
Written originally in FRENCH, By Father SIMON, Priest of the Congregation of the Oratory;
And since translated into ENGLISH, By a Person of Quality.

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TO THE
READER.

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 constuting of all the atheistical Opinions of our Age. There are a sort of half-learned men, who, sifting out of the Bible those things only which at the first sight seem to destroy the authority of it, and having found any fiddling 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 compos'd 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 opposte 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

years
To the Reader.

Years ago, occasion'd the publishing of that excellent Piece, intituled, A Letter to a Deist, wherein the Author has only answer'd the Objections propos'd to him; but if the person that was to 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 difcus'd, or else be instruct'd in the way how to resolve them themselves. I could with this Criticism had been made by some of our own Commissians, who might have alter'd nothing of the substance of it, but have left only some small reflections upon the Protestants; Father Simon however is less inveterate and makes fewer of his reflections than could be expected from a Roman Catholick Doctor; 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 Author'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 read 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 only 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.

The
THE
Author's Preface
Translated out of
FRENCH.

Seing I have at large explained in the first Chapter of this History the design of my whole Work, I shall only here shew what benefit we may thence draw.

First, It is impossible to understand thoroughly 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 instru'd 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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found only by the little reflection they made upon the History of the Text they translated. They considered not for example that only by leaving out, in the third Chapter of St. Luke, the Particle Or, which in English signifies Now, they favoured the opinions of the ancient Marcionite Heretics, who affirmed that the two first Chapters of St. 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 Caesar, 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 Caesar, has always authorized the two first Chapters of St. Luke by reason of the Particle Or, Now, which the Grammarians call an adverbial, 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 obliged to contain myself within the Books of the Old Testament.

Secondly, it is to be observed that I, considering only their benefit who desire thoroughly to understand the Holy Scriptures, have inserted many essential 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 established in the Hebrew Commonwealth the Prophets or publick Writers, who took care of collecting faithfully the acts of what past of most importance in the State, we need not too curiously enquire, as usually men do, who were the Authors of each particular Book of the Bible, because it is certain that they were all wise by Prophets, which the Hebrew Commonwealth never wanted as long as it lasted.

Besides, as these same Prophets, which may be called publick Writers, for the distinguishing of them from other pri-
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Writers, had the liberty of collecting out of the ancient Alls which were kept in the Register of the Republick, and of giving a new form to these same Alls 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 their Authority, since the Authors of these additions or alterations were real Prophets directed by the Spirit of God. Wherefore their alterations in the ancient Alls 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 Spinola 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 considered that the Authors 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 Authors.

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 Authors 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 only Author of the Books which we have under his name; for they prove only that something has been added in series of time, which destroys not the Authority of the ancient Alls which were writ in Moses's time.

Herein Spinola 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 Authors of these alterations.

We ought however to take heed of multiplying these additions or corruptions, as Spinola and some others have very injudiciously done: but on the contrary we ought not absolutely to deny them, or too subtly 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 affirmed that the Writers of the Holy Scriptures were inspired by God only 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 prophetical, and to have been inspired. Wherefore I thought I ought to lay down some principles whereby we might describe every thing in the Holy Scriptures to Prophets or persons inspired by God, even to the alterations themselves, those only 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 passed 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 Author of them.

The publick Writers which were in his time and wrote out these ancient Acts, have spoke of Moses in the third person, and have used several other such 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 ascribed only to persons which Moses had commanded to put into writing the most important allusions of his time.

We ought to apply this same principle to Joshua, Judges, and other Books which Spinoza has endeavoured to nullify; the Authority of pretending that some things have been added. He does Alcinus injury in affirming that this Rabbi did not take Moses to be the Author of the Pentateuch, whereas what he has from him only proves that there have been some additions inserted into the ancient Alts, which we cannot deny to be Moses's, at least but that they were writ in his time and by his order.

The same Spinoza shews his ignorance yet more in the character of the same place, where he concludes that the Book of Moses was written 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 alludes to are the whole Law of Moses, whereas there are only five Ordinances of Moses spoke of which he commands should be observed, and that they might the better observe them he commanded them to be writ upon twelve Stones, or Pillars. This is so true, that Spinoza could not be mention in the series of his discourses this explanation, although he endeavours to pervert it as much as he can. This passage and several others such like are explained in the first Book of this History Chap. 6, where I have largely shown what the word Law signifies in the Book 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 have only an allusion of the Alts which were preferred entire in the Register 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 only abridgments of larger Alts, and that they give to the people only 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 only joined several Alts together in short, referring us to those same Alts which were kept more as large in the Registries which might in those times have been consulted.

For the better establishing this principle we may hereafter join the observations which we have in this History made concerning the way of writing of Books heretofore upon little leaves, which were usually only rolled upon another, without being joined 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 changed. Wherefore we ought not to blame the Author 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 totally with the Jewish Pentateuch, although these two Pentateuchs are Copies from one and the same Copy. We had also such like transpositions in the ancientest Greek Copies of the Septuagint Translation, which St. Jerome 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 Abrahall 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 changed, than to fly to a miracle and to suppose, as some Authors do, that God by a particular providence had restored 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 things, but have chiefly endeavoured 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 joined 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; those repetitions was seeming to them to be altogether superfluous, because they served for explanation, they thought not it 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 Authors of many repetitions which are in his Books, as well as of a great many transpositions. And this is the chief reason why I choose rather herein to follow the opinion of S. Jerome and several other Fathers, who have been of opinion that Moses was not the Author 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 were
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were not very polite Writers, that they usually transposed, or repeated the same thing, and that sometimes they only begin one matter, and then on a sudden go to another, and afterwards restate their former discourse. We may easily understand this style in the Books of the New Testament, especially in the Epistles of St. 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 everyone 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, saeiv S. Augustin, salva fide qua Christiani lumin, aut ignorantur quid verum sit, et sententia definitiva suspenditur, aut alter quam eft humana & infirma fulpicione con- jicitur.

Fourthly, The great alterations which have happened, as we have shown in the first Book of this Work, to the Copies of the Bible since the first Originals have been lost, utterly destroy the Protetants and Socinians Principle, who consult only these same Copies of the Bible as we at present have them. If the truth of Religion remained 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 Translators; 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; wherefore we may add the uncertainty of the Hebrew Grammar, which could never be perfectly restored since its being lost. This has been explained 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 Transla-
tions of the Bible is an evident proof that it is almost im-
possible to translate the Holy Scripture, especially if we join
terewith the project of a new Translation set down at the
beginning of the third Book. Those Protestants without
doubt are either ignorant or prejudiced who affirm that the
Scripture is plain of itself. As they have laid aside the
Tradition of the Church, and will acknowledge no other
principle of Religion but the Scripture itself, 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 Protes-
tants and Socinians draw from the same principle, we shall
be convinced that their principle is not so plain as they ima-
gin, since these conclusions are so different and the one abso-
lutely 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 quote the word of God by joining therewith
the Tradition of the Church, since he who refers us to the
Holy Scriptures has also referred us to the Church whom he
had entrusted with this holy pledge.

Before the Law was writ by Moses the ancient Patriarchs
preferred their Religion in its purity by Tradition only.
After the Law was writ the Jews always upon difficulties
consulted the Interpreters of this Law; and although they have
too much encroached their Traditions through series of time,
we ought not for all that to find fault with these same Tra-
ditions 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 preserved in the chief Churches which had been founded by the Apostles.

When these Bishops were assembled in Councils they every one decla'red 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 grounded upon the common consent of the first Apostles' Churches, and besides we cannot well confute the Shinian subtilities 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 endeavoured so much to find out new interpretations of the Scripture Text as since this Council. They thought not that the Fathers had thoroughbly 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 examined 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 only 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 itself 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 Religions in the Fathers Interpretations than literal explanations of the Scripture Text. There are few who have applied 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 Doctors, that every one might be instructed as well in the method which hath been observed even to this time in the Synagogue, as in the Church, for the explaining of the Holy Scriptures: I have joind with

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the latter the Protestant and Socinian Authors, 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 observed which may
be found in several places of this History, I can affirm that
I have copy'd from no Author who has writ before me up
on any part of this Subject, being persuaded 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 useful to the Publick, I have carefully read over
the Works of the chief Authors, who have writ upon the
Criticism of the Bible, and after having observed their faults
for my particular instruction I thought I might publish them,
having no other design but to be useful to others; I dare
affirm that I have wanted no necessary helps for the comple-
ating 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 only their Authors, have had but
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 pre-
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judged 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 Catholics 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 openly shown they were biased in favour of the Rabbinic opinions, without having consulted any other Authors. Father Morin on the contrary was prejudiced against the Rabbinics 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 Ludovico Capellus's Criticism, but as he endeavoured hardly any thing else but to find out the various readings, he has multiplied them. Wherefore I have in this History laid down some principles for the explaining of several various readings, without blaming the Translators for being mistaken in all these places. Besides Capellus has taken for various readings some downright errors of Translators, which might be easily corrected by good Copies: Lastly, he has not methinks given authority enough to the Maifcroft, which has fixed the way of reading the Hebrew Text of the Bible. For although the Jews have not been infallible in their Maifcroft or Criticism, we ought not however to reject or despise it only because it comes from the Jews. As the question is about the custom of reading, we ought to consult them amongst when this custom has been preferred. But notwithstanding these faults and some others which I mention not here, Capellus his Work ought to be preferred before all others upon this Subject, and although he was a Protestant he was not prejudiced.
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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 persuaded it destroy'd the principle of their Religion, and oblig'd them to have recourse to the Tradition of the Catholicks. Father Perau, a Jesuit, Father Morin of the Oratory and Father Merlemannus, a Minim, got the King's 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 treat'd of, should be print'd 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, wrote to Cardinal Francis Barberini, that they at Rome did Capellus a kindness in condemning his Criticism which had create'd 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 reject'ing the Masoret Copies, he has thrown into another extremity 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 endeavor'd to do in this Work, by preferring 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 having
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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 ex-
tremes are very dangerous.

Origen and S. Jerom, who found many faults in the an-
cient Greek Copies of the Septuagint Translation, would not
for all that reject it; they endeavoured only to reform it
according to the common rules of Criticism. I have followed
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 myself according to the terms of the art I treated of.
Besides persons who are Scholars are already used to these
terms in our Tongue. When we speak, for example, of Cap-
pell'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'Angle-
terre.

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 Authors I make use of in abridgment only and ac-
cording to the sense, there being nothing more tedious than
long quotations of passages where sometimes there are only
five or six words which are necessary. I designed only in
this Work to speak many things in few words, and that my
 citations
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citations might be of greater credit I have put at the end of the Book a Catalogue of the Authors I have quoted which are not well known.

But I have spoke enough of the design and profit of this Work, I am now only to desire those who will take the pains to read 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 criticized upon so many Authors I should submit my self to the censure of others.
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CHAPTERS
contain'd in this
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XXII. Rules how to know good Manuscripts from bad ones. A particular examination of some Manuscripts.

XXIII. The manuscrit Copies of the Text of the Bible particularly considered. Size of the various reading, which proceed from the different ways of writing the Manuscripts.

XXIV. Of the Mallores. The different opinions of the Jews and Christians therein. What we ought to believe.

XXV. The Mallores more particularly explained. The several Rules therein contained, whether we may judge the ancient Translations of the Scripture.

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