
T H E
P R E F A C E.

THE following Differtation has long lain by me; nor was it written at first with any design to publish it to the world; but was written at leisure-hours for my own amusement, and by way of essay to try how far back the antiquity of the things treated of in it could be carried. And what has prevailed upon me now to let it go into the world, and take its fate in it, are the confidence which some late writers on the opposite side have expressed, their contempt of others that differ from them, and the air of triumph they have assumed, as if victory was proclaimed on their side, and the controversy at

an end, which is far from being the case; and what seeming advantages are obtained, are chiefly owing to the indolence and sloth of men, who read only on one side of the question, and such who write one after another, and take things upon trust, without examining into them themselves, either through want of ability, or through unwillingness to be at any pains about it.

I CONFESS, it has given me offence to observe the *Jews* called by such opprobrious names, as villains, wilful corrupters of the *Hebrew* text, &c. It must be owned indeed, that they are very ignorant of divine things, and therefore the more to be pitied; and many of them are, no doubt, very immoral persons; but have we not such of both sorts among ourselves? yet, as bad as the *Jews* are, the worst among them, I believe, would sooner die, than wilfully corrupt any part of the *Hebrew* Bible. We should not bear

witness against our neighbours, let them be as bad as they may in other things. I have never, as yet, seen nor read any thing, that has convinced me that they have wilfully corrupted any one passage in the sacred text^a, no not that celebrated one in *Pſ.* xxii. 16. Their copiers indeed may have made mistakes in transcribing, which are common to all writings; and the *Jews* meeting with a various reading, they may have preferred one to another, which made most for their own sentiments; nor is this to be wondered at, nor are they to be blamed for it. It lies upon us to rectify the mistake, and confirm the true reading.

It does not appear, that there ever was any period of time, in which the *Jews* would or could have corrupted the *Hebrew* text; not before the coming of Christ, for then they could have no disposition nor temptation to it; and to

^a See a good Defence of the *Jews* by F. Simon against Leo Castrius, Morinus and Vossius in his *Disquisit. Critic.* c. ix. and x.

attempt it would have been to have risked the credit of the prophecies in it; nor could they be sure of any advantage by it: and after the coming of Christ, it was not in their power to do it without detection. There were the twelve apostles of Christ, who were with him from the beginning of his ministry, and the seventy disciples preachers of his gospel, besides many thousands of *Jews* in *Jerusalem*, who in a short time believed in him; and can it be supposed that all these were without an *Hebrew* Bible? and particularly that learned man, the apostle *Paul*, brought up at the feet of a learned *Rabbi, Gamaliel*; and who out of those writings convinced so many that Jesus was the Christ, and who speaks of the *Jews* as having the privilege of the oracles of God committed to them *Rom. iii. 1, 2.* nor does he charge them, nor does he give the least intimation of their being chargeable, with the corruption of them; nor does

Christ, nor do any of the apostles ever charge them with any thing of this kind. And besides, there were multitudes of the *Jews* in all parts of the world at this time, where the apostles met with them and converted many of them to Christ, who, they and their fathers, had lived in a state of dispersion many years; and can it be thought, they should be without copies of the *Hebrew* Bible, whatever use they may be supposed to have made of the *Greek* version? so that it does not seem credible, that the *Jews* should have it in their power, had they an inclination to it, to corrupt the text without detection. And here I cannot forbear transcribing a passage from *Jerom*^b, who observes, in answer to those who say the *Hebrew* books were corrupted by the *Jews*, what *Origin* said, “ that
 “ Christ and his apostles, who re-
 “ proved the *Jews* for other crimes,
 “ are quite silent about this, the

^b Comment. in Esaiam, c. 6. fol. 14. G.

“greatest of all.” *Jerom* adds “if
 “they should say, that they were cor-
 “rupted after the coming of the Lord,
 “the Saviour, and the preaching of
 “the apostles; I cannot forbear laugh-
 “ing, that the Saviour, the evange-
 “lists and apostles should so produce
 “testimonies that the *Jews* afterwards
 “should corrupt.” To all which may
 be added, that the *Jews* are a people
 always tenacious of their own wri-
 tings, and of preserving them pure and
 incorrupt: an instance of this we
 have in their *Targums* or paraphrases,
 which they had in their own hands
 hundreds of years, before it appears
 they were known by Christians; in
 which interval, it lay in their power to
 make what alterations in them they
 pleased; and had they been addicted
 to such practices, it is marvellous they
 did not; since they could not but ob-
 serve, there were many things in them,
 that Christians were capable of impro-
 ving against them, should they come

into their hands, as in fact they have done; and yet they never dared to make any alterations in them: and had they done any thing of this kind, it is most reasonable to believe, they would have altered the passages relating to the Messiah; and yet those, and which are many, stand full against them. Indeed, according to *Origen*^c, as some think, the *Targums* were known very early, and improved against the *Jews* in favour of Jesus being the true Messiah, agreeable to the sense of the prophets; since he makes mention of a dispute between *Jason*, an *Hebrew-Christian*, supposed to be the same as in *Acts* xvii. 5. and *Papiscus*, a *Jew*; in which, he says, the Christian shewed from *Jewish* writings, that the prophecies concerning Christ agreed with Jesus; and what else, says Dr. *Allix*^d, could he mean by *Jewish* writings, but the *Targums*?

^c Contra Celsum, l. 4. p. 199.
the ancient Jewish Church, &c. p. 376.

^d Judgment of

though it is possible the writings of the Old Testameant may be meant, by which the apostle *Paul* also proved that Jesus was the Christ. However, if the *Targums* are meant, they do not afterwards appear to have been known by christian writers for some hundreds of years.

It may be said, perhaps, that the *Jews* are self-condemned, and that it may be proved out of their own mouths and writings, that they have in some places wilfully corrupted the *Hebrew* text; as the *thirteen* places they own they changed, on the account of *Ptolemy* king of *Egypt*; and also what they call *Tikkun Sopherim*, the ordination of the scribes, and *Ittur Sopherim*, the ablation of the scribes: as to the first of these, it is true, that they say*, when *Ptolemy* king of *Egypt* desired to have their law, and seventy men sent to translate it, that

* T. Hieros. Megillah, fol. 71. 4. T. Bab. Megillah, fol. 9. 1. Massechet Sopherim, c. 1. f. 8. fol. 8. 1.

they made alterations in the copy they sent ; but then it should be observed, that they do not say they made any alteration in their own copies, only in that they sent to him ; and which appears also to be a mere fable of the *Talmudists*, and that in fact no such alterations were made : but the story was invented, partly to bring into disgrace the *Greek* version of the *Seventy*, as if it was made after a corrupt copy ; and partly to make the minds of their own people easy, who disapproved of that work, and kept a fast on occasion of it^f. My reason for this is, because the *Greek* version does not correspond with the pretended alterations. There are but two places out of the thirteen, which agree with them ; the one is in *Gen. ii. 2.* which the *Seventy* translate, *and on the sixth day God ended his work* ; the other is in *Numb. xvi. 15.* which they render *I have not taken the desire of any one of them*, instead of one

^f Schulchan Aruch, par. I. c. 580. f. 3.

as from them ; neither of which seem to arise from a bad copy before them, but from some other cause. The first of them is not peculiar to the *Septuagint*, it is the same in the *Samaritan Pentateuch* ; and the latter plainly arises from the similarity of the letters *Daleth* and *Resh*. There is a third, *Exod.* xii. 40. in which there is some agreement, but not exact. Besides, neither *Philo* the *Jew*, nor *Josephus*, though they wrote very particularly of this affair of *Ptolemy*, yet make not the least mention of these alterations, in the copy sent to him, nor in the translation of it. They observe, there never was any change made in the sacred writings, from the time of the writing of them to the age in which they lived. *Philo* says^{*}, the *Jews*,
 “ for the space of more than two
 “ thousand years, never changed one
 “ word of what was written by *Moses*,
 “ but would rather die a thousand

* Apud Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. l. 8. c. 6. p. 357.

“ times, than receive any thing con-
 “ trary to his laws and customs.”

Josephus^b observes, “ it is plain, in
 “ fact. what credit we give to our
 “ writings, for that so long a space of
 “ time has run out, yet no one ever
 “ dared, neither to add, nor to take
 “ away, nor to change any thing.”

And *Walton*ⁱ himself, I observe, reck-
 ons this story about the alterations for
 the sake of King *Ptolemy*, to be a
Rabbinical fable; and, as such, *Je-*
rom^k had got a hint of it from one of
 his *Rabbins*.

THE *Tikkun Sopherim*, or ordination
 of the scribes, is supposed to be the
 order of *Ezra*, as it is said in the *Ma-*
sorah on *Exod.* xxxiv. 11. and on
Numb. xii. 12. and of his colleagues;
 though some think^l it is no other than
 the order or instruction of the inspired
 writers themselves. It respects eigh-
 teen passages in the Bible, so expres-

^b Contra Apion, l. 1. c. 8. ⁱ Prolegom. Polyglott. 9.
 f. 16. ^k Præfat. ad Quæst. Heb. Tom. 3. fol. 65. c.

^l Buxtorf. Epist. Glassio in Philolog. Sacr. p. 40.

fed, as that some smatterers in knowledge might gather from the context, that something else is intended than what is written; and so suspect a corruption in the text, and take upon them to alter it. Now this ordination of the scribes, as it is called, is so far from implying a corruption itself, and from encouraging an attempt to make an alteration in the text, that it is just the reverse; it is an ordination that the text should be read no otherwise than it is; and would have it remarked, that the words so read, and which are the words of the inspired writer, contain an *Euphemy* in them, what is decent and becoming the majesty of God; when, if they were read, as the context might be thought to require they should be read, they would express what is derogatory to the glory of the Divine Being. Thus, in the first of the places, this ordination respects, *Gen. xviii. 22. Abraham stood yet before the Lord; it*

might seem to some from the context, that the Lord descended to stand before *Abraham*; but as this might be thought derogatory to the glory of God, the inspired writer chose to express it as he has done,; and the design of what is called the ordination of the scribes, is to establish it, and to admonish that none should dare to alter it^m; and so it was to prevent an alteration, and not to make one; they made no change at all, far be it from them, as *Elias Levita* saysⁿ. As for the *Ittur Sopherim*, or ablation of the scribes, that is only the removal of a superfluous *Vau* in five places^o; not that it was in the text, and removed from it by them, but what the common people pronounced in reading, as if it was there; which reading the scribes forbid, to secure and preserve the integrity of the text; and which

^m Halichot Olam, p. 47, 48. Præfat. Ben Chayim ad Bibl. Heb. Buxtorf. fol. 2. Buxtorf. Talmud. Lexic. Col. 2631. ⁿ In Tisbi, p. 270. ^o Baal Aruch, in voce וָאֵן Præfat Ben Chayim ut supra. Buxtorf. ut supra. Col. 1597, 1598.

prohibition of it to the common people, is called a taking it away; though in reality it never was in the text, only pronounced by the vulgar.

THERE is a passage in the *Talmud*^p, produced by some^q, as a proof that the *Jews* studiously corrupted the scriptures, and allowed of it, when an end was to be answered by it; which is this, “it is better that one letter be
“rooted out of the law, than that the
“name of God should be prophaned
“openly;” but their sense is not that any letter should be taken, or that it was lawful to take any letter out of any word in the law, to alter the sense of it, in order to serve that, or any other purpose; but that a lesser command should give way to a greater: as for instance, that the law concerning not putting children to death for the sins of their parents, and of not suffering bodies hanged on a tree to

^p T. Bab. Yevamot, fol. 79. 1.
de Sincer. Heb. l. 1. Exercitat. 1. c. 2.

^q Vid. Morin.

remain so in the night, should give way to a greater command concerning sanctifying the name of God publicly ; as in the case of *Saul's* sons being given to the *Gibeonites* to be put to death, and whose bodies continued hanging a considerable time, which is the case under consideration in the *Talmudic* passage referred to ; and the sense is, that it was better that the law in *Deut.* xxiv. 16. should be violated, rather than the name of God should be prophaned ; which would have been the case, if the sons of *Saul* had not been given up to the *Gibeonites* to be put to death for their father's sins, because of the oath of *Joshua* and the princes of *Israel* to them. The falsifications charged upon the *Jews* by *Justin* and *Origen* respect not the *Hebrew* text, but the *Septuagint* version ; and even, with respect to that, *Trypho*, the *Jew*, rejects the charge brought by *Justin* as incredible ; whe-

ther, says he^r, they have detracted from the scripture, God knows; it seems incredible.

It has been very confidently affirmed, that there is no mention made of the *Hebrew* vowel-points and accents, neither in the *Misnab* nor in the *Talmud*: and this is said by some learned men, who, one would think, were capable of looking into those writings themselves, and not take things upon trust, and write after other authors, without seeing with their own eyes, and examining for themselves, whether these things be so or no; in this they are very culpable, and their mistakes are quite inexcusable. But to hear some men prate about the *Talmud*, a book, perhaps, which they never saw; and about the *Masorah* and *Masoretic* notes, one of which, as short as they be, they could never read, is quite intolerable. These men are like such the apostle speaks of, on

^r Justin. Dialog. cum Tryphone, p. 297. 299.

another account, who *understand*, *neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*. What is this *Masorab*^{*}? who are these *Masoretes*? and what have they done, that such an outrageous clamour is raised against them? to me, they seem to be an innocent sort of men; who, if they have done no good, have done no hurt. Did they invent the vowel-points, and add them to the text, against which there is so much wrath and fury vented? to assert this is the height of folly[†]; for if they were the authors of the points, the inventors of the art of pointing, and reduced it to certain rules agreeable to the nature of the language, and were expert in that art, as, no doubt, they were, why did not they point the Bible regularly, and according to the art of pointing at once? why did they

* Plane divina res est Hebræorum Critica, quam ipsi Massoram vocant. Is. Casaubon. Epist. ep. 390. Perthæio, p. 467.

† Punctationem Hebraicam non esse Massora, neque dici, norunt qui nondum ære lavantur. Owen. Theologoumen. par. 4. Digress. i. p. 293.

leave so many anomalies or irregular punctuations? and if, upon a survey of their work, they observed the irregularities they had committed, why did not they mend their work, by casting out the irregular points and putting regular ones in the text itself, and not point to them in the margin? or there direct to the true reading? is it usual for authors to animadvert on their own work in such a manner? if they make mistakes in their work at first, is it usual in an after edition, and following editions, to continue such mistakes in the body of the work, and put the corrections of them in the margin? The *Masorettes*, had they been the inventors of the vowel-points, would never have put them to a word in the text, to which they were not proper, but what better agree with a word placed by them in the margin; had they invented them, they would have put proper ones to the word in the text;

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

work itself shews ; and *Walton*ⁿ, 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 *Masoretes* 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 “

ⁿ Prolegom. 8. f. 12.
mentary on *Job* ix. 34.

^w *Chappelow's* Commentary 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 *Masoretes* al-
 so^x, 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*^y numbered the
 verses of the book of *Proverbs*, and
 says they were 915, exactly as the
Masorah. Some words, through length

^x Vid. Croii Observ. in Nov. Test. c. 1. & c. 10.
^y 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 so²; 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, an-

² Maimon. Moreh Nevochim, par. 3. c. 8.

other *English* word or words were put to be read less offensive. And, by the way, from the change of words proposed in those passages, may be drawn an argument in favour of the antiquity of the *Masoretes*. For this part of their work must be done, whilst the *Hebrew* language was a living language, when only the difference of words offensive or not offensive to the ear could be discerned, and a change of them necessary : and certain it is, these notes were made before the *Talmud*, for mention is made of them in it^a: yea, these variations are followed by the ancient *Targums*, by *Onkelos*, and the *Jerusalem* on *Deut.* xxviii. 27. 30. and not only by *Pseudo-Jonathan* on 1 *Sam.* v. 6. 9. 2 *Kings* vi. 25. x. 27. and xviii. 27. but by the true *Jonathan* on *Is.* xiii. 16. and xxxvi. 12. and *Zech.* xiv. 2. who and *Onkelos* are supposed to live in the first century. As for the word *Sebirim*,

^a T. Bab. Megillah, fol. 25. 2.

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 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^b.

^b 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^c, “ *Afferemoth* in *Jer.* (xxxi. 40.) for which, in a *Hebrew* copy it is written *Sedemoth*, which *Aquila* interprets *suburbana*.” And which reading is preferred by *Jerom*^d, 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 *Masoretes* 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, *Junius* and *Tremellius*, our own translators, and the *Dutch*^e, 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

^c De loc. Heb. fol. 89. B.
Hieremiam, c. 31. 40. fol. 161. F.
Philolog. Heb. Mixt. Dissert. 10. f. 9. p. 84.

^d Comment. in
^e *Leusden*,

Pſ. 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 לענוי *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 *Masoretes* 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 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*^f has reckoned those of the *Masoretas* 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 en-

^f 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 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^s : 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

^s Amamæ Antibarb. 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 Usser. 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 science: 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 ther

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 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 *Masoretes*, 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

Masoretes 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 קֵרֵי *Kere* read, but is קִרִי; and is either the same with קִרְיִי something read, or with קִרְיָהּ a reading, *i. e.* a various reading. And if the *Masoretes* 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 תִּסְדֵּר Ps. 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 *Pſ.* 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 ^a 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

^a T. Bab. Eruvin, fol. 19. 1. et Yoma, fol. 87. 1.

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, *Mascler'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 *Masoretes* 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*ⁱ and *Plutarch*^k 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-*

ⁱ In *Persicis ad Calcem* Herodot. Ed. Gronov. p. 687.

^k In *Artaxerxe*, p. 1012.

gi, portended a reign of thirty years¹, 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*^m: hence, the god of the *Persians* is called *Oromazes*, and sometimes *Oromasdes*ⁿ, *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*^o: as for

¹ Cicero de divinatione, l. i. Vid. Hiller. Onomastic. sacr. p. 615. 617. ^m Vid. Bochart. Phaleg. l. i. c. 15. col. 61. ⁿ Plutarch. ut supra, p. 1026. et in Vita Alexandri, p. 682. ^o 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*^p, and is a word consisting of four parts, and signifies a great, vast, vehement fire^q; 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 *Ahasuerus*, 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^r, some people called *Darius*, *Darieces*. *Casaubon*^s

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

thinks, that *Strabo* wrote *Δαριανης*, *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 fure of being treated with candour and decency ; but should I be attacked by fciolifts, I expect nothing but petulance, supercilious airs, silly sneers and opprobrious language ; and who will be righteoufly treated with neglect and contempt.

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.

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. חֲדָתָא. 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. מִירְדֵי. l. 24. r. מִירְדֵי. P. 266. l. 16. r. לְבָנָה. P. 267. l. 22. for when, r. where.