

**THE PURITY AND
INTEGRITY OF THE HEBREW AND GREEK
TEXTS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

BY

JOHN OWEN

EDITED AND PUT INTO SIMPLER ENGLISH

BY

GEOFFREY STONIER

All Bible quotations are from the King James Bible), Authorised Version

A DEFENCE OF THE PURITY AND
INTEGRITY OF THE HEBREW AND GREEK
TEXTS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

WITH SOME CONSIDERATIONS OF THE *PROLEGOMENA*
AND APPENDIX TO THE LATE “BIBLIA POLYGLOTA”

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ANALYSIS
BY THE ORIGINAL EDITOR
REV. WILLIAM H. GOOLD, D.D.

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PREFACE
BY THE ORIGINAL EDITOR
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The Epistle Dedicatory to the three following treatises is full of curious information, and deserves to be read, in order to understand our author's true position in his controversy with Bishop Brian Walton, the learned editor of the London *Polyglot*. Surprise has been expressed that under one general title Owen should have included tracts on subjects so different in their nature as the divine origin of Scripture, the purity of the Hebrew and Greek text of Scripture, and the doctrinal errors of the Society of Friends. The last tract, too, was first written, and on the subordinate title prefixed to it bears the date 1658, whereas the others belong to the succeeding year. The bond of connection among the treatises is, however, sufficiently plain. In refuting the doctrine of the inward light, as held by the Quakers, he was discriminating his own profound and original views of the self-evidencing power of the Word from a dogma with which they might be confounded; and as in the first treatise he had expressed himself in language rather unguarded and too unqualified, about the providential care of God over every letter and syllable of revelation, he was prompted to question some features in Walton's Polyglot, which had just been published, and in which thousands of various readings were exhibited. These various readings seemed to refute the position he had taken, that the Scriptures had been providentially kept in their original integrity. How far he erred on this point, and to what extent his views have been misapprehended, are discussed in the prefatory note to the "*Considerations on the Prolegomena and Appendix to the Biblia Polyglota*".

As this Polyglot was the occasion of the following Epistle and of the tract to which we have just alluded, it may be necessary to glance at its history and character. It appears that Walton issued the description and prospectus of it in 1652, and before the close of that year nearly £4,000 had been raised by subscription for the work. The Council of State promised to advance £1,000, and the paper to be used for it was exempted from duty.

In May 1653 the subscriptions had risen to £9,000, and in the autumn of that year the impression was begun. Next year the first volume was completed, containing Prolegomena which are still a treasure of sacred criticism, and have been thrice republished separately, and the Pentateuch in the Hebrew, the Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Targum of Onkelos, the Samaritan, and the Arabic: in 1655 the second volume appeared, comprising the historical books in the same languages and versions, with the exception of the Samaritan: in 1658 the third, comprehending the poetic and prophetic books from Job to Malachi, with the addition of an Ethiopic version of the Book of Psalms: and in 1657 the fourth, containing all the apocryphal books; the fifth, including all the books of the New Testament, in the Greek, Syriac, Persian, Vulgate, Arabic, and Ethiopic; and the sixth, composed of various readings, critical remarks, etc. Walton's assistants in this magnificent work

were Bishop James Ussher, Dr. Edmund Castell, Thomas Hyde, Dr. Edward Pococke, Dr. John Lightfoot, Alexander Huish, Samuel Clarke, the Dutch protestant minister Louis De Dieu, and others.

The terms in which Oliver Cromwell is mentioned in the preface are as follows —

“Primo autem commemorandi, quorum favore chartam a vectigalibus immunem habuimus, quod quinque abhinc annis a Concilio secretiori primo concessum, postea a SERENISSIMO D. PROTECTORE ejusque Concilio, operis promovendi cause, benigne confirmatum et continuatum erat.”

About the time of the Restoration, two leaves of the preface were cancelled, the name of Cromwell was expunged from the list of benefactors, and a dedication to Charles II. prefixed, stigmatising Cromwell as “the great dragon”, and insinuating that he wished to extort from Walton the honour of the dedication —

“Insidiabatur partui nostro draco the magnus, et per tyrannidis suae mancipia hoc agebat, ut in ipso partu opprimeretur, nisi ipsi ut patronae et protectori dicaretur.”

The change could surely have been effected in a way more honourable to Walton, and without needless reflections on the memory of the Protector, his obligations to whom could not be concealed and should not have been forgotten. He was rewarded in 1660 with the bishopric of Chester, which he enjoyed only for the short space of a year. There are few names on the bright roll of British scholarship and learning to which Biblical literature has been more indebted.

PREFATORY NOTE
BY THE ORIGINAL EDITOR
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THERE is a tendency to acquiesce in the general verdict against our author for the part he took in the controversy with Walton on the subject of the London Polyglot, without any very careful inquiry into the grounds on which it rests. Dr. Owen, we are convinced, has been the victim of unintentional misrepresentation on this point, partly through the dexterous management of Walton, partly through his own want of caution in properly defining his position, and partly because on some points he was completely in error. Dr. Twells, in his biography of Pococke, accuses Owen of writing against the Polyglot; and Mr. Todd, in his biography of Walton, bitterly re-echoes the charge. Even his friendly biographer, Mr. Orme, intimates that he viewed the Polyglot "With jealousy or disapproval." No statement could be more unfounded. Transparent honesty and perfect truthfulness were leading features of his character; and we cannot think of him as speaking in any other terms but those of warm and unfeigned admiration, when he eulogises the Polyglot as "a noble collection", "a great and useful work", "which he much esteemed"; and when he declares that he "would never fail, on all just occasions, to commend the usefulness of the work, and the learning, diligence, and pains, of the worthy persons that have brought it forth." Dr. Chalmers, also, in reference to this controversy, censures Owen as "illiterate" for the views he expressed in it, and contrasts "the lordly insolence of the bishop" with "the outrageous violence of the puritan." There is more of alliteration than truth in the contrast. Walton's short-lived bishopric did not begin till after his controversy with Owen; and the charge of "outrageous violence" against the latter appears to have been suggested by the misrepresentation of his antagonist. Owen professed a desire to conduct the dispute "with Christian candour and moderation of spirit"; and, on the whole, he redeemed his pledge.

On the minute and multifarious details of biblical literature, our author assuredly must yield the palm to Walton. It was not his province. But the real merits of the controversy between them involve two questions, and, by his opinions on these, it must be judged whether the condemnation so unsparingly heaped on him is altogether well-founded. These questions relate to the various readings in the original text of Scripture, and to the antiquity of Hebrew punctuation.

(1) On the subject of various readings, Owen submitted, in the epistle dedicatory, at the beginning of the former treatise, ample evidence that Papists had resorted on a grand scale to the artifice of magnifying the corruption of the text in order to exalt the Vulgate, and support the claim of their church to infallibility. As critical research multiplied, the various readings by the inspection of the ancient codices, Protestant divines took alarm, and, trembling for the ark of truth, discounted such inquiries.

That Owen was altogether free from the panic cannot be affirmed. We must sympathise, however, with any pious jealousy for the honour of the holy oracles, in an age when sound principles of criticism had not been clearly established. It will be new, moreover, to many readers, who have hitherto assumed as true the charge against Owen of ignorant antipathy to the duties and advantages of sacred criticism, when they are told that he not only admitted the existence of various readings, but held that, if any others could be discovered from a collecting of manuscripts, they "deserved to be considered", differing in this respect from Dr. Whitby, who, at a later period, in 1710, published his "*Examen Variantium Lectionum*" in opposition to Mill's edition of the New Testament, taking up ground from which Owen would have recoiled, and insisting that every word in the common text stood as originally written — "*in its omnibus lectionem textus defendi posse.*"

Owen acknowledged and proclaimed the fact that, in spite of all the variety in the readings, not a single doctrine was vitally affected by them. In regard to them, he objected to the unnecessary multiplication of very trivial differences — an objection of no moment, stated in a single sentence, and never afterwards pressed. He objected further to the practice of Cappell, in making innovations on the received text by the authority of translations only, on the ground that these translations were made from copies *essentially different* from any now extant. He exonerates Walton from this error, but deems him not sufficiently careful to refrain from admitting into his Polyglot readings gathered from such a source. It was against Cappell's theory that he chiefly wrote; and some strong expressions used with regard to it are quoted by Walton in his reply to the following treatise, as directed sweepingly against the Polyglot. Few now would ratify the innovations of Cappell.

Dr. Davidson, in his standard work on biblical criticism, "sighs over the groundless conjectures introduced into parts of the Old Testament text by Cappell." Owen's main objection, however, reproduced frequently in the course of his treatise, was against the attempt to amend the text by mere conjecture. There is still a diversity of opinion as to the legitimacy of this source of criticism. Griesbach repudiated the use of it in his edition of the New Testament. Marsh would avail himself of it in regard to the Old Testament, but not in regard to the New. Davidson reckons the cautious use of it lawful in regard to both. At all events, Walton himself professed to discard it as an instrument of criticism; and yet, as Owen shows, he admitted into the Polyglot the conjectural emendations of Grotius. Even Simon, an admirer of Grotius, while commending his notes, complains that he "sometimes multiplies the various readings without necessity." So far, therefore, as it was a question of principle between them, Walton was not in advance of Owen. So far as it was a question of fact, Owen had rather the best of the dispute.

2. As to Hebrew punctuation, Owen held the pointings to be part of Scripture, and as sacred and ancient as the other elements of the text. Here, he may have erred, but it was in honourable company — with the Buxtorfs, Gerard, Glass, Voet, Flacius Illyricus, Lightfoot, Leusden, and others. Cappell, in 1624, though wrong on the question of criticism, adopted the opinions of a learned Jew, Elias Levita, who wrote in 1520, and of some Jewish and Christian writers even before the days of Levita, and first took strong ground in denying the antiquity of the Hebrew points, and tracing them to the school of the Masoretes. Still, the question was not determined. Schultens, in 1737, followed by Michaelis, adopted an intermediate course,

contending that some points had been in use from the earliest ages of the language, Eichhorn and Gesenius were inclined to believe in the existence of some points before the Talmud and the days of Jerome. It was only in 1830 that Hupfeld is considered to have put the question to rest by proving the Masoretic punctuation to have been unknown both to the authors of the Talmud and to Jerome. It is a question which it has taken the discussion of centuries to settle, and some may even yet be disposed to think that all the difficulties connected with Hupfeld's view are not eliminated from it, and that some apparatus corresponding to the points must have been needed to secure uniformity in Hebrew pronunciation during successive ages, and in all parts of the world, wherever in ancient times there were Jews to speak their own tongue or read their own Scriptures.

Owen erred in various matters of detail; but the same allegation, though not to the same extent, might be made respecting Walton, who advanced opinions in the controversy which no modern scholar would endorse with his sanction. Owen erred also in betraying a nervous sensitivity, lest an imposing array of various readings should invalidate the authority of the sacred text. The spirit in which Walton replied, however, cannot be justified — changing the hypothetical reasonings of his adversary into positive averments, and applying to the Polyglot what he wrote against Bellarmine, Leo Castrius, Morin, and Cappell, whose principles of criticism were notoriously unsound and dangerous. Owen begins the following treatise by stating that, after he had finished, but before he had sent off the manuscript of the preceding treatise "On the Original of Scripture", the London Polyglot had reached him. "A palpable untruth!" exclaimed Walton, "for in that treatise there are two references to the Polyglot" — as if they could not have been inserted after he had seen it, the more especially as, on seeing it, Owen declares that he took time for consideration. It is to be wished that he had taken more time, and been more guarded, and less rash on this occasion. He would have been less open in minor details to the rebukes of his learned and haughty antagonist; with whom, after all, we cannot help feeling some degree of sympathy, in his fears lest the rude breath of jealous criticism should scorch the laurel due to his brow for devising and completing that stupendous monument of enterprise, learning, and industry — the *Biblia Sacra Polyglota Londini*.

CHAPTER 1

The occasion of this discourse — The danger of supposing corruptions in the original manuscripts of the Scripture — The great usefulness of the *Biblia Polyglota* — The grounds of the following critical remarks — The assertions proposed to be defended laid down — Their weight and importance — Several principles in the *Prolegomena* prejudicial to the truth contended for laid down — Those principles formerly asserted by others — Reasons for the opposition made to them.

WHEN the whole of my little preceding treatise was finished and ready to be given to the printer, there came into my hands the *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* to the *Biblia Polyglota* lately published. Upon the first sight of that volume, I was somewhat startled with that bulky collection of various reading which the appendix puts forward to the view of everyone that casts an eye over it. Within a while after, I found that others also, men of learning and judgement, had understood that work with views not unlike those my own thoughts had suggested to me. Afterwards, considering what I had written about the providence of God in the preservation of the original copies of Scripture in the former discourse, fearing lest, from that great appearance of variations in the original copies, and those of all the translations, published with so great care and diligence, there might arise some unconquerable objections against the truth of what I had asserted, I judged it necessary to stop the progress of those thoughts until I could get time to look through the Appendix and the various lections in that great volume brought to my notice, with the grounds and reasons for them in the *Prolegomena*.

Having now discharged that *task* and (as something I felt) *duty*, I beg leave to deliver my thoughts on some things contained in them, which possibly men of perverse minds might wrest to the prejudice of my former assertions — to the prejudice of the certainty of divine truth brought to us through the providence of God in the original manuscripts of Scripture.

What use has been made, and is as yet made, in the world, of this supposition that corruptions have entered into the original manuscripts of Scripture, which those various lections at first view seem to intimate, I need not go into in great detail. It is, in brief, the foundation of Mohammedanism (*Alcor. Azoar. 5*), the chiefest and principal prop of Popery, the only pretence of fanatical anti-scripturists, and the root of much hidden atheism in the world. At present there was sent to me by a very learned person, on my discourse on this subject, a treatise in English, with the Latin title of "*Fides Divina*" (Divine Faith) where its nameless author, on this very foundation, labours to subvert and utterly render useless the whole Scripture. How far such as he may be strengthened in their infidelity by a consideration of these things, time will tell.

Had there not been, then, a necessity laid upon me either utterly to desist from pursuing any thoughts of publishing the foregoing treatise, or else giving an account of some things contained in the *Prolegomena* and *Appendix*, I should, for many reasons, have abstained from this employment. But the truth is, not only what I had written in the first chapter about the providence of God in the preservation of the Scripture, but also the main arguments afterward insisted on by me concerning the self-evidencing power and light of the Scripture, receiving, in my understanding, a great weakening by the things I shall now speak to, if owned and received as they are proposed to us, I could not excuse myself from missing the hazard of giving my thoughts about them.

The wise man tells us that he considered “all travail, and every right work, and that for this a man is envied of his neighbour”; which, says he, is “vanity and vexation of spirit.” (Eccles. 4:4). It cannot be denied that this often comes about through the corruption of the hearts of men, that when works, rightful works, are with most difficulty brought forth in the world, their authors are repaid with envy for their labour; which mixes all the issues of the best efforts of men with vanity and vexation of spirit. Jerome of old and Erasmus lately are the usual examples of this kind. That I have any of that guilt in a strange manner thrust upon me with reference to this work of publishing the *Biblia Polyglota*, which I much esteem, or the authors and contrivers of it, whom I don’t know, I can, with due consideration, and indeed do, utterly deny. The Searcher of all hearts knows I am not lying. And what could possibly infect me with that leaven? I neither profess any deep skill in the learning used in that work, nor am I ever likely to be engaged in anything that could be set up in competition with it, nor did I ever know that there was such a person in the world as the chief author of this edition of the Bible unless I have read it. I shall, then, never fail, on all just occasions, to commend the usefulness of this work, and the learning, diligence, and pains, of the worthy people that brought it out; nor would I be lacking to their full praise if I produced such a work, and even an entrance into this discourse with their due commendation might be liable to misrepresentation.

But whereas we have not only the Bible published, but also the private opinions of men, and collections of various readings (real or pretendedly, as we shall see later), leading some of them, as I understand, to the disadvantage of a great and important truth that I have been pleading for, returned to us. I hope it will not be grievous to any, nor a matter of offence, if, using the same liberty that they have, whose hands have been most eminent in this work, I do, with, I hope, Christian candour and moderation of spirit, briefly disclose my thoughts about some things proposed by them.

The renowned learned prefacer to the Arabic translation in this edition of it tells us that the work of translating the Pentateuch into that language was performed by a Jew, who took good care to give openly his own private opinions, and so render them authentic by importing them into the text of his translation.

It is not of such an attempt that I have any cause to complain of, or shall so do in reference to these *Prolegomena* and *Appendix*. Only I might have wished (with submission to better judgements to be made) that, in the publishing of the Bible, the sacred text, with the translations, and such bare historical accounts of their originals

and preservation as was necessary to lay them fair and square before the judgement of the reader, had not been clogged with disputes and pleas for particular private opinions, imposed on them with too much advantage on the minds of men by their constant straying into canonical truth.

But my present considerations being not to be extended beyond the concern of the truth which in this discourse I have pleaded for, I shall first propose a brief abstract of it, as to that part of it which seems to be especially concerned, and then lay down what to me appears prejudicial in the volumes now under debate, not doubting but a fuller account of the whole will by someone or other be speedily offered to their learned and impartial readers. The sum of what I am pleading for, as to the particular head to be defended is —

“That as the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were immediately and entirely given out by God himself, his mind being in them presented to us without the least intervening of such mediums and ways as were capable of giving change or alteration to the least *iota* or syllable; so, by his good and merciful providential dispensation, in his love for his Word and church, his whole Word, as first given out by him, is preserved for us entire in the original languages; where, shining in its own beauty and lustre (as also in all translations, so far as they faithfully represent the original manuscripts), it presents itself to the consciences of men without other foreign help or assistance because of its divine origin and authority.”

Now, the several assertions or propositions contained in this position are to me very important truths, that I should not be blamed in the least by my own spirit, nor, I hope, by any others, in contending for them, judging them to be fundamental parts of the “faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude verse 3); and though some of them may seem to be less weighty than others, yet they are so joined together that, by the removal or destruction of any one of them, our interest in the others is utterly taken away. It will assuredly be granted that the persuasion of the coming forth of the Word immediately from God, which is what I am pleading for, is the foundation of all faith, hope, and obedience. But what, I pray, will it advantage us that God “once” delivered his Word, if we are not assured also that that Word has been, by his special care and providence, preserved entire and uncorrupt to us, or that it does not prove itself to be his Word in being so preserved? May we say that blessed were the ages past, who received the Word of God in its unquestioned power and purity, when it shone brightly in its own glorious native light, and was free from those defects and corruptions which, through the default of men over a long period of time it has contracted. But as for us, finding such defects in some manuscripts, we do not know easily where to lay a sure foundation of believing that this book, rather than any other, contains what is left to us of that Word of his. It is impossible, then, that we should ever come to any certainty about almost any individual word or expression whether it is from God or not.

Far be it from the thoughts of any good man, that God, whose covenant with his church, is that his Word and Spirit shall never depart from it (Is. 59:21; Mat. 5:18; 1 Pet. 1:25; 1 Cor. 11:23; Mat. 28:20), has left us with uncertainties about the things that are the foundation of all that faith and obedience that he requires at our hands.

As, then, I have, in the following treatise, proved, as I hope, the self-evidencing light and power of Scripture, let us now candidly, for the sake, and in pursuit of, the truth — dealing with a mind freed from prejudice and upsetting feelings, save only the trouble that arises from the necessity of dissenting from the authors of so useful a work — and address ourselves to a consideration of what seems in these *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* to impair the truth of the other assertions about the entire preservation of the Word as given out from God in the copies that yet remain with us. And this I shall do, not doubting that the authors themselves will fairly accept and weigh what is conscientiously offered.

As, then, with all thankfulness, I acknowledge that many things are spoken very honourably of the originals in these *Prolegomena*, and that they are in themselves absolutely preferred above any translation whatever, and asserted in general as the authentic rule of all versions, contrary to the thoughts of the publisher Jean Baptiste Morin (Morinus) of the great Parisian Bibles, and his infamous *hyperaspistes* (by Erasmus in 2 parts), so, as they stand in their aspect to the *Appendix* of various lections, there are both opinions and principles, confirmed by suitable practices, that are of the nature and importance mentioned earlier.

1. After a long dispute in this matter, it was determined that the Hebrew points (or vowels and accents) were a *novel invention* of some Jewish Rabbis, about five or six hundred years *after the proclamation of the gospel*.

Hence —

(1) An antiquity is ascribed to some *translations*, two or three at least, above and before the invention of these points, whose agreement with the original cannot, therefore, by just consequence, be tested by the present text, which is now pointed and accented.

(2) The whole credit of our reading and interpretation of the Scripture, as far as it is regulated by the present *punctuation*, depends solely on the faithfulness and skill of those Jews whose invention this work is asserted to be.

2. The sources are more than eight hundred Hebrew Bibles, which are various lections, partly gathered by some Jewish Rabbis out of ancient copies, and partly their critical amendments.

Therefore —

After these various lections, as they are esteemed, are presented to us in their own rightful order, in which they stand in the great Bibles (not surely to increase the bulk of diverse readings, or to present a face of new variety to a less attentive observer), but to prove that they are various lections as above described, and they are given us over a second time, as the method into which they are cast by Cappellus, the great patriarch of these mysteries

3. That there are such alterations of the *original* as we find in many places, they may be rectified by the translations that have been made of old.

And therefore —

Various lections may be observed and gathered out of those translations, by considering how they read in their copies, and in which they differ from those which we now enjoy.

4. It is also declared, that where any *gross faults* or corruptions have appeared in the originals, men may, by their faculty of critical conjecturing, amend them, and restore the native lections that were lost. Though, in general, without the authority of copies, this may not be allowed.

Therefore —

A collection of various readings out of Hugo Grotius, consisting for the most part in such conjectures, is presented to us in the *Appendix*.

5. The *voluminous bulk of various lections*, as nakedly exhibited, seems sufficient to generate scruples and doubts in the minds of men about the truth of what has been thought by many concerning the preservation of Scripture through the care and providence of God.

It is known to all men acquainted with things of this nature that, in all these there is no *new opinion* coined or maintained by the learnèd prefacer of these Bibles; the several mentioned have been asserted and maintained by several learnèd men. Had the opinion about them been kept within the sphere of men's private conceptions, in their own private writings, running the risk of men's judgements on their own strength and reputation, I should not, from my former discourse, have esteemed myself bothered with them. Everyone of us must give an account of himself to God. It is well for us if we are found holding to the foundation. If we build hay and stubble on it, though our work perish, we shall be saved. Let everyone in these things be fully persuaded in his own mind; it will bring me offence. It is their being laid as the foundation of the usefulness of these *Biblia Polyglota*, with an effort to make them catholic, not in their own strength, but in their appendage to the authority that, on good grounds, is expected for this work, that calls for a thorough consideration. All who find them stated in these *Prolegomena* may not, perhaps, have had leisure, may not, perhaps, have the ability, to know what is at issue the most in these things.

As I willingly grant, then, that some of these things may, without any great prejudice to the truth, be candidly debated among the learnèd, so taking them all together, placed in the advantages they now enjoy. I cannot but look upon them as an engine suited for the destruction of the important truth before I pleaded for, and as a fit weapon put into the hands of men of atheistic minds and principles, such as this age abounds with, to oppose the whole evidence of truth revealed in Scripture. I fear, with some, either the pretended *infallible judge* or the *depth of atheism* will be found to lie at the door of these considerations. *Hoc Ithacus vellet.* (Thus would Ithacus!) But the debate of the advantage of either Romanists or Atheists from this belongs to another place and season. Nor is the guilt of any consequences of this nature charged on the workmen, which yet may be feared from the work itself.

CHAPTER 2

Of the purity of the originals — The AUTOGRAPHA of the Scripture lost — That of Moses, how and how long preserved — Of the book found by Hillkiah — Of the AUTOGRAPHA of the New Testament — Of the first copies of the originals — The scribes of those copies not THEOPNEUSTOI (inspired by God) — What is ascribed to them — The great and incomparable care of the scribes over it — The whole Word of God, in every tittle of it, preserved entire in the copies of the original extant manuscripts — Heads of arguments to that purpose — What various lections are granted in the origin of the Old and New Testaments — Several considerations concerning them, manifesting them to be of no importance — That the Jews have not corrupted the text — The most probable instances are considered.

HAVING given an account of the *occasion* of this discourse, and mentioned the particulars that are, all or some of them, to be taken into further consideration before I proceed to their discussion, by way of addition and explanation to what has been said in the former treatise, I shall give a brief account of my understanding concerning the purity of the present copies of the Scripture, or rather copies in the original languages, which the church of God now, and has for many ages enjoyed, as her greatest treasure; in which it may more fully appear what it is I am pleading for and defending against the insinuations and pretences of the critics, already mentioned.

First, then, it is granted that the individual AUTOGRAPHA of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles have, in all probability, and as far as I know, utterly perished and got lost to the world; as also the copies of Ezra. The reports mentioned by some to the contrary are openly fictitious. The individual ink and parchment, the rolls or books that they originally wrote, could not, without a miracle, have been preserved from mouldering into the dust before this time. Nor doe it seem improbable that God was willing by their loss to reduce us to a nearer consideration of his care and providence in the preservation of every tittle contained in them. Had those individual writings been preserved, men would have been ready to adore them, as the Jews do their own *autographa* in their synagogues.

Moses, indeed, delivered his original copy of the Pentateuch in a public assembly to the Levites (that is, the sons of Korah), to be put into the sides of the ark, and there kept as a perpetual monument. (Deut. 31:25-26. That individual book was, I don't doubt, preserved until the destruction of the temple. There is, indeed, no mention

made of the book of the law in particular when the ark was solemnly carried into the holy place after the building of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 5:4-5); but the tabernacle of the congregation continued until then. That, and all that was in it, were said to be "brought up". (Verse 5) Now, the placing of the book in the sides of the ark being so solemn an ordinance, it was no doubt preserved; nor is there any opinion to the contrary. Some think the book found by Hilkiah in the days of Josiah was this *autographon* of Moses, which was placed in the sides of the ark. But it rather seems to have been some ancient sacred copy used in the service of the temple, and laid up there, as there was in the second temple, which was carried away in triumph to Rome. For besides that, he speaks of his findings in general in the house of the Lord, on the occasion of the work which was then done (2 Chron. 34:15), which was not in or about the holy place, where he, who was high priest, knew full well this book was kept. It does not appear that it was lawful for him to take that sacred *depositum* from its special archive and send it abroad, as he dealt with the book that he found; no, doubtless, it was altogether unlawful for him to have done so, as it was placed there by a special ordinance for a particular or special end.

After the destruction of the temple, all inquiry after that book was in vain. The author of the Second Book of Maccabees does not mention its being hidden in Nebo by Jeremiah with the ark and altar, or by Josiah, as say some of the Talmudists; nor was any of it of any importance if they had. Of the Scripture preserved in the temple at its last destruction, Josephus gives us a full account. (*De Bell. Jud. lib. 7, cap. 24*)

Secondly, regarding the Scriptures of the New Testament, it does not appear that the AUTOGRAPHA of the several writers of it were ever gathered into one volume, there being now not one church to keep them for the rest. The epistles, though immediately transcribed for the use of other churches (Col. 4:16), were doubtless kept in the several churches to which they were directed. From those original manuscripts, there were quickly made "transcribed copies", given out to "faithful men" (2 Tim. 2:1), while the infallible Spirit yet continued his guidance in an extraordinary way.

For the first transcribers of the original copies, and those who in succeeding ages have taken over this work from them, by which they have been propagated and continued down to us, in subservience to the providence and promise of God, we cannot say, as is vainly charged by Morinus and Cappellus, that they were all, or any of them "infallible and divinely inspired", so that it was impossible for them in anything to make a mistake. It is known, it is granted, that failings have been found amongst them, and that various lections have risen from them; of which more later.

Religious care and diligence in their work, with a due reverence for him with whom they had to do, is all we can ascribe to them. Not to acknowledge this freely in them, without clear and unquestionable evidence to the contrary, is highly uncharitable, impious, and ungracious. This care and diligence, I say, in subservience to the promise and providence of God, has produced the effect I am contending for; nor is anything further necessary to say. On this account, to argue, as some do, from the faults and mistakes of men, their obstinacy and negligence in transcribing the old heathen authors, such as Homer, Aristotle, Tully, we think it not tolerable in a Christian, or anyone that has the least sense of the nature and importance of the Word, or the care of God towards his church.

Shall we think that those who wrote out books in which they themselves and others were no more concerned than it is possible for men to be in the writings of the authors mentioned, and others like them, had as much reason to be careful and diligent in that they made sure, as those who knew and considered, that every letter and tittle that they were transcribing was part of the Word of the great God, in which the eternal concern of their own souls, and the souls of others, lay? Certainly, whatever may be looked for from the sacred care and diligence of men lying under a loving and careful respect from the promise and providence of God, may be rightly expected from those who undertook that work. However, we are ready to own all their failings whenever it can be proved. To assert such a thing in this case without proof is dangerous.

The Jews had a common saying among them — that to *alter one letter of the law is no less sin than to set the whole world on fire*. And shall we think that in writing it they took no more care than a man would do in writing out Aristotle or Plato, who for a very little portion of the world would willingly have done his best to get both their works out correctly?

Considering that the word to be transcribed was, every iota and tittle of it, the Word of the great God; that what was written, and as written, was proposed as his, as from him; that if any mistakes were made, innumerable eyes of men, owning their eternal concern to lie in that word, were open to discover it, and thousands of copies were extant to test it by; and all this known to, and confessed by, everyone that undertook this work — it is no hard matter to prove their care and diligence to have outdone that of other common scribes of heathen authors. The truth is, they are prodigious things that are related to the exact diligence and reverential care of the ancient Jews in this work, especially when they entrusted a copy to be a rule for the testing and standard of other private copies. Maimonides in his writing (chap. 8:3-4), tells us that Ben Asher spent many years in the careful, exact writing out of the Bible. Let anyone consider the twenty things they affirm that profane a book or copy, and this will further appear. They are repeated by Rabbi Moses (*Tractat. de Libro Legis. cap. 10*) One of them is: “If but one letter be wanting”, and another, “If but one letter is redundant”. Of which more shall be spoken as the occasion arises.

Even among the heathen, I can scarcely think that the Roman pontifices, going solemnly to transcribe the Sibyls’ verses, would do it either negligently or treacherously, or alter one tittle from what they found written. And shall we entertain such thoughts of those who knew they were dealing with the living God, and that in and about what is dearer to him than all the world beside? Let men, then, clamour as much as they like, and decry all men as ignorant and stupid who will not grant the corruptions of the Old Testament which they plead for, which is the way of Morinus; or let them propose their own conjectures of the ways of the coming of the mistakes that they pretend have crept into the original copies, with their remedies, which is the way of Cappellus; we shall acknowledge nothing of this nature but what they can prove by undeniable and undoubted instances — which, as to anything as yet done by them, or those that follow in their footsteps, appears upon the matter to add up to nothing at all.

For this purpose, take our meaning in the words of a very learnèd man —

“Ut in iis libris qui sine vocalibus conscripti sunt, certum constantemque exemplarium omnium, tum excusarnm scriptionem similemque omnino comperimus, sic in omnibus etiam iis quibus puncta sunt addita, non aliam cuiquam nec discrepantem aliis punctuationem observavimus; nec quisquam est qui ullo in loco diversa lectionis Hebraicae exemplaria ab iis quae circumferuntur, vidisse se asserat, modo grammaticam rationem observatam dicat. Et quidem Dei consilio ac voluntate factum putamus, ut cum magna Graecorum Latinorumque fere omnium ejusdem auctoris exemplarium, ac praesertim manuscriptorum pluribus in locis varietas deprehendatur, magna tamen in omnibus Hebraicis, quaecunque nostro saeculo inveniuntur, Bibliis, scriptionis aequalitas, similitudo atque constantia servetur quocunque modo scripta ilia sint, sive solis consonantibus constant, sive punctis etiam instructa visantur.” (Benito Arias Montano, praefat, ad Biblia Interlin. *De Varia Hebraicorum Librorum Scriptione et Lectione*.

It can, then, with no degree of probability be asserted (which yet I find some learned men too free in granting), namely, that the same fate has attended the Scriptures in its transcription as has done other books. Let me say without offence, this imagination, asserted after deliberation, seems to me to border on atheism. Surely, the promise of God for the preservation of his Word, with his love and care of his church, of whose faith and obedience that Word of his is the only rule, requires other thoughts from our hands.

Thirdly, we add, that *the whole Scripture*, entirely as given out from God, without any loss, is preserved in the *copies of the originals* yet remaining. What varieties there are among the copies themselves shall be afterwards declared. In them all, we say, is every letter and tittle of the Word. These copies, we say, are the rule, standard, and touchstone of all translations, ancient or modern, by which they are, in all things, to be examined, tested, corrected, and amended; and themselves only by themselves. Translations contain the Word of God, and are the Word of God, perfectly or imperfectly, according as they express the words, sense, and meaning of those originals. To advance any, all translations concurring to an equality with the originals — so as to set them by it as to set them up with it on even terms — much more to propose and use them as a means of criticising, amending, altering anything in them, gathering various lections by them, is to set up an altar of our own beside the altar of God, and make equal the wisdom, care, skill, and diligence of men, with the wisdom, care, and providence of God himself. It is a foolish conjecture of Morinus, from some words of Epiphanius, that Origen, in his *Octapla*, placed the translation of the LXX in the midst to be the rule of all the rest, even of the Hebrew itself, that was to be regulated and amended by it —

“Media igitur omnium catholica editio collocata erat, ut ad eam Hebraea caeteraeque editiones exigerentur et emendantur.” (*Exercit. lib. 1, cap. 3, p. 15*)

The truth is, he placed the Hebrew, in Hebrew characters, in the first place, as the rule and standard of all the rest; the same in Greek characters in the next place; then that of Aquila; then that of Symmachus; after which, in the fifth place, he followed that of the LXX, mixed with that of Theodotion.

The various arguments giving evidence to this truth that might be produced are too many for me to insist upon, and would take up more room than is allotted to the whole discourse, should I handle them at large, and according to the merit of this cause.

1. The *providence of God* in taking care of his Word, which he has magnified above all his name as the most glorious product of his wisdom and goodness, his great concern in this Word, answering his promise to this purpose.
2. The *sacred care* of the church (I am not speaking of the Romish synagogue) to whom these oracles of God were committed.
3. The care of the first writers in giving out *authentic copies* of what they had received from God to many, which might be rules for the first transcribers.
4. The *multiplying of copies* to such a number that it was impossible that any should corrupt them all, wilfully or by negligence.
5. The preservation of the *authentic copies*, first in the Jewish synagogues, then in the Christian assemblies, with reverence and diligence.
6. The *daily reading* and studying of the Word by all sorts of people, ever since its first writing, making every alteration liable to immediate observation and discovery, and that all over the world.

With —

7. The consideration of the many *millions* that looked upon every letter and tittle in this book as their inheritance, which, for the whole world, they would not be deprived of; and, in particular, for the Old Testament (now most questioned).
8. The care of Ezra and his companions, *the men of the great synagogue*, in restoring Scripture to its purity when it met with the greatest testing it ever underwent in this world, considering the smallness of the copies then extant.
9. The *care of the Masoretes* from his days and downward, to keep perfect, and give an account, of every syllable in Scripture — concerning which, see Buxtorius (*Com. Mas.*).
10. The *constant consent* of all copies in the world, so that, as several learned men have observed, there is not in the whole Mishna, Gemara, or either Talmud, any one place of Scripture found otherwise read than as it is now found in our copies.
11. The security we have that no mistakes were voluntarily or negligently imported into the text before the coming of our Saviour, who was to *declare* all things, in that not once did he reprove the Jews on that account, when yet for their false glosses of interpretation on the Word he did not spare them.

12. Afterward, the watchfulness of the two nations of Jews. And Christians had always one upon another — with several things of the same importance, might, to this purpose, be insisted on. But of these things I shall speak again, if occasion offers itself.

Despite what has been said, we grant that there are, and have been, various lections in the Old Testament and the New. For the Old Testament, the Keri and Ketib, the various readings of Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali, of the eastern and western Jews, proves it. Of the Keri, I shall speak particularly later. They present themselves to the view of everyone that looks into the Hebrew Bible. At the end of the great Rabbinical Bibles (as they are called) printed by Daniel Bombergus at Venice, as also in the edition of Buxtorfius at Basle, there is a collection of the various readings of Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali, of the eastern and western Jews — we have them also in this *Appendix*. For the two first mentioned, they are called among the Jews, one of them, “Rabbi Aaron, the son of Moses, of the tribe of Asher”; the other, “Rabbi Moses, the son of David, of the tribe of Naphtali.” They flourished, probably, among the Jews, about the year of Christ 1030, or thereabouts, and were teachers of great renown, the

former in the west or Palestine, the latter in the east or Babylon. In their exact consideration of every letter, point, and accent of the Bible, in which they spent their lives, it seems they found some varieties. Let anyone run them through as they are presented in this *Appendix*, he will find them to be very small, consisting for the most part in unnecessary accents, of no importance to the meaningt of any word, that they deserve not to be taken notice of.

For the various readings of the oriental or Babylonian, and occidental or Palestine Jews, all that I know of them (and I wish that those that know more of them would better inform me) is that they first appeared in the edition of the Bible by Bombergus, under the care of Felix Pratensis, gathered by Rabbi Jacob Ben Chajim, who corrected that printing. But they give us no account of their original, nor (to profess my ignorance) do I know any that do. It may be some do, but, in my present haste, I cannot inquire after them. But the thing itself proclaims their non-importance; and Cappellus, the most skillful and diligent improver of all advantages for impairing the authority of the Hebrew text, so, to give countenance to his “*Critica Sacra*”, confesses that they are all trivial, and not matters of any moment. Besides these, there are no other various lections of the Old Testament. The conjectures of men, conceited by their own abilities to correct the Word of God, are not to be admitted to that title. If any others can be gathered, or turn up later, out of ancient copies of credit and esteem, where no mistake can be discovered as to their cause, they deserve to be considered. Men must here deal by examples, not conjectures. All that yet appears impairs not in the least the truth of our assertion, that every letter and tittle of the Word of God remains in the copies preserved by his merciful providence for the use of his church.

As for the Jews, besides the mad and senseless clamour in general for corrupting the Scriptures, three things are with most pretence of reason objected against them — The tikkun sopherim, or “correction scribarum”, by which means it is confessed by Elias that eighteen places are corrected. But all things are here uncertain: uncertain that ever any such things were done; uncertain what are intended by their sopherim, — Ezra and his companions most probably; nor do the particular places enumerated

uncover any such correction. They are all, in particular, considered by the German theologian Salomo Glassius (*lib. 1, tract. 1*); but the whole matter is satisfactorily determined by Buxtorfius in his letters to Glassius, printed by him, and repeated again by the Dutch theologian Sixtinus Amama (*Anti. Barb. Bib. lib. 1 p. 30-31*). Because this thing is much insisted on by Pietro (Petrus) Galantino (Galatinus) to prove the Jews' corruption of the text, it may not be amiss to set down the words of that great master of all Jewish learning —

“Ad tertium quaesitum tuum, de tikkun sopherim, voces hanc censuram subiisse Massora passim notat. Receusio locorum in vestibulo libri Numerorum, et Psalm cvi. Utrobique non nisi recensentur, sed in Numbers 12:12, duo exempla oecurrunt, ut notat Rabbi Solomon. Deest ergo unus locus mihi, quem ex hullo Judaeo hactenus, expiscari potui, nec magnus ille Mercerus eum invenit. Galatinus hoc thema non intellexit, et aliena exempla admiscet. Sic et alii qui corruptiones ista ease putant. Nec ullum hactenus ex nostris sire evangelicis sire catholicis vidi, qui explicarit, quae fuerint scribae isti, et quales.

Quam antiquae hae notre de tikkun sint, liquido mihi nondum constat. Autquior ipsarum memoria est in libro, qui ante Talmud Babylonicum fertur conscriptua Dissentient tamen Hebraei de ejus autore et tempore. In Talmud neutro ulla plane istius tikkun mentio fit, cum alias longe minoris negotii in Talmud commemoretur. Si aliter ista loca fuissent aliquando scripta, Onkelos et Jonathan id vel semel expressissent. Nec Josephus reticuisset, qui contrarium Hebraeis adscribit, nullam scilicet unquam literam mutatam fuisse in lege ab Hebraeis popularibus suis, lib. 1 contra Apionem. Talmudistae in Leviticus vers. ult. diversis locis notant, nec prophetae ulli licitum fuisse vel minimum in lege mutare vel innovare. Quomodo ergo scribae quidam vulgares hanc audaciam sibi arrogassent, textum sacrum in literis et sensu corrigere? In silentio itaque omnium, in aurem tibi dico, Sopherim hosee fuisse ipsos autores sacros, Mosen et Prophetas, qui nunquam aliter scripserunt quam hodie scripture legitur. At sapientes Hebraeorum nasutiores, animadvententes inconvenientiam quandam in istis locis, scripserunt, aliter istes autores loqui debuisse, et secundum cohaerentiam propositi textus, sic vel sic scribere, sed pro eo maluisse sic scribere, et id sic efferre, ut illud hodie in textu est. Veluti (Gen. 18:22), lecture scriptum, ‘Et Abraham adhuc stabat coram Domino.’ Itane? Ubi legitur, inquiunt sapientes, quod Abraham venerit ad Dominum, et steterit coram eo; contrarium dicitur in praecedentibus, Deus scilicet venit ad Abraham, et dixit ad eum, ‘Num ego celo ab Abrahamo,’ etc. ‘Clamor Sodomae et Gomorrhæ magnus est,’ etc. Ideoque Moses scribere debuit, ‘Et Dominus adhuc stabat coram Abrahamo.’ At ita serviliter de Deo loqui non decuit Mosen, unde correxit et mutavit stylum sermonis, honoris majoris causa, et dixit, ‘Et Abraham adhuc stabat,’ etc. Hinc R. Salamo adjicit scribendum ipsi (Mosi) erat, (Seu) scribere debebat, Et Domus stabat; non quod ahter sic scripserit antea, et postea id ab aliis scribis correctum sit, aut corruptum. Hinc Rabbi Aben Ezra, ad aliquot loca irridet nasutos, inquiens, nullo tikkun opus fuisse, id est, nihil esse, quod nasuti isti sapientes putarint, autorem debuisse aliter ibi loqui vel scribere. Vide et eum Job. 32:3. Habes mysterium prolixe explieatum, in quo et multi Hebraeorum impegerunt.” (Johannes Buxtorfius)

The words are insisted on by the same Galatinus; but these are only about the use of the letter I (vav) four or five times, which seem to be of the same currency as the foregoing.

But that which makes the greatest outcry at present is the corruption of Ps 22:17, where, instead of KA'ARU, which the LXX. Translated RUXAN — “They digged” or “pierced” — that is, “my hands and feet” — the present Jewish copies, as the Antwerp Bibles also, read KA'ARI, “as a lion”, so depraving the prophecy of our Savior’s suffering, “They digged (or pierced) my hands and my feet”, leaving it with no sense at all — “As a lion my hands and my feet.” Simeon de Muis on this place pleads the substitution of ' (Yodh) for I (vav) to be a late corruption of the Jews; at least, KA'ARU was the Keri, and was left out by them. Johannes Isaac (*lib. 2 ad Lindan.*) professes that when he was a Jew, he saw KA'ARU IN a book of his grandfather’s. Buxtorf affirms one to have been the Ketib, the other the Keri, and proves it from the Masora; and blames the Antwerp Bibles for printing KA'ARI in the line. With him agree Genebrard, Pagninus, Vatablus, Mercer, Rivet, etc. Others contend that CA'ARI, “as a lion”, ought to be retained, repeating the common verb, “They compassed me about”, affirming also that word to signify “to tear, rend, and strike”; so that the sense should be, “They tear my hands and feet as a lion.” So also Voetius (*De Iusolubil. Scripturae*).

But that KA'ARI cannot be here rendered “sicut leo” (like a lion) is strongly proved, partly from the anomalous position of the prefix with the long vowel Kamets, but chiefly from the Masora, affirming that the word is taken in another sense than is used in (Is. 38:130, where it expressly signifies “as a lion.” The shorter determination is that from the radix KAR'AH by the epenthesis [the addition of one or more sounds to a word, especially to the interior of the word] tou \aleph (Aleph), and the change that is used often of VAV into YODH (as in the same way it is in Ezra 10:44), in the third person plural. The pluperfect of kal is KA'ARI, “perfoderunt, “they digged” or “pierced through my hands and my feet.” But to what purpose is this gleaning after the vintage of Mr. Pococke to this purpose in his excellent *Miscellanies*?

The place of old instanced by Justin Martyr (Ps. 96:10), where he charges the Jews to have taken out the words, “from the wood,” making the sense, “The LORD reigneth from the wood” or the tree, so pointing to the death of Christ on the cross, is exploded by all; for besides speaking of the Greek LXX, not the Hebrew text, it is evident that those words were foisted into a few copies of that translation, never being generally received, as is shown by Fuller (*Miscellan. lib. 3 cap. 13*). And it is a pretty story that Arias Montanus tells of a learned man (I suppose he means Lindanus) pretending that those words were found in a Hebrew copy of the Psalms, and of venerable antiquity, beyond all exception, here in England; which copy coming into his hand, he found it to be a spurious, corrupt, novel transcript, in which yet the pretended words are not to be found! So than for Arias! (*Mont. Apparat. de Variis Lec. Heb. et Mass.*) And I no way doubt but that we lack the opportunity to search and sift some of the copies that men put up against the common reading in several places in the New Testament, we should find them not one bit better, or of more worth, than he found in that copy of the Psalms.

CHAPTER 3

Of various lections in the Greek copies of the New Testament

FOR various lections in the Greek copies of the New Testament, we know with what diligence and industry they have been collected by some, and what improvement has been made of those collections by others. Protestants, for the most part, have been the chief collectors of them. Stephanus, Camerarius, Beza, Cameron, Grotius, Drusius, Heinsius, De Dieu, Cappellus, all following Erasmus, have had the prime hand in that work. Papists have ploughed with their heifer to disparage the original and cry up the Vulgate Latin. We have a specimen of their work in the late virulent *Exercitations* of Morinus. At first, very few were noticed. What a heap or bulk they have now swelled up to we can see in this *Appendix*! The collection of them makes up a book bigger than the New Testament itself! Of those that went before, most gave us only what they found in some particular copies of which they themselves were possessors; some, those only which they judged of importance, or that might make some pretence to be considered whether they were proper or not. Here, we have all that, by any means, could be brought to hand, and that whether they are tolerably attested for various lections or not; for as to any contribution to a better understanding of the Scripture from them, it cannot be pretended. And where this work may yet grow, I don't know.

That there are in some copies of the New Testament, and some of them of good antiquity, with *different readings*, in things or words of less importance; that all acknowledge. The proof of it lies within the reach of most in the copies that they have; and I shall not solicit the reputation of those who have afforded us others out of their own private collections. That they have been all needlessly heaped up together, if not to an eminent scandal, is no less evident. Let us, then, take a little view of their rise and importance.

That the Greek was once, as it were, the vulgar language of the whole world of Christians, is well known. The writing of the New Testament in that language in part found it so, and in part made it so. What thousands, yes, what millions of copies of the New Testament were then in the world, all men promiscuously reading and studying the Scriptures, cannot be reckoned! That so many transcriptions, most of them by private persons, for private use, having a standard of correction in their *public assemblies* ready to relieve their mistakes should they be made without some variation, which is “within their power”. From the copies of the first age, others in the succeeding ages have been transcribed, as men found an opportunity. From those that have come down to the hands of learned men in this latter age, of which very few, or none at all, are of any considerable antiquity, which men made it their business to collect the various readings we mention of. With what usefulness and service to the churches of God others, that look on, must be allowed liberty to judge.

We know the vanity, curiosity, pride, and bad behaviour of the heart of man; how ready they are to please ourselves with things that seem singular and remote from the observation of the many, and how ready they are publish them as evidence of their learning and diligence, let the fruit and issue be what it will. Hence, it has come to pass — not to question the credit of any man speaking of his manuscripts, which is wholly swallowed in this *Appendix* — that whatever varying word, syllable, or title, could by any be observed, in which any book, though of yesterday, varies from the common received copy, though obviously a mistake, superfluous or deficient, inconsistent with the context of the passage, yes, barbarous, is presently imposed on us as a varied lection.

As, then, I shall not say anything to take away from the worth of their labour who have gathered all these various readings into one body or volume. So I presume I may take liberty without offence to say that I should more esteem their efforts who would endeavour to search and trace out these pretenders back to their several originals, and, rejecting the spurious brood that has now sprawled itself over the face of so much paper, that ought, by no means, to be brought into competition with the common reading, would reduce them to such a necessary number, whose consideration might be of some other use than merely to *create a temptation* to the reader to feel that nothing is left sound and entire in the Word of God.

However, now Satan seems to have exerted the utmost of his malice, men of former ages have shown the utmost of their negligence, in these latter ages of their diligence — the results of which we have in the present collection in this *Appendix* — with those that rightly ponder things there which come to nothing at all except the prejudice of our assertion. As may possibly, God assisting, be further shown hereafter, in a particular consideration of some, or all, of these different readings set before us. Those that are of importance have been already considered by others, especially Glassius (*tract. 1, lib. i.*)

It is evident that the design of this *Appendix* was to gather together everything of this sort that might by any means be afforded. At the present, that the reader may not be too much startled at the fruit of their diligence, whose work and labour it was, I shall only remark concerning a few things that, in a general view of it, occur unto me —

Firstly, here is professedly no choice made, nor judgement used, in *discerning* which may indeed be called various lections, but all differences whatever that could be found in any copies, printed or written, are equally displayed. Hence, many differences that had been formerly rejected by learnèd men as open corruptions are here given to us again. The very first observation in the treatise next printed after this collection, in the *Appendix* itself, rejects one of the variations as a corruption. So have some others been by Arias Montanus, Cameron, and many more. It is not every variation or difference in a copy that should presently be cried up for a varied reading. A man might, with as good a colour and pretence, take all the printed copies he could get of various editions, and, gathering out the *errata typographica* (typing mistakes), print them as various lections, that give us many, I shall say the most, of those in this *Appendix* under that name. It may be said, indeed, that the composers of this *difficulty* did not find it inconvenient for them to make no judgement of the readings which, *de facto*, they found in the copies they perused, but merely presented what they found, leaving the judgement of them to others. I say also that it might be so; and therefore, as I do not intend to reflect on them, nor pay them much regard, so I hope they or others will not be offended if I give this notice of what judgement remains yet to be made concerning them.

Secondly, whereas Beza, who is commonly blamed by scholars of all sides and parties for making too bold with various lections, has professedly *stigmatised his own manuscript* that he sent to Cambridge as so corrupt in the Gospel of Luke that he dare not publish the various lections of it for fear of offence and scandal (however, he thought it had not fallen into the hands of heretics, that had deliberately depraved it). We have here, if I make no mistake, all the corruptions of that copy given us as various readings; for though I have not seen the copy itself, yet the swelling of the various lections in that Gospel into a bulk are as big or bigger than the collection of all the New Testament — besides the other Gospels and Acts, where that copy is cited 1440 times — which puts it out of all question that this is what we are dealing with. Now, if this could be taken up, and every stigmatised copy may be searched for differences, and these presently printed as varied readings, there is no doubt that we may have enough of them to frighten poor unstable souls into the arms of the pretended infallible guide — I mean as to the use that will be made of this work by such people as Morinus.

Thirdly, I am not without an apprehension that *opere in longo obrepit somnus* (it works in the long faded into sleep), and that while the learnèd collectors had their hands and minds busied about other things, some *mistakes* did fall into this work of gathering these various lections. Some things I meet with, and I admit it, cannot bring any good consistency among themselves. To let pass particular instances, and insist on one only of a more general and eminent importance — in the beginning of this collection, an account is given us of the *ancient copies* out of which these observations are made; among the rest, one of them is said to be an ancient copy in the library of Emmanuel College in Cambridge: this is noted by the letter **M** throughout the whole collection. Now, whereas it is told us, in these preliminary warnings and observations, that it contains only Paul's Epistles, I wonder how it has come about that so many various lections in the Gospels and Acts which are found in this farrago [a mixture of fact and fiction] fixed to the credit of that book could come to be gathered out of a copy of Paul's Epistles. Certainly, there must be some mistake, either in the learnèd authors of the previous directions, or by those

employed to gather the varieties that follow. And it may be supposed that that mistake is not alone; so that, upon a further consideration of particulars, it may be that we shall not find them so clearly attested as at first view they seem to be. It would indeed be a miracle if, in a work of that variety, many things should not escape the eye of the most diligent observer.

I am not, then, upon the whole, out of hopes that, upon a diligent review of all these various lections, they may be reduced to a less offensive and less formidable number. Let it be remembered that the vulgar copy we use was in the public possession of many generations — that upon the invention of printing, it was in actual authority throughout the world with those that used and understood that language, as far as anything appears to the contrary. Let that, then, pass for the standard, which is confessedly its right and due, and we shall, God assisting, quickly see how little reason there is to pretend such varieties of readings as we are now surprised with.

For —

1. Let those passages be *separated out* which are not sufficiently attested to, so as to pretend to be various lections; it being against all pretence of reason that every mistake of every obscure, private copy, perhaps not above two or three hundred years old (or older), should be admitted as a varied lection, against the current consensus of, it may be, all others that are extant in the world; and that without any agreement of reason as to the sense of the text where it differs. Men may, if they please, take pains to inform the world in how such and such copies are corrupted or mistaken, but to impose their known failings on us as varied lections is a course not to be approved.

2. Let the same judgement, and that deservedly, be passed on all those *different places* which are altogether inconsiderable, consisting of *accents* or the change of a *letter*, not in the least consistent with the sense of the passage, or giving the least hint of any other sense to be possibly gathered out from them but what is in the approved reading. To what end should the minds of men be troubled with them or about them, being evident mistakes of the scribes, and of no real importance at all?

3. Let them also be removed from the pretence, which carry their own convictions along with them that they are *spurious*.

Either —

(1) By their *superfluity*, or *redundancy* of unnecessary words.

(2) Their *deficiency* in words evidently necessary to the sense of their places.

(3) Their *incoherence* with the text in their various situations.

(4) By providing *evidence* of being intended as expository of difficulties, having been moved and pardoned by some of the ancients in these the passages, and their decisions being intimated.

(5) Are foisted out of the Septuagint, as many places out of the New have been inserted into that copy of the *Old*.

(6) Are taken out of one *place* in the same penman, and are used in *another*.

(7) Are apparently taken out of *one Gospel* and put in another, to flesh out the sense of the passage.

(8) Have been corrected by *the Vulgate Latin* — which has often happened in some copies, as Lucas Brugensis shows us on Mat. 17:2, Mk, 1:38, 7:4, and several other places.

(9) Arise out of *copies apparently corrupted*, like that of Beza in Luke, and that, in the Vatican, is boasted of by Huntley the Jesuit, which Lucas Brugensis affirms to have been changed to fit in with the Vulgate Latin, and which was written and corrected, as Erasmus says, about the time of the Council of Florence (1431), when an agreement was patched up between the Greeks and the Latins.

(10) Are notoriously corrupted by the old *heretics*, such as in 1 Jn. 5:7. Unto which heads many, yes, most of the various lections collected in this *Appendix* may be referred. I say, if this work might be done with care and diligence (concerning which I earnestly exhort some in this university [Oxford], who have both the ability and leisure for it), it would quickly appear how small the number is of those varieties in the Greek copies of the New Testament which may pretend to any consideration under the state and title of various lections, and of how very little importance they are to weaken, in any measure, my former assertion concerning the care and providence of God in the preservation of his Word. But this is a work of more time and leisure than at present I possess; what is to come, God knows. In the meantime, I don't doubt I will hear tidings from Rome concerning this variety, no such collection having as yet been found in the world.

CHAPTER 4

General premises — Opinions prejudicial to the authority of the originals in the *Prolegomena* enumerated — The rightful consequences of these premises — Others engaged in these opinions — Of Cappellus — Of Origen, Ximenes, Arias Montanus' editions of the Bible.

Having now declared in what sense, and with what allowance as to various lections, I maintain the assertion laid down in the previous treatise concerning the providential preservation of the whole book of God, so that we may have full assurance that we enjoy the whole revelation of his will in the copies remaining among us. I shall now proceed to weigh what may be objected further (beyond what has already been said by our critics) against the truth of it from the *Prolegomena* and *Appendix* to the *Biblia Polyglotta*, at the beginning of my discourse which I proposed for your consideration.

To say something of them in general, I must beg leave to say — and it being but the presentation of men's avowed judgements, I hope I may say without offence — that together with many high and honourable expressions concerning the originals, setting aside the incredible figment of the Jews corrupting the Bible out of hatred of the Christians, which, being first supposed by Justin Martyr (though he speaks of the LXX only), has scarcely found one or two since to own, but is rejected by most of learned men, ancient and modern, unless some few Papists, mad for their idols, and the *thesis* in whichg they prefer in general this or that translation above the original, there is no opinion that I know of that was ever ventilated among Christians, tending to the downgrading of the worth, or impairing the esteem of the Hebrew copies, which is not, directly or by rightful consequence owned in these *Prolegomena*.

From this, it is contended that the present *Hebrew characters* are not those used by God himself and in the old church before the captivity of Babylon, but it was in the Chaldean, the other being left to the Samaritans; that the *points* or *vowels*, and *accents* are a late invention of the Tiberian Masoretes, long after several translations were extant in the world; that the *Keri* and *Ketib* are *critical notes*, consisting partly of various lections gathered by the late Masoretes and Rabbis; that considering how often, in likelihood, translators read the text before the invention of the points, and accents, the present reading may be corrected and amended by them. Because the old translators had other copies, or different copies of them which we now enjoy; that where *gross faults* have crept into the Hebrew text, men may, by their own conjectures, find out various lections by which they may be amended — and to this purpose an instance of various lections, or rather corrections of the original, is found in the *Appendix* exhibited unto us out of Grotius; that the books of the Scriptures, having had the fate of other books — by passing through the hands of many transcribers, they have on them the marks of their negligence, ignorance, and laziness.

Now, truly, I cannot but wish that some other way were found to give esteem and reputation to this *noble collection* of translations than by espousing these opinions, so prejudicial to the truth and authority of the originals. And it may be justly feared, that where *one* will believe himself against the uncertainty of the originals by considering the various translations here exhibited to us, being such that, under testing, they will be found to be, *many* will be ready to question the foundation of them all. It is true, the learnèd prefacer does not own up to those wretched consequences that some have laboured to draw from these premises; yet it must be acknowledged, also, that sufficient security against the lawful deriving of those consequences from these premises is not sent our way. He does not say that, because this is the state of the Hebrew language and Bible, therefore all things in it are dubious and uncertain, easy to be turned unto various meanings, not fit to be a rule for the testing of other translations, though he knows full well who thinks this a just consequence from the opinion of the *novelty of the vowels*; and he himself grants that all our knowledge of the Hebrew is taken from the translation of the LXX, as he is quoted to that purpose by Morinus (*Praefat. ad Opusc. Hebrae. Samarit.*). He does not conclude that on these accounts we must rely on an *infallible living judge*, and the translation that he commends to us, though he knows full well who does so; and he himself gives it as a rule that, in the correction of the original, we have the consent of the guides of the church.

I could desire then, I say, that sufficient security may be given us against these inferences before their premises are embraced, seeing great and wise men, as we shall soon see, suppose them naturally and necessarily to flow from them.

I confess that some learnèd men, even among the Protestants, have here vented these, or some of these, paradoxes; especially Cappellus, in his *Arcanum Punctuationis Revelatum, Critica Sacra*, and other treatises; in defence of which, as I hear, he still labours on, being unwilling to suffer loss in the fruit of so great pains. What will become of his reply to Buxterius in defence of his *Critica* I do not know. Reports are that it is finished; and it is thought he must once more flee to the Papists with the help of his son, a great zealot among them; as he did with his *Critica*, to get

it published. Most learned men among the Protestants are not yet infected with this leaven; nor, indeed, do I find his boldness in conjecturing approved in these *Prolegomena*. But let it be free for men to make known their judgements in the several mentioned. It has been so, and may it abide so, still. Had not this great and useful work been prefaced with the stating of them, it would not have been of public concern (as it now seems to be) to have taken notice of them.

Besides, it is not known to what extent this inconvenience will grow. Origen, in his *Octapla*, as I said, fixed the Hebrew original as the rule and measure of all translations. In the reviving of that kind of work by Ximenes in the *Complutensian Bibles*, its station is left for it. Arias Montanus, who followed in their steps (concerning whose performances under his master the king of Spain, I must say, for several excellencies, *Nil oriturum alias, nil ortum tale*, (Nothing is about to rise at other times, nothing for the rise of such) was religiously careful to maintain the purity of the originals, publishing *the true Hebrew* (as it is called by Jerome, Augustine, and other of the ancients) as the rule for examination by all translations whatever; for which he has since been accused of ignorance by a petulant Jesuit, that never deserved to carry his books after school! Michael Le Jay has given a turn in this progress, and, in plain terms, exalts a corrupt translation above the originals, and that upon the principle under consideration, as is abundantly shown from Morinus. And if this change of judgement, which has been long insinuating itself, according to the curiosity and boldness of critics, should break in also upon the Protestant world, and be avowed in public works, it is easy to conjecture what the end will be. We went from Rome under the conduct of *the purity* of the originals; I wish none had a mind to return there again under the pretence of their *corruption*.

CHAPTER 5

The origin of the points proposed to consideration in particular — The importance of the points to a right understanding of Scripture — The testimony of Morinus, Junius, Johannes Isaac, Cevallerius, and others — The use made by the Papists of the opinion of the novelty of the points — The importance of the points further shown — The extreme danger of making Hebrew punctuation arbitrary — That danger proved by example — No relief against that danger on the grounds of the opinion considered — The authors of Hebrew punctuation according to the *Prolegomena*; who and what — Morinus' folly — The improbability of this pretence — The state of the Jews, the supposed inventors of the points after the destruction of the temple — Two attempts made by them to restore their Jewish religion: the first under Barchochab [*Son of a star*, who pretended to be the Messiah in the reign of Hadrian] with its issue; the second under Rabbi Judah, with its issue — The rise and foundation of the Talmuds — The state of the Jews upon and after the writing of the Talmuds — Their rancor against Christ — Who the Tiberian Masoretes were that are supposed to be the authors of Hebrew punctuation; their description — That figment of imagination rejected — The late testimony of Dr. John Lightfoot to this purpose — The rise of the opinion of the novelty of the points — Of Elias Levita — The value of his testimony in this case — Of the validity of the testimony of the Jewish Rabbis — Some considerations about the antiquity of the points: the first, from the nature of the punctuation itself, with reference to grammatical rules; the second, from the Chaldee paraphrase, and the integrity of Scripture now pointed.

THIS being, according to my understanding, the state of things among us, I hope I may, without offence, proceed to a consideration of the particulars mentioned earlier, from where, it is feared, that objections may arise against the purity and self-evidencing power of the Scriptures, pleaded for in the previous treatise. What in the first place was mentioned, is the assertion of the *points* (or vowels and accents) *to be a novel invention of some Rabbis of Tiberias in Palestine*. This, the learned author of the *Prolegomena* defends by Cappellus' arguments, and some other additions as he was pleased to make use of.

To clear up the concerns of the truth in this particular, it will be necessary to consider the following —

1. What *influence* in a right understanding of the text these points have, and necessarily must have.
2. What is their *origin*, or whom their invention is ascribed to in these *Prolegomena*. As for the assertive part of this controversy, or the defence of their true sacred origin, some other occasion may call for additions to what is now (by the way) insisted on. And as I shall not oppose those who maintain that they are of the same age as the letters — which are not a few of the most learned Jews and Christians — so I no way doubt but that, as we now enjoy them, we shall yet show that they were completed by “the men of the great synagogue”, Ezra and his companions, guided in their task by the infallible direction of the Spirit of God.

That we may not seem “up in the air”, or to contend *de lana caprina* (for something of nothing useful), the importance of these points as to a right understanding of the Word of God must first be considered, and that from testimony and the nature of the thing itself. Morinus, in his preface to his *Hebrew Lexicon*, tells us that, without the points, no certain truth can be learned from the Scriptures in the Hebrew language, seeing all things can be read in different ways, so that there is more confusion in that one tongue than there was among all those at Babylon —

“Nulla igitur certa doctrina poterit tradi de hac lingua, cum Omnia possint diversimodo legi, ut futura sit major confusio unicae hujus linguae quam illa Babylonia.”

Morinus plainly affirms that it is so indeed, giving an example in the word DBR, which, as it may be variously pointed, has at least 8 different meanings, and some of them as distant from one another as heaven and earth. And to make evident the uncertainty of the language on this account, he gives a similar instance in c, r, and s in Latin. The Protestant scholar Franciscus Junius, at the close of his criticisms of Bell (*De Verbo Dei, lib. 2, cap. 2*), commends that saying of Johannes Isaac against Lindanus — “He that reads the Scriptures without points is like a man that rides a horse without a bridle; he may be carried he knows not where!” Radulphus Cevallerius goes further (*Rudiment. Ling. Heb. cap. 4*) —

“Quod superest de vocalium et centuum antiquitate, eorum sententiae subscribo, qui linguam Hebraeam, tanquam omnium aliarum ajrce>tupon absolutissimum, plane ab initio scriptam confirmant; quandoquidem qui contra sentiunt non modo

authoritatem sacrae Scripturae dubiam efficiunt, seal radicitus (meo quidem judicio) convellunt, quod absque vocalibus et distinctionum notis, nihil certi firmique habeat."

(As for the antiquity of the vowels and accents, I am of their opinion who maintain the Hebrew language as the exact pattern of all others, to have been plainly written with them from the beginning; seeing that they who are otherwise minded not only make doubtful the authority of the Scriptures, but, in my judgement, wholly pluck it up by the roots; for without the vowels and notes of distinction it has nothing firm and certain.)

In this man's judgement (which is also my own), it is evident to all how allergic to the opinion now opposed to the truth is what I am contending for.

To these also may be added the great Buxtorfs, father and son, Gerard of Bologna, Salomon Glass (Salomo Glassius), thye Dutch Gisbertus Voetius, the German Matthias Flach (Flacius Illyricus), the German Amandus Polanus de Polansdorf, the Anglican William Whitaker, Hassret, and Wolthius.

It is well known what use the Papists make of this conceit. Robert Bellarmine maintains that errors have crept into the original by this addition of the points (*De Verb. Dei, lib. 2, cap. 2*) —

"Hisce duabus sententiis refutatis, restat tertia, quam ego verissimam puto, quae est, Scripturas Hebraicas non esse in universum depravatas opera et malitia Judaeorum, nec tamen omnino esse integras et puras, sed habere suos errores quosdam, qui partita irreperserint negligentia et ignorantia librariornm, etc., partim ignorantia Rabbinorum qui puncta addiderunt; itaque possumus, si volumus, puncta detrahere et aliter legere."

(These two opinions being confuted, the third remains, which I suppose to be most true; which is, that the Hebrew Scriptures are not universally corrupted by the malicious work of the Jews, nor yet are wholly part and entire, but that they have errors, which have crept in partly by the negligence and ignorance of the transcribers, partly by the ignorance of the Rabbis who added the points; whence we may, if we please, reject the points and read otherwise.)

In the voluminous opposition to the truth made by that learnèd man, I know nothing more perniciously spoken, nor yet know how his inference can be avoided on the hypothesis in question. To what purpose this insinuation is made by him is well known, and his companions in design exactly express it. That their Hebrew text is corrected by the Vulgate Latin is the express desire of Gregory de Valentia (*tom. 1 disput. 5, q. 3*); and that because the church has approved that translation, it being corrected (says Huntley) by Jerome before the invention of points. But this is put out of its doubt by Morinus, who from hereon argues that the Hebrew tongue has a very good nose of wax, to be turned by men any way they please, and to be so given of God on purpose that men might subject their consciences to their infallible church (*Exercit. lib. 1 exer. 1 cap. 2*).

Great has been the effort of this sort of men, where they have left no stone unturned to downgrade the originals. Some of them cry out that the Old Testament was corrupted by the Jews, such writers as as Leo Castrins, Gordon Huntley, Melchior Canus, Petrus Galatinus, Morinus, Salmeron, Pintus, Mersennus (*Animad. in Problem. Georgii Venet, etc.*, p. 233) — that many corruptions have crept in by negligence and the carelessness of scribes, so Belarmine, Genebrard, Sixtus Senensis, with most of the rest of them. In these things, indeed, they have been opposed by the most learnèd of their own side, such as Arias Montanus, Johannes Isaac, Pineda, Masius, Ferrarius, Andradius, and various others, who speak honourably of the originals. But in nothing do they so pride themselves as in this conceit of the novelty of the Hebrew punctuation, whereby they hope, with Abimelech's servants, utterly to stop the wells and fountains from where we should draw our souls' refreshment.

This may serve for a short view of the opinions of the parties lined up in opposition, and their several interests in these opinions. The importance of the points is on all hands acknowledged, whether aiming at the honour or dishonour of the originals. Vowels are the life of words; consonants without them are dead and immovable; by them they are carried away to any sense, and may produce great differences. It is true that men who have come to an acquaintance with the Scriptures by the help of the vowels and accents, being in possession of an habitual notion and understanding of that sense and meaning which arises from them, may possibly think that it were an easy thing to find out and fix on the same sense with the help of the *matres lectionis* (mother-lections), and a consideration of antecedents and consequences, with such like assistances.

But let them be all taken out of the way (as I shall prove it is fit they should be, if they have the original assigned to them by the *Prolegomena*), and let men lay aside that advantage they received from them, and it will quickly appear into what devious ways all sorts of people will run. Scarcely a chapter, it may be a verse, or a word, in a short time, would be left free from perplexing, contradicting conjectures. The words are altogether innumerable whose meanings may be varied by an arbitrary supplying of the points. And when the regulation of the punctuation shall be left to every single person's conjectures on the basis of antecedents and consequences (for who shall give a rule to the rest?), what end shall we have of these fruitless contests? What various, what pernicious meanings shall we have to contend with! Suppose that men serious, modest, humble, pious, might be preserved from such faults, and be brought to some agreement about these things (which yet, in these days, upon many accounts, is not being looked for, yes, from the nature of the thing itself seems impossible), yet this leaves us with the impression of a human, fallible persuasion, that the readings fixed on by them are according to the mind of God. But to expect such an agreement is fond and foolish. Besides, who can secure us against the luxuriant, atheistic wits and spirits of these days, who are bold upon all advantages, and break in on everything that is holy and sacred, that they will not, by their huckstering, utterly corrupt the Word of God?

How easy is it to foresee the dangerous consequences of contending for various readings, though not false nor pernicious, by men obstinately sticking to their own conjectures! The Word of God, as to its literal sense, or reading of its words, has up till now been the leader, and the acknowledged touchstone of all expositions;

however, our critics have render it an apple beyond reach or hope, and what remains firm and unshaken?

Let men, with all their confidence as to the knowledge of the sense and meaning of the Scriptures which they have already received by such helps and means as are all of them resolved into the present punctuation of the Bible (for all grammars, all lexicons, the whole Masora, all aids to this language, new and old in the world, are built on this foundation), reduce themselves to such an indifference as some of late have fancied as a fit rise for knowledge, and fall seriously to reading some of the prophets, whose matter is sublime and mystical, and their style elliptical and abstruse, without the help of points and accents — let them fix them, or any figures to answer their sounds, *arbitrarily* merely on their judgement in the language and conjectures as to the meaning of the passage, without any advantage from what they have been instructed in — and let us see whether they will agree, as they falsely report of the seventy translators!

Whatever may be the result of their labour, we need not fear quickly to find out, as learnèd as they that lay their work level with the ground. I confess, considering the days we live in, where the bold and curious wits of men, under pretence of critical observations, alluring and enticing with a show of learning, have ventured to question almost every word in Scripture. I cannot but tremble to think what would be the issue of this supposition, that the points or vowels, and accents, are no better guides to us than may be expected from those who are pretended to be their authors. The Lord, I hope, will safeguard his own from the poison of such attempts. The least of its evil is not yet thoroughly considered. So that whereas, saving for myself the liberty of my judgement as to several particulars, both in the impression itself, and in several translations, I acknowledge the great usefulness of this work, and am thankful for it, which I here publicly testify. Yet I must say, I had rather that it, and all works of a similar kind, were put out of the world, than that this one opinion should be received, with the consequences that unavoidably come with it.

“But this trial need not be feared. Grant the points to have the origin pretended, yet they deserve a proper regard, and are of singular use for a right understanding of Scripture; so that it is not lawful to depart from them without urgent necessity, and evidence of a better lection to be substituted in the place of the one that has been refused.”

But as this relieves us not at all, but still leaves us within the sphere of rational conjectures, so, whatever can honestly be pretended and pleaded in this case comes next to be uncovered by a consideration of the supposed authors of this invention.

The founders of this story of the invention of the Hebrew points tell us that it was the work of some Rabbis living at Tiberias, a city in Galilee, about the year of Christ 500, or in the next century after the death of Jerome and the finishing of the Babylonian Talmud. The improbability of this story or legend I will not now insist on. Morinus takes the lie lower. He tells us that the Babylonian Talmud was finished just a little before the year 700 (*Exer. 2 cap. 3, par. poster.*); and that the Masoretes (to whom he ascribes the invention of the points) wrote a long time after the finishing of the Talmud in the year 700 (*p. p. 5, cap. 3*). This long time cannot denote less than

some hundreds of years. And yet the same man, in his preface to his *Samaritica Opusoula*, boasting of his discovery of Rabbi Jehuda Chiug, shows that he was acquainted with the present punctuation, and wrote about it. Now, this rabbi was a grammarian — which kind of learning among the Jews succeeded that of the Masoretes — and he lived about the year 1030, so that no room at all seems to be left for this work. That there was formerly a famous school of the Jews and learned men at Tiberias is granted. Jerome tells us that he hired a learned Jew from there to assist him (*Epist. ad Chromat*). Among others, Dr. Lightfoot has well traced the shadow of their Sanhedrin, with their presidents, in some kind of succession, to that place. That they continued there in any esteem, number, or reputation, until the time assigned by our authors for this work, does not appear in any history or record of Jews or Christians; yes, it is certain that about the time mentioned, the main flourishing of the Jewish doctors was at Babylon, with some other cities in the east, where they had newly completed their Talmud, the great pandect [a compendium in 50 books of Roman civil law made by order of Justinian in the 6th century] of Jewish laws and constitutions, as they themselves everywhere witness and declare.

That any people considerably learned were then in Tiberias is a mere conjecture; and it is most improbable, considering what destruction had been made of them at Diocaesarea and Tiberias about the year of Christ 352 by Gallus, at the command of Constantius. That there should be such a collection of them so learned, so authorised, as to invent this work, and impose it on the world, no one once taking notice that any such persons ever existed, is beyond all belief. Despite any entanglements that men, by their conjectures, may put on the persuasion of the antiquity of the points, I can as soon believe the most incredible figment in the whole Talmud as this fable. But this is not my business. Let it be granted that such people there were. On the supposition under consideration, I am only inquiring what is the state and condition of the present Hebrew pointing, and what weight is to be laid upon it. That the reader, then, may a little consider what sort of men they were who were assigned in these *Prolegomena* as the inventors of this artifice of punctuation, I shall take a brief view of the state of the Jews after the destruction of the temple, down to the days we are inquiring into.

That the Jewish church-state continued not only *de facto*, but, in the merciful forbearance of God, so far as many thousands of believers constantly adhered to the Mosaic worship, and were accepted by God until the destruction of the temple (AD 70); that that destruction was the end of the old world was by fire, and the beginning of setting up solemnly the new heaven and new earth in which dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13) — I have at large elsewhere declared, and may, God assisting, yet further declare in my thoughts on the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews. From the time between the beginning of Christ's preaching to the utter desolation of the city and temple, an open, visible rejection of that church, as such, was made.

Thereon an utter separation of the true Israel from it followed; and the hardened residue became a people not in covenant or delight, but of curse and indignation. What their state was for a season onwards, both civil and religious, many have described. I shall only put forward some heads of things. In general, then, they were most remote from accepting the punishment of their sin, or considering that God was revenging upon them the quarrel of his covenant to the utmost, having broken both his staffs, "Beauty and Bands". So far were they from owning their sin in selling off

their Messiah, that, seeing an end put to all their former worship, there was nothing recorded of them but these **two** things, which they, wholly, in direct opposition unto God, gave themselves up to —

1. They increased in rage and madness against all the followers of Christ, stirring up persecution against them all the whole world over. Here they were provoked by a great number of apostates, who, when they could no longer retain their Mosaic rites with their profession of Christ, being rejected by the Christian churches, fell back again to Judaism or semi-Judaism. (See Hebrews)
2. A filthy lust and desire after their former worship now became abominable, so that what had been for their safety now became the means of their utter ruin and hardening. Of the former, or their stirring up of persecution, all histories are full of examples and instances. The latter, or their desire and attempt for the restoration of their worship, as conducive to our present task, must be further considered.

For the accomplishment of a design to restore their old religion, or to furnish themselves with a new one, they made two desperate attempts. The first of these was by arms, under their pseudo-Messiah Barchochab, in the days of Hadrian, the Roman Emperor. Under the conduct and influence of this man, to whom one of the chief Rabbis (Rabbi Akiba) was armor-bearer, in pursuit of a dream of restoring their temple and worship, they fell into rebellion against the Romans all over the world. In this work, after they had committed unheard-of outrages, massacres, unparalleled, murders, spoils, and cruelties, and shook the whole empire, they were themselves in all parts of the world, especially among the Berber people (in North Africa, west of the Nile Valley), where the head of their rebellion was ruined with a destruction seemingly equal to that which befell them at Jerusalem in the days of Vespasian and Titus.

That the rise of is war was upon the twofold cause mentioned, namely, their desire to retain their former worship and to destroy the Christian, is evident. For the first, it is described in Greek by Lucius Cassius Dio (Dio Cassius), in his *Hist. Romans lib. 69 in Vita Had.*) —

It was the defiling of the soil whereon the temple stood (which God allowed on set purpose to manifest their utter rejection, and that the time was come wherein he would be no more worshipped in that place in the old manner) that put them in arms, as that author declares at large. And for the latter, Justin Martyr, who lived at that time, informs us in Greek of it (*Apol. 2 ad Anton. Pium.*) —

The rebel fury was, in a special way, against the Christians, whom he commanded to be tortured and slain, unless they would deny and blaspheme Jesus Christ. See *Euseb. Chron. ad an. Christi 136*. And this war they managed with such fury, and, for a while, success, that after Hadrian had called together against them the most experienced soldiers in the world, particularly Julius Severus from England, and had slain of them five millions and eighty thousand in battle, with [while?] an infinite number

besides, as the historian speaks, by famine, sickness, and fire, were consumed, he found himself to have sustained so much loss by them that he did not begin his letter

(in Greek) to the Senate in the usual way. He could not assure them that it was well with him and his army.

By this second desolation, they were brought very low, made weak and contemptible, and driven into obscurity all over the world. In this state, they wandered up and down for some time in all kinds of uncertainty. They had not only lost the place of their solemn worship, seeing it was wholly defiled, with the name of Jerusalem changed into Aelia, and themselves forbidden to look towards it on pain of death, but also, being now unspeakably diminished in their number, all hope of conniving themselves into any condition of observing their old rites and worship was utterly lost. Here they sat down for a season, being at their wits' end, as was threatened to them in the curse. But they would not rest here.

Considering, therefore, that their old religion could not be continued without a Jerusalem and a temple, they began a nefarious attempt against God, equal to that of the old world in building Babel, even to set up a new religion that might abide with them wherever they went, and giving them confidence in their infidelity and opposition to the gospel to the very utmost.

The head of this new apostasy was one Rabbi Judah, whom we may not unjustly call the Mohammed of the Jews. They term him Hannasi, the "price", and Hakkadosh, the "holy". The whole story of him and his companions, as reported by the Jews, is well collected by Joseph de Voysin (*Observat. in Proem. ad Pugi. Fidei.* p. 26-27). The sum of the whole concerning this work was laid down by Maimonides in his *Praefatio in Seder Zeraim*, p. 36-37 of the edition by Mr. Pococke; where, also, a sufficient account is given of the whole Mishna, with the names of the Rabbis either implied in it or occasionally mentioned. This man, about the year of Christ 190 or 200, when the temple had now lain waste almost three times as long as it did under the Babylonish captivity, being countenanced, as some of themselves report, such as Antoninus Pius, compiled the Jewish Koran, or the Mishna, as a rule of their worship and ways for the future. Only, when Mohammed afterward pretended to have received his figments by revelation (though, indeed, he got many of his abominations from the Talmud), this man pleaded the receiving of his by tradition — the two main engines that have been set up against the Word of God.

Out of such pharisaic traditions as were indeed preserved among them, and such observances as they had learned and taken up from apostate Christians, such as Aquila and others, with such figments as were invented by himself and his predecessors since the time of their being publicly rejected and cursed by God, this man compiled the text of their Talmud, and the foundation of their present religion — under the name of the old oral law. That several Christian ceremonies and institutions, vilely corrupted, were taken up by the Jews of those days, many of them being apostates, as also some of Mohammed's assistants in the compiling of the Koran, I shall, God assisting, elsewhere endeavour to prove and manifest. That any gospel observances were taken from the Jews, as being in practice among them before their institution by Christ, will appear in the issue to be a bold and groundless fancy.

The foundation mentioned being laid in a collection of traditions and a new invention of abominations under the name of old traditions, by this Rabbi, the following

Talmuds were an improvement of the same attempt of setting up a religion under the curse and against the mind and will of God, that, being rejected by him, and left “without king, without prince, without sacrifice, without image, without an ephod, and without teraphim”, any kind of worship, true or false, they might have something to give them confidence in their unbelief. The Talmud of Jerusalem, so called (for it is the product of many comments on the Mishna in the city of Tiberias, where Rabbi Judah lived), because it was compiled in the land of Canaan, whose metropolis was Jerusalem, was published about the year of Christ 230: so it is commonly received, though I find Dr. Lightfoot of late, on supposition of finding in it the name of Diocletian the Emperor, to give it a later date; but I confess I see no just ground for the alteration of his judgement from what he delivered in another treatise earlier.

The Doclet mentioned by the Rabbis was beaten by the children of Rabbi Judah Princeps, as he himself observes, who lived in the days of one of the Anteninuses, a hundred years before Diocletian. Neither was ever Diocletian in a poor condition in the east, being Sarmatian born, and living in the western parts; only he went with Numerianus in that expedition to Persia, where he was made Emperor at his return. But this is beside the point. See Lightfoot (*Chorograph. cap. 81, p. 144*) The Babylonian Talmud, so called because it was compiled in the land of Babylon, in the cities of Nahardea, Sora, and Pumbeditha, where the Jews had their synagogues and schools, was finished about the years 506 or 510. In this greater work was the mystery of their iniquity finished, and the engine of their own invention for their further obstinacy perfectly completed. These are now the rule of their faith, the measure of their exposition of Scripture, the directory of their worship, and the ground of their hope and expectation.

All this while, the Jews enjoyed the letter of the Scriptures as they do to this day; yes, they receive it sometimes with the honour and veneration due to God alone. God preserved it among them for our present use, their further condemnation, and means of their future conversion. But after the destruction of the temple, and rejection of their whole church-state, the Word was no longer committed to them by God, nor were they entrusted with it, nor are they to this day. They have it not by promise or covenant, as they had of old. (Is. 59:21) Their possession of it is not accompanied with the administering of the Spirit, without which, as we see in the example of themselves, the word is a dead letter, of no power for the good of souls. They have the letter among them, as at one time they had the ark in the battle against the Philistines, to their greater ruin.

In this state and condition, they everywhere released their rancour and malice against Christ, calling him bad names in contempt and reproach, who relate monstrous figments concerning him and in their dealings with him, under the name of “Jesus the son of Pandira.” Some deny that by Jesus, the son of Pandira and Stada in the Talmud, the blessed Messiah is intended. So did Galatinus (*Arcan. Relig. Cathol. lib. 1 cap. 7*); and Reuchlinnus (*Cabal lib. 1 p. 636*); and Wilhelm Schickard in *Prooem. Tarich. p. 83*. The contrary is asserted by Reynoldus (*Praelec. in lib. Apoc., praelec. 103, p. 405- 406*); Buxtorfius (*Lexic. Rab. Voce*; and Vorstius (*Not. ad Tzem. Dav. p. 264*)). And, in truth, the reason pleaded by Galatinus and others to prove that they did not intend our Saviour, upon due consideration, proves the contrary. The “Jesus”, say they, who is mentioned in the Talmud, lived in the days

of the Maccabees, being slain in the time of Hyrcanus, or of Aristobulus, one hundred years before the death of the true Messiah; so that it cannot be he who is meant by them. But this is invented by the cursed wretches, that it should not appear that their temple was so soon destroyed after their wicked defection from God in the killing of his Son.

This is most clear from what is cited by the Roman Catholic Archbishop Gilbert Génébrard from Abraham Levita, in his *Cabala Historiae*, where he says that Christians invented this story, that Jesus was crucified in the lifetime of Herod (that is, the Tetrarch), that it might appear that their temple was destroyed immediately, "when," says he, "it is evident from the Mishna and Talmud that he lived in the time of Alexander, and was crucified in the days of Aristobulus", so discovering the true ground why they perverted the whole story of his time — namely, lest all the world should see their sin and punishment standing so close together. But it is well that the time of our Saviour's suffering and death was affirmed even by the heathen, before either their Mishna or Talmud were born or thought of —

"Abolendo rumori" (he speaks of Nero, and of his setting fire to Rome) "subdidit reos, et quaesitissimis poenis affecit, quos, per flagitia invisos, vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis ejus Christus, Tiberio imperitante, per Procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat" (Tacitus, *Annal. lib. 15 cap. 44*).

To return to our Jews: universally, in all their old writings, they on a design of censuring him in his Gospel; for as we do not need their testimony, nor anything but Scripture, for their conviction and their judgement, so, to acknowledge the truth, the passages cited from their Talmuds and Gemara, from the Cabalists and other Rabbis, by Martinus Raymundus, the Italian Salvagus (Porehetus), Galatinus, Reuchlinus, and others (setting aside Galatinus in his *Gale Rezeia*, which must be set aside), seeming to be wrested, the most of them beside their intentions, as things obscurely, metaphorically, and mystically written, are easily dealt with. Their disputes about the Messiah, when they speak of him to the purpose, as in *Lib. Sanhedrim*, are foolish, contradictory triflings, where they leave all things as uncertain as if they were wrangling in their usual way *de lana caprina*. So that, for my part, I am not much removed from the opinion of Hulsius (*lib. 1 p. 2, dic. sup. de Temp. Messiae*), that Æsop's fables are of as much use in Christianity as the Jewish Talmud. While they keep the Scripturæ, we shall never lack weapons out of their own armoury for their destruction. Like the Philistines, they carry the weapon that will serve to cut off their own heads. Now, the Tiberian Masoretes, the supposed inventors of the points system of vowels and accents, which we now make use of, were men living after the finishing of the last Talmud, whose whole religion was built on it.

Let us, then, a little, without prejudice or passion, consider who or what these men were, who are supposed to be the authors of this work —

1. Men they were (if any were like them) *who did not have the Word of God committed* to them in a special way, as did their forefathers of old, being no part of his church or people, but only outward possessors of the letter, without right or title to it, utterly uninterested in the promise of the communication of the Spirit, which is the great charter of the church's preservation of truth. (Is. 59:21)

2. Men *so remote from a right understanding of the Word*, or the mind and will of God in it, that they were desperately engaged in opposing his truth in the books which they themselves enjoyed, in all matters of importance, to the glory of God or the good of their own souls, from beginning to end; the foundation of whose religion was infidelity, and one of their chief fundamentals an opposition to the gospel.

3. Men *under the special curse of God* and his vengeance, on account of the blood of his dear Son.

4. Men *all their days feeding themselves with vain fables*, and mischievous devices against the gospel, labouring to set up a new religion under the name of the old, in opposition to God; so striving to wrestle it out with his curse to the utmost.

5. Men *of a profound ignorance in all* kinds of learning and knowledge but only what concerned their own dunghill traditions; what appears in their stories, in which they made Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, help Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem; with other innumerable similar stupidities.

6. Men *so addicted to such monstrous figments that* appear in their Talmuds, as their successors of later ages are ashamed of, and seek to excuse what they are able; yes, for the most part *idolaters and magicians*, as I shall prove. Now, I dare leave it to the judgement of any godly, prudent person, not addicted to parties and names of men, who is at all acquainted with the importance of the Hebrew vowels and accents for a right understanding of Scripture. With what influence their present fixation has on the literal sense we embrace, whether we need not very clear evidence and testimony, yes, undeniable and unquestionable, to cast the fount and spring of them on the invention of these sort of men.

Of all the fables that are in the Talmud, I know none more incredible than this story, that men who cannot, by any story or other record, be made to appear that they were ever in *rerum natura* (in the nature of things) — such men as we have described, obscure, unobserved, not taken notice of by any learned man, Jew or Christian — should, in a time of deep ignorance, in the place where they lived, among a people wholly addicted to monstrous tales, they themselves blinded under the curse of God, find out so great, so excellent a work, of such unspeakable usefulness, not once advising the men of their own profession and religion, who then flourished in great abundance in Babylon and places adjacent, and impose it on all the world (that receive the Scriptures), and have every tittle of their work received, without any opposition or question from anyone or any persons of any principle whatever; yes, so as to have their invention made the constant rule of all following expositions, comments, and interpretations. *Credat Apella*, (Tell it to the marines!)

To draw this discourse to a close, I must crave liberty to profess that, if I could be thoroughly convinced that the present Hebrew punctuation were the figment and invention of these men, I should labour to the utmost to have it utterly taken away from the Bible, nor should I (in its present condition) make use of it any more. What use such an invention might be of under Catholic rules, by way of grammar, I shall not dispute; but to have it placed in the Bible as so great a part of the Word of God is not tolerable. But blessed be God, things have not as yet come to pass! I shall only

add that, whereas some of the most eminently learnèd and exercised people in all the learning and antiquity of the Jews these latter ages have produced, have appeared in the confutation of this fancy of the invention of the points by some post-Talmudic Masoretes. I am sorry that their respect to the Rabbis has kept them from the management of this consideration, which to me is of such great importance.

As to what I have spoken, I add the words of the learnèd Dr. Lightfoot, in his late *Centuria Chorograph* (cap. 81 p. 146), which came into my hands after the completion of this discourse —

“Sunt qui punctata Biblia credunt a sapientibus Tiberiensibus” (he means Elias only, for other Jews of this opinion there are none). Ego impudentiam Judaeorum, qui fabulam invenerunt, non miror; Christianorum credulitatem miror, qui applaudunt, Recognosce (quaeso) nomina Tiberiensium a site illic primum academia ad eam expirantem, et quidnam tandem invenies nisi genus hominum p̄ Pharisismo insaniens, traditionibus faveinans et fascinatum, caecum, vafrum, delirum; ignoscant, si dicam magicum et monstrorum? Ad opus tam divinum homines quam ineptos, quam stolidos! Perlege Talmud Hierosolymitanum, et nots qualiter illic se habeant R. Judy, R. Chamnath, Z. Judah, R. Hoshia, R. Chaija Rubba, R. Chaija Bar Be, R. Jochanan, reliquie inter Tiberienses grandissimi doctores; quam serio nihil agunt; quam pueriliter seria; quanta in ipserum disputationibus vafrities, spume, venenum, fumus, nihil; et si punctata fuisse Biblia in istiusmodi schola potes credere, crede et omnia Talmudica, Opus Spiritus Sancti sapit punctatio Bibliorum, non opus hominum perditorum, excaecatorum, amentium.”

In the words of this learnèd person, this is the sum of what I am pleading for.

“I do not admire the Jews’ impudence, who discovered that fable; I admire Christians’ credulity, which applauds it. Recount, I pray, the names of the Tiberians from the first foundation of a university there to its expiration; what do you find but the sort of men being mad with (or beyond) the Pharisees, bewitching and bewitched with traditions, blind, crafty, raging; pardon me if I say magical and monstrous? What fools, what stupids, as to such a divine work!

Read over the Talmud of Jerusalem; consider how Rabbi Juda, Rabbi Chamnath, Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Hoshia, Rabbi Chaija Rubba, Rabbi Chaija, Rabbi Jochanan, and the rest of the great doctors among the Tiberians, how they behave themselves. How seriously they do nothing; how childish they are in serious things; how very deceitfulness; how much froth, venom, smoke, nothing, in their disputation! And if you can believe the points of the Bible proceed from such a school, believe also their Talmuds. The pointing of the Bible savours of the work of the Holy Spirit, not of wicked, blind, and mad men.”

The Jews generally believe that the points have come from Mount Sinai, and so downward through Moses and the prophets, at least from Ezra and his companions, the men of the great synagogue; not denying that the knowledge and use of them received a great revival by the Gemarists and Masoretes when they had largely fallen into disuse. See Rabbi Azarias at large (*Imre Binah*. cap. 59).

Had it been otherwise, surely men, stupendously superstitious in inquiring after the traditions of their fathers, would have found some footsteps of their rise and progress. It is true, there is not only the opinion, but there are the arguments, of one of them to the contrary — namely, Elias Levita. This Elias lived in Germany about the beginning of the Reformation, and was the most learned grammarian of the Jews in that age. Several of the first reformers knew him. The task not only of *reforming religion*, but also of *restoring good literature*, being incumbent on them, they made use of such assistance as could be obtained then for that purpose. This man (whom Jacques Auguste de Thou (Thuanus) takes note of) lived with Paulus Fagius, and assisted him in his noble promotion of the Hebrew tongue.

Hence it turned out that some of those worthies unwarily embraced his novel opinion, being either overcome by his authority, or not having time to search further after the truth. That the testimony of this Elias should be able to outweigh the constant attestation of other learned Jews to the contrary, as Cappellus affirms and pleads, and is insinuated in our *Prolegomena*, is hard to imagine; and the premises of that learned man fight against his own conclusion.

“It is known”, says he, “that the Jews are prone to insist on everything that gives honour to their people and language; and therefore their testimony to the divine origin of the present punctuation, being against their own case, is not to be allowed. Only Elias, who, in this, speaks against the common interest of his people, is presumed to speak upon conviction of truth.”

But the whole *evidence* in this cause lies on the other side. Let us grant that all the Jews are zealous for the honour and reputation of their nation and language, as indeed they are; let us grant also that they greedily take up everything that may seem to have that tendency.

Therefore, as a result, what will be the issue or natural inference drawn from these premises? Why, as nothing could be spoken more honourably of the Jews while they were the church and people of God than that of Paul, that “to them were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2), so nothing can be imagined or fixed on more to their honour since their divorce from God than that their doctors and masters should make such an addition to Scripture, so generally acknowledged to be unspeakably useful. And, to this purpose, Elias, who was the father of this opinion, was far from making such deductions from this, as some do now-a-days, namely, that it is lawful for us to change the vowels and accents at our pleasure, but ties all men as strictly to them as if the changes had been the work of Ezra. It is Elias, then, who speaks in his own case; whose testimony is, then, not to be admitted. What was done of old and in the days of Ezra is ours, who succeed to the privileges of their church; what has been done since the destruction of the temple is properly and peculiarly theirs.

It may, perhaps, be thought that, by the account given of the Rabbis, that, by their state and condition of old and of late, I might have weakened one great argument which learned men make use of to confirm the *sacred antiquity* of the present Hebrew punctuation, taken from the universal consent and testimony of the Jewish doctors, ancient and modern, this one Elias excepted. Who can think such people can be believed in anything? But indeed, the case is quite otherwise. Though we account them wholly unfit for the work that is ascribed to them, and, on the

supposition that it is theirs, affirm that it had better undergo another kind of trial than as yet, out of reverence for its generally received antiquity, it has met with. Yet they were men still who were fully well able to declare what *de facto* they found to be so, and what they found otherwise. It cannot, I think, be reasonably supposed that so many men, living in so many several ages, at such vast distances from one another, who, some of them it may be, never heard of the names of one another of some of them, should conspire to comfort themselves, and all the world beside, in a matter of fact not at all to their advantage. However, for my part, whatever can be proved against them I shall willingly admit. But to be driven out of such a rich possession, as is the present Hebrew punctuation, with mere surmises and conjectures, I will not willingly give way or consent.

It is not my desire to give out arguments for the divine origin of the present Hebrew punctuation; neither do I judge it necessary for anyone to do so while the learnèd Buxtorfius' discourse *De Origine et Antiquitate Punctorum* lies unanswered. I shall, therefore, only add one or two considerations which, to me, are of weight, and not, as I remember, mentioned by him or his scholarly father in his *Tiberias*, or any other that I know of in their disputes in this matter.

1. If the points or vowels, and accents, are not comparable with the rest of the letters, or have an origin before all grammar of that language (as, indeed, languages are not made by grammar, but grammars are made by languages), *then the grammar of it and them must be collected from an observation of their use*, as they were found in all their variety before any such art was invented or used; and rules must be suited to it. The drawing up of rules from all the all the examples that, being uniform, would fall under such rules, and the distinct observation of anomalous words, either singly, or in exceptions taking in many under one head that would not be so reduced, was the work of grammar. But, on the other side, if the vowels and accents were invented by themselves, and added to the letters, *then the rule and art of disposing, transposing, and changing them, must be constituted and fixed before the disposition of them*; for they were placed after the rules were made, and according to them. A middle way I know of cannot be fixed on. Either they are of the original writing of the language, and have had rules made by their condition, or they have been supplied according to rules of art. Things have not come to pass by chance; nor was this world created by a casual concurrence of atoms.

Now, if the grammar or art was the ground and foundation, not the product of their use, as I am confident I shall never see a good answer given to that inquiry of Buxtorfius the elder in his *Tiberias*, why the inventors of them left so many words anomalous and pointed other than according to rule, or the constant course of the language, precisely reckoning them up when they had finished, and how often they are so used, as.. and.. for.. and.. for.. and such like, when they might, if they had so pleased, have made them all regular, to their own great ease, and advantage of their language, and making it easy to learn by all posterity, the very thing they seem to have aimed at. So I can't be satisfied why, in that long, busy, and curious work of the Masoretes, where they reckoned up every word in Scripture, and observed the irregularity of every letter and tittle, they never once attempted to give us out those catholic rules by which they or their masters proceeded in deciding the points; or why it came to pass that no learnèd Jew for hundreds of years after should be able to acquaint us with that way, but in all their grammatical instructions they merely collect

observations, and calculate them a hundred times over, according as they present themselves to them in particular instances.

Assuredly, had this wonderful art of pointing, which, for the most part, may be reduced to catholic rules, and might have wholly been so if it were an arbitrary invention, limited to no pre-existing writing, and been found out first and established as the *norma* (the norm) and canon of deciding the vowels, some footsteps of it would have remained in the Masora, or among some of the Jews, who spent all their time and days in considering the question.

2. In the days of the Chaldee paraphrast [paraphrase], when the prophecies of the humiliation and death of their Messiah were only not understood by them, yet we see *into how many several ways and senses they are twisted by that paraphrast*, to affix some tolerable meaning to them. Take an instance from Isaiah 53. Jonathan, there, acknowledges the whole prophecy is about the Messiah, knowing it to be the common faith of the church; but not understanding the state of humiliation which the Messiah was to undergo, he twisted the words into all forms, to make what is spoken passively of Christ, as to his suffering *from* others, to signify actively, as to his doing and exercising judgement *upon* others! But now, more than five hundred years later, when these points are supposed to have been invented, when the Rabbis were awake, and knew full well what use was made of those passages against them, as also that the prophets (especially Isaiah) are the most obscure part of the whole Scripture as to the grammatical sense of their words in their working, without points and accents, and how easy it was to invert the whole sense of many periods by small alterations in these rules of reading. Yet, as they are pointed, they make out incomparably more clearly the Christian faith than any ancient translations of those places whatever. Johannes Isaac, a converted Jew (*lib. 1 ad Lindan.*), tells us that more than 200 testimonies about Christ may be found in the original Hebrew that do not appear in the Vulgate Latin, or in any other translation. And Raymundus Martinus declares —

“Noverint quae ejusmodi sunt” (that is, who blamed him for translating things immediately out of the Hebrew, not following the Vulgate Latin) “in plurimis valde sacrae Scripturae locis veritatem multo planius atque perfectius pro fide Christiana haberi in litera Hebraica quam in translatione nostra.” (*Procem. ad Pug. Fid. sec.*)

Let anyone consider these two racks of the Rabbis, and swords of Jewish unbelief, Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9, as they are now pointed and accented in our Bibles, and compare them with the translation of the LXX, and this will quickly appear to him. Especially has this been proved, since the Socinians, as well as the Jews, have driven the dispute about the satisfaction of Christ to the utmost scrutiny and examination of every word in that 53rd chapter of Isaiah. But yet, as the text now stands pointed and accented, neither Jews nor Socinians (despite the relief given them by Hugo Grotius twisting that whole blessed prophecy to make application of it to Jeremiah, thinking which outdoes the late or modern Jews. The Portuguese Isaac Abrabanel and others applied it to Josiah, others, the whole people of the Jews. Messiah Ben Joseph (or Ephraim), and I know not whom, have been able, or ever shall be able, to relieve themselves from this sword of truth. Were such exercitations on the Word of God allowable, I could easily show how, by changing the distinctive accents and vowels, much darkness and perplexity could be cast on the context of

that glorious prophecy. It is known, also, that the Jews commonly plead that one reason why they keep the copy of the law in their synagogues without points is that the text may not be restrained to one certain sense, but that they may have liberty to draw out various, and, as they speak, more eminent senses.

CHAPTER 6

Arguments for the novelty of the Hebrew points proposed for consideration — The argument from the Samaritan letters considered and answered — Of the copy of the law preserved in the synagogues without points — The testimony of Elias Levita and Aben Ezra considered — Of the silence of the Mishna, Talmud, and Gemara, about the points — Of the Keri and Ketib — Of the number of the points — Of the ancient translations, Greek, Chaldee, Syriac — Of Jerome — The new argument of Morinus in this cause — The conclusion about the necessity of the points.

BECAUSE this appears to be a matter of great importance, where the truth formerly pleaded for appears to be nearly concerned, I shall very briefly consider the arguments that are usually insisted on (as in these *Prolegomena*) to prove the points

to be a *novel invention*; I mean from the men at the time mentioned earlier. Particular instances I shall not insist upon, nor is it necessary that I should so do; for it has been done already. The heads of arguments, which yet contain their strength, are capable of a brief despatch, which shall be given them in the order in which they are presented by the *Prolegomena*, (*Proleg.* 3, *sect.* 38-40).

1. It is said, then —

“That whereas the *old Hebrew* letters were the present Samaritan, the Samaritan letters having been always without points, as they still continue, it is obvious that the invention of the points must be at a later date than the change of the letters, which was in the days of Ezra; and so, consequently, be the work of the post-Talmudic Masoretea.” *Pergula Pictoris!* (Painting of a brothel!)

Answer

This whole objection is made up of most uncertain conjectures. This is not a place to speak at large of the Samaritans, their Pentateuch, and its translation. The origin of that nation is known from Scripture, as also their worship of God. (2 Kings 17) Their solemn excommunication and casting out from having any interest among the people of God is also recorded. (Ezra. 9:10; Neh. 13) Their continuing in their abominations after the closing of the canon of Scripture is reported by Josephus. (*Antiq. lib.* 11 *cap.* 8) In the days of the Maccabees, they were conquered by John Hyrcanus, and brought into subjection by the Jews. (*Joseph. Antiq. lib.* 13 *cap.* 10) Yet their self-worship, upon the credit of the tradition of their fathers, continued to the days of our Saviour, and their hatred to the people of God. (Jn. 4:9, 22) When, by whom, and in what character, they first received the Pentateuch, is most uncertain — not likely by the priest sent to them; for despite his instructions, they continued in open idolatry, which proves that they had not so much as seen the book of the law. Probably this was done when they were conquered by Hyrcanus, and their temple razed, after it had stood two hundred years. So also did the Edomites.

What diligence they used in its preservation being never committed to them by God, as we shall see afterward. That there are any of them remaining at this day, or have been these thousand years past, is unknown. That the letters of their Pentateuch were the ancient Hebrew letters, as Eusebius, Jerome, and some of the Rabbis, report, seems to me (on the best inquiry I have been able to make) a groundless tradition, and a mere fable. The proofs tendered to prove the conjecture are much too weak to bear the weight of such an assertion. Eusebius speaks only on the basis of a report, *affirmatur* (affirmed) — it was so affirmed, but on what grounds he does not tell us. Jerome, indeed, is more positive; but give me leave to say that, supposing this to be false, sufficient examples of similar mistakes may be found in him. As for the testimony of the Talmud, I have often declared that with me it is of no weight unless seconded by very good evidence. And indeed, the foundation of the whole story is very vain. The Jews are thought and said to have forgotten their own characters in the captivity, and to have learned the Chaldean, upon which account they adhered to it after their return, when the same men were alive at the burning of the one, and the building of the other temple.

That the men of one and the same generation should forget the use of their own letters, which they had been taught, is incredible. Besides, they had their Bibles with them always, and that in their own Hebrew letters only; whether they had any other book or not, we don't know. So why, then, this forgetting of one character and learning another, does not appear? Nor shall I, with such an improbable fiction, lay much weight on testimonies, the most ancient of which is six hundred years later than the pretended matter of fact.

The most weighty proof in this case is taken from the ancient *Jewish coins*, with Samaritan letters on them. We are now on the high road of forgeries and fables; in nothing has the world been more cheated. But be it granted that the pretended coins are truly ancient, must it need follow that because the letters were then known and in use, that they alone were so, that the Bible was written with them, and these now in use unknown? To save the credit of the coins, I beg leave to answer this conjecture with another. The Samaritan letters are plainly outside nature (if I may so say), a studied invention — in their frame and figure are fit to adorn, when extended or strengthened by way of engraving or embossing, anything they put on or cut in. Why may we not think they were invented for that purpose, namely, to engrave on vessels and to stamp on coins, and so came to be of some use in writing also?

Their shape and frame promise some such thing. And this is rendered the more probable from the practice of the Egyptians, who, as Clemens Alexandrinus tells us, had three sorts of letters: one which he calls *EPISTOLOGRAPHIKĒ*, with which they wrote things of common use; another termed by *HIEROGRAPHIKĒ*, used by the priests in the sacred writings; and the other *HIEROGRAPHIKĒ*, which also was of two sorts, simple and symbolical. Seeing, then, it was no unusual thing to have several sorts of letters for different purposes, it is not improbable that it was so also among the Jews: not that they wrote the sacred writings with a peculiar character as it were to hide them, which is not accepted, but only that the other character might be in use for some purposes; which is not unusual. I cannot think the Greeks of old used only the *uncial* (capital letters), which we know some did; although he did not who wrote Homer's *Iliad* in no greater a volume than would go into a nutshell.

But if that should be granted that cannot be proved, — namely, that such a change was made, — yet this prejudices not them in the least who affirm Ezra and the men of the great congregation to have been the authors of the points, seeing the authors of this rumour affixed that as the time wherein the old Hebrew letters were excommunicated out of the church, together with the Samaritans. No, it casts a probability on the other hand, namely, that Ezra, laying aside the old letters because of their difficulty, together with the new introduced the points, to facilitate their use. Nor can it be made to appear that the Samaritan letters had never any vowels affixed to them. Gulielmus Postellus affirms that the Samaritans had points in the days of Jerome, and that their loss of them is the cause of their present corrupt reading —

“Punctis hodie quae habebant Hieronymi temporibus carent: leguntque, sine punctis admedium depravate.” (*Postell. Alphab. 12 lingua.*)

There were always some copies written without vowels, which might be preserved, and the others lost. That people (if we have anything about them) being wicked, ignorant, stupid, superstitious, idolatrous, rejecters of the greater portion of Scripture,

corrupters of what they had received, might neglect the task of transcribing copies with points because a matter of so great care and diligence should be performed rightly. Nor is it improbable, whatever is pretended to the contrary, that, continuing in their separation from the people of God, they might get the law written in characters of their own choosing, out of hatred for the Jews.

Now, let any one judge whether, from this heap of uncertainties, anything can arise with the face of a witness, to be accepted as giving testimony to the cause in hand. He that will part with his possession on such easy terms never found much benefit by it.

2. The *constant practice* of the Jews in preserving in their synagogues one book, which they almost adore, written without points, is alleged to the same purpose —

“...for what do they else hereby but tacitly acknowledge the points to have a human origin?”

Answer

But it is certain that they do not so acknowledge them, neither by that practice nor by any other way, it being the constant opinion and persuasion of them all (Elias only excepted) that they are of a divine origin; and if their authority is urged, it is to be submitted to in one thing as well as in another.

The Jews give a **threefold** account of this practice —

(1) The difficulty of transcribing copies without any mistake, the least rendering the whole book, as to its use in their synagogues, profane.

(2) The liberty they have here in drawing out *various meanings*, more eminent, as they say (indeed more vain and curious), than they have any right to do, when the reading is limited to one certain sense by the vowels and accents.

(3) To keep all *learners* in dependence on their teachers, seeing that they cannot learn the mind of God but by their exposition. See Rabbi Azarias, (*lib. Imre Binah. cap. 59*).

If these three reasons satisfy none as to the ground of that practice, they may be pleased to inquire of them for others who intend to be bound by their authority — that the points were invented by some late Masoretes, they will not inform them. For Jesuitical stories out of China, they are with me, for the most part, of the same credit with those of the Jews in their Talmud. He that can believe all the miracles that they perform, where men are not warned of their juggling, may credit them in other things.

However, as I said, I do not understand this argument. “The Jews keep a book in their synagogues without points, therefore the points and accents were invented by the Tiberian Masoretes”, and that after when they had never read it, or, rather, sing it, but according to every point and accent in ordinary use. Indeed, the whole profound mystery of this business seems to be this, that none be admitted to read or sing the

law in their synagogues until he is so perfect in it as to be able to observe exactly all points and accents in a book in which there are none.

3. The testimony of *Elias Levita*, not only as to his own judgement, but also as to what he mentions from Aben Ezra and others, is insisted on.

“They affirm”, says he, “that we have received the whole punctuation from the Tiberian Masoretes.”

Answer

It is very true that Elias was of that opinion; and it may well be supposed that, if that opinion had not fallen into his mind, the world would have been little acquainted with it to this day. That by “receiving of the punctuation from the Tiberians”, the *continuation* of it in their school, not the *invention* of it, is intended by Aben Ezra, which is beyond all exception proved by Buxtorfius (*De Punct. Antiq. par. 1 cap. 3*). Nor can anything be spoken more directly to the contrary of what is intended, than that which is urged in the *Prolegomena* from Aben Ezra.

Comment

In Ex. 25:31, where he affirms that he saw some books examined in all the letters, and the whole punctuation by the wise men of Tiberias, namely to test whether it was done exactly according to the patterns they had. Besides, all Elias’ arguments are notably answered by Rabbi Azarias, whose answers are repeated by Joseph de Voysin in his most learned *Observations on the Procerium of the Pugio Fidei*, p. 91-92. And the same Azarias shows the consistency of the various opinions that were among the Jews about the vowels, ascribing them, as to their virtue and force, to Moses, or God on Mount Sinai; and as to their figure and character to Ezra; and as to the restoration of their use to the Masoretes.

4. The silence of the Mishna Gemara, or *whole Talmud*, concerning the points is further urged. This argument is also discussed at large by Buxtorfius, and the instances in it answered to the full; nor is it needful for anyone to add anything further until what he has discoursed to this purpose is removed. (See *par. 1 cap. 6*) See also Glassius (*lib. 1 tract. 1. De Textus Hebraei Puritate*), who gives instances to the contrary; yes, and the Talmud itself, in Nedarim, or “of vows” (chap. 4) on Neh 8:8, clearly mentions them; and treatises more ancient than the Talmud, cited by Rabbi Azarias in *Imre Binah*, expressly speak of them. It is to me sufficient evidence, able to overbear the conjectures to the contrary, that the Talmudists both knew, and, in their readings, were regulated by the points now in use, in that, as many learned men have observed, there is not one text of Scripture to be found cited in the Talmud in any other sense, as to the literal reading and meaning of the words, than only that which it is limited by the present punctuation. When it is known that the patrons of the opinion under consideration yield this constantly as one reason for the seventy translators reading words and sentences otherwise than we read them now in our Bibles — namely, because the books they used were not pointed, whereby they were at liberty to conjecture at this or that meaning of the word before them. This is one of the main pillars of Cappellus’ whole fabric in his *Critica Sacra*. And how it can be fancied there should be no variety between our present reading and the

Talmudists', upon the supposition that they did not know the use of points, I don't know.

Is it possible, on this supposition, that there should be such a coincidence between their and our present punctuation, when, on the same principle, it seems there are so many variations by them and the Chaldee paraphrast?

5. Of the Keri and Ketib, which are pleaded in the next place for this proposal, I shall address later. The difference in them is in the consonants, not in the vowels; which yet does not argue that there were no vowels when they were collected or disposed as now we find them. Yes, that there were no vowels in the copies from which they were collected (if they were so collected) may be true, but that that collection was made any later, for most of it, then the days of Ezra does not appear. Now, whatever was done about Scripture in the Jewish church before the time of our Saviour is shown to have been done by divine authority, in that it is nowhere by him reproved, but rather the integrity of every word is by him confirmed. But of these things distinctly by themselves we must speak later.

6. A sixth argument for the novelty of the points is taken from their *number*; for whereas it is said that all kinds of sounds may be expressed by five vowels, we are in the present Hebrew punctuation supplied with fourteen or fifteen, which, as it is affirmed, shows abundantly that they are not coeuous or co-natural with the language itself, but are the arbitrary, artificial inventions of men, who have not assigned a sufficient difference in their force and sound to distinguish them in pronunciation. But this objection seems of small importance. The ground of it is an apprehension that we still retain exactly the true pronunciation of the Hebrew tongue; which is evidently false.

(1) It is now near two thousand years since that tongue was vulgarly spoken in its purity by any people or nation. To imagine that the true, exact, distinct pronunciation of every tittle and syllable in it, as it was used by them to whom it was vulgar and natural, is communicated unto us, or is attainable by us, is to dream pleasantly whilst we are awake. Aben Ezra makes it no small matter that men of old knew aright how to pronounce *Kamets Gadol*. Says he —

“The men of Tiberias, also the wise men of Egypt and Africa, knew how to read *Kamets Gadol*.”

(2) Even the distinct force of one consonant, and that always radical, *v*, is utterly lost, so that the present Jews know nothing of its pronunciation.

(3) Nor can we distinguish now between *TOKI* (*Tau*) and *TQ* (*Teth*), between **ב** (*Beth*) and **ו** (*Vav*), though the Jews tell us that the wise men of Tiberias could do so twelve hundred years ago; as also between *Qamets* and *Segol*; nor is the distinct sound of *Qibbutz* so obvious to us.

(4) The variety of consonants among many nations, and their ability to distinguish them by pronunciation, makes this of little consideration. The whole nation of the Germans distinguish not between the force and sound of *t* and *d*; whereas the Arabic *dal* and *dhsal*, *dad*, *ta*, and *da*, show how they can distinguish those sounds.

(5) Nor are the Jewish letters **ׁ** (Sin) **ׂ** (Shin) **׃** (Samekh) **ׄ** (Zayin) **׆** (Tsadhe) found distinctly in any other language; to distinguish some of which good old Jerome had his teeth filed, under the direction of his Jewish Nicodemus.

(6) The truth is, the Hebrews have only ten vowels, five long and five short, or five great and five less. Sheva (□) is but a servant to all the rest, and its addition to Segol and Pathakh makes no new vowels. To distinguish between Kamets Khatuph and Khatuph Kamets there is no way. Seven only of them, as Morinus has manifested from Rabbi Jehuda Chiug, one of the first grammarians among the Jews, namely signs that go under, over, and within the consonants were used for calling of old, kings, or the chief rulers distinguished by all the motions of the letters. So that indeed they have not so many figures to distinguish sounds by, with all their vowels, as have the Greeks. Besides the seven vowels, they also have twelve diphthongs, and three of them, as to any peculiar sound, are as mute as Sheva.

It is true, Pliny tells us that Simonides Melicus found out two of the Greek vowels, eta (η) and omega (ω), as he did also two consonants. But surely he did so because he found them needful to answer the distinct sounds used in that language, or he would have deserved little thanks for his invention. Speaking lately with a worthy learned friend about a universal character, which has been mentioned by many, attempted by different ones, and by him, brought to that perfection as will doubtless yield much if not universal satisfaction to learned and prudent men, when he would be pleased to communicate his thoughts about it to the world. We dwelt occasionally on the difference of the "apert sounds" of vowels: which when I heard him, with good reason affirmed to be eight or nine, remembering this argument about the Hebrew points, I asked him to give his thoughts in a few words the next day; which he did accordingly. Now, because his discourse seemed evidently to discover the vanity of this pretence, that the Hebrew vowels are an arbitrary invention from their number, I have here inserted it —

Apert sounds are either Simple. — Vowels, Double. — Diphthongs.

1. Apert simple sounds are distinguishable either Formally. — Accidentally.

(1) The *formal* difference is what constitutes several letters, and must depend on the various apertures required in the making of them, together with the gravity or acuteness of the tone which is made by them; according to which, there are at least eight simple vowels that are by us easily distinguishable, namely —

1. 2. E — *magis acutum*, as in *he*, *me*, *she*, *ye*, etc.; *mi us acutum*: as the English *the*, and the Latin, *me*, *te*, *se*, etc.

3. I or Y — which are both to be accounted of one power and sound. Shi, di, thy, my.

4. A — magis aperture. All, tall, gall, wall.

5. A — minus aperture. Ale, tale, gale, wale.

6. O — rotundum, minus grave. As the English, go, so, no; the Latin, do.

7. O — magis grave et pingue. As the English, do, to, who.

8. U — as in tu, use, us, etc.

So many “apert” simple sounds there are which are evidently distinguishable. I would be loath to say that there neither are, nor can be, any more; for who knows how many other minute differences of apertion and gravity may be now used, or later discovered by others, which practice and custom may make as easy to them as these are to us?

(2) Beside this formal difference, they are, some of them, *accidentally* distinguishable from one another with reference to the quantity of time required for their prolation [length of time], in which the same vowel sometimes becomes long and sometimes short —

So E min. acut — Long. Mete, sterne.

So E min. acut — Short. Met, stem.

I — Long. Alive, give, drive, title, thine.

I — Short. Live, give, driven. i.e., tittle, thin.

A min. apert. A — Long. Bate, hate, cate, same, dame — ae.

A min. apert. A — Short. Bat, hat, cat, sam, dam.

O rotund — Long. One, none, note, etc. — oe *velca*.

O rotund — Short. One (non Lat.), not.

U — Long. Use, tune, pule, acute, — ue.

U — Short. Us, tun, pull, cut.

The other remaining vowels, namely, E magis acut., A magis apert., and O magis grave, do not change their quantities, but are always long.

2. Diphthongs are made of the complexion of two vowels in one syllable, where the sounds of both are heard. These are —

1. Ei, ey — Hei, Lat. They.

2. Ea. — Eat, meat, seat, teat, yea, plea

3. Eu, ew — Heu, Lat. Few, dew.

4. Ai, ay — Aid, said, pay, day.

5. Au, aw — Audience, author, law, draw.

6. Oi, oy — Point, soil, boy, toy.

7. Ou, ow — Rout, stout, how, now.

8. Ui, uy — Bui, juice.

9. Eo — Yeoman, people.

How other diphthongs (which have been used) may be significant for the expression of long vowels, see those noted above.

There is, then, very little weight to be ventured on the strength of this objection.

7. It is further pleaded (*Proleg. 8, sect. 46*), that the ancient *translations* — the Greek, the Chaldee, and the Syriac — show that, at the time of their composing, the points were not invented, and that, because in several places, it is evident that they read otherwise, or the words with other points (I mean as to the force and sound, not the figure of them) than those now affixed. For this purpose, very many instances are given us out of the LXX, especially by Cappellus; Grotius also takes the same course.

But neither is this objection of any force, to upset the balance in the matter under consideration. Some will, at the close of this discourse, be spoken about in those translations. The differences that may be observed in them, especially in the former, would as well prove that they had other consonants — that is, that the copies they used had other letters and words — than ours, as other vowels; yes, if we must suppose that, where they differ from our present reading, they had other and better copies, it is most certain that we must admit ours to be very corrupt. *Hoc Ithacus vellet.* (Thus would Ithacus!) Nor can this inference be avoided, as I shall, God willing, further manifest, if occasion allows. The truth is, the present copies that we have of the LXX in many places so vary from the original that it is beyond all conjecture what we should do. I wish some would test their skill in some parts of Job, the Psalms, and the Prophets, to see if, by all their inquiries of extracting various lections, they can find out how they do in their books, if they rendered as they read; and we enjoy what they rendered. Simeon de Muis tells us a very pretty story of himself to this purpose (*Asset Verit. Heb. sect. 1*); as also how ridiculous he was in his attempt. But I just recall that frustration!

The Scripture, indeed, is not to be dealt with like that; we have had too much of that work already. The rabbinical Cabalistic expressions [denoting a change either by the transposition of letters, or by altering the alphabetical order of the letters; the latter being applied to instances in which one letter written is used as a sign for a whole word or object] are not to be compared with some of our critics' *Temura* and *Notarjecon* of the Chaldee paraphrase. I shall speak of this later. It seems not to be of the antiquity pretended. It is not mentioned by Josephus, nor Origen, nor Jerome — but this will not affect its antiquity. But whereas it is most certain that it was in high esteem and reverence among all the Jews before the time assigned for the punctuation of the points, it seems strange that they should, in disposing of them, differ from it voluntarily in so many places. Besides, though these translators, or any of them, might use copies without vowels, as it is confessed that always some such there were, as still there are, yet it does not follow at all that therefore the points were not discovered or in use. But more of this when we come to speak distinctly of these translations.

8. Of the same importance is that which is, in the last place, insisted on from *the silence of Jerome* and others of the ancients as to the use of the points among the Hebrews. But as Jerome saw, not all things (he did not see the Chaldee paraphrase, which our authors suppose to have been extant at least four hundred years before him); so it cannot be made plain that he mentioned all that he saw. To speak expressly of the vowels, he had no occasion; there was then no controversy about them, nor were they then distinctly known by the names by which they are now called. The whole current of his translation argues that he had the Bible, as now,

pointed; yes, learned men have shown by examples that seem of unquestionable proof that he had the use of them; or, it may be, he could not obtain a pointed copy, but was instructed by his Jew in the correct pronunciation of words. Copies were then scarce, and the Jews full of envy. All these things are so uncertain. See Sebastian Munster, (in *Praefat. ad Bib.*), circa 1525. The truth is, either I cannot understand his words, or he positively affirms that the Hebrew had the use of vowels, in his *Epistle to Evagrius* (*Epist. 126*) —

“Nec refert utrum Salem an Salim nominetur, cum vocalibus in medio litteris perraro utantur Hebraei.”

If they did it *perraro* (very seldom), they did do it, and then they had them, though in those days, to keep up their credit in teaching, they did not much use the vowels. Nor can this be spoken about the sound of the vowels, but of their figures; for surely they did not seldom use the sounds of vowels if they spoke them often. And many other testimonies from him can be produced for the same purpose.

Jean Morin (Morinus), in his latest “Opuscula Hebraea Samaritica,” (circa 1675), in his digression against the Hebrew points and accents, in the first part, p. 209, he brings in a new argument to prove that the *puncta vocalia* (vowel points) were invented by the Jewish grammarians; however, the distinction of sections might be before. This he attempts out of a discourse by Aben Ezra concerning the successive means of the preservation of Scripture; first, by the men of the great synagogue, then by the Masoretes, then by the grammarians. As he assigns all these, their several works, so to the grammarians the skill of knowing the progress of the holy tongue, the generation of the kingly points, and of Sheva, as he is by him there cited at large. Afterwards, he labours to prove by several examples that the *puncta vocalia* are, by him, called *reges* (“kings”), and not the accents, as is now used; and in the *addenda* to his book, in a supplement to it, he triumphs upon a discovery that the vowels are so called by Rabbi Jehuda Chiug, the most ancient of the Jewish grammarians. The business is now for him, it seems, quite finished, and he cries out

—
“Oculis aliorum non egemus amplius, AUTOPTAI nunc sumus”!

A sacrifice is doubtless due to this trawl of Morinus! But *quid dignum tanto?* (What is worthy of more?) The place insisted on by him out of Aben Ezra was, some years ago, produced, weighed, and explained by Buxtorf, in his Standard of the Holy Tongue (*De Punct. Orig. par. 1 p. 13, 14, cap. 3*); and it is not unlikely, from Morinus, his preface to his consideration of that place, that he fixed on it some years ago, and that he learned it from Buxterius, by the provision that he lays in against such thoughts. For what does it mean to the reader when Morinus made his observations? The manner of the men of that society in other things gives sufficient grounds for this suspicion. And Simeon de Muis intimates that he had dealt before with the father as he now deals with the son (*Censur. in Exercitat. 4 cap. 7 p. 17*); himself, with great and rare ingenuity, acknowledging what he received from him (*Assert. Verit. Heb. cap. 5*) —

“Dicesve me haec Omnia mutuatum a Buxtorfio? quidni vero mutuor, si necesse erit.”

But what is the great discovery he made here?

1. That the *puncta vocalia* are, some of them, called *reges*; the accents have now got that name; some of them are *reges*, and some *ministri*: so that the present state of things with reference to vowels and accents is but novel.
2. That the grammarians invented these *regia puncta*, as Aben Ezra says.

But, pray, what cause of triumph or boasting is in all this goodly discovery? Was it ever denied by any that the casting of the names of the vowels and accents, with the titles, was the work of the grammarians? Was it not long since observed by many that the five long vowels were called of old *reges*? And that the distinction of the vowels into long and short was an invention of the Christians rather than Jewish grammarians, the Jews calling them some, absolutely, *reges*, some great and small, some *matres et filias* (mothers and sons)? "But then", says he, "the grammarians were the inventors of these points." Why so? "Aben Ezra refers this to the work of the grammarians, to know the progression of the holy tongue, the generation of those kings, etc." But can anything be more evident against his opinion than his own testimony? It was the work of the grammarians to know these things, therefore they did not to *invent* them. Did they invent the radical and servile letters? Surely they also then invented the tongue; for it consists of letters radical and servile, of points and accents: and yet this is also ascribed to them by Aben Ezra.

But it is as well that Morinus, at length, settled on Rabbi Jehuda Chiug. His opinion before was taken out of Kimchi, Ephodius, Muscatus, and others. But what does he say now from himself? For all that appears, by what we have quoted from Morinus, he is likely to prove a notable witness for the antiquity of the points. It may be well supposed that Morinus, writing on purpose against their antiquity, would produce that testimony which in his this author was most to his purpose; yet he fixes on one where this ancient grammarian, who lived about the year of Christ 1150 or 1200, gives us an account of the points, with their names, without the least intimation of anything to the downgrading of their divine origin. So also the same Aben Ezra on Psalm 9:7 tells us of one Adonim Ben-lafrad, who, long before this, Rabbi Jehuda, found various points in an ancient copy. And therefore, when Morinus came to the conclusion of his argument, he discovered, it seems, for himself, the folly of the pretence that the points were invented by the grammarians, the last sort of men mentioned by Aben Ezra, when he says —

"Procul omni dubio est, et luce meridiana clarius Aben Ezram sensisse omnium vocalium punctuationem a Masorethis Tiberiensibus, et grammaticis, qui hos sequuti sunt, originem ducere."

But of these Masoretes, there is not one word in the premises, nor is any such thing assigned to them by Aben Ezra, but quite another employment — of putting a hedge around the law by their observations on all the words of it — and had he dreamed of their inventing the points, he would surely have assigned that work to them; and as for the grammarians, his own testimony lies full to the contrary.

And these are the heads of the arguments insisted on by Cappellus and others, and by these *Prolegomena*, to prove the Hebrew punctuation to be an invention of the Jews of Tiberias five hundred years or more after the incarnation of Christ. *Brevis Cantilena, sed longum Epiphonema.* (Short song, but its staging is long) As I have not here designed to answer them in detail, with the various examples produced to give countenance to them (nor is it needful for any to do so until the answer already given to them is removed), so by the specimen given of their nature and kind, a serious and pious reader may easily judge whether there is any force in them to undermine the persuasion opposed by them, grounded on the *catholic tradition* and consent of the Jews; the *uncontradicted reception* of them absolutely, without the least opposition, all the world over, by Jews and Christians; the very *nature of the punctuation* itself, following the genius of the language, does not arise or flow from any artificial rules. It is impossible to assign any author to it since the days of Ezra, but only by such loose conjectures and fancies that ought not to be admitted to any plea and place in this weighty cause. All this is attended with great uncertainty, which, without their owning of these points to be of divine origin, we shall be left to all our translations and expositions of Scripture.

It is true, while the Hebrew language was the vulgar tongue of a nation, and was spoken by everyone uniformly everywhere, it had been possible that, on the supposition that there were no points, men, without infallible guidance and direction, might possibly add notes and figures which might, with some exactness, answer the common pronunciation of the language, and so, consequently, exhibit the true and proper sense and meaning of the words themselves. But when there had been an interval of a thousand years in the vulgar use of the language, it being preserved pure only in one book, to suppose that the true and exact pronunciation of every tittle, letter, and syllable, was preserved alive by oral tradition, not written anywhere, not commonly spoken by any, is to build towns and castles in the imagination, which may be as easily thrown down as they are erected. Yet, unless this is supposed (which, with no stretch of the imagination, can be supposed, by Cappellus and the learned author of the *Prolegomena*). It must then be granted that the great rule of all present translations, expositions, and comments, that have been written in the church of God for some hundreds of years, is the arbitrary invention of a few Jews, living in an obscure corner of the world under the curse of God, and in their unbelief and blindness!

The only relief against this amazing inference is, as I said, that the Masoretes did not affix the present punctuation arbitrarily (so also Cappellus), but according to the tradition they had received. What weight is to be laid upon such a tradition for nearly a thousand years (even more, according to Morinus) is easy to be imagined. Nor let men please themselves with the pretended facility of learning the Hebrew language without points and accents; and not only the language, but the true and proper reading and distinction of it in the Bible. Let the points and accents be wholly removed, and all understanding of the meaning arising by the restraint and distinction of the words as now pointed, and then turn in the wake of the learned critics of this age to the bare consonants, and we shall quickly see what woeful work, yes, havoc is made of sacred truth, will be charged among them. Were they shut up in several monkish cells, I should scarcely expect the harmony and agreement amongst them which is fabulously reported to have been in the similar case with the

LXX. The Jews say, and that truly — “No man can lift up his tongue to read without punctuation.”

And —

“Si rationi in his et similibus dominium concedamus, toti mutabuntur libri, in literis, vocibus, et sententiis, et sic res ipsa quoque mutabitur.” (*Lib. Cosri. 1, par. 3, p. 28*)

Thus I have, with all possible brevity, defended the position formerly insisted on from this grand exception, which might be justly feared from the principles laid down in the *Prolegomena*.

CHAPTER 7

Of the original characters, their nature and origin — The difference in the consonants — Morinus' vain charge on Arias Montanus — The senses of both consistent — Of the great congregation — The spring and rise of these various readings — The judgement of the *Prolegomena* about them — Their order given twice over in the *Appendix* — The rise assigned to them considered — Of Cappellus, his opinion, and the danger of it.

THE *Prolegomena*, and that represented in the *Appendix*, may seem to go against the universality of my assertion concerning the entire preservation of the original copies of the Scripture. The KERI UKETIB (Keri and Ketib), or the *scriptio* (spelling) and *lectio* (reading), or *scriptum* (written word) and *lectum* (spoken word), is what I mean. The general nature of these things is known to all those that have looked into the Bible. One word is placed in the line and another in the margin, the word in the line not having the points or vowels affixed to it that are its own, but those that belong to the word are put in the margin. Of this sort, there are 840 in the Bible, or thereabouts; for some of the late editions, by mistake or oversight, differ at to the precise number. All men that have written any considerations on the Hebrew text have spoken of their nature in general; so has the author of these *Prolegomena*. As to our present concern — namely, to show that, from them, no argument can arise as to corrupt the original — the following observations concerning them may be sufficient —

1. All the difference in the words is in the consonants, not at all in the vowels. The word in the margin has the vowels in the line as proper to it, and the vowels in the line seen to be placed to the word where they do not belong, because there is no other fit place for them in the line where they are to be continued, as belonging to the integrity of Scripture. Morinus, in revealing his rage against the Hebrew text, takes from this occasion to quarrel with Arias Montanus, and to accuse him of ignorance and false dealing. (*De Heb. Text. Sincer.*, Exer. 1 cap. 4 p. 40)

In the pretence of his quarrel, he makes out that Arias affirms the greatest part of these various lections consist in some differences of the points; for which purpose, he quotes his words out of his preface to his collection of various lections —

“Maxima in his lectionibus varietatis pars in hujusmodi punctorum discrepantia consistit, ut toto hujus Mazzoreth sire variaxum lectionum volumine demonstratur.”

To which he adds —

“Mira assertio! ne usa quidem in punctis sits est. Catalogum plurimorum ipse ad finem praefationis adtexuit. Et vaxietates omnes sunt in literis, nulls in punctis. Confidentialius scribe omnium variorum lectionum quas Judaei appellant Keri et Ketib, de quibus agit Arias nulls prorsus ad puncta pertinet. Iterum confidentialius,” etc.

Would not anyone think that the man had made here some *great discovery*, both as to the nature of the KERI and KETIB, as also to the ignorance of Arias, whom he

goes on to reproach as a person unacquainted with the Masora, and with the various lections of Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali, from the eastern and western Jews, at the end of the Venetian Bibles; which Bibles he chiefly used in printing his own? And yet, on the other hand, men acquainted with the ability and great discernment of Arias will be hardly persuaded that he was so blind and ignorant as to affirm the greatest part of the variety he spoke of consisted in the changing of vowels, and immediately give examples where all he mentions consists in the change of consonants only. But what if all this should prove the ignorance and prejudice of Morinus? Firstly, as to his redoubled assertion about the difference of the KERI and KETIB in the consonants alone — where he speaks as though he were blessing the world with a new and strange discovery — it is a thing known "*lippis et tonsoribus*" (sore eyed and barbered), and has been so since the days of Elias Levita. What then? Did he intend Arias Montanus to affirm the contrary?

"Hic nigri succus loliginis: haec est Ærugo mera."

(This black juice is from cuttlefish; this is pure rust!)

He speaks not at all of the KERI and KETIB, but merely of the anomalous pointing of words, in a various way from the genius of the tongue, as they are observed and reckoned up in the Masora: of other varieties he speaks afterward, giving a particular account of the Keri and Ketib; which whether he esteemed various lections or no I know not, "Non site superis aeques" (). But all are ignorant who are not of the mind of an aspiring Jesuit!

2. That the difference in the meaning, taking in the whole context, in the matter is very little, or none at all; at least each word, both that in the line and that in the margin, yields a meaning agreeable to the analogy of faith. Of all the varieties that are found of this kind, that of two words the same in sound, but of most distinct significance, seems of the greatest importance — namely, LO and LO', fourteen or fifteen times; where LO', "not" is in the text, the margin notes LO, "to him" or "his," can be read. But yet, though these seem contrary one to the other, wherever this happens, a sense agreeable to the analogy of faith arises fairly from either word, as to give one or two stands. Ps. 100:3 — "He hath made us, and not we ourselves" (the "not" being LO'). The Keri, in the margin, is VLU ("his"), giving this meaning, "He hath made us, and his we are", the verb substantive being included in the pronoun.

So Is. 63:9, LO' TSAR — "In all their afflictions (or straits), no straitness" so the KETIB. The KERI is LO — "Straitness (or affliction) was to him" or "he was straitened" or "afflicted." In the first way, God signified that when they were in their outward straits, he was not straitened from their relief; in the other, that he had compassion on them, and was afflicted with them, which, upon the matter, means the same. And the same may be shown of the rest.

I confess I am not able fully to satisfy myself in the origin and spring of all this variety, being not willing merely to depend on the testimony of the Jews, much less on the conjectures of late innovators. To the uttermost length of my view, to give a full account of this thing is a matter of no small difficulty. Their venerable antiquity and unquestioned reception by all translators gives them sanctuary from being cast down from the place they hold by any man's bare conjecture. That which to me is of the

greatest importance is that they appear, most of them, to have been in the Bibles then, when the oracles of God were committed to the Jews; during which time we find them not blamed for adding or altering one word or tittle.

Hence the Chaldee paraphrast often follows the Keri, which never was in the line, whatever some boastfully conjecture to the contrary; and sometimes the Ketib. What seems to me most probable is that they were collected, for the most part of them, by "The men of the great congregation." Some, indeed, I find of late (I hope not out of a desire to bring all things to further confusion about the original) to question whether there was ever any such thing as "the great congregation". Morinus calls it a Jewish figment. Our *Prolegomena* question it (*Proleg. 8, sect. 22*). But this is only to question whether Ezra, Nehemiah, Joshua, Zechariah, Haggai, and the rest of the leaders of the people, on their return from the Captivity, set a Sanhedrin according to the institution of God, and laboured to reform the church and all the corruptions that had crept either into the Word or worship of God. I don't see how this can reasonably be called into question, if we did not have something to confirm it, the catholic tradition of Jews and Christians. Neither is it called "The great congregation" from its number, but from the eminence of its members. Now, on this supposition, it may be granted that the Keri on the books of these men themselves, Ezra and the rest, were collected by the succeeding church; unless we suppose, with Ainsworth, that the word was so received from God as to make both necessary. And if we don't know the true cause of its being so given, we have nothing to blame but our own ignorance, this not being the only case where we have reason to do so.

Our last translation generally renders the word in the margin, noting also the word in the line, where there is any considerable difference. Those who have leisure for such a work may observe what choice is used in this case by old and modern translators; and if they had not believed them to have had an authoritative origin, beyond the judgement of anyone in these days, they could not fairly and honestly have used both line and margin as they have done.

What now says our *Prolegomena* and its *Appendix* to these things? We have them in the *Appendix* presented to us in their own order, according as they are found in the books of the Scriptures; and then over again in the order, and under the heads, that they are drawn and driven to by Cappellus — a task that learned man took upon himself, that he might, in the performance of it, give some face to his opinion, that they are, for the most part, critical emendations of the text made by some late scribe, that came no man knows where from, and that lived no one knows where nor when. Thus, whereas these Keri and Ketib have the only face and appearance on the matter of various lections upon the Old Testament (for the Jews' collections of the various readings of Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali, of the oriental and occidental Jews, are of no value, nor ever had place in their Bible, and may be rejected), the unwary viewer of the *Appendix* is presented with a great bulk of them, their whole army being mustered twice over in this service!

But this inconvenience may be easily amended, nor am I bothered by it.

3. Therefore, thirdly, for the rise of them, it is said that some of them are the amendments of the Masoretes or Rabbis; others, various lections out of different copies. That they are all, or most part of them, critical amendments of the Rabbis is

not allowed; for which latter part of his determination we think the learned author, and take leave to say, that in the former we are not satisfied. (*Prol. 8, sect. 23-25*) The arguments that are produced to prove them not to have been from Ezra, but, in the most part, from post-Talmudic Rabbis, are capable of a very easy solution, which also another occasion may uncover.

A present, I have gone already too far beyond my intention, so that I cannot allow myself any further digression.

Answer

To answer briefly: Ezra and his companions might be the collectors of all those in the Bible, but their own books, and those in their own books, might have been added by the succeeding church. The oriental and occidental Jews differed about other things as well as the Keri and Ketib. The rule of the Jews, that the Keri is always to be followed, is novel, and therefore the old translators might read either or both as they saw good reason. There was no occasion at all why these things should be mentioned by Josephus, Philo, Origen. Jerome says, indeed, on *Is. 49:5*, that Aquila rendered that word “to him” which is written with Lamedh (ל) and Aleph (א), not Lamedh (ל) and VAV (ו). But he does not make it appear that Aquila did not read as he translated, that is, by the KERI. And for what is urged of the Chaldee and LXX, making use of the Keri and Ketib, it is not intended that they knew the difference under these names, but that these differences existed in their days. That the word now in the margin was in the line until the days of the pretended Masoretes is not openly said, but need to be proved, if such a novel fancy expects any credit in the world. That the Jewish Rabbis made some alterations in the text of their own accord, at least placed words in the margin, as to their consonants, supplying their vowels in the line where they ought not to have been placed; that there were various lections in the copies after the Talmud which have been gathered by some obscure Jews, no mention being made of those collections in the Masora or any of their grammarians — is the sum of the discourse under consideration. When all this, or any part of it, is proved by testimony or evident reason, we shall pay further attention to it.

In the meantime, I cannot but rejoice that Cappellus’ fancy about these things — than which I know nothing more dangerous to the truth of God — is rejected. If these hundreds of words were the critical conjectures and amendments of the Jews, what security have we of the mind of God as truly presented to us, seeing that it is supposed also that some of the words in the margin were sometimes in the line? And if it is supposed, as it is, that there are numerous other places of similar nature standing in need of such amendments, what a door would be opened to curious, pragmatical wits to overturn all the certainty of the truth of the Scripture everyone can see! Given once this liberty to the audacious curiosity of men, priding themselves in their critical abilities, and we shall soon find out what a woeful state and condition the truth of Scripture will be brought down to. If the Jews have made such amendments and corrections of the text, and that, so they think, to so good a purpose, and if so much work of this kind yet remains, can anyone possibly better employ himself than with his utmost diligence to put his hand to this plough? But remember that “he that breaks down a hedge, a serpent shall bite him.” (*Eccl. 10:9*)

CHAPTER 8

Of gathering various lections by the help of translations — The proper use and benefit of translations — Their new pretended use — The state of the originals on this new pretence — Of the remedy tendered for the relief of that state — No copies of old differing in the least from those we now enjoy, inferred from the testimony of our Saviour — No testimony, new or old, to that purpose — Requisites needed for good translations — Of the translations in the *Biblia Polyglota* — Of the Arabic — Of the Syriac — Of the Samaritan Pentateuch — Of the Chaldee Paraphrase — Of the Vulgate Latin — Of the Septuagint — The translations of the New Testament — Of the Persian — Of the Ethiopian — The value of these translations as to the work in hand — Of the supposition of gross corruption in the originals — Of various lections out of Hugo Grotius — Of the *Appendix* in general.

BECAUSE it is the judgement of some that yet other objections may be raised against the thesis I am pleading for, from what is affirmed in the *Prolegomena* about gathering various lections together with the help of translations, and examples of that good work given us in the *Appendix*, I close my discourse with a consideration of that pretence.

The great and signal use of *various translations*, which hitherto we have esteemed them for, was the help afforded by them in expositions of Scripture. To have represented unto us in one view the several apprehensions and judgements of so many worthy and learned men as were the authors of these translations, upon the original words of Scripture, is a special help and advantage to men inquiring into the mind and will of God in his Word. That translations were of any other use formerly was not apprehended. They are of late presented unto us under another notion — namely, as means and helps of correcting the original, and finding out the corruptions that are in our present copies, showing that the copies which their authors used did really differ from those which we now enjoy and use!

For this rare invention, we are, as for the former, chiefly indebted to the learnèd and most diligent Cappellus, who is followed, as in several instances he himself declares, by the no less learnèd Grotius. For this purpose, the scene is thus laid out —

“It is supposed that of old *there were sundry copies of the Old Testament differing in many things, words, sentences, from those we now enjoy*. Out of these copies, some of the ancient translations have been made. In their translations, they express the sense and meaning of the copies they made use of. Hence, by considering what they deliver, where they differ from our present copies, we may find out (that is, the learnèd men, who are expert at conjectures) how they read in theirs. Thus, may we come to a further discovery of the various corruptions that have crept into the Hebrew text, and, by the help of those translations, amend them.”

This is the position of Cappellus.

The learned author of our *Prolegomena* will handle this business. (*Proleg.* 6) I do not remember that he anywhere expressly affirms that they had *other copies* than those we now enjoy; but whereas (besides the Keri and Ketib, the various readings of Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali, of the eastern and western Jews), there are, through the neglect, obstinacy, and frailty of the transcribers, many things that have befallen the text — not such failings as, happening in one copy, may be easily rectified by others, which are not to be regarded as various lections, nor such as may be collected out of any ancient copies, but faults or mistakes in *all* the copies we enjoy, or that have ever been known — with the help and use of translations, conjecturing how they read in their books, either in other words or letters, consonants or points, when we collect together various lections as from the original. In what this opinion on the matter differs from that of Cappellus I don't see, for the difference between our copies and those of old are, by him, assigned to no other original; nor does Cappellus say that the Jews have voluntarily corrupted the text, but only that alterations have befallen it by the means and ways related in the *Prolegomena*. To make this evident by examples, we have a great number of such various lections, gathered by Grotius, in the *Appendix*. The truth is, how that volume should come under that name at first view, I have often wondered. The greatest part of it gives us no various lections of the Hebrew text, as is pretended, but various interpretations of others from the Hebrew. But the *Prolegomena* solve that seeming difficulty. The particulars assigned as various lections are not different readings, collected out of any *copies extant*, or ever known to have been extant, but *critical conjectures* of his own for the amendment of the text, or at most conjectures on the reading of the words by translators, especially the LXX and the Vulgate Latin.

Let us now consider the disease intimated, and the remedy prescribed, together with the improbability of the one, and the unsuitability of the other, as to the removal of it, being once supposed. The disorder pretended is dreadful, and such as may well prove mortal to the sacred truth of Scripture. The sum of it, as I declared before, is from Louis Capel (Cappellus) —

“That of old there were *several copies extant*, differing in many things from those we now enjoy, according to which the ancient translations were made; and so it has come to pass that, in so many places, they differ from our present Bibles, even all that are extant in the world.”

Or —

“That there are corruptions befallen the text (varieties from the AUTOGRAPHIA) that may be found with the help of the translations.”

As in the *Prolegomena*.

Now, whereas the *first translation* that ever was (as is pretended) was that of the LXX, and that, of all others, excepting only those which have been translated from it, most vary and differ from our Bible, but may be made good by some thousands of instances, we cannot but be exceedingly uncertain in finding out where those copies which, as it is said, were used by them, differed from ours, or where ours are corrupted, but are left in endless uncertain conjectures. What sense others may have of this disorder, I don't know. For my own part, I am solicitous for the ark, or the

sacred truth of the original, and that because I am fully persuaded that the remedy and relief of this evil provided in the translations is unfit for the cure, yes, fitted to increase the disease. Some other course, then, must be taken; and seeing the remedy is notoriously insufficient to effect the cure, let us test whether the whole disorder is not a mere fancy, and so do whatever lies in us to prevent that horrible and outrageous violence which will undoubtedly be offered to the sacred Hebrew verity, if every learned charlatan may be allowed to practice on it with his conjectures from translations.

1. It is well known that the translation of the LXX, if it has the original pretended, and which alone makes it considerable, was made and finished three hundred years, or thereabout, before the incarnation of our Saviour. It was in that time and season when the oracles of God were committed to the Jews, while that church and people were the only people of God accepted by him, designed by him as keepers of his Word for the use of the whole church of Christ to come, as the great and blessed foundation of truth — a time when there was an authentic copy of the whole Scripture, as the rule of all others, kept in the temple. Now, can it be at once imagined that there should be at that time such notorious varieties in the copies of the Scripture, through the negligence of that church, and yet afterwards neither our Savior nor his apostles took the least notice of it?

Yes, does not our Saviour himself affirm concerning the Word that was then among the Jews, that not one jot or tittle of it should pass away or perish? (Mat. 5:18) Surely this involves not only the points, but the consonants themselves with their apices, included in that expression. Yet of that Word, which was translated by the LXX according to this hypothesis, and which assuredly they then had, if ever, not only tittles and letters, but words, and what many have decided are lost. But that no Jew believes the figment we are now considering, I might say, *Credat Apella!* (Tell it to the marines!)

2. Putting to one side a consideration of our refuge in these cases, namely, the good providence and care of God in the preservation of his Word, let the authors of this insinuation prove their assertion, namely, that there was ever in the world any other copy of the Bible, differing in any one word from those that we now enjoy. Let them produce one testimony, one author of credit, Jew or Christian, who can, or does, or ever did, speak one word to this purpose. Let them direct me to any relic, any monument, any kind of remembrance of them — and not put me off with weak conjectures on the significance of one or two words, and it shall carry weight with me. Is it right that a matter of so huge importance, called into question by none but themselves, should be cast and determined by their conjectures? Do they think that men will part with the possession of truth upon such easy terms? That they will be cast from their inheritance by divination? But they will say —

“Is it not evident that the old translators made use of other copies, in that we see how they could have translated many words and places, so as it was impossible to do so, using our Hebrew copy according to what we now read?”

But can this indeed be pleaded? May it not be extended to all places as well as to any? And may not men plead so for every variation made by the LXX., from the original, that they had other copies than any that now are extant? Better all old

translations should be consumed out of the earth than that such a figment should be admitted.

That there are a great many other reasons to be assigned to the variations from the original — such as the translators' own clumsiness, negligence, ignorance (for the wisest don't see everything), a desire to expound and make the meaning clear, and, as it was likely, of altering and varying many things from the original, with the many corruptions and interpolations that have befallen that translation, indifferently well witnessed to by the various lections exhibited in the *Appendix* — as is easy to show. Seeing, then, that neither the care of God over his truth, nor the fidelity of the Jewish church while the oracles of God were committed to her, will permit us to entertain the least suspicion that there was ever in the world any copy of the Bible differing in the least from that which we enjoy, or that those we have "corrupted", as is pretended; and seeing that the authors of that insinuation cannot produce the least testimony to make it good, pristine entirely through the mercy and goodness of God, in its entirety, as the *unquestioned possession* of his oracles that were once committed to the Jews, and is now the faith that was "once delivered unto the saints." (Jude verse 3)

But now, to suppose that such indeed has been the condition of the holy Bible in its original state as is pretended, let us consider whether any relief in this case can be expected from the translations exhibited to us, taking much pains, care, and diligence, in these *Biblia Polyglota*, and so at once determine that question, whether this can be any part of the use of translations, be they ever so ancient, namely, to correct the originals by, leaving further discussion of quite a number of things in and about them to other Exercitations [essays].

That all, or any translation, may be esteemed *useful* for this purpose, I suppose without any contention it will be granted —

1. That we must be certain concerning those that they are *translated from the originals themselves*, and not from the interpretations of them that went before them; for if that can be shown, all their authority as to the business I am inquiring into falls to the ground, or is, at best, resolved into that former from which they are taken, if they are at agreement with them. Otherwise, they are a thing that comes to nothing. And this one consideration will be found to lay hold of one part or section of these translations.
2. That they must be of venerable *antiquity*, so as to be made when there were other copies of the original in the world beside what we now enjoy.
3. That they must be known to be made by men of *ability and integrity*, sound in the faith, and conscientiously careful not to add or take away from the originals they made the translation from. If all these things at least concur not in a translation, it is most undeniably evident that it can be of no use in assisting in the finding out of what corruptions have befallen our copies, and what is the true lection of any passage about which any differences arise.

Let us, then, as without any prejudice in ourselves, or without, I hope, any offense to others, very briefly consider the state and condition of the translations given us in the *Biblia Polyglota* as to the qualifications they lay down.

Let us, then, take a view of some of the chiefest of them, without observing any order, seeing there is no more reason for that which is laid down in this *Appendix* than for any other that may be fixed on.

I begin with the **ARABIC**, for the honour I bear to the renowned learnèd publisher of it and the various lections of the several copies we possess; and rather because he has dealt here with his usual candour, giving in a clear and learnèd account of the origin and nature of that translation; which I had, for the substance of it, received from him in a discourse earlier, where also he gave me a satisfactory account concerning some other translations, which I do not now need to mention, though I only say that his judgement in such things is to be esteemed, at least equal with that of anyone now alive.

1. Firstly, then, he tells us as to this matter that this translation is *a cento* (at the centre), made up of many ill-suited pieces, there being no translation in that language today. I speak of the Old Testament.
2. For the antiquity of the most ancient part of it, it was made about the year 4700 of the Jews' account, that is, of Christ 950.
3. It was, as to the Pentateuch, translated by Rabbi Saadias Haggao.
4. That it is interpreted and changed in many things by some other person.
5. That he who made these changes seems to have so done so that he might the better serve some particular opinion of his own; of which several examples are given.
6. That he seems to have been a Mohammedan, or at least much to have favoured them, as appears from other evidences, so from the inscription of his work with that solemn motto, taken from of the Koran, *In nomine Dei miseratoris, misericordia.* (In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.)
7. It may be thought, also, that some other, a Jew or a Samaritan, had his hand in corrupting the last translation —
8. Who thought to stamp a divine authority on his particular opinions.
9. That the foundation of this translation, now printed, being that of Saadias, it is observable that he professes that he both *added* and *detracted* according as he thought fit, so he might set out a hidden, cabalistic understanding of Scripture.
10. That the other Arabic translations that are extant are from the Septuagint, either immediately, or by, the Syriac, which was translated from it. On these and like heads, doth that oracle of eastern learning — who has not only, as some, learned the words of some of those languages, but searched with great diligence and judgement into the nature of the learning extant in them, and the importance of the books we have — discoursed in that preface. It is the way of amateurs, when they have obtained a little skill in any language or science, to persuade the world that all worth and wisdom lie in him. Men thoroughly learnèd, and whose learning is regulated by a

sound judgement, know that the true use of their abilities consists in the right suiting of men to a dear acquaintance with truth. In that kind, not only in this particular, are we indebted to this worthy, learnèd personage.

I suppose there will not need much of an argument to prove that this translation, though exceeding useful in its own place and kind, yet is not in the least a fit remedy to relieve us against any pretended corruption in the original, or to gather various lections different from our present copies. Well may it exercise the ability of learnèd men to consider in what, and how often, it goes away from the rule of faith; but rule in itself, and upon its own account, comes short of all the necessary qualifications laid down before.

Should I now go on gathering examples of the failings of this translation, open and gross, and so proceed with the rest, I think I might produce a volume nearly as big as that of the various lections now afforded us. But I have another way to account for the giving of my hours and the spending of them.

Whether the **SYRIAC** translation is in any way more suitable for this use, anyone who shall be pleased to consider and weigh it will easily discover. It seems, indeed, to have been made out of the original, at least for some part of it, or that the translation of the LXX has been in many things changed since this was made (which I rather suppose). But when, where, or by whom, it does not appear; nor does it in many things seem to have any respect at all to the Hebrew. The note at the close of the Prophets I suppose proceeded rather from the scribe of that individual copy than the translator; but that the reader may see what hands it has passed through, he may take it as it is rendered by the learnèd author of the annotations on that translation —

“Explicit Malachias sive libri 12 prophetarum, quorum oratio perpetuo nobis adsit, Amen; precibusque ipsorum, precibusque omnium sanctorum, sodalium ipsorum praesertim virginis, quae Deum peperit, omnium sanctorum matris quae pro genere Adami intercedit, propitius sit Deus lectori et scriptori peccatori, et omnibus sire verbo sive opere, ipsis participantibus.”

But this good conclusion is, as I suppose, from the scribe; the usual negligence of whom in his work is frequently fixed in the collection of various readings, for which see page 8, *et alibi*.

Now, though I confess this translation is very useful in many things, and follows the original for the most part, yet being made as yet I know neither when, nor by whom, in several places evidently follows another corrupt translation, having passed through the hands of men ignorant and suspicious, against whose frauds and folly, by reason of the smallness of copies, we have no relief. So I question whether it may be esteemed of any great use or importance as to the end I am inquiring into.

Of the **SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH**, both original and translation, we do not need to add much. What the people from whom it has its denomination were is known; nor have the inquiries of Scaliger and Morinus added anything to what is generally known of them from the Scripture and in Josephus. In a word, they were an idolatrous, superstitious, wicked people, before they were subdued by Hyrcanus.

Afterwards, they continued in their separation from the true church of God; and, upon the testimony of our Saviour, did not have salvation among them. When they received their Pentateuch is uncertain; it is uncertain also how long they kept it. That they corrupted it whilst, they had it is not uncertain; they are charged with doing so by the Jews in the Talmud, and the example they give is true to this day. (Deut. 11:30) They have added "Sichem" to the text, to give face to their abominations. And openly, in Deut 27:4, where God gives a command that an altar should be set up on mount Ebal, they wickedly and openly corrupted the text and put in Gerizim.

Now, one such voluntary corruption, made on purpose to excuse a sin and false worship, is enough to lay low the authority of any copy whatever. The copy here printed was brought out of the east, from Damascus, not long ago. "It appears to have been two hundred and thirty years old", says Morinus in his account of it. (*Opusc. Samar. Praefat. Ad Translat. Samarit.*) As I said before, that any Samaritans still yet remain is uncertain; there are just a few Jews that walk in that way, and here and there a few families. Now, that this Pentateuch, which was never as such committed to the church of God, that arose no one knows by whom, and that has been preserved no one knows how, known by a few, used by none of the ancient Christians, that has been voluntarily corrupted by men of corrupt minds, to excuse them in their folly, should be of any authority, upon its own single account, to any end or purpose, especially to vie with the Hebrew text, men that have not some design that they will not publicly own or will scarce contend. The passages instanced by Morinus to prove its integrity above the Hebrew copy, as to the solution of difficulties by it, in Gen. 11:29, Ex. 12:40, evidently prove it to be corrupt.

Anyone who will consider them find the alterations purposely made to avoid the difficulties in those places; which is one common evidence of corruption. In Gen. 11:31, sixty years are cut off from the life of Terah, to make the chronology agree; and that of Ex. 12:46 — "The dwelling of the children of Israel and their fathers, when they dwelt in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years" — is plainly a comment or exposition of the text. Nor would Jerome, who had this copy, make any use of it in these difficulties. If I went over the rest of Morinus' examples, in which he seeks to credit his Samaritan copy, which we have in these *Biblia Polyglota*, I could show that there is scarcely one of them but yields a clear argument of corruption in it, upon some of the best grounds we have to judge the sincerity or corruption of any copy. And if this Pentateuch had been of any credit of old, it would not have been omitted, yes, as it seems, utterly rejected as a thing of nothing by Origen, in his diligent collection of the originals and versions.

But we are in a way and business where all things are carried to and fro by conjectures; and it is no hard task to show the utter uncertainty of what is fixed on as the original of this Pentateuch by the author of the *Prolegomena*, or to reinforce those conjectures which he opposes; but that is not my present work, nor do I know that it will ever be so. But I must, for the present, say that I would have been glad if he had refrained at the close of his discourse, (sect. 2), where, from the occasional mention of the Samaritan Liturgy, and the pretended antiquity of it, he had not fallen, not without some bitterness of spirit, on those who have laid aside the English Prayer Book. It were not (in the judgement of some) imprudently done, to reserve a triumph over the sectaries to some more considerable victory than any that is to be hoped for from the example of the Samaritans. Were they all barbers, and porters, and

alehouse-keepers, yet they might easily discern that the example and precedent of a wicked people, forsaken of God, and forsaking of him, to whom the promise of the Spirit of supplications was never made, nor was he he bestowed upon them, is not convincing to the people of Christ under the new testament, who had the promise made good to them. And much more, to the same purpose, will some of them be found to say, when men of wisdom and learning, who are able to instruct them, shall condescend personally to do so. But I will forbear from saying anything else.

The **CHALDEE PARAPHRASE** is a *cento* also. The *Jonathan Targum* is ancient, so also is that of Onkelos. They are supposed to have been made before or about the time of our Saviour. Some of the Jews would have Jonathan to have lived not long after Ezra; others say that he was the chief disciple of Hillel, about a hundred years before Christ's incarnation. Some are otherwise minded, and will not own it to be much older than the Talmud: but as yet I see no grounds sufficient enough to overthrow received opinion. The other parts of Scripture were paraphrased several times, some above five hundred years after our Saviour, and are full of Talmudic fancies, if not fables; such as that on the Canticles (Song of Solomon). That all these Targums are of excellent use I am willing to confess; and I am indebted to the *Biblia Polyglota* for presenting them in so handsome an order and place, that, with great facility, they may be compared with the original.

But as to the end under consideration, how little advantage is gained and obtained, these few following observations will prove —

1. It was never the aim of these paraphrasts to render the original text exactly *verbum de verbo* (word for word), but to give the meaning of the text according to as it appeared in their judgement. Hence, it is impossible to give any true account how they read in any place wherever they differ from our present copies, since their endeavour was to give us the sense as they thought, rather than the bare and naked importance of the words themselves. Hence, Elias says of them — “Behold, the Targumists observed not sometimes the way of grammar.”
2. It is evident that all the Targums agreed to give us often mystical meanings, especially the latter, and so found it necessary to go away from the letter of the text.
3. It is evident that they have often made additions of whole sentences to Scripture, even the best of them, from their own understanding or corrupt traditions, so that there is not one tittle or syllable in Scripture, nor ever was.
4. What careful hands it has passed through, the bulk collection of various lections given in this *Appendix* abundantly manifests. And seeing it has not been subjected to any particular care and the merciful providence of God, it has produced innumerable other faults and errors, not to be discovered by any variety of copies (as it happened with the Septuagint); so who will go into it, who can tell? Of these and similar things we have a fuller account in the “*Babylonia*” of Buxtorf the elder (promised some time ago to be published by the son as *Vindic. Veritat. Heb. p. 2, c. 10:p. 337*, and, as we are informed, by the learnèd annotator of this *Paraphrase*, in the preface to his *Appendix*, lately sent to the publishers of this Bible). So we have not as yet arrived at the remedy provided for the supposed disorder.

Of the **VULGATE LATIN**, its uncertain origin, its corruptions and barbarisms, its abuse, so much has been said, and by so many already, that it would be to no purpose to go over it again. For my part, I esteem it much the best in the whole collection exhibited to us, except the interlinear of Arias; but not to be compared to many modern translations, and very unfit to yield the relief sought for.

The **SEPTUAGINT** (LXX) is something that must carry the weight of the whole. And good reason there is, indeed, that it should answer for most of the rest, they being evidently taken out of the argument, and so are often worse. Yet they are now better than that is. But here again, all things are exceedingly uncertain; nothing almost is shown concerning it but that is woefully corrupt. Its rise is uncertain. Some call the whole story of that translation into question as though there had never been any such people in *rerum natura* (in the nature of things). The circumstances that are reported about them and their works are certainly fables. That the translators should be sent for on the advice of Demetrius Phalereus (who had died before), that they should be put into seventy-two cells or private chambers, and that there should be twelve from each tribe fit for the work, are all of them unbelievable. See Scal. ad Euseb. *fol. 123*; Wouwer Syntag. *cap. 11*.

Some of the Jews say that they based the translation on a corrupt Chaldee paraphrase; and to me this seems not unlikely. Josephus, Augustine, Philo, Jerome, Zonaras, believed that they translated the Law or Pentateuch only. Josephus affirms this expressly in his *Prooem. ad Antiquit.*

And this is one received opinion. Where the rest came from is unknown. Take for this purpose the following chapter out of Drusius (*Observat. lib. 6 cap. 9*) —

“Vulgatam translationem Graecam non esse LXX. interpretum, contra, quam olim existimat fuit. “Translatio ea quae vulgo apud Graecos habetur, quin LXX. interpretum non sit, nemini hodie dubium esse arbitror ham si nihil aliud, innumeri in ea loci sunt, qui argunt magnam imperitiam sermonis Ebraici; sed et negligentiam singularem in legendo, et oscitantiam tantis viris indignam qui in ea editione non videt, nihil videt; etsi Eusebius, Hieronymus passim in monumentis suis earn Septuaginta interpretibus attribuere videtur, Nos quoque cure aliquid inde proferimus usitato magis quam veto nomine utimur, exemplo videlicet Hieronymi, quem suspicamur, licet crederet interpretationem earn a viris illis elabouratam minime fuisse, ne offenderet Graecos voluisse tamen recepto nomine semper appellare. Certe quin dubitaverit super iisdem authoribus, nihil dubitamus, nam vel hoc nos in ea opinione confirmat, quod scribit Josephum, omnemque adeo scholam Judaeorum quinque tantum libros Mosis a Septuaginta interpretibus translatos ease asserere, scribit autem hoc non semel, sed saepius, ut *Ezechiel 5 page 343, et page 301 et 372 et Mich. 2 page 150. (Libris Antwerpiae vulgatis.)*”

Let it be granted that such a translation was made, and that of the whole Bible, by some Alexandrian Jews is most probable, yet it is certain that the AUTOGRAPHON of it, if left in the library of Alexandria, was consumed in ashes in Caesar's wars; though Chrysostom tells us that the Prophets were placed in the temple of Serapis — “...and they abide there”, says he, “unto this day.” How unlikely this is anyone may guess, by what Jerome, who made another manner of inquiry after these things than Chrysostom, affirms concerning the incurable various copies of that translation

lacking an umpire for their differences. We know also what little exactness men in those days, before the use of grammar, attained in the knowledge of languages in their relation to one another; and some learned men question very much even the skill of those translators.

So Munster, in his *Praefat. ad Biblia* —

“Videbat Hieronymus vir pius et doctus, Latinos vera et genuine legis atque prophetarum destitutos lectione, nam LXX. Interpretum editio, quae tunc ubique locorum receptissima erat apud Graecos et Latinos nedum perperami plerisque in locis versa fuit, vernm per scriptores atque scribas plurimum corrupta, id quod et hodie facile patet conferenti editionem illam juxta Hebraicam veritatem, ut interim fatear illos non admodum peritos fuisse linguae Hebraicae id vel quod inviti cogimur fateri, alioquin in plurimis locis non tam fcede lapsi fuissent.”

If, moreover, the ability is granted, what security do we have of their *principles and honesty*? Cardinal Ximenes, in his preface to the edition of the Complutensian Bibles, tells us (that which is most true, if the translation we have came from them) that, on several accounts, they took liberty in translating according to their own mind; and thence concludes —

“Unde translatio Septuaginta duum, quandoque est superflua quandoque Diminuta.”

(“It is sometimes superfluous, sometimes wanting.”)

But, suppose all these uncertainties could be overlooked, yet the intolerable corruptions that (as are on all hands confessed) have crept into the translation make it altogether useless as to the end we are inquiring into. Jerome, in his *Epistle to Chromatius*, at large declares, and shows from there, the necessity of a new translation. Yes, Bellarmine himself says that, though he believes the translation of the LXX to be still extant, yet it is so corrupt and vitiated, that it plainly appears to be another (*lib. 2. De Verbo Dei, cap. 6*).

He that shall read and consider what Jerome has written of this translation, even then when he was excusing himself, and condescending to the utmost to waive the envy that was coming on him with his own new translation, in the second book of his *Apology against Rufinus, cap. 8:9*, repeating and softening what he had spoken of it in another place, will enabled us in some measure to guess of what account it ought to be with us. In brief, he tells us it is corrupted, interpolated, mingled by Origen with that of Theodotion, marked with asterisks and obelisks; that there were so many copies of it, and they so varying, that no one knew what to follow. He tells us of a learned man who, on that account, interpreted all the errors he could alight on as Scripture; that in the book of Job, take away what was added to it by Origen, or is marked by him, and little is left. His discourse is too long to transcribe. See also his *Epistle to Chromatius* at large for this purpose. Let the reader also consult the learned Hector Gottfried Masius, in his preface to his most scholarly *Commentary on Joshua*.

For the translations of the New Testament that are here afforded us, little need be said. Of the antiquity, usefulness, and means of bringing the Syriac into Europe, an account has been given by many, and we willingly acquiesce in it. The **ETHIOPIAN** and **PERSIAN** are novel things, of little use or value. Yes, I suppose it may safely be said that they are the worst and most corrupt extant in the world. The Persian was not translated out of the Greek, as is confessed by the learned annotator upon it —

“Praesens locus satis arguit, Persam Graecum codicem baud consuluisse”, in Luc. 10 et 41.

Yes, in how many things he goes away from the Greek, Syriac, Arabic, yes, goes directly contrary to the truth, is both acknowledged by its publisher and is shown in the thing itself. I know no use of it but only to show that such a useless thing is in the world. Nor is the Ethiopian one bit better — a novel endeavour of an illiterate person. He tells us that John, when he wrote the Revelation, was archbishop of Constantia, or Constantinople, etc. It is to no purpose to go over such observations that might be made on these translations. If anyone has a mind to be led out of the way, he would do well to attend to them. Whether some of them are in use now in the world, I don't know; I am sure it would be better if they are not.

Had I not seen them, I could not have imagined any would have been so bad. Would I make it my business to give examples of the mistakes, ignorance, falsifications, errors, and corruptions of these translators, whoever they were (Jews or Christians, for I am not without some ground of thinking that Jews have had a hand in them for money), my discourse, as I said before, would swell into a volume; and, unless really needed, I shall avoid it.

From what hath been said, it may abundantly appear that if there are indeed such corruptions, mistakes, and errors, crept into the original, as some have pretended, there is no relief in the least provided for the security of truth by any of the translations shown to me in these late editions of the Bible, themselves being of an uncertain origin, corrupt, and indeed of no authority from themselves, but merely from their relation to that whose credit is called into question. For my own part, as I said before, I allow them their proper use and place, and am thankful to them by whose care and pains we are made partakers of them; but to endeavour, by them, to correct the Scripture — to gather various lections out of the original, as others say — for my part, I detest the thought of it. Let others do as seems good for them. And if ever I need to speak in particular of these translations, there are yet in readiness further discoveries to be made from them.

There remains only, as to my purpose in hand, that some brief account be taken of what is yet further insinuated of the liberty to observe various lections in the Bible, upon supposition of *gross corruptions* that may be crept into it; as also of the specimen of various lections gathered out of Grotius' *Annotations*; and something of the whole bulk of them as presented to us in the *Appendix*.

As for the suggested corruptions, I could heartily wish that learned men would abstain from such insinuations, unless they are able to give them some pretence with examples. It is not spoken of this or that copy, which, by the error of the scribes or printers, may have important mistakes found in it. There is no need of men's

critical abilities to rectify such mistakes; other copies are at hand for their relief. It is of the text, without such suppositions, that this insinuation is made. Now, to cast scruples into the minds of men about the integrity and sincerity of that, without sufficient ground or warrant, is surely not allowable. It is not good to deal so with *men* or their writings, much less with *the Word of God*. Should anyone write that in case of such a man's theft or murder, who is a man of unspotted reputation, it would be good to take such or such a course with him, and publish it to the world. Then would their stirring of such rumours be looked on as an honest, Christian, and candid course of proceeding? And is it safe to deal in this way with Scripture? I speak of Protestants. For Papists, who have grown bold in their opposition to the origins of Scripture, I must need to say that I look upon them as effectively managing a design of Satan to draw men into atheism. Nor, in particular, do I account Morinus' *Exercitations* one little bit better. It is readily acknowledged that there are many difficult places in Scripture, especially in the historical books of the Old Testament. Some of them have, by some, been looked at in Greek as ALUTA (a lost cause).

The industry of learnèd men of old, and lately of Jews and Christians, has been well exercised in the interpretation and reconciliation of these problems: by one or other a fair and probable account is given of all of them. Where we cannot reach the utmost depth of truth, it has been thought right that poor worms should bring captivity their understanding to the truth and authority of God in his Word. If there is this liberty once given, that they may be looked on as corruptions, and amended at the pleasure of men, how we shall be able to stop before we come to the bottom of questioning the whole Scripture, I don't know. That, then, which yet I insist on is that, according to all rules of equitable procedure, men must prove such corruptions before they entertain us with their provision of means of remedy.

For the specimen of various lections gathered out of Grotius' *Annotations*, I shall not much concern myself; they are nothing less than various lections of that learnèd man's own observations.

Set aside —

1. The various lections of the Septuagint, of the Vulgate Latin, and of Symmachus, Aquila, and Theodotion, with which we are not concerned.
2. The Keri and Ketib, which I have often referred to over and over in this discourse.
3. The various readings of the oriental and occidental Jews, which we have also poken about elsewhere.
4. Conjectures how the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin read, by altering letters only.
5. Conjectures of his own, how the text may be amended — and very little room will take up what remains.

By this cursory view I have taken of them, I see not one word that can pretend to be a various lection unless it belongs to the Keri and Ketib, or the difference between the oriental and the occidental Jews: so that, as I said before as to my present

design, I am not at all concerned with that collection; those that are, may further consider it.

As short an account will serve for the general consideration of the whole bulky collection of various lections that we have here presented to us. As for those lections of the several translations, we are not at all bothered with them. Where any or all of them fail or are corrupted, we have a rule (blessed be God!) preserved to correct them by. As for those lections of the originals, I have spoken of them in particular. I shall only add that we have some of them, both from the Old and New Testament, given us three times over at least; many of the Keri and Ketib, after a double service done by them, are given us again the third time by Grotius; so also are those of the New Testament by the same Grotius and Lucas Brugensis.