) 416.

in loss and expenses was dismissed while Sibbald and Ruthven were cleared of the charge of “failing to deliver the book in a workmanlike manner.”²¹¹

On 9 June 1789 Woide wrote that Bruce’s book, which was to have been printed at Cadell’s, was instead to be printed at Edinburgh. Three days later Barrington supplied Percy with further details: Bruce had purchased paper, types and ink; the work would now be a 4-volume quarto edition containing at least 40 engravings; preparations were underway for French and German translations; and copyright would be retained by Bruce.²¹² Some of Bruce’s own correspondence that year indicates that he continued to face difficulties, notably securing an adequate supply of ink while maintaining four printing presses and paying two compositors.²¹³ At the same time, he was kept busy at Edinburgh correcting proofs.²¹⁴ Then on 14 February 1790 Bruce wrote to Robinson letting him know that 135 bales of his *Travels* were aboard a ship in Edinburgh. This amounted to 2,024 copies of the ordinary edition and 21 copies printed on imperial paper for high-status recipients. Besides retaining a copy of each edition to check for corrections, additional copies had been sent to Paris and Leipzig for translation.²¹⁵ At the end of the month Barrington notified Percy that Bruce had recently arrived in London but that 2,000 copies of his *Travels*, now expanded to a 5-volume quarto edition with nearly 60 copper-plate engravings, were still afloat in the vicinity of Norfolk.²¹⁶ Then, having secured permission to dedicate his book to George III, on 13 April 1790 Bruce presented a specially printed copy to the King, which was “most graciously received.” The

²¹¹ Richard Sher, *The Enlightenment & the Book. Scottish Authors & Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland & America* (Chicago, 2006) 242–43; Warren McDougall, “Sibbald, James (1747–1803),” *ODNB*.

²¹² BL, Add. MS 48,711, fol. 131r; Nichols, *Illustrations*, 8.274.

²¹³ James Bruce to George Robinson (Edinburgh, 15 June 1789), <<https://www.the-saleroom.com/en-gb/auction-catalogues/chiswick-auctions/catalogue-id-srchis10463/lot-25d8b967-36a5-48ad-8df1-a89b00e2fa8a>>.

²¹⁴ Dawson, ed., *Banks Letters*, 178, 533; Cumming, “Unpublished letters of James Bruce,” 50.

²¹⁵ Private possession, James Bruce to George Robinson (Edinburgh, 14 February 1790), <<https://www.lotsearch.net/lot/bruce-james-1730-1794-two-autograph-letters-signed-to-george-robinson-23967818?page=2>>.

²¹⁶ Nichols, *Illustrations*, 8.275.

following day he presented the volumes to Queen Charlotte, who reportedly praised their author for rendering Ethiopian manners with “such delicacy of thought and expression” that the book “promised so much instructive amusement.”²¹⁷ Finally, on 25 April the five-volume edition of Bruce’s *Travels* was published, priced at five guineas.²¹⁸ The title-page displayed an engraving of a medal by James Heath; Bruce’s head in profile on one face, on the obverse three figures representing the fountains of the Nile and above them a Latin inscription: “It has not happened to anyone to have seen this source.”²¹⁹ Later that year a French translation by J. H. Castéra was published at Paris by Charles-Joseph Panckhoucke. This contained restored passages that Bruce had expurgated from the English version lest they offend female readers.²²⁰ A German translation by Johann Jacob Volkmann (1732–1803) with a preface and supplementary notes by the physician and naturalist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) was also published at Leipzig by Philip Erasmus Reich.²²¹ One contemporary journalist estimated that—even allowing for the expense of paper, ink, engraving and printing—Bruce had netted almost £3,000 profit on the first English edition alone.²²²

*

The reception of Bruce’s *Travels* merits extensive discussion. Here, however, our focus is on the consequences during his lifetime for those interested in Ethiopic Enoch. As we have seen, prior to the publication in April 1790 of the first edition of Bruce’s *Travels* very few people knew more than the outline of his claim to have brought back “an Abyssinian Manuscript

²¹⁷ *Whitehall Evening Post* (6–8 April 1794); *General Evening Post* (13–15 April 1794); Hulbert, *African traveller*, 22.

²¹⁸ *Whitehall Evening Post* (24–27 April 1794).

²¹⁹ John Payne, *Universal Geography formed into a new and entire system* (London, 1791) 1.337. The inscription: “Nec contigit ulli hoc vidisse caput.”

²²⁰ Hulbert, *African traveller*, 22.

²²¹ Norbert Klatt, ed., *The Correspondence of John Friedrich Blumenbach, Volume III: 1786–1790* (Göttingen, 2010) 264, 284–85, 308–9, 320–21, 324, 326, 327, 351.

²²² *Edinburgh Magazine* 5 (June 1795) 416.

which contains the Prophecy of Enoch.”²²³ The exceptions were certain scholars and their correspondents, some British antiquarians, and readers of particular German and French learned publications. Consequently, what Bruce had to say about Ethiopic Enoch in print became almost an authorized version of the book’s opening chapters. Judging from statements in the first volume of his *Travels*, these passages were composed between mid-July 1788 and late April 1789.²²⁴ This agrees with Latrobe’s testimony that he was employed as Bruce’s amanuensis between mid-May 1788 and late June 1789. Evidently, Bruce’s indirect gift of a copy of Ethiopic Enoch to the Bodleian Library (MS. Bodl. Or. 531) together with the temporary loan of some of his Ethiopic manuscripts to the British Museum (including MS. Bruce 74) were intended as public-spirited gestures. No doubt Bruce also hoped that such munificence would endow him with cultural capital. Yet the timing of his gift and loan is also revealing since, with the bulk of his *Travels* completed, Bruce thought that he no longer needed these texts. And while he subsequently retrieved his manuscripts from the British Museum he left Ethiopic Enoch at Oxford untouched. This suggests that by late spring 1788 Bruce had definitely abandoned his translation of Enoch from the Ge‘ez. Not only that, but by retaining two copies of Ethiopic Enoch for more than seventeen years he ensured that no one else in the British Isles other than Woide could complete a translation unless they too journeyed to Paris.

Following the publication of Bruce’s *Travels*, several English-language periodicals and at least one French journal quoted or noticed his account of Ethiopic Enoch.²²⁵ And all did so uncritically with the exception of *The English Review*, which defended Woide’s reputation from Bruce’s dishonest misrepresentation.²²⁶ There was also a brief if informed discussion in

²²³ *Lloyd’s Evening Post* 2531 (17–20 September 1773).

²²⁴ Bruce, *Travels*, 1.lxix, 489, 498; Bruce, *Travels*, ed. Murray (2nd ed.) 1.72.

²²⁵ *The Analytic Review* 7 (June 1790) 146–47; *The Critical Review* 70 (July 1790) 50–51; *The Aberdeen Magazine, Literary Chronicle, and Review* 3 (1790) 483–85; *The Historical Magazine; or, Classical Library of Public Events* 2 (1790) 302; *L’Esprit des Journaux, François et Étrangers* 11 (November 1790) 88–90.

²²⁶ *The English Review* 16 (July 1790) 55–56; *The English Review* 16 (September 1790) 183.

an appendix to Bruce's *Travels* by the naturalist Johann Friedrich Gmelin (1748–1804).²²⁷ Further publicity came from Isaac D'Israeli's popular *Curiosities of Literature* (1791). Here D'Israeli plagiarised Bruce's story of how Peiresc had been deceived when he purchased what he thought were "*The Prophecies of Enoch*," but which upon examination turned out to be a book with a misleading title.²²⁸ Moreover, an entertainment for newspaper readers conceived as a fantastical journey to the subterranean world recounted how in the manuscript room of a museum of curiosities a traveller saw the "prophecy of Enoch" written upon paper made from amianthus.²²⁹ Finally, Bruce's *Travels* stimulated interest in Ethiopic Enoch among certain readers of the polymath and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772); a milieu intermittently inhabited by William Blake requiring detailed treatment elsewhere.²³⁰ Yet the most intriguing of all contemporary responses to Bruce's *Travels* is contained in a letter dated 18 May 1790 written from Hamburg to a recipient residing in England. Here the author, an "elegant classical scholar" and "accomplished gentleman," recounted what sounds like a garbled anecdote ultimately derived from Woide:

Mr. Bruce himself has often been deceived. When he returned from his travels, he brought over several precious manuscripts: one he sent as a present to the King of France—it was said to be written by *Enoch*. This being the most marvellous thing that ever was heard of, it was carefully shut up in an elegant box, and nobody was allowed even to peep at it. A German, who was employed in the library, to collate different old manuscripts, humbly represented, that if it was kept in this box, it could not possibly be of any use; and as he was much versed in the ancient oriental languages, offered to decypher it.—No; they would not let a creature see it. Some time after the Queen came to visit the library, and Mons. l'Abbé Directeur, to pay his court to Her Majesty, brought out this box and uncovered it. The German, who was there, peeped over the Queen's shoulders, and behold—this

²²⁷ Johann Friedrich Gmelin, *Anhang zu James Bruce Reisen in das Innere von Africa, nach Abyssinien an die Quellen des Nils* (Leipzig, 1791) 151–52.

²²⁸ Bruce, *Travels*, 1.497; cf. Isaac D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature* (London, 1791) 20–21; *The Town and Country Magazine*, 23 (December 1791) 562.

²²⁹ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (23 September 1790).

²³⁰ *The New Magazine of Knowledge concerning Heaven and Hell*, 2(London, 1791) 421–23; William Spence, *Essays in Divinity and Physic* (London, 1792) 19–21.

precious manuscript was nothing more than a Coptic copy of one of the Gospels of the Apostles;—consequently Mr. Bruce is not infallible.²³¹

Legacy

The fundamental question that needs addressing is why no European undertook a complete translation of Ethiopic Enoch during Bruce's lifetime. There are, I think, three main aspects to this answer. Firstly, we must consider Bruce's character. His narcissistic personality, occasionally difficult behaviour, propensity for embellishment and even taking credit for others' achievements understandably tended to create a bad impression within certain circles of polite Italian and British society. So much so, that a number of Bruce's hearers and then readers questioned the accuracy of both minor and major details in his self-aggrandizing dialogues and travelogue. Such was the damage to Bruce's reputation that relatively few scholars and wanderers were prepared to defend his inconsistent and partial accounts. Consequently, some people did not believe either that Bruce had discovered the source of the (Blue) Nile, or that he had returned to Europe with several copies of Ethiopic Enoch.

Secondly, there were very few, if any, Britons before the turn of the 19th century possessed of sufficient skill, patience and time to produce a full and accurate translation from the Ge'ez—including Bruce himself, despite his posturing to the contrary. Indeed, by wanting to take credit for being the first person to render Ethiopic Enoch into a major European written or spoken language Bruce seems to have deterred other scholars from undertaking this important task. Instead they waited for him to deliver on a project he eventually abandoned. Afterwards, as we shall see in the next chapter, Alexander Murray—recommended as the ablest Ethiopic scholar within the British dominions—died quite young. Given his professed dislike of the subject matter, Murray may anyway have been disinclined

²³¹ *Letters from the continent; describing the manners and customs of Germany, Poland, Russia, and Switzerland, in the years 1790, 1791, and 1792* (London, 1812) iii, 62–63.

to undertake a translation. Among native German speakers, however, the situation appears to have been different. There was strong interest among certain specialists, notably Woide and Michaelis. Furthermore, in 1820 Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842) of Halle, an expert in Hebrew, undertook research with the intention of producing a Latin translation. But to consult the three copies Gesenius knew of necessitated foreign travel to Paris, London, and Oxford. As for Italian speakers, they were largely unaware that Bruce had also gifted a copy in Rome to Pope Clement XIV. That leaves France. And it was here, although only after Bruce's death, that the greatest advances were made by about 1800—particularly through the important contribution of Antoine Isaac, Baron Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838), but also an untraced work by his pupil Louis-Mathieu Langlès (1763–1824).²³²

Thirdly, at the outset Ethiopic Enoch appeared to be of comparatively minor benefit in settling theological disputes among Protestants within the English-speaking world. Whereas the Old Testament Apocrypha still generated controversy as late as 1825, extra-canonical texts such as *Enoch* had essentially become curiosities rather than weapons wielded in polemical attacks against the authority of the Anglican Church and its derivatives. Consequently, from a theological perspective within the Anglosphere, Ethiopic Enoch proved to be of greatest interest to nonconformists—particularly assorted Swedenborgians and Muggletonians, as well as the Latter-day Saints. Given these factors, the book of Enoch's appeal was more pronounced in other spheres—notably among people predisposed to what might be termed the occult, including the odd notable Freemason. Moreover, it became relatively influential for some explorations of antediluvian themes expressed through the medium of prose, poetry and art. All of this requires further detailed research. Now, however, I want to turn our attention to what happened to Bruce's manuscripts after his death.

²³² *The Scots Magazine* 90 (December 1822) 640.