

or have removed that, and put the word in the margin in its room, with which they agree, see *Gen.* viii. 17. and xiv. 3. and it may be observed, that their critical art and notes are not only frequently exercised and made upon the points, but even upon the points without consonants, and upon consonants without points ; which would not have become them, had they been the inventors of them ; see an instance of each in *Jer.* xxxi. 38. and li. 3. The truth of the matter, with respect to the *Masoretes*, is, that the pointing of the Bible was not their work , they considered it as of a divine original, and therefore dared not to make any alteration in it ; but only observed, where there was an unusual punctuation, that it might be taken notice of ; and that so they found it, and so they left it ; and that those who came after them might not dare to attempt an alteration. Punctuation was made before their time, as their

b 2

work

work itself shews; and *Walton*<sup>u</sup>, an opposer of the antiquity of the points, has this observation; “The *Masoretic* notes about words irregularly pointed, and the numbers of them, necessarily suppose that pointing was made long before.” Have these *Masorettes* employed their time and study, in counting the verses and letters of the Bible, and how many verses and letters there are in such a book; and where exactly is the middle of it; where a word is deficient or lacks a letter; or where it is full and has them all; or where one is redundant and has too many; where one letter is larger and another lesser than usual, and another suspended; suppose now this is all trifling, and of no manner of importance, yet who or what are injured by it? the mispending of their time in such trifles, is a loss not to others, but to themselves; and, as a learned man<sup>w</sup> remarks,

<sup>u</sup> Prolegom. 8. f. 12.  
mentary on *Job* ix. 34.

<sup>w</sup> *Chappelow's* Com-

See also on ch. xi. 14.

remarks, “ how trifling soever this  
 “ scrupulous exactness of the *Maso-*  
 “ *retes* (with respect to the letters in  
 “ the *Hebrew* text) may appear, yet it  
 “ suggests to us one observation, that  
 “ the *Jews* were religiously careful to  
 “ preserve the true literal text of  
 “ scripture ; and consequently, not-  
 “ withstanding their enmity and ob-  
 “ stinate aversion to christianity, they  
 “ are not to be charged with this ad-  
 “ ditional crime of having corrupted  
 “ the Bible :” and after all, have not  
 the Christians had their *Masorettes* al-  
 so<sup>x</sup>, who, with like diligence and  
 faithfulness, have numbered all the  
 verses, both of the *Greek* version of  
 the Old Testament and of the books  
 of the New ? and have they been  
 blamed for it ? *Jerom*’ numbered the  
 verses of the book of *Proverbs*, and  
 says they were 915, exactly as the  
*Masorah*. Some words, through length

b 3

of

<sup>x</sup> Vid. Croii Observ. in Nov. Test. c. 1. & c. 10.  
<sup>y</sup> Quæst. seu Trad. Heb. lib. Reg. 3. fol. 80. l. Tom. 3.

of time, became obscene and offensive to chaste ears, at least were thought so<sup>z</sup>; hence the *Masoretes* placed other words in the margin, which, perhaps, is the boldest thing they ever did, and of which the *Karaite Jews* complain; but then they never attempted to remove the other words from the text, and put in theirs in their room; they only placed them where they did, that, when the passages were read in public, or in families, the reader might be supplied with words that signified the same, only more pure and chaste, and less offensive; at least which were thought so; and which were left to their own option to read them or not. The passages are *Deut.* xxviii. 27, 30. *1 Sam.* v. 6. 9. *Is.* xiii. 16. *Zech.* xiv. 2. *2 Kings* vi. 25. x. 27. and xviii. 27. *Is.* xxxvi. 12. and it would not be improper, if, in the margin of our Bibles over-against the last, and others that have the same word, another

<sup>z</sup> Maimon. *Moreh Nevochim*, par. 3. c. 8.



sometimes used by the *Masoretes* in their notes; this only respects the conjectures of some persons, who thought a word should be otherwise read or pointed; but it is what the *Masoretes* object to, and say of such persons, that they are mistaken: and this they observe, that no one may presume to make any alteration upon such conjectures: and are they to be blamed for this? and, besides these things, what have they done, except transmitting, from age to age, the marginal or various readings, which had been observed by collating copies, or which arose from their own observations, by comparing different copies that lay before them; and from delivering them down to posterity, they obtained the name of *Masoretes*; and can this be thought to be culpable in them? they left the text as they found it; nor did they offer of themselves to insert a various reading, different from the commonly received copy, but placed such  
readings

readings in the margin, that others might make what use of them they pleased ; or rather they took this method, to prevent the insertion of them into the text, suggesting, that so they found them, and there it was proper to continue them : and is a Bible with such readings the worse for them ? is a *Greek* Testament to be dis-esteemed, for having the various readings in it collected from different copies ? or are our *English* Bibles with the marginal readings in them, placed by the translators themselves, with references to other scriptures, the less valuable on that account ? nay, are they not the more valued for them ? and it may be observed, that these *Keries* or marginal readings of the *Hebrew* text, are followed in many places, by some of the best translators of the Bible, both ancient and modern. *Aquila* and *Symmachus*, the best of the ancient *Greek* interpreters, almost always follow them<sup>b</sup>.

*Jerom*

<sup>b</sup> Montfaucon. Hexapla Origen. vol. 2. p. 549.

*Jerom* had knowledge of them, and testifies to *Aquila's* following them, in a particular instance. His words are<sup>c</sup>,  
 “ *Afferemoth* in *Jer.* (xxx. 40.) for  
 “ which, in a *Hebrew* copy it is writ-  
 “ ten *Sedemoth*, which *Aquila* inter-  
 “ pretis *suburbana*.” And which rea-  
 ding is preferred by *Jerom*<sup>d</sup>, as is the  
 marginal reading of v. 38. And if  
 he was the author of the *Vulgate Latin*  
 version, that agrees with the marginal  
 readings of the *Masorettes* in several  
 places; see *Josh.* iii. 16. and xv. 47.  
*2 Sam.* viii. 3. *2 Kings* xix. 31. all  
 which shew the antiquity of these  
 readings. So modern interpreters, *Ju-*  
*nius* and *Tremellius*, our own tran-  
 slators, and the *Dutch*<sup>e</sup>, often follow  
 them, as do various interpreters, both  
*Papists* and *Protestants*. Nay, some of  
 these readings and notes are confirmed  
 by the inspired writers of the New  
 Testament. Thus, for instance, in  
*Pf.*

<sup>c</sup> De loc. Heb. fol. 89. B.      <sup>d</sup> Comment. in  
 Hieremiam, c. 31. 40. fol. 161. F.      <sup>e</sup> Leusden,  
 Philolog. Heb. Mixt. Dissert. 10. f. 9. p. 84.



*Pf.* xvi. 10. the word rendered *holy one*, is written with a *yod*, as if it was plural; but the *Masoretic* note on it is, that the *yod* is redundant, and so the word is to be considered as of the singular number; and this is confirmed by two inspired writers, the apostles *Peter* and *Paul*, *Acts* ii. 27. and xiii. 35. Again, in *Prov.* iii. 34. the *Cetib* or textual writing is, לעניים *the poor*; but the *Keri* or marginal reading לענוים *the humble* or *lowly*, which is followed by our translators of the text, and is confirmed by two apostles, *James* and *Peter*, *Jam.* iv. 6. 1 *Pet.* v. 5. And what have the *Masorettes* done in this respect, but what the learned *Dr. Kennicott* is now doing, or getting done in the several libraries in *Europe*; that is, collating the several copies, and collecting from them the various readings; and which, if I understand his design aright, is not to form, upon his own judgment, a new copy of the *Hebrew* text; but to  
do

do with the present copy in common use, what others have done with the New Testament; let it stand as it is, with the various readings thrown into the margin as they may be collected, and leave them to every one's judgment, with some critical rules to form it, to make use of them as they please: and when this learned gentleman has finished his large *Masoretic* work, he will be the greatest *Masorete* that ever any age produced; since not only eight hundred and forty-eight various readings, as *Elias*<sup>f</sup> has reckoned those of the *Masorettes* to be, but as many thousands, and more will now appear. I say not this, to depreciate his laborious undertaking, far be it from me; he has my good wishes for the finishing of it, and what little assistance otherwise I can give him in it. For I am not so great an enthusiast, for the integrity of the present printed *Hebrew* copy, as to imagine, that it is entirely

<sup>f</sup> Præfat. 3. ad Masoret.

tirely clear of the mistakes of transcribers in all places : to imagine this, is to suppose a miraculous interposition of Divine Providence attending the copiers of it, and that constant and universal ; and if but one copier was under such an influence, it would be very extraordinary indeed, if his copy should be lighted on at the first printing of the *Hebrew* Bible ; and besides the first *Hebrew* Bible that was printed, was not printed from one copy, but from various copies collated ; nor is there more reason to believe, that the *Hebrew* text of the Old Testament, which is more antient, should be preserved from the escapes of librarians, than the *Greek* of the New Testament, which it is too notorious are many : nor is suffering such escapes any contradiction to the Promise and Providence of God, respecting the preservation of the Sacred Writings, since all of any moment is preserved in the several copies ; so that what is omitted,

or

or stands wrong in one copy, may be supplied and set right by another, which is a sufficient vindication of Divine Providence ; and this may serve to excite the diligence and industry of learned men, in collating the several copies for such a purpose ; and besides, the Providence of God remarkably appears, in that the escapes suffered to be made do not affect any doctrine of *faith*, or any moral *practice*, as has been observed and owned by many<sup>s</sup> : and after all, if from the present collation of manuscripts, there should be published, what may be thought a more correct and perfect copy of the *Hebrew* text, we shall be beholden to the *Jews* for it, against whom the clamour rises so high : for by whom were the manuscripts written, now collating, but by *Jews* ? for the  
truth

<sup>s</sup> Amamæ Antibar. Bibl. l. 1. p. 20. 22. Bochart. Phaleg, l. 2. c. 13. col. 91, 92. Walton. Prolegom. 6. f. 1. 3. and 7. f. 12. 15 and Considerator considered, p. 127. 162. Capellus de Critica. Epist ad Uffer. p. 116. Dr. Kennicott, Dissert. 1. p. 11. 301.

truth of this, I appeal to the learned collator himself; and who, if I mistake not, in his printed *Dissertations* always represents the several *Hebrew* copies, whether more or less perfect, as the work of *Jewish* transcribers; and indeed the thing speaks for itself: for from the times of *Jerom* to the age of printing, there were scarce any, if any at all among Christians, capable of transcribing an *Hebrew* copy; that interval was a time of barbarous ignorance, as with respect to arts and sciences, so with respect to languages, especially the *Hebrew*. To know a little *Greek*, in those barbarous times, was enough to make a man suspected of heresy; and to study *Hebrew*, was almost sufficient to proclaim him an heretic at once: the study of which lay much neglected, until it was revived by *Reuchlin* and others, a little before, and about the time of the Reformation. There might, in the above space of time, rise up now and then

one,

one, who had some knowledge of the *Hebrew* tongue, as *Raymund* in the thirteenth century, the author of *Pugio Fidei*; and friar *Bacon*, who wrote an *Hebrew* grammar in the latter end of the same century, and which perhaps was the first, at least one of the first *Hebrew* grammars written by a Christian; though since, we have had a multitude of them: for almost every smatterer in the *Hebrew* language thinks himself qualified to write a grammar of it. However, there is no reason to believe, as I can understand, that any of our *Hebrew* manuscripts were written by Christians, but all by *Jews*, I mean such as were written before the age of printing; for what have been written since, can be of no account.

I OBSERVE there is much talk about the *Masoretic* Bible, and about *Masoretic* authority. As to the *Masoretic* Bible, I could never learn there ever was such an one, either in manuscript,  
or

or in print, that could with any propriety be so called. Is a Bible with points to be called *Masoretic*? it must be with great impropriety, since the *Masorettes*, as has been observed, were not the authors of pointing: are any called so, because they have various readings, and other notes in the margin? as well may a *Greek Testament*, with various readings and notes in the margin have such a name. Let it be shewn, if it can, that there ever was in manuscript, or in print, a copy of the *Hebrew text*, in all things conformable to the *Masoretic* notes and readings in the margin, or in which these are inserted in the body of the text, call them corrections, emendations, various readings, or what you please; but if these cannot be shewn, then whatsoever Bible, that does not conform in the text to the *Masorah* in the margin, with much greater propriety may be called *Anti-masoretic* than *Masoretic*. As to authority, the

*Masorettes* never claimed any; their *Keri* is no command to read so or so, nor even a direction how to read, and much less a correction of the text, as if it was faulty; it is only a suggestion, that so it is read in some copies; for the word for which ק stands in the margin of some Bibles, is not the imperative קרי! *Kere* read, but is קרי; and is either the same with קרי something read, or with קרי a reading, *i. e.* a various reading. And if the *Masorettes* ever pretended to any authority, as they have not, it is not regarded; for notwithstanding their antiquity, their readings, and what is agreeable to their notes and observations, are not admitted into the text, but are obliged to keep their place in the margin; and where then is their authority? thus, for instance, in defiance of *Masoretic* authority, as it is called, and notwithstanding the *Masoretic* note in the margin, the second *yod* is continued in חסידה *Psf.* xvi. 10. and in defiance



of the punctuation of the word, which is different from all other places, where the word is manifestly plural, as in *Pf.* lii. 9. lxxix. 2. cxxxii. 9. and cxlv. 10. 2 *Cbron.* vi. 41. in all which places *Segol* is put under *Daleth*; but here *Sheva*, as it is in other words, in which the *yod* is redundant also, and the word to be read singular, as *Debareca*, 1 *Kings* viii. 26. and xviii. 36. *Dameca*, 2 *Sam.* i. 16. *Yadeca*, 1 *Kings* xxii. 34. *Prov.* iii. 27. *Abdeca*, 1 *Kings* i. 27. *Ragleca*, *Eccl.* v. 1. with others: and in defiance of the *Talmud* also. There are but two places <sup>b</sup> I have met with in the *Talmud*, where the text is quoted; and in both of them the word is without the *yod*; so that if these, especially the first, had any authority, the *yod* would not continue in that word.

THE different schemes men have formed, for reading *Hebrew* without the antient points, shew the necessity  
c 2
of

<sup>a</sup> T. Bab. Eruvin, fol. 19. 1. et Yoma, fol. 87. 1.

[ xxxviii ]

of them, and the puzzle they are at without them ; but what need men rack their brains to find out a scheme of reading that language, when there is one so fuitable, ready at hand for them, consisting of vowel-points, which for their figure and position cannot be equalled by any ; which are so contrived, that they take up scarce any, or very little more room, than the words do without them ; which neither increase the number of letters in a word, nor make it longer, nor give it any unfightly appearance ? whereas, for instance, *Masclef's* scheme, besides the augmentation of letters, makes the word look very aukward : and if it was thought the present vowel-points were too numerous, and too great an incumbrance to words, one would think, men might content themselves with reducing their number, and not throw them all away : but the great offence taken at them is, that they tie down to a certain determinate sense of

the word, and that they cannot bear, but chuse to be at liberty to fix what sense upon it they please.

GREAT complaint is made of the ignorance of the *Masorettes* in pointing, and an instance is given of it, in their pointing the word *Cyrus*, as to be read *Coresh* or *Choresh*, though indeed they had no hand in it; but admitting they had, and whoever had, there does not appear to be any just blame for it. It is true, it may be thought so, if the *Greek* pronunciation of the word must be the rule of punctuation: but the original name is not *Greek*, but *Persic*; and which, in that language, signifies the sun. So *Ctesias*<sup>i</sup> and *Plutarch*<sup>k</sup> say: whether *Cyrus* had his name from the sun being seen at his feet, while sleeping, which he three times endeavoured to catch with his hands, but it slipped from him; and which, according to the *Ma-*  
*gi,*

<sup>i</sup> In *Persicis ad Calcem Herodot.* Ed. Gronov. p. 687.  
<sup>k</sup> In *Artaxerxe*, p. 1012.

gi, portended a reign of thirty years<sup>1</sup>, is not certain : now the word for the sun, in the *Persic* language, is *Chor* or *Cor*, the same with *Or*, *Job* xxxi. 26. and it is now called *Corshad*<sup>m</sup> : hence, the god of the *Persians* is called *Oromazes*, and sometimes *Oromasdes*<sup>n</sup>, *Hormusd*, and *Ormusd* ; this shews the propriety of the first point put to the word, a *Cholem* and not a *Shurek* ; and it may be observed, there is a similar word used for the sun in other eastern languages, and is pronounced *Cheres*, *Job* ix. 6. to which may be added, that the oriental versions, both *Syriac* and *Arabic*, read the word for *Cyrus* in all places in the Bible, with *o*, *e*, and *Shin*, according to the Bible-pronunciation. It was usual with the *Persians*, to give men names taken from the sun, as *Carshena*, *Esth.* i. 14. and *Orsines* in *Curtius*<sup>o</sup> : as for the

<sup>1</sup> Cicero de divinatione, l. 1. Vid. Hiller. Onomastic. sacr. p. 615. 617. <sup>m</sup> Vid. Bochart. Phaleg. l. 1. c. 15. col. 61. <sup>n</sup> Plutarch. ut supra, p. 1026. et in Vita Alexandri, p. 682. <sup>o</sup> Hist. l. 10. c. 1.

the *Greek* pronunciation of the word, it is not unusual with the *Greeks* to pronounce a *Cholem* by an *Ypsilon*, as *Tzor*, *Lod*, *Beerot*, by *Tyrus*, *Lydda*, *Berytus*. In like manner may the punctuation of *Darius* be vindicated, which is *Darjavesch*, *Dan. v. 31.* in much agreement with which, this name is *Δαρείαιος Dareiaios* with *Ctesias*<sup>p</sup>, and is a word consisting of four parts, and signifies a great, vast, vehement fire<sup>q</sup>; and *Esch*, fire, is well known to be the deity of the *Persians*, which was taken into the names of their kings and great personages, as was usual in the eastern nations. So *Vasthi*, the wife of *Abasuerus*, or *Va-eshti*, a great fire, *Esth. i. 9.* *Zeresh*, or *Zebar-esb*, the wife of *Haman*, *ch. v. 10.* the brightness of fire; and it appears in *Astyages*, a king of the *Medes*. *Strabo* says<sup>r</sup>, some people called *Darius*, *Darieces*. *Casaubon*<sup>s</sup> thinks,

<sup>p</sup> In *Perficis*, ut supra, p. 641. 643.      <sup>q</sup> Hiller. ut supra, p. 635.      <sup>r</sup> *Geograph. l. 16. p. 540.*      <sup>s</sup> *Comment. in ib. p. 217.*

thinks, that *Strabo* wrote *Δαριασνης*, *Dariaoues*, which is near the *Hebrew* punctuation.

I HAVE sent the following Differtation into the world, not to revive the controverfy about the things treated on in it, nor with any expectation of putting an end to it ; no doubt, but some will be nibbling at it : and tho' I may be very unfit to engage further in this controverfy, through weight of years upon me, and through the duties of my office, and other work upon my hands, some third person may perhaps arife, to defend what may be thought defensible in it. Should any truly learned gentleman do me the honour, to animadvert upon what I have written, I am sure of being treated with candour and decency ; but should I be attacked by sciolists, I expect nothing but petulance, supercilious airs, filly sneers and opprobrious language ; and who will be righteously treated with neglect and contempt.

To

To conclude; if what I have written should merit the attention of men of learning, and cause them to think again, though ever so little; and be a means of directing such, who are enquiring after these things; and of engaging such who may hereafter write on these subjects, to think more closely, to write with more care, caution and candour, and with less virulence, haughtiness and arrogance, than have appeared in some writings of late upon them, my end will be in a great measure answered.

A

E R R A T A.

Page 23. l. 23. for *Eber*, r. *Elam* his first-born. P. 62. l. 11. r. through the near likeness. P. 65. l. 3. r. *Gen.* xiv. 14. P. 92. l. 11. r. said. P. 113. l. 14. r. *הדרתא*. P. 128. l. ult. put a comma instead of a full stop. P. 155. l. 11. r. *Bameb*. l. 15. r. *If*. liv. 13. P. 244. l. 22. r. *מירדי*. l. 24. r. *מירדי*. P. 266. l. 16. r. *לבנה*. P. 267. l. 22. for when, r. where.

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