Appendix 2

*Transcription of minutes of May 15 1623 meeting of delegates from three sephardic congregations concerning the arrival at Amsterdam of Uriel da Costa*

2nd excommunication

Os \(\text{ặcAVOR}h\) ores deputados da nação fazem saber a Vossa \(\text{ eroticis} M\)ercês como tendo notícia que haja vindo a esta cidade hú homê que se pôs por nome Uriel Abadat, e que trazia \(\text{miútas} \) opiniões falsas e heréticas contra nossa Santíssima Lei, pelas quais já em Amburgo e Veneza foi declarado por hereje e excomungado, dejezando reduzi-lo à verdade, fizerão todas as diligências necessárias, por vezes, com toda a suavidade e brandura, por meo de hahamim e velhos de nossa nação, a que ditos \(\text{اقتAVOR}h\) ores deputados se acharam presentes. E vendo que por pura pertinácia e arrogância persiste em sua maldade e falsas opiniões, ordenarão com os mahamados das \(\text{اقتAVOR}h\) ilot e consentimentos de ditos hahamim apartá-lo como homê já enhermado e maldito del Dio, e que lhe naõ apare pessoa algùa de nenhùa qualidade, nê homê, nê molher, nê parente, nê estranho, nê entre na casa onde estiver, nê lhe dém favor algù, nê o comuniquem, com pena de ser compreendido no mesmo herem e de ser apartado de nossa comunicaçãão. E a seus irmãos por bons respeitos se concedeu termo de outo dias p[àr]a se apartarem delle.

Amsterdam, 30 del homer 5383

Samuel Álvares  Binhamin Israel  Abraham Curiel  
Josef Abeníacar  Rafael Jesurun  Jacob Franço

Appendix 3

*Uriel da Costa’s own account of his life*  
(Exemplar humanae vitae),  
*engaged by John Whiston (London, 1740)*

I was born in Portugal in a city of the same name, but commonly called Oporto. My parents were of the nobility and originally descended from those jews who were constrained to embrace the christian religion in that kingdom. My father was a true christian and a man of strict honour and integrity. I had a genteel education at home, servants always to command and a managed Spanish gennet to perfect myself in that exercise of the great horse in which my father was completely skilled, and I endeavoured to follow his steps to the utmost. At length being grown up, and as well accomplished in the liberal arts as young gentlemen generally are, I applied myself to the study of the law. As to my genius and disposition, I was naturally very pious and compassionate, insomuch that I could not hear the story of any person’s misfortunes without melting into tears, and had such an innate sense of modesty that I dreaded nothing so much as to suffer disgrace. Not that I had the least cowardice in my temper or was free from resentment when a just occasion offered, for which reason I always had an aversion to that haughty and insolent race of men who are apt to despise and trample upon others, and therefore took all opportunities to defend the oppressed and to make their cause my own.
By religion has my life been made a scene of incredible sufferings. I was educated according to the custom of that country in the popish religion, and when I was but a young man the dread of eternal damnation made me desirous to keep all its doctrines with the utmost exactness. I employed my leisure time in reading the Gospel and other spiritual books, ran through breviaries of the confessors, and the more time I bestowed upon them, the greater difficulties still rose upon me, which by degrees threw me into such inextricable perplexities, doubts and difficulties as overwhelmed me with grief and melancholy.

It seemed to me a thing impossible by confessing my sins (after the custom of the Roman Church) to obtain by virtue thereof a plenary absolution and to have fulfilled all the things that were required, and this consequently made me despair of salvation, as it was to be obtained only by such particular rules. But as it was a very difficult thing to shake off at once a religion which I had been educated in from my infancy and which by a long implicit faith had taken deep root, I began when I was about twenty years old to question with myself whether or no it was possible for those things which were related of another life to be forgeries, and whether a belief of them was consistent with reason, forasmuch as my reason did perpetually suggest to me things that were directly contrary. Under this doubt I continued some time, and at last came to this settled persuasion that salvation was not to be obtained in the way that I was in. During this time I applied myself to the study of the law, and when I was in my twenty-fifth year an opportunity offered by which I obtained an ecclesiastical benefice, viz. the dignity of treasurer in the collegiate church.

Not being able to find that satisfaction I wanted in the Romish Church, and being desirous to attach myself to one; knowing also there was a great dispute betwixt the christians and jews, I went through the books of Moses and the Prophets, wherein I found some things not a little contradictory to the doctrines of the New Testament, and there seemed to be the less difficulty in believing those things which were revealed by God himself. Besides, the Old Testament was assented to both by jews and christians, whereas the New was believed by christians only. Hence I was induced to become a convert to the law of Moses, and as he declared himself only to be a deliverer of what was revealed by God himself, being called by him to that office or, rather, constrained to accept it (so easily are the ignorant imposed on), I thought it my duty to make the law the rule of my obedience. Having entered upon this resolution, and finding it unsafe to profess this religion in that country, I began to think of changing my habituation and leaving my native home. In order to [effect] this I immediately resigned my ecclesiastical benefice in favour of another, unbiased either by the profits or honour of it, which are two prevailing motives with the people of our nation. I also left a handsome house situated in the best part of the city, that my father had built. Which having done, my mother, brothers and myself embarked on board a ship, though at a very great hazard, it not being lawful for those that are descended from the jews to depart the kingdom without the king's special license. I must acquaint the reader that, from a principle of natural affection, I had communicated to them my sentiments on the falsity of our religion, though such a discovery might have proved fatal to me, so dangerous a thing is it in that country to speak freely on this subject, though to the dearest friends. Having finished our voyage and being arrived at Amsterdam, where we found the jews professing their religion with great freedom, as the Law directs them, we immediately fulfilled the precept concerning circumcision.

I had not been there many days before I observed that the customs and ordinances of the modern jews were very different from those commanded by Moses. Now if the Law was to be strictly observed, according to the letter, as it expressly declares, it must be very unjustifiable in the jewish doctors to add to it inventions of a quite contrary nature. This provoked me to oppose them openly: nay, I looked upon it as doing God service to defend the Law with freedom against such innovations. The modern jewish rabbins, like their ancestors, are an obstinate and perverse race of men, strenuous advocates for the odious sect of the Pharisees and their institutions, not without a view to gain and, as is justly imputed to them, vainly fond of the uppermost seats in the synagogue and greetings in the market. Men of this character could not bear that I should differ from them, though in the most minute points, insisting upon my following their steps exactly in everything or else threatening to exclude me from their synagogue and to pass full sentence of the greater excommunication upon me. But as it was unworthy of him who had so lately left his native country and been content to forego many other temporal advantages for liberty of conscience to be overawed and forced to submit to men who had no right to such a power (besides, I thought it both sinful and beneath a man to be