CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES SEEMINGLY QUOTED BY THE APOSTLES IN AN INCORRECT SENSE.
VERIFICATION OF CRITICISMS MADE OF THEIR WRITINGS.
ESTABLISHMENT OF BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR REFUTING THE JEWS AND THE EMPEROR JULIAN

A detailed analysis of all the Old Testament passages quoted by the Evangelists and the apostles in their writings would be tedious and even pointless: commentaries are available for consultation, especially those of Maldonado and Grotius, who customarily observe the principles already established. Our principles must be valid, since they have the support of both Jews and Christians. Since my purpose here is to provide a general guideline to refute Jewish criticisms of the books of the New Testament, it will be appropriate for me to reproduce just some of the quotations so that the guidelines will become clearer.

One of the most difficult instances to reconcile is Micah 5:2, quoted in Matthew 2:6. It is clear as day, says St Jerome, that the latter does not correspond to the Hebrew text nor the Greek of the Septuagint.\(^1\) In the same place he quotes the views of various authors who held that the Evangelists and the apostles did not quote accurately because they relied on their memories.\(^2\) But as this is harmful rather than supportive of the truth of the Gospels, he resorts to a different solution. He says that Micah 5:2 reproduces the words of Jewish scholars, and that Matthew used their words in quoting the passage in order to show that these scholars were negligent in their study of the Scripture. But there is nothing to suggest that the Evangelist sought to accuse them of ignorance.

Yet it cannot be denied that Herod is being addressed by the Jews to whom therefore the quoting of this passage from Micah must be ascribed. All St Matthew is doing is recounting as a historian what happened between King Herod and the chief priests and scribes. The ruler asked them where the Messiah was to be born. Their reply that he would be born in Bethlehem from the tribe of Juda, backing up this statement with this quotation from

1 Jerome, Commentary on Micah 5:2 (PL 25:1197A).
2 Ibid., col. 1197A-AB.
the Prophet Micah: and thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. If the quotation is inaccurate we must blame the learned Jews who were speaking, not St Matthew. It will be asked: is it possible that the most learned then at living in Jerusalem would have erred when quoting a passage they knew so well? Should they not have quoted it as it appears in the Hebrew text, which says that Bethlehem was a little town? In St Matthew the learned men say on the contrary that Bethlehem was not little.

Some commentators have attempted to resolve the anomaly by supposing that the Jews had taken this passage to be in the form of a question. As there is no question mark in Hebrew, they could thus explain it away without altering Micah's words. This could be easily confirmed from several examples in Jewish books. In his Syriac translation Gabriel Sionita actually translates this passage as a question even though the passage corresponds exactly to the Hebrew: Tertullian and St Cyprian had the word non in the Old Latin translation suggesting that the Septuagint reading should have been μὴ ὄλγοστὸς “not least,” a reading confirmed by Origen. Nonetheless it may be that these writers have the passage as it occurs in St Matthew and not as it occurs in the prophet, or that they even quoted the words of Micah as they are reproduced in St Matthew. Quoting the Old Latin St Jerome has modicaes “thou art small” without any negative, corresponding to the Hebrew.

Mr Pocock found another way of reconciling these two verses without postulating a question. He claimed that the Hebrew word בַּשְּׂרִי in Micah 5:2,