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*LINES OF DEFENCE OF THE BIBLICAL
REVELATION.*

V. THE BIBLE OF THE JEWS (*concluded*).

THE Jews, in matters affecting their religion, are forced to conceal their obligations, and hence the reforms are sprung on the nation unawares. Of the origin of the punctuation of the Bible, as of the compilation of the Talmud, we have no authentic record; in the case of the latter the origin is fraudulently misrepresented, in that of the former it is hidden in the dark. Those who introduced these reforms knew that to acknowledge obligations to Christians or Mohammedans would be to wreck the chance of success that the reform had; whereas if flung on the nation suddenly, they might win by their own merits. The condition in which we have to think of the Jews before the Abbasid period is somewhat similar to that of the Copts¹ or the Parsees. With the fall of Jerusalem Hebrew had ceased to exist as a spoken or written language. There was, however, a tradition preserved of the way to read the Hebrew Bible, and a certain number of sayings in the same language, partly from lost books, were preserved and taught in the schools. Otherwise the Jews thought, spoke, and wrote in the languages of the countries in which they sojourned.

The Targum is no more an authentic document than the Mishnah. Of difficult words and phrases in the Old Testament there was here and there a traditional interpretation in Aramaic; it is not impossible that some of these glosses go back to the days of Nehemiah. But the committal of this interpretation to writing was forbidden;² and the

¹ Jahiz, quoted by Raghîb of Ispahan, *Colloquies*, ii. 248. This writer, who died 868 A.D., is of great ability.

² Midrash Tanchuma (Warsaw, 1879), i. 25.

phrase by which the Targum is quoted in the Talmud, "as we interpret," shows that it was not thought of as a written book. Similarly instead of "reading the Targum," the formula used is "knowing how to translate"; and the accurate Mas'udi in the tenth century describes the Targum not as a book, but as a *language* into which the Jews translate their sacred books.¹ Where the Targum is mentioned as a book in the Talmud, the Christian Syriac translation called Peshitta is meant. Hence we can easily reconstruct the history of the "Targum." When the movement for preserving every monument of antiquity which we see dominated Islam in the early Abbasid period spread to the Jews, the preservation of the old Aramaic interpretation was considered desirable. But there was not enough of it in stable form to put down. What was done, therefore, was to *revise the Peshitta*, inserting the traditional interpretations where they could be obtained. Hence it comes that Christian interpretations are found in the Targum, and that the Peshitta is sometimes misrepresented in it.

Novelists who are well acquainted with human nature sometimes show how a quarrel between masters is taken up by servants. Two officers are on bad terms; so their servants come to blows. Between Kais and Kalb there is an immemorial feud; if the theory be true that David was chief of Kalb, then we can understand how it came about that there was no peace between him and the son of Kais (Kish). Similar to, if not identical with, this feud was that between the people of Syria and the people of Irak; the Umayyad dynasty represented the hegemony of Syria, whereas the Abbasid dynasty represented that of Irak. The Christian chronicler known as Dionysius of Tell-Mahré speaks of the Abbasid conquest as the conquest of

¹ *Bibliotheca Geogr. Arab.*, viii. 79.

the Arabs by the Persians. It would be surprising if the Jews, though subjects and not directly involved in the quarrel, had not taken it up. They did take it up; the Syrian Jews by no means approved of the domination of their Eastern brethren. Hence we find a duplication of the new literature. The Babylonian Talmud finds a rival in the Jerusalem Talmud. The Targum of "Onkelos" has a rival in the Jerusalem Targum. But just as Irak prevailed in the contest for political power, so the school of Babylon won an easy victory over the school of Palestine.

For the rest, the literature which the Jews now produce in large quantities is the merest imitation of what the Mohammedans have got. An author, supposed to be R. Nissim of Kairawan, about the year 1,000, writes a book of "Anecdotes," and gives the following reason for doing so :¹ "Since the sectarians (*i.e.* the Moslems) have books which they call *Deliverance after Stress*, I thought our people ought to have a work of the same kind." The idea of collecting stories of providential escapes in order to console the afflicted appears to require but little originaive power for its conception; but the author was not capable of conceiving it without external aid. A couple of generations before, R. Seadyah, the greatest of Jewish writers, writes on Creeds; he would not have done this, had not the comparison of beliefs been a recognised part of the Kalam. The period after the compiling of the Tradition is with the Mohammedans the period of the composition of the legal codes; so the Jews begin to compose codes. Some of the Moslem codes are called "Pandects," *i.e.* "All containing"; ere long these are matched by a Jewish work bearing the elegant title "All-in-it." The pride of the Arabic language is its poetry, which, while observing

¹ Lemberg edition, near the commencement.

the measure of syllables as carefully as Greek, adds thereto a rhyming system of extraordinary elaboration. The Jews find that Hebrew will scan and rhyme no less than Arabic, and so they become poets. Letters are written by the heads of Mohammedan communities to distinguished jurisconsults, requesting opinions on difficult points of law; presently the Jews find themselves in possession of a whole literature of Responsa, at first in the Yiddish of the time, *i.e.* Nabatæan Aramaic, presently in Arabic, and then in Hebrew. In the fourth century of Islam continuous commentaries on the Koran come to be substituted for the older and less formal style of desultory homilies. The Jews, who had matched the latter with their Midrashim, can now boast of a Rashi and an Ibn Ezra.

The canon that the Jews have in religious matters no ideas of their own has therefore proved itself the solvent for all questions which attach themselves to what is called Rabbinical literature; if you see a Jewish book, you have only to look through an Arabic bibliography, and you will speedily detect the source of the former. Few Jewish writers acknowledge their obligations so candidly as "Rabbi Nissim," but the reason of this has been seen. What then were the Jews doing between the fall of Jerusalem and the Mohammedan conquest? This question cannot be answered easily; but the point whence we start is the definite assertion of the Talmud that the Jews were allowed to write nothing except the Old Testament. This assertion is rightly regarded as indisputable by Seadyah in the tenth century and Rashi in the eleventh; Krochmal and Frankel in the nineteenth century think they know better, but they are mistaken. The Talmud can be no more mistaken about that matter than can Ghazzali be about the age of the literature of the Mohammedans. Hence the latest event mentioned in the Talmud gives us the *terminus a quo* for the renaissance of Jewish writing. This is probably

the slaughter of the Umayyads¹ in 750 A.D., which is used as an illustration in the Mishnah of the tractate "New Year's Day."

But the idea of a canon, containing books which might be written to the exclusion of all others, must have some origin; and how far can we trace either the prohibition against writing or the constitution of the canon? The canon of Leontius of Byzantium of the seventh century shows that the rule existed then; but its commencement is not so easy to trace. Jerome professes to have seen the original of Ecclesiasticus, but he was easily taken in, and deserves little credence. The words of Epiphanius, who is a little earlier, imply that the Apocrypha still existed in Hebrew, but, since he cannot give their Hebrew names, no faith can be placed in such an inference. From Origen we might expect fuller information on this point, but we fail to obtain it. He is, however, familiar with the word *Apocrypha*, and the meaning of that word is worth considering. It is a translation of the Hebrew word which, in this context, means to destroy. The Talmudists bless a man for not having allowed Ezekiel to be rendered apocryphal; thereby implying that Ezekiel would otherwise have been lost to the community. Hence apocryphal books mean "destroyed books," and Origen's suggestion that certain narratives might be preserved among the *destroyed books* involves a humorous contradiction. Hence the rule that only the canonical books might be written is as early as Origen; and when Melito enumerates the canonical books as those possessed by the Jews, we are justified in

¹ The spelling מַרְוָן for *Merwān* is the same as that employed by Dionysius of Tell-Mahré. *Baru Merwan* is used for the Umayyads by early Arabic writers, on Kutaibah, Istakhri, etc. If the story in Ibn Khallikan i. 258 be authentic, it was in use before 725 A.D. The Gemara first glosses the phrase rightly as "sons of our Prince," but proceeds to give some impossible explanations. The massacre was at Anbar (*Ikd Farid*, ii. 280), a Jewish centre.

inferring that they had no others. The last copy of the original of Ecclesiasticus was that used by the Syriac translator somewhen in the second century A.D.; it was faint and obliterated with age, and was probably thrown away by him when he had done with it.

To him who reflects on the origins of Christianity it will be apparent that the earliest Christian literature must have been largely in Hebrew. In the Gospel of the Nativity the Hebrew often glimmers through, and here and there in the Acts of Thomas, where indeed we are expressly told that Thomas sings in Hebrew, and therefore is understood by a Jewess. The fall of Jerusalem doubtless led to the disappearance of Hebrew as a spoken language. The books of the Christians, invigorated by the fulfilment of their Master's prophecy, were a positive danger. A rule, therefore, is made, prohibiting the writing of any Hebrew books besides those included in the Canon. Ben-Sira has the name *Jesus*; though his book is harmless, it is better to destroy it, for, if books by a Jesus were allowed, Christian productions might be smuggled in. The Wisdom of Solomon is likely to be used for polemical purposes, owing to the predictions which it contains; therefore it is allowed to perish. From the rigid censure which the Salomonic writings underwent, and whence Proverbs and Ecclesiastes narrowly escaped, we may infer without hardihood that some of them are likely to have perished.

Whether the anti-Christian interpolations which the Hebrew Bible contains were all made at once seems uncertain. Probably they were introduced according as controversy rendered it necessary. The most striking of all is the alteration of the name of the follower of Moses from Jesus to Joshua (Jeshua to Jehoshua). This personage is called Jesus by Nehemiah, the LXX., the Peshitta, Philo, and Josephus; and Ben-Sira, in a remarkable grammatical note, observes that his name is an intensive

form of the word "saviour,"¹ which can only apply to the name Jeshua, since Jehoshua must mean "Jehovah is a rock," and has no connection with this root. Ben-Sira's nine-syllable metre also testifies in a manner which perhaps the revisers of the Canon could not foresee. The Latin Fathers before Jerome speak regularly of *Jesus* in this context. The reason for this alteration was not only dislike of the name Jeshua, or Jesus, but the fact that the Christian controversialists based an argument on Moses having altered his follower's name from Hoshea to Jesus. This appears in Augustine, Jerome's contemporary,² but also in the Dialogue of Justin, which is of the second century;³ and, since the spelling of the name Jehoshua in the Hebrew Bible is such as to render the pronunciation Jeshua impossible, this alteration would be quite sufficient to silence the Christians. If we knew whether Justin was the first person⁴ who based an argument for Christianity on the passage of Numbers in which the name of Hoshea is changed, we should have a *terminus a quo* for this alteration; for the introduction of the form Joshua into Christian books Jerome is apparently responsible.

The purpose, therefore, of the revision of the Canon which took place before Melito's time was restrictive. Only those books which were to form part of the law were to be preserved; the rest were to be destroyed. From this time dates the great distinction between "reading" and "reciting" which pervades the Talmud. To *read* means to study the Old Testament; to *recite* means to

¹ Ecclus. xlvi. 1:

גְּבוֹר חֵיל יֵשׁוּעַ בְּדַנּוֹן
 וַיִּזְרַשׁ מֹשֶׁה בְּנִבְיֹת
 אֲשֶׁר הָיָה קִשְׁמוֹ [מוֹשִׁיעַ]
 גְּדוֹל עַל יֵשׁוּעַת חֲבָרְיוֹ

The Samaritan Pentateuch agrees with the Jewish Bible.

² *Contra Faustum*, xvi. (viii. 249B).

³ *Dialogue*, §§ 106, 131, 132.

⁴ *The Epistle of Barnabas*, § 12, cannot be quoted.

study something else. The Old Testament is Mikra; everything else Mishnah.¹ This means that nothing but the Old Testament might be written; the rest of the matter possessed by the Jews was to be preserved orally.² Where oral tradition has to take charge of a mass of matter that is neither in verse nor in counted sentences, accretion and loss cannot be avoided. Hence the Talmud contains matter belonging to some nine different centuries. It is not likely, however, that the oral tradition claimed to be a second law till the Mohammedan tradition had acquired that value. The Karaites are in reality no more averse to tradition than the Rabbanites. What they disapprove is that the oral tradition should be written and assigned an importance equal to that of the Bible.

Before the revision of the Canon, there was the state of things which Josephus describes: there were a number of sacred books of primary authority; but there was no objection to multiplying literature in Hebrew. How then came the Jews to think of a Canon? For we see that the Bible contains post-exilian matter. Whence came the Jews to think of separating books of authority from the rest? As before, we have only to glance round to find the source of this idea.

To the Jews of Ben-Sira's time the Greeks were what the Arabs were to Seadyah and his contemporaries. We have seen that Seadyah convinces the Jews of the authority of the Talmud, although it was not reduced to writing more than a century before Seadyah's time. Hence the completion of the Canon need not have preceded Ben-Sira's

¹ Ordinarily Rashi understands this, e.g., *Ketuboth*, 17a ult.; but on *Nedarim*, 62a, he forgets it. Cf. *Tosefta*, ed. Zuckerman, p. 374, 25.

² This is regularly assumed in the Talmud; e.g. *Nedarim*, 41a: "Rab Joseph was ill; so all his knowledge was uprooted. Ubayy repeated it to him; he said, I have never heard this oral tradition." *Kiddushin*, 30a: "When Rab Assi died, the Rabbis met to pick out his dicta." This means, says Rashi, "they met and said, Let every one who has heard a fresh dictum from his mouth say it in the ears of his companion."

birth by many generations, notwithstanding his glorification of it. The destruction of Greek liberty by Philip of Macedon, followed by the world conquest of Alexander, had made Attic Greek the literary language of the world. Entering upon the heritage of free Hellas, the world of the Epigoni took stock of its possessions. Just as Aristotle collects constitutions by scores, so he has on his shelves a row of classics furnishing the matter whence he can generalize for his philosophy of taste. That any nation besides the Hellenes had a literature is an idea from which the father of science seems to be very far.

The classical age of Greek literature stops at the battle of Chæronea; and within sixty years of that event the Alexandrian library is founded. Contemporary with its foundation is the first editor of Greek classics, Zenodotus. He is the father of all who collect various readings. The generation that separates him from the battle of Chæronea represents the period of transition from the productive period to the reproductive. The Greek authors have become *classics*, *i.e.* authors divided into classes, and arranged in rows.

That the Hebrew Canon closes at this time can be no more accidental than the fact that Hebrew grammar and lexicography flourish a little later than Arabic grammar and lexicography. The attitude of Alexandria towards Judæa was friendly, whence the latter was willing to learn from the former. The heirs of free Greece were proud of its legacy of classics, hence the Jews find themselves in possession of classics; only, as usual, they can surpass what the Greeks have. The Greeks have their canon of orators, their epic cycle, their old, middle, and new comedy, their twenty-four books of the Iliad and twenty-four books of the Odyssey. The Jews have their five books of Moses and their twelve minor prophets, etc., etc. Just as in the case of the oral law and the vocalization of the

Old Testament, the Jews have to learn from foreigners the value of what they have. They learn it; but they are forced to disown the obligation.

Just as for the writing down and editing of the Talmud, we have the narrow limits drawn by the dates of Ibn Juraij and Seadyah, so for the completion of the Canon we have the boundaries marked by the dates of Aristotle and Ben-Sira. The name given to the Hebrew classics was at first *either* the Law, *or* the Prophets, *or* the Book of the Covenant; the practice of the Talmud, in which the Law means the Old Testament, is as old as the New Testament, and is also found in Ben-Sira.¹ That the name "the Prophets" covered the whole appears from the passage cited above, in which Joshua is said to come after Moses in the prophetic office, whence the books of Moses would clearly come under the category prophecy. The term "Written Books" is also applied in the New Testament to the whole collection; but this must be an abridgment for "Divine" or "Prophetical Books," and is to be compared with the use of the word "Poet" for Homer by Greek writers.

That all existing copies of the Hebrew Old Testament are ultimately derived from one is proved by the *puncta extraordinaria*, or points placed above certain letters to indicate that those letters should be *expunged*. This inference (first drawn, it would appear, by Lagarde) commends itself at once to any one who is familiar with MSS. If, then, we could discover when the process of expunging was invented, we should have a *terminus a quo* for this copy. For this it is worth while observing that the word *expunge* is Latin, and refers properly to an operation performed with the Roman pen, the *stylus*. The earliest context in which it is apparently found is a place in Plautus, where it is applied to the erasion of the name of a soldier from a roll,² an operation for which both the

¹ Ecclus. xxiv.

² Compare Jahn on Persius, p. 122.

Hebrew and Greek languages use a word meaning "to wipe out"; *pricking* out would be done with a stylus on a tablet of wax. The single point, then, by which erasion is indicated is symbolic of this process, and must have come from Italy to Greece and Palestine. The word used by the Rabbis for "pointing" means originally "cleaning"; it is derived from a Syriac adjective which means "pure," "clean." This, again, seems to come from an Arabic verb, which means "to discriminate," "select." The process, then, which we call "pointing," originally meant "purifying," and was done by putting points above unnecessary letters, and inserting in a minute hand others that had been omitted. The former process gives its name to *expunging* in Latin, but not in Greek or Hebrew, and is connected with purely Italian processes. Therefore, it cannot have come to Palestine before Latin influence waxed strong, *i.e.*, before about 60 B.C. Hence all our copies of the Old Testament are derived from one that is not earlier than 60 B.C.

A fast in the Jewish calendar which commemorates the burning of the law by Apostomus confirms the hypothesis that at some time the copies of the law were reduced to one. Who was this Apostomus? The name appears to be Latin, Postumus or Postumius. The Persian calendar¹ calls him "king of the Greeks," which may be an error for "Romans."

That it could be possible to destroy all the existing copies of the Hebrew Bible, when the Jews were scattered over so many countries, seems surprising. But then we probably have no means of telling in what number such copies existed. If, however, the burning of the law by Postumus was an event worth celebrating by a yearly fast, it must clearly have been a very serious misfortune; and this would not have been the case had

¹ See next chapter.

it been possible to replace the law easily. The inference suggests itself that the restoration of the law, which followed this catastrophe, was the occasion on which the negative fixing of the Canon, of which the Talmud retains a tradition, took place.

The meaning of the "extraordinary points" and hanging letters was unknown to the Talmudists, who assign ridiculous explanations to them, to which references are faithfully given by many of those German commentators from whom we fancy we can learn criticism. So hard is it for mankind to be really *critical*, *i.e.* to gather the wheat into their garners, and allow the chaff to burn away.

The purpose of this sketch of literary history is to secure our lines of communication in dealing with the Old Testament as the preparation for the New. That we possess the Old Testament in a partially anti-Christian recension is shown by the name *Jehoshua*; that interpolation must be after the time of Justin, who bases an argument against a Jew on the occurrence of the name *Jesus* in the Pentateuch, but earlier than Jerome. And yet even in Justin's time the Jews were charged with anti-Christian alterations. This fact excites suspicion where arguments based on passages of the Old Testament are, according to our present text, futile. The process of deliberately falsifying evidence in order to avoid a painful conclusion does not commend itself as either honest or intelligent; but he knows little of human nature who supposes that less than 99 per cent. of mankind would resort to it if tempted.

Secondly, some reason must be given for the fact that the interpretation of the Bible current among the Jews before Seadyah's time is (as is generally agreed) worthless. It is to be found in the rule that the writing of traditions was forbidden. If we consider what confusion and obscurity have been brought into the history of Islam

by 120 years of oral tradition, what the effect of 800 years of it among the Jews would be may be conjectured. The grammatical sense fails the Talmudists altogether. Where they come across unusual words, they interpret them according to the language of the country in which they happen to be residing.¹ Words in the Old Testament are thus interpreted as Coptic and Greek; some one in Persia hears the word *shighal* ("jackal"), and, coming across the Hebrew *sheghal* ("queen")—Nehemiah ii. 6—thinks it may be this Persian word. The endeavours made by many writers to get history out of the Jewish books are absolute failures; the sense of chronology is as much lost as that of philology.

The scientific study of the Old Testament among the Jews begins with Seadyah, or a little earlier. That the Arabic language was the best possible source for Hebrew grammar and lexicography is certain; but the chain of circumstances which led the Mohammedans to provide the Jews with both is so remarkable that it may well be termed providential. The Jews would, in any case, have explained words they did not know from the language of the country in which they had taken up their abode; since Arabic happened to be the real source of those words, the explanation of the Bible at last had fallen on ground where it could thrive. Seadyah began by translating the Old Testament into Arabic. The probability is that he utilized previous translations made by Christians from Syriac or Coptic; so that here was another gate by which Christian glosses came into Jewish books.

What, however, is a more interesting subject for speculation is this: Until Jewish history merges in Biblical history,

¹ Theodoret, *Quæst.* in Gen. lxi.: "You can nowhere find Hebrew children speaking Hebrew, but only the language of the country in which they happen to be born" (fifth century).

so far back as it can be traced, *originality* seems absolutely to fail the race. All their non-Biblical literature is borrowed (at any rate in form) from Mohammedans or Christians; their idea of a canon from Greeks; their pointing MSS. for different purposes from Romans and Syrians. In some of these matters they appear able to outdo those from whom they borrow. The counting of letters and the arranging of dots, the Kabbalah and the Tradition, are thought by mankind to be peculiarly Jewish, but all these things have come to the Jews from others. And if we consider what the Bible tells us about them, we should expect that this would be so. The desire of Israel appears to be to resemble others. Other nations have a king, so they want a king. The fact that the institution is not altogether desirable does not count. Other nations are idolatrous, whence they display an unreasoning attachment to idolatry; no amount of preaching is of avail. How are we to reconcile with this most patent want of originality the extraordinary phenomenon of such a race having produced a literature which, after having once taken its place at the head of the literature of the world, has no intention of quitting that post? The lost literatures that come to light rarely have any value of their own. Egypt and Assyria produced monuments which were long lost, but now are found and deciphered. Who reads them, except out of mere curiosity, or to aid him in some other study? Indian literature is now as easy of access as Greek; but who cares for it? One or two isolated morsels, perhaps, are known beyond professional circles, but nothing else. The Bible itself explains this problem by the theory that the best of Israelitish literature was communicated to its authors from *without*—that it was the result of special favours conferred on privileged members of the race. “Men spake as they were moved.” The nation which of itself could do nothing for science or philosophy, which could not observe and could

not experiment, which could not compile a grammar nor invent a metre, produced the books which, owing to the profundity of their contents, "the first man did not fully know, and the last man has not sounded to the bottom." Truly this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

It is not altogether fair to expect of the Jews in dependence the qualities which they exhibited when independent, if that be the epithet to apply to an oriental monarchy. But, as Pindar well says, even if you cut down an oak, it is still an oak; though it be sawn for a pillar or burnt on the hearth, it is still the king of trees. For whatever purpose it be employed, the great qualities of the wood show themselves. The Athenians of St. Paul's time have still the intellectual keenness of the Athenians of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. From being the University of Hellas, Athens has become the University of the world. The singular purity with which the Jewish race maintains itself does much to eliminate the factor which in the case of all the modern representatives of ancient races has cut away the ground for such an argument. If we fail to find in the Greeks of to-day the qualities of the Greeks of old, the explanation is to be sought in the paucity of Hellenic blood in the former. But if race count for anything, there is no reason for supposing that since the first exile the Jews have mingled with other races in such a manner as would seriously alter the national qualities.

That the great gifts which members of the race once possessed did not disappear with the first Captivity is certain; some post-exilian matter got into the Canon; and though Ben-Sira could not be called a prophet, there are passages in his book which are worthy of a writer of the first class. It seems, however, clear that these gifts were not *racial*, but isolated. The Israelites were not like the Greeks, whose intellectual ability was such as to cause the

word "clever" to be naturally associated with their name. But to particular individuals extraordinary powers were granted, which they could neither communicate nor hand down, and the very form of which they could not lucidly explain. Hence what they produced differed from the productions of other races more in kind than in quality, and its efficiency for the purpose of evolution has been proportionately great. The descent from the Old Testament to the Mishnah is, in consequence, steeper than that from the greatest of the Greek poets to the feeblest, or from the most brilliant of the productions of India to the least tolerable. And the underlying fact is that the value of the former is due to the presence in it of a factor which the intellectual capital of the race did not provide. The literature produced by the race unaided wanted that anti-septic, and also showed but a small measure of the gifts whence mankind has derived its stores of philosophy and science.

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.

SINGLENES OF VISION.

(MATT. VI. 22, 23; LUKE XI. 33-36.)

THE difficulty which the passage in Matthew's Gospel has long presented to most readers and students of the New Testament arises from the fact that hitherto it has been the custom to regard it as a somewhat obscure simile. It is maintained that the terms of the analogy are very incompletely expressed,—that given the statement that the eye is the lamp of the body and the source of its light, it is left to the ingenuity and to the common and religious sense of the reader to discover the other member of the simile from the slight indications given in the passage itself. We can easily understand how such liberty of interpretation results in many strange and diverse discoveries among exegetes, and