

**THE TEN ANNUAL ACCOUNTS OF
THE COLLATION OF HEBREW MSS
OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT, BEGUN IN
1760, AND COMPLETED IN 1769**

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The ten annual accounts of the collation of Hebrew MSS of the Old Testament, begun in 1760, and completed in 1769 by Benj. Kennicott

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BENJ. KENNICOTT

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TO
ALL THE
MUNIFICENT PATRONS
OF
THIS WORK
THE PRESENT COLLECTION
OF THE
SEVERAL ANNUAL ACCOUNTS
OF ITS PROGRESS
IS
MOST GRATEFULLY
INSCRIBED:

T H E

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

THE Collation of the Hebrew MSS of the Old Testament being now finished, I think it my duty to express myself most truly thankful — first, to DIVINE PROVIDENCE; for that share of Health, which I have enjoyed (tho' of late frequently interrupted) in perhaps too close an attention, during Ten Years, to a Work of such peculiar labour and fatigue — and secondly, to all those Illustrious and Learned PERSONS; who, with a public spirit which has no parallel in the support of any literary undertaking, and with a piety which exceeds all praise, have thus liberally supported a Work, not expedient only, but necessary, for the Honour of REVELATION.

As I entered upon this important Work, resolved to prosecute it with all the expedition, and all the care, in my power; the proper advances made in it, from year to year, gave me sincere pleasure. At the end of the first, and every succeeding year; I thought it necessary, for my own credit in the discharge of my Trust, as well as the satisfaction of my Subscribers, to present Them with a printed Account, both of the Progress made,

6 INTRODUCTION.

made, and the Encouragement granted. And one of the most agreeable rewards, which I could possibly receive during this hard labour, has been the Approbation, with which these annual Accounts have been honoured by my Patrons : especially, as their Approbation has been followed by the Applause of the Learned in almost every part of Europe.

Being now to conclude the several short histories of this Collation, with an Account of the last year ; I have been persuaded to republish, and prefix, the Accounts of the nine years preceding. It is no wonder, that some of those Gentlemen, whose zeal for my Work led them to subscribe to it, should think the annual Accounts worthy of preservation : and yet it would have been strange, if several of those little pamphlets had not been lost, thro' different accidents. This has been the case ; and I have frequently been applied to, with some earnestness, for other copies of these Accounts, in order to make Sets compleat : which requests I have sometimes been unable to comply with, as all the copies for a few of the years had been before given away. A desire therefore to oblige all my Subscribers, to the utmost of my ability, is the apology I have to offer for this Republication ; and I shall beg leave to introduce it with a few historical particulars.

Soon

Soon after my entrance in this University, when I learnt the Hebrew language from the celebrated Dr HUNT, Regius Professor of the Oriental languages; I then was, and continued for some years, strongly prejudiced in favour of the *Integrity* of our Hebrew Text: taking it for granted (as men of learning far superior to mine did, almost universally, thro' Europe) that, if the printed copies of the Hebrew Bible at all differed from the Originals of Moses and the Prophets, the variations were very few and quite inconsiderable.

But, in defiance of these prejudices, I became convinced in the year 1748, that our Hebrew Text had suffered from transcribers, at least as much as the copies of other antient writings; and that there are now such corruptions in this sacred volume, as affect the Sense greatly in many instances. The particular Chapter, which extorted from me this conviction, and which was benevolently recommended to my perusal (for this very purpose) by the Reverend Dr LOWTH, now Lord Bishop of Oxford, is the 23d Chapter of the 2d Book of *Samuel*.

Having been thus convinced of my own mistake, in a matter of so much moment; I thought it my duty to endeavour to convince others. And accordingly, in 1753, I published a Dissertation on the latter part of that Chapter, beginning at the 8th verse; which verse seems to contain more and greater mistakes than are perhaps to be found elsewhere,

8 INTRODUCTION.

where, among the same number of words. To the remarks on this chapter I added (by way of Second Part) an account of SEVENTY Hebrew MSS, which I had then discovered; and I specified several instances of their Various Readings, which indeed I found to be both numerous and important.

This discovery of so many *written* copies, hitherto entirely unknown or unattended to, differing so essentially in many instances from the *printed* copies of the Old Testament, struck every reader with surprise. Whilst the more learned, and the more candid, of these readers were led to express their warm wishes — that no farther time might be lost, than had been lost already, in delaying the perfect examination of MSS, which were found to be capable of such public advantage.

In the year 1758, when the Delegates of the Press at Oxford, with very laudable intentions, requested the several Professors to recommend to them such Works, as they thought would be most acceptable to the Public, and which it would be most honourable for Them to encourage the publication of; our Hebrew Professor recommended various particulars, the first of which was *A Collation of all those Hebrew MSS of the Old Testament, which were preserved in the Bodleian Library.*

The Right Reverend Dr SECKER, then Lord Bishop of Oxford, and late Arch-Bishop of Canterbury

bury (by whose death this Work has been deprived of its first Patron, and has lost His Grace's farther Recommendation, as well as the usefulness of His Advice) was so thoroughly convinced of the great importance of such a Collation, that He pressed me strongly to undertake it. And indeed He was the Person, not only who first endeavoured to persuade me (in 1757) but also who chiefly prevailed with me (in 1760) to give up my life to this laborious Undertaking. In the year 1758, His Lordship honoured me with a Letter, from which the following is an extract.

Sir,

Deanery of St Paul's; Mar. 10, 1758.

I have long wished, that the Hebrew MSS of the Old Testament at Oxford were collated — if you are willing to undertake it, I think you the fittest; and am glad the Delegates have pitched on you. I presume you would have been glad, if they would have made proposals to you, rather than have desired you to make proposals to them: but what Advice would be proper in either case, I am unable to say — If an annual Salary be proposed; it will probably be expected, that the number of Years for completing the Work shall be fixed — I hope, whatever Doubts or Difficulties may arise, the Design will not be soon abandoned, from despair of getting thro' them — This is all that occurs at present to

Your loving brother and servant,

THO. OXFORD.

B

Soon after the receipt of this letter, His Lordship was advanced to the See of Canterbury; and His Grace then wrote to me, as follows.

Sir,

Deanery of St Paul's; Apr. 15, 1758.

I am very willing to take the part, which I thought was proper for the late Arch-Bishop, of consulting with the other Bishops, concerning some proper method of encouraging the Undertaking proposed to you — What their opinion may be, I cannot say beforehand — when I am able, I will give you farther information. In the mean while preparing for the press the Work, which you mention, I think will be a very proper employment. I wish you good Success in it, and am &c.

The Work, mentioned by His Grace, was *A Second Dissertation on the printed Hebrew Text*, which I published in the beginning of the year 1760; having then seen 110 MSS of the whole, or parts, of the Hebrew Bible. And in consequence of the additional discoveries therein made, I was still more strenuously exhorted by several Great Persons, and in particular by the Arch-Bishop of Canterbury, to enter upon the Collation of these MSS. I consented; and published Proposals. And, after HIS GRACE had begun an Annual Subscription, for the support of this Work; I applied to the *Delegates* at OXFORD, who readily patronized it likewise: as did also several learned Individuals, and some Colleges, in this Univerſity.

These