

The King of P R U S S I A's Preface to his *Examen*, or
Critical Essay upon MACHIAVEL'S PRINCE.

Machiavel's *Prince* may be looked upon with regard to *Morality*, in the same light, as Spinoza's [a] Works in relation to matters of *Faith*. Spinoza sapped the foundations of Faith, with a design to subvert Religion; and Machiavel by corrupting Politics has struck at the very root of true Morality. The errors of one are only speculative; but those of the other, are of such a nature as immediately influence our practice. The Theologians however presently rung the alarm-bell, and raised the World against Spinoza in such a manner, that his writings have been refuted in form, and Divinity settled upon so solid a basis as to despise his attacks: whilst Machiavel has only been pelted by here and there a Moralist; in spite of whom, notwithstanding his pernicious doctrine, he has still maintained his ground and sat triumphant in the Political Chair to this very hour. Nevertheless, I shall venture to enter the lists in defence of Humanity against this Monster, this declared enemy to it, and arm myself with Reason and Justice, against Sophisms and iniquitous argumentation, in the course of some reflections upon his *Prince*, which I shall subjoin Chapter by Chapter to that Work; that so the Reader may be immediately provided in one, with an antidote for the poison which he finds in the other.

I have always looked upon the *Prince* as one of the most dangerous works that ever was published. It is a book that must of course fall into the hands of Princes, and of many others that study Politics, and it may naturally be expected that young and ambitious men, whose heart and judgment are not sufficiently matured to distinguish betwixt

[a] The works of this author, who was originally a Jew, and resided mostly in Holland, have made a great noise in the world; especially his *Traëtatus Theologico-Politicus*, printed at Hamburg, 1670; in which his principal endeavour seems to be to overthrow all Religions, but more particularly the Jewish and Christian; and instead thereof to introduce Atheism, and a free toleration of all systems of Religion in those that are inclined to profess any. He says, they were only invented to make men live honestly, and obey the Magistrates, and apply themselves to virtue; not for the hope of any reward after death, but for the excellence of virtue in itself, and the advantages which its votaries receive in this Life. Many other strange positions he endeavoured to maintain, and at last fell into downright and professed Atheism. His hypothesis in his *opera posthuma*, is a most absurd and palpable contradiction to the clearest notions of the human understanding. If the Reader desires to see it exposed and confuted, he may consult Mr. Bayle's Dictionary, under the article *Spinoza*.

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