
T O T H E
R E A D E R.

Reader,

HAVING seriously perus'd this Work in its Original, I thought I might be serviceable to the publick by giving in English a Piece of so much Learning, and from whence we may draw convincing Arguments for the confuting of all the atheistical Opinions of our Age. There are a sort of half-learned men, who, searching out of the Bible those things onely which at the first sight seem to destroy the authority of it, and having found any seeming contradiction, or what they think is erroneous, will be sure to exercise their wit in publishing to the world what, in their judgment, makes any thing against the authority of those holy Books which have, through all Ages, been look'd upon, by the learned and judicious, as composed by Prophets or men inspir'd by God; without considering that, to the most understanding persons, they onely shew their ignorance, in that they understand not how to give solutions to the difficulties of the Scriptures, which belongs onely to the learned, or else their wilfull obstinacy, in resolving to oppose whatever shall be authoris'd either by Divine or Humane Authority. We have a fresh example of what I have been saying in the person of him, who, not many

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years ago, occasion'd the publishing of that excellent Piece, intituled, *A Letter to a Deist*, wherein the Authour has onely answer'd the Objections propos'd to him; but if the person that was so desirous to have his Scruples answer'd, or any one else, have any more of such like Objections, they may here either find them particularly discuss'd, or else be instructed in the way how to resolve them themselves. I could wish this Criticism had been made by some of our own Communion; who might have alter'd nothing of the substance of it, but have left out onely some small reflexions upon the Protestants; Father *Simon* however is less inveterate and makes fewer of his reflexions than could be expected from a Roman Catholick Doctour; which thing is yet more pardonable in him in that he spares not even them of his own Church. If notwithstanding what I have already said, there shall be any who, at the first sight, shall be scandaliz'd with this Authour's free way of handling the Holy Scriptures, I give this caution to all such persons, either to let it alone and not concern themselves with it, or else to reade it clear through, by which time I doubt not but they will be satisfy'd of their too nice scruples. As for the faults of the Press I cannot answer for them not having had leisure enough for the correcting of them, wherefore I shall onely here advise that the most considerable errata's are printed at the beginning of the Book, whither, Reader, if at any time you chance to doubt of the sense, be pleas'd to turn your eye.

Farewell.

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Author's Preface

Translated out of

F R E N C H.

Seeing I have at large explain'd in the first Chapter of this History the design of my whole Work, I shall onely here shew what benefit we may thence draw.

First, It is impossible to understand throughly the Holy Scriptures unless we first know the different states of the Text of these Books according to the different times and places, and be instructed of all the several changes that have happened to it. This we may understand by the first Book of this Critical History, where I have taken notice of the several revolutions of the Hebrew Text of the Bible from Moses to our time; and if I might be suffer'd to speak something here beforehand of the New Testament, I could shew some faults in the Translations thereof into our Tongue, which were not long since made by two learned Divines. This could be occa-

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ston'd onely by the little reflection they made upon the History of the Text they translated. They consider'd not for example that onely by leaving out, in the third Chapter of S. Luke, the Particle Or, which in English signifies Now, they favour'd the opinions of the ancient Marcionite Hereticks, who affirm'd that the two first Chapters of S. Luke had been added to his Gospel, and that they made it to begin with these words, In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, by leaving out the two foregoing Chapters concerning the Birth and Infancy of our Saviour: but the Church, who has always read according to the Original and the ancient Latin Translation, Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, has always authoriz'd the two first Chapters of S. Luke by reason of the Particle Or, Now, which the Grammarians call an adversative, which plainly denotes a connection with something that went before. No one could imagine this Particle to be of so great consequence in this place without being instructed in the History of the New Testament. But I am oblig'd to contain my self within the Books of the Old Testament.

Secondly, It is to be observ'd that I, considering onely their benefit who desire thoroughly to understand the Holy Scriptures, have insert'd many usefull principles for the resolving of the greatest difficulties of the Bible, and at the same time answering of the Objections which are usually brought against the Authority of the Holy Scriptures. For example, having establish'd in the Hebrew Commonwealth the Prophets or publick Writers, who took care of collecting faithfully the acts of what pass'd of most importance in the State, we need not too curiously enquire, as usually men do, who were the Authours of each particular Book of the Bible, because it is certain that they were all writ by Prophets, which the Hebrew Commonwealth never wanted as long as it lasted.

Besides, as these same Prophets, which may be call'd publick Writers, for the distinguishing of them from other private

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vate Writers, had the liberty of collecting out of the ancient Acts which were kept in the Registers of the Republick, and of giving a new form to these same Acts by adding or diminishing what they thought fit; we may hereby give a very good reason for the additions and alterations in the Holy Scriptures without lessening of their Authority, since the Authours of these additions or alterations were real Prophets directed by the Spirit of God. Wherefore their alterations in the ancient Acts are of as great Authority as the rest of the Text of the Bible.

We may by this same principle easily answer all the false and pernicious consequences drawn by Spinoza from these alterations or additions for the running down the Authority of the Holy Scripture, as if these corrections had been purely of humane Authority; whereas he ought to have consider'd that the Authours of these alterations having had the Power of writing Holy Scriptures had also the Power of correcting them. Wherefore I have made no scruple to give some examples of these alterations, and to conclude that all we find in the Holy Scriptures was not writ by contemporary Authours.

Spinoza
Tract.
Theolog.
c. 8.

S. Jerom, Theodoret, and several other Fathers who were of this opinion, thought not that they hereby lessened the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, supposing at the same time that the Authours of these corrections were inspired by God.

By this principle we may also easily answer several objections which are usually made, to shew that Moses is not the onely Authour of the Books which we have under his name; for they prove onely that something has been added in series of time, which destroys not the Authority of the ancient Acts which were writ in Moses's time.

Herein Spinoza has shewn his ignorance, or rather malice in crying down the Authority of the Pentateuch, by reason

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of some alterations or additions therein, without considering the quality of the Authours of these alterations.

We ought however to take heed of multiplying these additions or corrections, as Spinoza and some others have very injudiciously done: but on the contrary we ought not absolutely to deny them, or too subtilly or nonsensically explain them, for these additions are of the same Authority as the rest of the Scripture; or else we must confess the whole not to be equally Divine and Canonical, as a Divine of Paris seems too boldly to have asserted.

This Divine has affirm'd that the Writers of the Holy Scriptures were inspir'd by God onely in things relating to matters of Faith, or which had some necessary connection or relation thereto; As for the other things in these Books, we ought not therein to acknowledge a more particular inspiration of God than in other Works which have been writ by godly persons. But besides that this principle is dangerous it is directly opposite to the Doctrine of the New Testament, which acknowledges every thing throughout the whole Scripture for propheticall, and to have been inspir'd.—Wherefore I thought I ought to lay down some principles whereby we might ascribe every thing in the Holy Scriptures to Prophets or persons inspir'd by God, even to the alterations themselves, those onely excepted which had happened through length of time or negligence of Transcribers.

We may by this same principle of publick Writers or Prophets, which collected the Acts of what pass'd of most importance in the Hebrew Commonwealth, give reasons for several expressions in the Books of Moses, which seem to suppose him not to be the Authour of them.

The publick Writers which were in his time and writ out these ancient Acts, have spoke of Moses in the third person, and have us'd several other such like expressions which could not be Moses's: But they for all that have never the less

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Authority; because they can be ascrib'd onely to persons which Moses had commanded to put into writing the most important actions of his time.

We ought to apply this same principle to Joshua, Judges, and other Books which Spinosa has endeavour'd to lessen the Authority of pretending that some things have been added. He does Aben Ezra injury in affirming that this Rabbin did not take Moses to be the Authour of the Pentateuch, whereas what he has from him onely proves that there have been some additions inserted into the ancient Acts, which we cannot deny to be Moses's, at least but that they were writ in his time and by his order.

The same Spinosa shews his ignorance yet more in the same place, where he concludes that the Book of Moses was much less than the present one, because it was writ within the compass of an Altar of twelve Stones; but he is clearly mistaken in thinking that the places of Deuteronomy and Joshua which he alledges speak of the whole Law of Moses, whereas there are onely some Ordinances of Moses spoke of which he commanded should be observ'd, and that they might the better observe them he commanded them to be writ upon twelve Stones, or Pillars. This is so true, that Spinosa could not but mention in the series of his discourse this explanation, although he endeavours to pervert it as much as he can. This passage and several others such like are explain'd in the first Book of this History Chap. 6. where I have largely shewn what the word Law signifies in the Books of Moses.

Thirdly, This principle which I have laid down, concerning the way how the Holy Scriptures which we have at present have been collected, we having onely an abridgment of the Acts which were preserv'd intire in the Registry of the Republick; This principle I say is of great use for the resolving of many difficult questions concerning Chronology
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and the Genealogies. For if it is certain that these Books are onely abridgments of larger Acts, and that they gave to the people onely what they thought was necessary for their instruction, we cannot affirm that all the Genealogies in this abridgment are successive one to another. Wherefore we may by this means reconcile several manifest contradictions in these Genealogies when they are set down in several places. We cannot also state any exact Chronology upon the authority of these Books, because that things are not always set down according to the times they happened in. Because they often onely join'd several Acts together in short, referring us to those same Acts which were kept more at large in the Registries which might in those times have been consulted.

For the better establishing this principle we may hereto joyn the observation which we have in this History made concerning the way of writing of Books heretofore upon little leaves, which were usually onely roll'd one upon another, without being sown together upon a little Roller. It has happened that as the order of these ancient Leaves or Scrolls has not been carefully enough kept, the order of things has been sometimes chang'd. Wherefore we ought not to blame the Authours of the Holy Scripture for the disorder in some places of the Holy Scripture; but we ought to complain of a misfortune which has happened to all ancient Books. This is partly the cause why the Hebrew Samaritan Text agrees not wholly with the Jewish Pentateuch, although these two Pentateuchs are Copies from one and the same Copy. We find also such like transpositions in the ancientest Greek Copies of the Septuagint Translation, which S. Jerom and before him Origen scrupled not to correct.

I had rather have recourse to this principle than to most of the answers which are usually brought for the excusing of these sort of transpositions in the Scripture Text. It is for example said in Gen. 20. that Abimelech fell in love with Sarah,

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Sarah, and yet the Historian had a little before said, that Sarah and Abraham were well stricken in years. We ought methinks much rather to lay this fault concerning the method of things upon the disposition of the ancient Scrolls, which in this and many other places has been chang'd, than to fly to a miracle and to suppose, as some Authours do, that God by a particular providence had restor'd to Sarah the beauty of her youth.

We may also say that in abridging of the Scripture to give it to the People, they have not always observed the order of times, but have chiefly endeavour'd to give those Histories which they thought were most proper for the instructing of the People.

We may join with this principle another not much different from this, by which we may give reasons for many repetitions of the same things. It is probable that they who joyn'd together the ancient Records for the making of the Body of canonical Scriptures which we at present have, troubled not themselves to leave out several Synonymous terms which were in their Copies; and perhaps were added for a farther illustration; these repetitions not seeming to them to be altogether superfluous, because they serv'd for explanation, they thought not fit to leave them wholly out. We ought methinks rather to have recourse to this principle than to make Moses or the Scribes of his time to be the Authours of many repetitions which are in his Books, as well as of a great many transpositions. And this is the chief reason why I chose rather herein to follow the opinion of S. Jerom and several other Fathers, who have been of opinion that Moses was not the Authour of the whole Pentateuch as we at present have it.

We ought not for all this always to have recourse to these principles, where we find repetitions or transpositions in the Scripture. I have on the contrary shewn that the Hebrews
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were not very polite Writers, that they usually transpos'd, or repeated the same thing, and that sometimes they onely begin one matter, and then on a sudden go to another, and afterwards reassume their former discourse. We may easily understand this style in the Books of the New Testament, especially in the Epistles of S. Paul. But as it would be hard to justify all the transpositions and repetitions in the Books of Moses by their ways of expressing themselves, I have had recourse to other rules, leaving however every one the liberty of believing as he pleases, because these questions are such as we may be ignorant of, and may speak freely of without any prejudice to Religion. In quibus, says S. Augustin, salva fide qua Christiani sumus, aut ignoratur quid verum sit, & sententia definitiva suspenditur, aut aliter quam est humana & infirma suspitione con-jicitur.

Fourthly, The great alterations which have happened, as we have shewn in the first Book of this Work, to the Copies of the Bible since the first Originals have been lost; utterly destroy the Protestants and Socinians Principle, who consult onely these same Copies of the Bible as we at present have them. If the truth of Religion remain'd not in the Church, it would be unsafe to search for it at present in Books which have been subject to so many alterations, and have in many things depended upon the pleasure of Transcribers; It is certain that the Jews, who have writ out these Books, have took the liberty of adding and leaving out certain letters according as they thought fit, and yet the sense of the Text often depends upon these letters; whereto we may add the uncertainty of the Hebrew Grammar, which could never be perfectly restor'd since its being lost. This has been explain'd at large at the end of the first Book, where we have given an account of the rise and progress of the Jewish Grammar.

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Besides, the Criticism we have made of the chief Translations of the Bible is an evident proof that it is almost impossible to translate the Holy Scripture, especially if we join herewith the project of a new Translation set down at the beginning of the third Book. Those Protestants without doubt are either ignorant or prejudic'd who affirm that the Scripture is plain of it self. As they have laid aside the Tradition of the Church, and will acknowledge no other principle of Religion but the Scripture it self, they were obliged to suppose it plain and sufficient for the establishing the truth of Faith without any Tradition.

But if we but consider the conclusions which the Protestants and Socinians draw from the same principle, we shall be convinc'd that their principle is not so plain as they imagin, since these conclusions are so different and the one absolutely denies what the other affirms.

Instead of believing with the Protestants that the shortest and most certain way of deciding the questions of Faith is to consult the Holy Scriptures, we shall on the contrary find in this Work that if we join not Tradition with the Scripture, we can hardly affirm any thing for certain in Religion. We cannot be said to quit the word of God by joining therewith the Tradition of the Church, since he who refers us to the Holy Scriptures has also refer'd us to the Church whom he has trust'd with this holy pledge.

Before the Law was writ by Moses the ancient Patriarchs preserv'd their Religion in its purity by Tradition onely. After the Law was writ the Jews always upon difficulties consulted the Interpreters of this Law; and although they have too much encreas'd their Traditions through series of time, we ought not for all that to find fault with these same Traditions but the men who have been the depositaries of them. As for the New Testament, the Gospel was established in many Churches before any thing of it was writ, and since

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that time S. Irenæus, Tertullian and the other first Fathers have not, in their disputes against Hereticks, had recourse so much to the word of God contained in the Holy Scriptures, as to this same word which was not written but preserv'd in the chief Churches which had been founded by the Apostles.

When these Bishops were assembled in Councils they every one declar'd the belief of their own Church; so that this belief receiv'd in the first Churches serv'd afterwards as a rule for the explaining of the difficult places of the Scripture. Wherefore the Fathers of the Council of Trent wisely ordain'd that no one should interpret the Scripture against the common opinion of the Fathers; and this same Council made the not written Traditions to be of equal authority with the word of God contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, because it suppos'd that those Traditions which were not writ proceeded from our Saviour who communicated them to his Apostles, and from thence they at last came down to us.

We may call these Traditions an abridgment of the Christian Religion, which has been since the beginning of Christianity in the first Churches apart from the Holy Scripture. By this ancient abridgment of the Christian Religion we ought to explain the difficulties of the Scripture, as the Protestants themselves and amongst others Illyricus and Du Plessis are of opinion. Thus they are oblig'd to acknowledge the true Tradition of the Church, although they affirm the contrary in their disputes against the Catholicks. We can establish no unity in Religion without supposing this ancient uniformity of belief ground'd upon the common consent of the first Apostolical Churches, and besides we cannot well confute the Socinians subtilties but by this means.

To conclude, although the Council of Trent ordain'd that we should not in interpreting of the Scripture deviate from the explanations of the Fathers, it has not for all that prohibited

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hibited private persons from searching out of other explanations of places not relating to matters of Faith. We may on the contrary say that men never endeavour'd so much to find out new interpretations of the Scripture Text as since this Council. They thought not that the Fathers had thoroughly sifted the matter. Wherefore I have made bold to give my opinion upon their Commentaries in the third Book. I have observed both their failures and perfections; and lastly I have examin'd their Works according to the rules of Criticism, because in those places there is no mention made of matters of Faith. We however at present find some learned persons who collect onely whatever they can find out of the Fathers Books upon the Scripture, as if the Fathers had better succeeded than the other Interpreters of the Bible.

They who search after truth it self without prejudice value not persons names nor their antiquity, especially in things not relating to Faith; and it is certain that most of the Fathers have not had all the necessary helps nor time enough to search into the great difficulties in the Scripture. The Commentaries of the modern Interpreters ought in many places to be prefer'd before those of the ancient ones, and we ought rather to search for Religion in the Fathers Interpretations than literal explanations of the Scripture Text. There are few who have apply'd themselves to this sort of study, and amongst the Latin Fathers there have been none except S. Jerom who were capable of doing it. Wherefore for the carrying on of my design of observing what I thought was necessary for the understanding of the Scripture, it was convenient that I should consult the Jewish Commentaries as well as those of the Catholick Doctours, that every one might be instructed as well in the method which has been observ'd even to this time in the Synagogue, as in the Church, for the explaining of the Holy Scriptures: I have join'd with

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the latter the Protestant and Socinian Authours, to the end one may profit by their new discoveries in this study, as the Fathers heretofore consulted the Greek Translations of the Bible which had been made by the greatest enemies of the Church.

Besides the principles I have already observ'd which may be found in several places of this History, I can affirm that I have copy'd from no Authour who has writ before me upon any part of this Subject, being perswaded that we have already but too many Books of all sorts, and but very few good ones.

For the avoiding this fault, and that I might at the same time be usefull to the Publick, I have carefully read over the Works of the chief Authours, who have writ upon the Criticism of the Bible, and after having observ'd their faults for my particular instruction I thought I might publish them, having no other design but to be usefull to others; I dare affirm that I have wanted no necessary helps for the completing of this Work. I have had for a long time within my own power a great many Books which were brought out of the Levant, and are at present in the Library of the Fathers of the Oratory of Paris, and besides having followed no other employment, I have had leisure enough to think upon a Work of this importance. I have also, through the help of my friends, consulted many learned and judicious persons, thereby to know their opinions upon the greatest difficulties.

But after all I found that no one had hitherto thoroughly search'd into the Criticism of the Scripture; every one has commonly spoke according to his prejudices. The Jews, for example, who consulted onely their Authours, have had but a very slender knowledge herein, and they have contented themselves with admiring what they understood not. As for the Christians, most of the Fathers have been so much prejudic'd

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judic'd in favour of the ancient Translations of the Church, that they have wholly neglected the Hebrew Text, besides that they have not had all the necessary helps for the thorough examining of what belongs to the Criticism of the Bible.

As for the Writers of our times, whether Catholicks or Protestants, I have found none who were wholly free from prejudice. The two Buxtorfs, who have got much reputation, especially amongst the Protestants, have in most of their Works onely shewn they were bias'd in favour of the Rabbins opinions, without having consulted any other Authours. Father Morin on the contrary was prejudic'd against the Rabbins before he had read them, and under pretence of defending the ancient Translations of the Church, he has collected all the proofs he could find to destroy the originals of the Bible.

There is indeed much more judgment in Ludovicus Capellus's Criticism, but as he endeavour'd hardly any thing else but to find out the various readings, he has multiply'd them. Wherefore I have in this History laid down some principles for the explaining of several various readings, without blaming the Transcribers for being mistaken in all those places. Besides Capellus has taken for various readings some downright errors of Transcribers, which might be easily corrected by good Copies: Lastly, he has not methinks given authority enough to the Massoret, which has fix'd the way of reading the Hebrew Text of the Bible. For although the Jews have not been infallible in their Massoret or Criticism, we ought not however to reject or despise it onely because it comes from the Jews. As the question is about the custom of reading, we ought to consult them amongst whom this custom has been preserv'd. But notwithstanding these faults and some others which I mention not here, Capellus his Work ought to be preferr'd before all others upon this Subject, and although he was a Protestant he was not prejudic'd.

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judic'd in favour of those of his Religion. They of Geneva, Sedan and Leyden oppos'd the publishing of this Book for ten years together, being perswaded it destroy'd the principle of their Religion, and oblig'd them to have recourse to the Tradition of the Catholicks. Father Petau, a Jesuit, Father Morin of the Oratory and Father Mersennus, a Minimite, got the Kings Licence for the printing of it. This so alarm'd the Court of Rome that it had almost condemn'd it, it being a thing without precedent that heretical Books wherein matters of Divinity are treated of, should be printed in France with the King's Licence. But Father Morin, who had helped forward the printing of it, and perhaps had not foreseen all the consequences, writ to Cardinal Francis Barberini, that they at Rome did Capellus a kindness in condemning his Criticism which had created him the hatred of those of his Sect, and that at the same time they did the Catholicks injury, who made use of this Book to shew that the Protestants have no certain principle of their Religion having reject'd the Tradition of the Church; Capellus however never intended to draw this consequence from his Book.

*Lastly, Vossius, who could not allow of the ignorance of some Protestants, whom he calls half Jews, undertook in a Work for that purpose to defend the Septuagint Translation, but, under pretence of rejectting the Massoret Copies, he has flown into another extream concerning the Septuagint, so that we may say there are very few persons who have been able to keep the medium which was necessary for the finding out of the truth. This I have endeavour'd to do in this Work, by preserving as much as possibly I could the authority of the original Hebrew, and Translations. I have had no prejudice either for the Greek, Latin, Hebrew, or any other Language. But I have carefully examin'd according to the rules of Criticism the Hebrew Text and all the Translations; and after
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having observ'd the various readings, I have shewn how we might correct the faults in the present Copies.

If we ought to reject the original Hebrew because of the faults which are therein, we ought also for the same reason to reject all the ancient Translations of the Church which have been made from the Hebrew, because they are also faulty as well as the Hebrew Text, and consequently we ought to admit of no Copy of the Scripture; But these extreams are very dangerous.

Origen and S. Jerom, who found many faults in the ancient Greek Copies of the Septuagint Translation, would not for all that reject it; they endeavour'd onely to restore it according to the common rules of Criticism. I have follow'd the example of these two great men, and as there has been nothing upon this subject as yet in French, no one ought to wonder why I make use sometimes of certain expressions which are not altogether exact French; every art has peculiar terms which are in a manner consecrated to it. Thus we shall often find in this Work the word Critick, and some other such like, which I have been forced to use the better to express my self according to the terms of the art I treated of. Besides persons who are Scholars are already us'd to these terms in our Tongue. When we speak, for example, of Capellus's Book, printed under the Title of *Critica Sacra*, and of the English Commentaries call'd *Critici Sacri*; we say in French *La Critique de Capelle*, *Les Critiques d'Angleterre*.

It is also to be observ'd that for the making my self more usefull to the world, I usually set down the Testimonies of the Authours I make use of in abridgment onely and according to the sense, there being nothing more tedious than long quotations of passages where sometimes there are onely five or six words which are necessary. I design'd onely in this Work to speak many things in few words, and that my
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citations might be of greater credit I have put at the end of the Book a Catalogue of the Authours I have quoted which are not well known.

But I have spoke enough of the design and profit of this Work, I am now onely to desire those who will take the pains to reade it carefully, to tell me charitably of my faults, to the end that I may profit by their admonitions. It is but reasonable that after having criticis'd upon so many Authours I should submit my self to the censure of others.

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