

Aphra Behn

AN ESSAY ON TRANSLATED PROSE

[1700]

Discusses her translation of Fontenelle's

A Discovery of New Worlds

[*Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes*, 1686]



Aphra Behn



Bernard de Fontenelle

THE general Applause this little Book of the Discovery of several Worlds has met with, both in *France* and *England* in the Original; made me attempt to translate it into *English*. The Reputation of the Author, (who is the fame that writ, *The Dialogues of the Dead*;) the Novelty of the Subject in vulgar Languages, and the Author's introducing a Woman as one of the Speakers in these five different Discourses, were further Motives for me to undertake this little Work; for I thought an *English* woman might adventure to translate any thing, a *French* Woman may be suppos'd to have spoken: But when I had made a Tryal, I found the Task not so easy as I believ'd at first. Therefore, before I say any thing, either of the Design of the Author, or of the Book itself, give me leave to say something of Translation of Prose in general: As for

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for Translation of Verse, nothing can be added to that incomparable Essay of the late Earl of *Roscommon*, the nearer the Idioms or turn of the Phrase of two Languages agree, 'tis the easier to translate one into the other: The *Italian*, *Spanish* and *French*, are all three at best Corruptions of the *Latin*, with the mixture of *Gothick*, *Arabick*, and *Gaulish* Words. The *Italian*, as it is nearer the *Latin*, is also nearest the *English*; for its mixture being compos'd of *Latin*, and the Language of the *Goths*, *Vandals*, and other

Northern Nations, who over-ran the *Roman* Empire, and conquer'd its Language with its Provinces, most of these Northern Nations spoke the *Teutonick*, or Dialects of it, of which the *English* is one also: and that's the reason, that the *English* and *Italian* learn the Language of one another sooner than any other; because not only the Phrase, but the Accent of both do very much agree; the *Spanish* is next of kin to the *English*, for almost the same reason; because the *Goths*, and *Vandals* having over-run *Africk*, and kept possession of it for some hundred of Years, where mixing with the *Moors*, no doubt, gave them a great Tincture of their Tongue. These *Moors* afterwards invaded and conquer'd *Spain*; besides *Spain* was before that, also invaded and conquer'd by the *Goths*, who possess'd it long after the time of the two Sons of *Theodosius* the Great, *Arcadus* and *Honorius*. The *French*, as it is most remote from the *Latin*, so the Phrase and Accent differs most from the *English*: It may be, it is more agreeable with the *Welsh*, which is near a-kin to the *Basbriton* and *Biscag*

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ne Languages, which is deriv'd from the old *Celtick* Tongue, the first that was spoken amongst the ancient *Gauls*, who descended from the *Celts*.

The *French* therefore is of all the hardest to translate into *English*. For Proof of this, there are other Reasons also: And first, the nearer the Genius and Humour of two Nations agree, the Idioms of their Speech are the nearer; and every Body knows there is more Affinity between the *English* and *Italian* People, than the *English* and the *French*, as to their Humours; and for that Reason, and for what I have said before, it is very difficult to translate *Spanish* into *French*; and I believe hardly possible to translate *French* into *Dutch*. The second Reason is, The *Italian* Language is the fame now as it was some hundred Years ago, so is the *Spanish*, not only as to the Phrase, but even as to the Words and Orthography; whereas the *French* Language has suffer'd more Changes this hundred Years past, since *Francis* the First, than the Fashions of their Cloths and Ribbons, in Phrase, Words, and Orthography: So that I am confident a *French* Man a hundred Years hence will no more understand an old Edition of *Froisard's* History, than he will understand *Arabick*. I confess the *French* Arms, Mony and Intriques have made their Language very universal of late, for this they are to be commended: It is an Accident, which they owe to the Greatness of their King, and their own Industry; and it may fall out hereafter to be otherwise. A third Reason is, as I said before, That the *French* being a Corruption of the *Latin*, *French* Au

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Authors take a Liberty to borrow whatever Words they want from the *Latin*, without farther Ceremony, especially when they treat of Sciences. This the *English* do not do, but as second-hand from the *French*. It is Modish to Ape the *French* in every thing: Therefore, we not only naturalize their Words, but Words they steal from other Languages. I wish in this and several other things, we had a little more of the *Italian* and *Spanish* Humour, and did not chop and change our Language, as we do our Cloths, at the Pleasure of every *French* Taylor.

In translating *French* into *English*, most People are very cautious and unwilling to print a *French* Word at first out of a new Book, till Life has render'd it more familiar to us; and therefore it runs a little rough in *English*, to express on *French* Word, by two or three of ours; and thus much, as to the Ease and Difficulty of Translating these Languages in general. But, as to the *French* in particular, it has as many Advantages of the *English*, as to the Sound, as ours has of the *French*, as to the Signification; which is another Argument of the different Genius of the two Nations. Almost all the Relatives, Articles, and Pronouns in the *French* Language, end in Vowels, and are written with two or three Letters. Many of their Words begin with Vowels; so, that when a Word after a Relative, Pronoun or Article, ends with a Vowel, and begins with another, they admit of their beloved Figure *Apostrophe*, and cut off the first Vowel. This they do to shun an ill Sound; and they are so Musical

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Musical as to that, that they will go against all the Rules of Sense and Grammar, rather than fail; as for Example, speaking of a Man's Wife they say. *Son Epouse*; whereas in Grammar, it ought to be *Sa Epouse*; but throw a *French* Man into a Fit of a Fever, so to hear one say, by way of *Apostrophe* *S'Epouse*, as this makes their Language to run smoother, so by this they express several Words very shortly, as, *qu'entend je?* In *English*, What do I hear? In this Example, three Words have the sound but of one, for sound prevails with them in the beginning, middle and end. Secondly, Their Words generally end in Vowels, or if they do not, they do not pronounce the Consonant, for the most part, unless there be two together, or that the next Word begins with a Vowel. Thirdly, By the help of their Relatives, they can shortly, and with ease resume a long preceding Sentence, in two or three

short Words; these are the Advantages of the *French* Tongue, all which they borrow from the *Latin*. But as the *French* do not value a plain Suit without a Garniture, they are not satisfied with the Advantages they have, but confound their own Language with needless Repetitions and Tautologies; and by a certain Rhetorical Figure, peculiar to themselves, imply twenty Lines, to express what an *English* Man would say, with more Ease and Sense in five; and this is the great Misfortune of translating *French* into *English*: If one endeavours to male *English* Standard, it is no Translation. If one follows their Flourishes and Embroideries, it is worse than *French* Tin-sel

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sel. But these Defects are only comparatively, in respect of *English*: And I do not say this so much, to condemn the *French*, as to praise our own Mother-tongue, for what we think a Deformity, they make think a Perfection; as the *Negroes of Guinney* think us as ugly, as we think them. But to return to my present Translation:

I have endeavour'd to give you the true Meaning of the Author, and have kept as near his Words as was possible; I was necessitated to add a little in some places, otherwise the Book could not have been understood. I have used all along the *Latin* word *Axis*, which is *Axle-tree* in *English*, which I do not think so proper a Word in a Treatise of this nature; but 'tis what is generally understood by every Body. There is another Word in the two last Nights, which was very uneasie to me, and the more so, for that it was so often repeated, which is *Tourbillion*, which signifies commonly a *Whirl-wind*; but Monsier *Des Chartes* understands it in a more general Sense, and I call it a Whirling; the Author hath given a very good Definition of it, and I need say no more, but that I retain'd the Word unwillingly, in regard of what I have said in the beginning of this Preface.

I know a Character of the Book will be expected from me, and I am obliged to give it, to satisfie myself for being at the Pains to Translate it; but I wish with all my heart I could forbear it; for I have that Value for the ingenious *French* Author, that I am sorry I must write what some may understand to be a Satyr against

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against him: The Design of the Author is to treat of this part of Natural Philosophy in a more familiar Way than any other hath done, and to make

every Body understand him: For this End, he introduceth a Woman of Quality as one of the Speakers in these five Discourses, whom he feigns never to have heard of any such thing as Philosophy before. How well he hath perform'd his Undertaking you will best judge when you have perused the Book: But if you would know before-hand my Thoughts, I must tell you freely, he hath failed in his Design; for endeavouring to render this part of Natural Philosophy familiar, he hath turn'd it into Ridicule; he hath pushed his wild Notion of the *Plurality of Worlds* to that height of Extravagancy, that he most certainly will confound those Readers, who have not Judgement and Wit to distinguish between what is truly solid (or, at least, probable) and what is trifling and airy: and there is no less Skill and Understanding required in this, than in comprehending the whole Subject he treats of. And for his Lady *Marquiese*, he makes her say a great many very silly things, tho' sometimes she mak'd Observations so learned, that the greatest Philosophers in *Europe* could make no better. His way of Arguing is extreamly fine, and his Examples and Comparisons are for the most part extraordinary, just, natural, and lofty, if he had not concluded with that of a *Rose*, which is very irregular. The whole Book is very unequal; the first, fourth, and the beginning of the fifth Discourses are incomparably the best. He ascribes all to Na-ture,

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ture, and says not a Word of God Almighty, from the beginning to the end; so that one would almost take him to be a Pagan. He endeavours chiefly two things; one is, that that there are thousands of Worlds inhabited by Animals, besides our Earth, and hath urged this Fancy too far: I shall not presume to defend his Opinion, but one may make a very good use of many things he hath expressed very finely, in endeavouring to assist his wild Fancy; for he gives a magnificent Idea of the Vastness of the Universe, and of the Almighty and Infinite Power of the Creator, to be comprehended by the meanest Capacity. This he proves judiciously, by the Appearances and Distances of the Planets and fixed Stars; and if he had let alone his learned Men, Philosophical Transactions, and Telescopes in the Planet *Jupiter*, and his Inhabitants not only there, but in all the fixed Stars, and even in the *Milky-way*, and only stuck to the Greatness of the Universe, he had deserved much more Praise.

The other he endeavours to defend and assert is, The System of *Conpernicus*. As to this, I cannot but take his part, as far as a Woman's Reasoning can go. I shall not venture upon the Astronomical Part, but leave

that to the Mathematicians; but because I know, that when this Opinion of *Copernicus* (as to the Motion of the Earth, and the Sun's being fixed in the Center of the Universe, without any other Motion, but upon his own Axis) was first heard of in the World, those who neither understood the old System of *Ptolemy*, nor the new one of *Copernicus*, said, That this

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this new Opinion was expressly contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and therefore not to be embraced; nay, it was condemned as Heretical upon the same account: After it had been examined by the best Mathematicians in *Europe*, and that they found it answer'd all the *Phoenomena's* and Motions of the Spheres and Stars better than the System of *Ptolemy*; that it was plainer, and not so perplexing and confused as the old Opinion; several of these learned Men therefore embraced this; but those that held out, when they saw all Arguments against *Copernicus* would not do, they had recourse to what I said before, that this System was expressly against the Holy Scriptures. Amongst this Number is the learned Father *Tacquit*, a Jesuit, who, I am told, has writ a large Course of Mathematics, and particularly, of Astronomy, which is deservedly much esteemed. In the end of this Treatise, he cites several Texts of Scripture; and particularly, the 19th *Psalm*, *And the Sun standing still at the Command of Joshua*. If I can make it appear, that this Text of Scripture is, at least, as much for *Copernicus* as *Ptolomy*, I hope it will not be unacceptable to my Readers: Therefore, with all due Reverence and Respect to the Word of God, I hope I may be allowed to say, That the Design of the Bible was not to instruct Mankind in Astronomy, Geometry, or Chronology, but in the Law of God, to lead us to Eternal Life; and the Spirit of God has been so condescending to our Weakness, that through the whole Bible, when any thing of that kind is mentioned, the Expressions are always

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always turned to fit our Capacities, and to fit the common Acceptance, or the Appearances of things to the Vulgar. As to Astronomy, I shall reserve that to the last, and shall begin with Geometry; and though I could give many Instances of all three, yet I shall give but one or two at most. The Measure and Definitions of *Solomon's Molten-brass Sea*; in *I Kings 7.23*. the words are these, *And he made a Molten Sea, ten Cubits from one brim to the other, it was round all about, and his height was five Cubits, and a Line of thirty Cubits did compass it round about*: That is to say, the Diameter of this

Vessel was a Third of its Circumference: This is indeed commonly understood to be so, but is far from a Geometrical Exactness, and will not hold to a Mathematical Demonstration, as to the just Proportion between the Diameter and Circumference of a Circle. In the next place, as to Chronology, I could give many Instances out of the Bible, but shall only name two that are very apparent, and easie to be understood by the meanest Capacity: See I Kings 6.1. the words are these, *And it came to pass, in the four hundred and fourscoreth Year after the Children of Israel were come out of the Land of Egypt, in the fourth Year of Solomon's Reign over Israel, in the Month Zif, which is the second Month, he began to build the House of the Lord.* Compare this Text, and number of Years with Acts 13. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22; which is the beginning of St. Paul's Sermon to the Jews of Antioch, and the number of Years therein contained; the words are these: *The God of this People of Israel chose our Fathers, and exalted the People when*

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when they dwelt as Strangers in the Land of Egypt, and with an high Hand brought he them out of it. And about the time of forty Years suffered he their Manners in the Wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven Nations in the Land of Canaan, he divided their Land to them by Lot. And after that, he gave unto them Judges, about the space of four hundred and fifty Years, until Samuel the Prophet. And afterwards they desired a King, and God gave them Saul, the Son of Kish, a Man of the Tribe of Benjamin, for the space of forty Years. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their King.

King David the Prophet reigned seven Years in *Hebron*, and thirty three Years in *Jerusalem*; and for this see I Kings 2.11. To this you must add the first three Years of his Son *Solomon*, according to the Text I have cited, in I Kings 6.1. Put all these Numbers together, which are contained in St. Paul's Sermon at *Antioch*, with the Reign of King *David*, the first three Years of *Solomon*, and seven Years of *Joshua's* Government, before the land was divided by Lot, which is expresly set down in Acts 13.19. the number of the Years will run thus: Forty Years in the Wilderness, the seven Years of *Joshua*, before the dividing the Land by the Lot; from thence, till *Samuel*, four hundred and fifty Years; forty Years for the Reign of *Saul*, forty Years for the Reign of *David*, and the first three Years of *Solomon*; all these Numbers added together, make five hundred and eighty Years; which Computation differs an hundred Years from that in I Kings 6.1. which is but four hundred and eighty. It is

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is not my present Business to reconcile this Difference; but I can easily do it; if any Body think it worth their Pains to quarrel with my Boldness, I am able to defend my self.

The second Instance is, as to the Reign of King *Solomon*; for this, see I *Kings* 11.42. where it is said, he reigned but forty Years over *Israel*. *Josephus* says expressly, in the third Chapter of his eighth Book of Antiquities, that King *Solomon* reigned eighty Years, and died at the Age of ninety four. I would not presume to name this famous Historian in Contradiction to the Holy Scriptures, if it were not easie to prove by the Scriptures, that *Solomon* reigned almost twice forty Years. The *Greek* Version of the Bible, commonly call'd the *Septuagint*, or seventy two Interpreters, has it most expressly in 2 *Kings* 2. But the first Book of *Kings*, according to our Translation in *English*, says, That *Solomon sat upon the Throne of his Father David, when he was twelve Years of Age*. But for Confirmation, be pleas'd to see I *Chron.* 22.5 [?] and 29.1. where it is said, That *Solomon was but young and tender for so great a Work, as the building of the Temple. Rehoboam the Son of Solomon was forty one Years old, when he began to reign*; see I *Kings* 14.21. How was it possible then that *Solomon* could beget a Son, when he was but a Child himself, or of a eleven Years of Age according to the *Septuagint*? This Difficulty did strangely surprize a Primitive Bishop, by Name, *Vitalis*, who proposed this Doubt to St. *Jerome*, who was strangely put to it to return an Answer; and the Learned Holy Father is forc'd, at last, to say, *That the Letter of the*

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the Scripture does often kill, but the Spirit enlivens. The Difficulty is still greater than what *Vitalis* proposed to St. *Jerome* in his Epistle: *Rehoboam* was the Son of *Naamah* an *Amonitish* Stranger-woman, as you may see in I *Kings* 14.13. Now it is clear, that *Solomon* did not abandon the Law of God, nor give himself to strange Women till the end of his Reign, see I *Kings* 9. Where he had so many strange Wives and Concubines, besides his lawful Queen, the King of *Egypt's* Daughter; and I hope this will convince and rational Man, that the Scripture names only the first forty Years of the Reign of King *Solomon*, which was the time, wherein he did what was Right in the sight of the Lord; which I think is Demonstration, that the Holy Scripture was not design'd to teach Mankind Geometry, or instruct them in

Chronology. The Learned *Anthony Godean*, Lord and Bishop of *Venice*, seems to have been sensible of this great Difficulty; for in his Learned Church-history, his Epitom from *Adam* to *Jesus Christ*, writing the Life of *Solomon*, he says, *He was twenty three Years old when he began his Reign*. Upon what Grounds, or from what Authority I know not; but this agrees better with the Age of *Solomon's Son Rehoboam*; but it doth not remove the Difficulty, so well as what I have said.

I come now in the last place to perform what I undertook, which is to prove, That the Scripture was not design'd to teach us Astronomy, no more than Geometry or Chronology: And to make it appear that the two Texts cited by Father *Tacquer*, viz. that of *Psal. 19.4*,

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4, 5, 6, and *Josh. 10. 12*; &t. are at least as much for *Copernicus* his System, as they are for *Ptolomy's*. The Words of the 19th *Psalms* are, *In them hath he set a Tabernacle for the Sun, which is as a Bridegroom coming out of his Chamber; and rejoyces as a strong Man to run his Race, &c.*

That these Words are Allegorical is most plain. Does not the Word *Set* import Stability, Fix'dness and Rest, as much as the Words *run his Race*, and *come forth of his Chamber*, do signifie Motion, or turning around? Do not the Words *Tabernacle* and *Chamber* express Places of Rest, and Stability? And why may not I safely believe, that this makes for the Opinion of *Copernicus*, as well for that of *Ptolomy*? For the Words of the Scriptures favour one Opinion as much as the other. The Texts of the Sun's standing still at the Command of *Joshua*, are yet plainer for *Copernicus*, in *Josh. 10.* and the latter part of v. 12. the Words are these: *Sun stand still on Gibeon, and thou Moon on the Valley of Ajalon, &c.*

The best Edition of the *English Bible*, which is printed in a small *Folio* by *Buck*, in *Cambridge*, has an Asterism at the Word *stand*, and renders it in the Margent, from the Hebrew, *Be thou silent*: If it be so in the Hebrew, *be thou silent* makes as much for the Motion of the Earth, according to *Copernicus*, as for the Motion of the Sun according to *Ptolomy*, but not to Criticize upon Words, consider this miraculous Passage, not only the Sun is commanded to stand still, but the Moon also, *And thou Moon on the Valley of Ajalon* The reason the Sun was commanded to stand still, was to the end the

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the Children of *Israel* might have Light to guide them, to destroy their Enemies. Now when by this Miracle they had the Light of the Sun, of what Advantage could the Moon be to them? Why was she commanded to stand still upon the Valley of *Ajalon*? Besides, be pleased to consider, the Holy Land is but a very little Country or Province: The Valley of *Ajalon* is very near *Gibeon*, where *Joshua* spoke to both Sun and Moon together to stand still above, in places so near each other, it is Demonstration, that the Moon was at that time very near the Sun; and by consequence was at that time either a Day or two before her Change, or a Day or two at most after New Moon; and then she is nearer to the Body of the Sun, as to appearance, so could not assist the Children of *Israel* with Light, having so little of her own: It was then for some other reason that the Moon stood still; and for some other reason that it is taken notice of in Holy Scripture. Both Systems agree that the Moon is the nearest Planet to the Earth, and subservient to it, to enlighten it, during the Night, is absence of the Sun. Besides this, the Moon has other strange Effects, not only on the Earth itself, but upon all the living Creatures that inhabit it; many of them are invisible, and as yet unknown to Mankind; some of them are most apparent; and above all, her wonderful Influence over the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea, at such regular Times and Seasons, if not interrupted by the accident of some Storm, or great Wind. We know of no Relation or Cor-

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Corresponding between the Sun and Moon, unless it be what is common with all the rest of the Planets, that the Moon receives her Light from the Sun, which she restores again by Reflection. If the Sun did move, according to the System of *Ptolemy*, where was the necessity of the Moon's standing still? For if the Moon had gone on her Course, where was the loss or disorder in Nature? She having, as I demonstrated before, so little Light, being so very near her Change, would have recovered her Loss at the next Appearance of the Sun, and the Earth could have suffered nothing by the accident; whereas the Earth moving at the same time, in an annual and diurnal Course, according to the System of *Copernicus*, would have occasioned such a Disorder and Confusion in Nature, that nothing less than two or three new Miracles, all as great as the first, could have set the World in Order again: The regular Ebbings and Flowings of the Sea must have been interrupted, as also the Appearing of the Sun in the Horizon, besides many other Inconveniencies in Nature; as, the Eclipses of the Sun and Moon, which are now so regular, that an Astronomer could tell you to a Minute,

what Eclipses will be for thousands of Years to come, both of Sun and Moon; when, and in what Climates they will be visible, and how long they will last, how many Degrees and Digits of those two great Luminaries will be obscured: So that I doubt not but when this stupendious Miracle was performed by the Almighty and Infinite Pow-er

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er of God, his Omnipotent Arm did in an instant stop the Course of Nature, and the whole Frame of the Universe was at a stand, though the Sun and Moon be only named, being, to vulgar Appearance, the two great Luminaries that govern the Universe. This was the space of a Day in Time, yet can be call'd no part of Time, since Time and Nature are always in motion, and this Day was a stop of that Course. What is there in all this wonderful stop of Time, that is not as strong for the System of *Copernicus*, as for that of *Ptolemy*? And why does my Belief of the Motion of the Earth, and the Rest of the Sun contradict the Holy Scriptures? Am not I as much obliged to believe that the Sun lodges in a Tabernacle? (as in Psalm 19.) Are not all these Allegorical Sayings? In the abovenamed Edition of the *English Bible* of *Buck's* at *Cambridge* see *Isa.* 8. 38. where the Shadow returned ten Degrees backwards, as a Sign of King *Hezekiah's* Recovery, and there follow these Words, *And the Sun returned ten Degrees*; but on the Margin you will find it from the Hebrew, *The shadow turned ten Degrees by the Sun*; and this is yet as much for *Copernicus* as *Ptolemy*. Whether God Almighty added ten Degrees or Hours to that Day, or by another kind of Miracle, made that Shadow to return upon the Dial of *Ahaz*, I will not presume to determine; but still you see the *Hebrew* is most agreeable to the new System of *Copernicus*.

Thus I hope I have performed my Undertaking in making it appear, that the Holy Scri-

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Scriptures, in things that are not material to the Salvation of Mankind, do altogether condescend to the vulgar Capacity; and that these two Texts of *Psal.* 19. and *Josh.* 10. are as much for *Copernicus* as against him. I hope none will think my Undertaking too bold, in making so much use of the Scripture, on such an Occasion: I have a Precedent, much esteemed by all ingenious Men; that is, Mr. *Burnet's* Book of *Paradise*, and *Antedeluvian World*, which inroads as much, if not more, on the Holy Scriptures. But I

have another Reason for saying so much of the Scriptures at this time: We live in an Age, wherein many believe nothing contained in that Holy Book, others turn it into Ridicule: Some use it only for Mischief, and as a Foundation and Ground for Rebellion: Some keep close to the literal Sense; and others give the Word of God only that Meaning and Sense that pleases their own Humours, or suits best their present Purpose and Interests. As I quoted an Apistle of St. *Jerometo Vitalis* before, where that great Father says, That *the Letter kills, but the Spirit enlivens*; I think it is the Duty of all good Christians to acquiesce in the Opinion and Decrees of the Church of Christ, in whom dwells the Spirit of God, which enlightens us to Matters of Religion and Faith; and as to other things contained in the Holy Scriptures relating to Astronomy, Geometry, Chronology, or other liberal Sciences, we leave those Points to the Opinion of the Learned, who, by comparing the several Copies, Translations, Versions, and Edi

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Editions of the Bible, are best able to reconcile any apparent Differences; and this with all Submission to the Canons of general Councils, and Decrees of the Church. For the School-men agitate and delate many things of a higher Nature, than the standing still, or the Motion of the Sun or the Earth. And therefore, I hope my Readers will be so just as to think, I intend no Reflection on Religion by this Essay; which being no Matter of Faith, is free for every one to believe, or not believe, as they please. I have adventur'd to say nothing, but from good Authority: And as this is approved of by the World, I may hereafter venture to publish somewhat may be more useful to the Publick. I shall conclude therefore with some few Lines, as to my present Translation.

I have laid the Scene at *Paris*, where the Original was writ; and have translated the Book near the Words of the Author. I have made bold to correct a Fault of the *French* Copy, as to the heighth of our Air or Sphere of Activity of the Earth, which the *French* Copy makes twenty or thirty Leagues, I call it two or three, because sure this was a Fault of the Printer, and not a Mistake of the Author. For Monsieur *Des Cartes*, and Monsieur *Rohalt*, both assert it to be but two or three Leagues. I thought *Paris* and St. *Denis* fitter to be made use of as Examples, to compare the Earth and Moon to, than *London* and *Greenwich*; because St. *Denis* having several Steeples and Walls, is more like *Paris* than *Greenwich* is to *London*: *Green-*

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Greenwich has do Walls, and but one very low Steeple, not to be seen from the Monument without a Prospective-glass. And I resolv'd either to give you the *French* Book into *English* or to give you the Subject quite changed and made my own; but having neither Health nor Leisure for the last, I offer you the first, such as it is.

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