Ecclesiastical Characteristics

OR, THE

ARCANA OF CHURCH POLICY



portrait by Charles Willson Peale

by

JOHN WITHERSPOON

1723 — 1794

EDINBURGH

first published MDCCLIII · modernised edition MMXXVI

Ecclesiastical Characteristics:

OR, THE

Arcana of Church Policy.

BEING AN

Humble Attempt

TO OPEN UP THE

Mystery of Moderation.

Wherein is shewn

A plain and easy way of attaining to the CHARACTER of a MODERATE MAN[1], as at present in repute in the CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

By the Reverend Mr Buchanan[2].

THE FIFTH EDITION.

EDINBURGH:

Printed in the Year MDCCLXIII.

And now reprinted by Berith Press
in the Year of our Lord MMXXVI.

1. **Moderate Man** — the whole tract is sustained irony. The narrator speaks as an enthusiastic member of the *Moderate* party in the 18th-century Church of Scotland, praising their positions as virtues; Witherspoon, who belonged to the opposing *Evangelical* or *Popular* party, thereby exposes them as vices.

2. **Mr Buchanan** — a mock attribution. Witherspoon published anonymously and chose this name satirically: George Buchanan (1506–1582) was the famous Scottish humanist and reformer, tutor to James VI — invoking him as the supposed author of this "moderate" manual is part of the joke.

Berith Press

P.O. Box 861, Kansas, OK 74347
(918) 896-2055
www.berithpress.com

In this Berith Press reprint, spelling and formatting changes have been made. This is a public domain work.

Modernised edition prepared under the supervision of the Rev. Romesh Prakashpalan, Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

ISBN 978-1-963516-71-5



PREFACE TO THE MODERNISED EDITION

John Witherspoon: Minister and Founding Father

John Witherspoon (1723–1794) was a parish minister of the Church of Scotland when he published *Ecclesiastical Characteristics* anonymously in 1753, at the age of thirty. Born in Gifford, East Lothian, educated at Haddington Grammar School and the University of Edinburgh, he was settled first at Beith (1745) and then at Paisley (1757), and became one of the chief leaders of the Evangelical, or Popular, party in the Scottish Kirk, in opposition to the dominant Moderate faction. In 1768, he accepted the presidency of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) and is reckoned one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America. He was the only active clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence, served as a delegate to the Continental Congress from 1776 to 1782, and trained a generation of American statesmen and ministers, including James Madison. He died at Tusculum, his farm near Princeton, in 1794.

The Church of Scotland: Moderate and Evangelical Parties

This book, written when Witherspoon was a minister in the Church of Scotland, is a satirical look at the Moderate Party of that Church. The Moderates opposed the Evangelical Party, which stressed doctrinal fidelity to the Confession of Faith, experimental religion, direct preaching, and the need for the new birth, what Thomas Chalmers would later call *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*.

The Moderates, by contrast, were embarrassed by the Confession of Faith, cultivated politeness rather than directness, preached morality rather than Christ, good manners rather than the new birth, defended one another at any cost, and were politically savvy. These remain the markers of Moderates in today's Churches as well.

The Book: *Ecclesiastical Characteristics*

What Witherspoon accomplished with this work of satire was far more devastating in exposing the Moderate program than any direct polemic could have been. The book is both humorous and a solemn warning. It allows the reader, for a time, to enter into the mind of the Moderate; when properly understood, it will guard the reader from becoming one.

Though small in size, this work is of great value for the Church. In many present-day Reformed Churches, one finds a desire for cultural acceptance, a greater reverence for men than God, the rejection of fixed truths in favor of "the moment," and preaching that does not aim at the conscience but tickles men's ears and fancies. Outright contempt for the Reformed Confessions of Faith is evident in Church Courts, and Church Officers often view the Confessions with embarrassment. But History shows that this is nothing new. History also shows that this mentality is corrosive and destructive to Christ's Church.

Using This Book

This book is written from the perspective of a Moderate. It is satire. Pay careful attention to the thirteen Moderate Maxims. The Maxims give tremendous insight into the Moderate way and are easy to grasp.

This book is precious because all Churchmen will either be tempted by the Moderate mentality or encounter Moderate-minded men in the Church. Witherspoon protects the Church at large from

a mentality that has *a form of godliness, but denieth the power thereof* (2 Tim. 3:5).

Flee Moderatism!

Moderates can never turn the world upside down, because they are men of the world. However, men of the Evangelical Party, like Witherspoon, changed the world because they preached Christ and the heads of true Evangelical religion.

This work reveals that the danger of Moderatism lies in being a form of apostasy with a very respectable religious veneer. Let all beware of this tendency in the Church. May the Lord preserve his Church from Moderatism through the labors of men like Witherspoon, who *being dead, yet speaketh* (Heb. 11:4).

Features of the Modernized Edition

This modernization of the fifth edition is rather light. Most of the work involved replacing the "long s" with the regular "s" to aid modern readers. Rather than change archaic words, they are footnoted with definitions. Footnotes were also added for terms and persons that might elude the reader, and some of the satire that depends on historical figures is likewise explained in footnotes. This was done to reduce the friction of reading a work that requires insider knowledge of the Church of Scotland in the eighteenth century.

In addition, for those who would like to use this work in a scholarly manner, inline page numbers from the original edition are inserted in the modernized text so that this version may be verified against it. While these may slightly hinder reading, they are crucial for scholarly use — both to verify the transcription and to allow serious citation of Witherspoon's work.

Disclosures: Use of "AI"

It is important to note when LLMs (sometimes called AI) are used in the production and updating of works. LLMs were used in the production of this book, but not in any way that modified Witherspoon's words. An LLM generated scripts to create the layout of this book from a Markdown file. Content for footnotes defining archaic words and historical items was generated automatically. In addition, an LLM was used to convert the OCR to this modern format and to intelligently replace the "long s" characters based on context.

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Fredericksburg, Virginia
April 2026

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE *First* Edition of the CHARACTERISTICS was published the beginning of October 1753; the *Second*, the middle of December following; the *Third*, the end of May 1754; and the *Fourth*, in 1755.

[P. III]

TO THE DEPARTED GHOST,
OR
SURVIVING SPIRIT,

Of the late Reverend Mr——, Minister in ——

WORTHY SIR,

During a great part of the time I spent in composing the following treatise, I was fully resolved to have sent it abroad by itself; and not to have dedicated it to any person in the world: and indeed, in a confined sense of the word WORLD, you see I have still kept my resolution. The reason of this my intended purpose was, that I find the Right Honourable the Earl of Shaftsbury, in an advertisement, or ticket, prefixed to his works, hath expressed a contempt and disdain of all dedications, prefaces, or other discourses, by way of forerunners to a book. This he seems to think a mean and cowardly way in an author, of creeping into the world, and begging the reception which he dares not claim.

[P. IV]

Being satisfied, therefore, of the justness of this observation, and being also somewhat confident (as his Lordship seems to have been) of the intrinsic worth of my performance, I intended to have come forth in this masterly manner.

But, upon more mature deliberation, I discovered, that the only objections against dedications were, the self-diffidence just now mentioned, and the suspicion of flattery for selfish ends, which is so contrary to disinterested benevolence; so that if I could frame a dedication which should be quite beyond the imputation of any of these two purposes, I should then wholly escape his Lordship's censure. This aim, I think, I have fallen nothing short of, when I

have dedicated this book to you, most illustrious SHADE! as my most malignant enemies cannot but grant, that I could have no expectation of your encouraging me, either by buying my book, recommending it to others, or giving it away to the poor; nay, or even so much as voting for my translation to a better benefice in Assembly or Commission[3].

It startled me a little, that this conduct might perhaps, by evil-disposed persons, be represented as an approach to Popery, and resembling their worshipping of saints: but, I hope, this can scarcely be imputed to me, in the present case, since you never were esteemed a saint while you lived, nor ever thirsted after that title.

Another more material objection occurred to me, That a dedication to a dead man, is either almost, or altogether unprecedented. But I am not much concerned, though this method of proceeding should be thought bold and new, because this is the character which the incomparable Mr —— gives of his own essays upon the principles of morality and natural religion. Besides, I am not altogether destitute of authority: for the memorable Dean Swift[4] has used the freedom to dedicate his Tale of a Tub to Prince Posterity: I have also seen a satirical poem, called *Jure Divino*[5], dedicated, with great solemnity,

to Prince (or rather, I believe, to King) Reason. If, therefore, one of these authors might dedicate a book to a faculty of the human

3. **Commission** — the Commission of the General Assembly, a standing body of Assembly members that met quarterly between Assemblies to deal with urgent business.

4. **Dean Swift** — Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), Anglican Dean of St Patrick's, Dublin, and the era's greatest satirist; *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) is his prose satire on religious factionalism.

5. ***Jure Divino*** — Latin "by divine right"; the title of Daniel Defoe's 1706 satirical poem mocking the doctrine of the divine right of kings.

mind, and the other to an abstract idea, I hope it is no great presumption in me to dedicate mine to you, though *in statu mortuorum*[6]; especially as there is not a living man who hath so good a claim to the compliment of a treatise upon my subject.

But a more gravelling[7] difficulty than any of these kept me some time in suspense, *viz.*[8] how to get the book presented to you, as I did not find in myself any inclination to depart this life, in order to transport it. After much trouble, I was at length relieved, by reflecting, that Mr Pope[9] has assured us, that the ghosts of departed ladies always haunt the places in which they delighted while they were alive; and therefore, from analogy, it is to be supposed, that the same thing holds with regard to departed ministers. If this is the case, I look upon it as certain, that your chief residence is in the Assembly-house at Edinburgh, where you have, in your lifetime, both given and received so much pleasure. For though I will not limit you, in your unembodied state, from making circuits through the country, and visiting synods[10], or presbyteries, particularly in the M——se and G——y, where there are so many men after your own heart; yet, I dare say, you will not be absent from the Assembly, or any of the quarterly meetings of the Commission, which hath so often saved the church from impending dangers.

It is, therefore, my purpose to go to Edinburgh in May next, when the Assembly meets, of which I am a member, and there to lay

6. ***in statu mortuorum*** — Latin, "in the state of the dead." The narrator addresses the dedication to the *ghost* of an unnamed deceased Moderate leader.

7. **gravelling** — perplexing, deeply troubling (literally "running aground"); 18th-century usage.

8. ***viz.*** — abbreviation of Latin *videlicet*, "namely" or "that is to say."

9. **Mr Pope** — Alexander Pope (1688–1744), the leading English poet of the early 18th century. The narrator alludes to *The Rape of the Lock*, in which the ghosts of departed beauties haunt the places they loved.

10. **synod** — a regional church court above the presbytery and below the General Assembly.

before you my performance, hoping it will prove most delicious and savoury to all your senses, to the names of which, and the manner of their present operation, I am wholly a stranger.

It is probable you have not been accustomed, these two or three years bypast[11], to hear your own praises celebrated; and therefore I shall no farther lanch out[12] into them than to say, that there is not one branch of the character recommended

in the following pages, in which you were not eminent; and that there never was one stone by you left unturned, for promoting the good cause.—That you may still sit upon the throne, and, by your powerful, though invisible, influence, make the interest of moderation prevail, is the ardent wish, and the pious prayer of,

SIR,

Your most obedient, and admiring servant.

11. **bypast** — Scots/archaic: past, gone by.

12. **lanch out** — archaic for *launch out* (to sail forth, to embark on at length); used here of expansive praise.

PREFACE

TO THE

SECOND EDITION

Gratitude obligeth me to acknowledge the kind reception which the world hath given to the following generous effort, for the honour of our church. This shews, either that panegyric[13] is by no means so unacceptable to mankind in general, as some ill-natured authors insinuate; or that this of mine hath been executed with very uncommon skill. If this last should be the true solution, it would give me a double satisfaction. However, as the love of detraction, in some persons, is incurable, and as many have such ulcerated minds, that there is no possibility of applying to them, even in the softest and most friendly manner, without offending them; to prevent the spreading of any such baleful influence, I think it proper to add a few things upon the structure of this performance; part of which should have accompanied the first edition, if it had not pleased the publisher to print it without any communication with the author.

From the beginning I foresaw it would occur as an objection, that I have not properly denominated that party in the church which I have chosen to celebrate by the words moderation and moderate men. It is alledged[14], that, for these two or three years bypast, they have made little use of these words, and have chosen rather to represent themselves as supporters of the constitution, as acting upon constitutional principles, as lovers of order, and enemies to

13. **panegyric** — a formal speech or writing of lavish praise. The narrator's word for the whole book (ironically — since it is satire masquerading as panegyric).

14. **alledge** — archaic spelling of *allege*.

confusion, &c.; while, at the very same time, the opposite party have taken up the title of moderation, and pretend to be acting upon moderate principles. It is also hinted, that the just severities which the times render necessary, require a different phraseology.

In answer to this, I observe, that my treatise has really been a work of time, (as, I hope, appears from

its maturity), the most part of it having been composed above two years ago, and before this change of language was introduced. It was originally intended only to exhibite a general view of the different parties in religion and learning among us; though it hath now admitted a very particular account of the latest and most recent differences in the church, chiefly because the present seems likely to be an area of some consequence, and to be big with some very great events, as well as persons. Besides, I considered, that this name of moderate men was much longer the designation of my friends, than those lately invented; and as they do not even at present allow the claim of their enemies to that character, it is probable they intend to take it up again, as soon as the designs now upon the anvil shall be completely executed. As to the name of moderation being inconsistent with a proper vigour, in support of their own measures, and wholesome severities against their enemies, it is an objection altogether frivolous, as appears from the following example: A certain minister, being asked the character of a friend of his, who had come up to the Assembly, and, particularly, whether or not he was a moderate man? answered, O yes; fierce for moderation!

I think it proper to inform the reader, that one great reason of the uncommon choice of a patron to this work was, an opinion I had long entertained, and in support of which I could alledge very strong arguments, from the sayings of some great men and philosophers, as well as the practice of a famous ancient nation, with regard to their kings; that the true and proper time of ascertaining

and fixing a man's character is when he has done his whole work; and that posterity hath as good a right to the possession and use of his fame after death, as his cotemporaries[15] to his abilities during his life. At the same time, though the author had a particular hero in view, yet he chose to publish it without mentioning his name, or place of abode, or indeed any circumstance foreign to the character which might distinguish the person. The design of acting in this manner was, that in case the world should universally agree to ascribe it to the

same person he had in his eye, it might be *such* a justification of the truth of the character, as very few modern dedications can boast of.

This invention I challenge as wholly my own; and do hereby allow and recommend the use of it to all future authors, hoping it will change the *fashion* among writers of character and *self-esteem*, from using no dedications at all, to forming them upon a plan entirely new. Let them each keep his patron in his eye, draw his character as exactly and graphically as possible, and publish it without a name, or with this inscription, *Detur digniffimo*[16]: then, if the world do universally ascribe it to the person intended, let his name be prefixed to the *second* edition; and it will be more true, and sterling, and acceptable praise, than any hitherto found in that class of panegyrics. But if, on the contrary, the world shall ascribe it to a different person, let the author acquiesce in that determination, rejoice in so good an expedient for preventing a blunder, and make his court to his *new* patron, who will hardly refuse to admit him after so refined and delicate a compliment. I dare not recommend

15. **cotemporaries** — 18th-century spelling of *contemporaries*.

16. ***Detur dignissimo*** — Latin, "Let it be given to the most worthy." The narrator's mock-inscription for anonymous dedications.

any thing like this method, with respect to the books already printed, because it would occasion so violent a controversy about the property of many dedications, as could not be ended but by the sword; they being most of them addressed to great men, who have agreed upon this method of revenging gross affronts, and terminating, in the last resort, all important disputes. Should any ask, why I have not followed out my own rule, by now prefixing the name of my patron? they are to understand, that, for reasons known to myself, I intend to defer it till the nineteenth or twentieth edition.

If any shall think fit to blame me, for writing in so bold and assuming a way, through the whole of my book, I answer, I have chosen it on purpose, as being the latest and most modern way of writing; and the success it has already met with, is a demonstration of its propriety and beauty. The same thing also, to my great satisfaction, is a proof of the justice of a late author's scheme of Moral Philosophy, who has expelled mortification, self-denial, humility, and silence, from among

[P. X]

the number of the VIRTUES, and transferred them, as he expresseth himself, to the opposite column; that is to say, the column of VICES. That scheme, I dare say, will stand its ground; and, as a critic, I observe, that it was probably the single circumstance just now mentioned, that brought upon the author an adversary, who, though possessed of many truly good qualities, had the misfortune to be always eminent for modesty, and other bastard virtues of the same class.

There are some, I find, of opinion, that it was neither necessary nor useful for me, to give so many examples of the conduct of the moderate, in the illustration of the several maxims; and these eminent persons themselves seem to feel some pain from the exposing of their virtues to the public view. But is it not an established truth, that example teaches better than precept?

Is there any thing more usual in moral writings, than to illustrate them by extracts from the lives of the philosophers, and other heroes, of ancient times? And since the advantage of example is commonly said to be, that it is a living law, or that it puts life into the precept, surely the best of all examples must be those of persons really and literally alive: neither should such persons themselves be offended with this conduct; since, as has been hinted above, mortification and self-denial, are no more to be reckoned among the virtues, but the vices.

However, I have the comfort to reflect, that from the opposite opinions of those who have passed their judgment on this performance, I am in the middle, and consequently in the right: for there have been transmitted to me many noble instances of moderation, in expectation, no doubt, that they should be added to my collection. I thankfully acknowledge my obligations to these kind contributers, but cannot make any use of their contributions at present; for it would, at least, double the bulk of the treatise, and thereby render it less commodious for pocket-carriage. Further, I do assure them, it was not through want of materials that a greater number of examples was not produced, but from having duly weighed the proper proportion for a work of this extent; and to what hath been fixed with so much deliberation, I am resolved stedfastly[17] to adhere.

[P. XI]

It were indeed to be wished, that every man were left to himself, and allowed, in peace and quietness, to finish his own work his own way: for I have seldom observed these things called hints and suggestions, to have any other effect than to perplex and mislead. An author's situation, when persecuted with them, seems to me very much to resemble that of a gentleman building a house, or planning out a garden, who, if he hearkens to the advice, or attempts to gratify

17. **stedfast / stedfastly** — archaic spelling of *steadfast(ly)*.

the taste, of every visitor, will, in all probability, produce, upon the whole, a collection of inconsistencies, a system of deformity.

I am very sorry to be obliged thus to speak in obscurity, by returning a public answer to private observations; but cannot omit taking notice, that it has been much wondered at, that a certain very eminent person has been lost in the croud of heroes, without any particular or distinguishing compliment paid to himself. Now, this did not by any means flow from a want of respect or esteem, but from a distrust of my own abilities, and a despair of being able to do justice to so illustrious a character. Neither indeed was there any great necessity (excepting mere compliment) of spreading his fame, which hath already gone both far and wide. Besides, that his many and remarkable exploits, however strong and pregnant proofs they may be of benevolence and social affection, have some circumstances attending them, which render them more proper subjects of discourse than writing. The glare would be rather too great for even the strong eye-sight of this generation to endure, when brought very near them. The sun is the most glorious of all objects in the firmament; and yet, though it were in the power of a painter to draw him in all his lustre, there would hardly be found a proper place for him in the largest palace in Great Britain.

The only other objection I shall take notice of, is, that, in one respect, I may be said to have drawn the picture larger than the life, in as much as I seem to suppose, that all moderate men do, in fact, possess every one of the virtues which I have made to enter into the perfection of the character. This objection, though the one most insisted one, is evidently both false and foolish.*

[P. XII]

No reader, of true discernment, can imagine any such thing. If it were so, there would be no occasion for my book at all: on the contrary, the various maxims inserted in it, and the various examples produced in illustration of them, do show that there are different

degrees of perfection, even amongst the moderate themselves. They are a body, every member of which hath neither the same abilities, nor the same office. They are also a body most firmly united, for mutual defence and support: so much, I confess, I intended to intimate; and that, on this account, they are intitled to a sort of community of goods, and mutual participation of each others excellencies. A head may very well boast of the beauty, elegance and activity of the hands, or the comely proportion and strength of the limbs, belonging to it; and yet, though they are one body, it would be ridiculous to suppose, that the head or hands are always in the dirt, when they have the feet to carry them through it.

This metaphor of a body, however common, is one of the justest and most significative imaginable, out of which a very long allegory might be formed; but I shall prosecute it no further, at this time, except to acknowledge, that it convinces me of one real omission in my plan, viz. that what hath been just now hinted, I ought to have inserted as a thirteenth maxim, and illustrated it at large*. It would have been easy to shew, that the moderate are remarkable for the most perfect union and harmony, and for a firm and stedfast adherence to each other, in the prosecution of their designs. Neither is there any instance in which there is a stronger contrast or opposition between them and the orthodox; as manifestly appeared from the conduct of both parties in the General Assembly[18] 1753. A friend of ours called the enemy, upon that occasion, a parcel of conscientious fools: had he then read the following maxims, which prove, that they have as little conscience as wisdom, it is probable he would have bestowed on them their true and proper character.

* *This was done in the third edition*.

18. **General Assembly** — the supreme court of the Church of Scotland, meeting annually in Edinburgh; composed of ministers and ruling elders commissioned from every presbytery.

ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

INTRODUCTION

THE reader will doubtless agree with me, that moderation is an excellent thing, and particularly the noblest character of a churchman. It is also well known, that as all churches have usually in them a moderate, and a zealous, high-flying, wild party[19]; so our church hath, at present, a certain party, who glory in, and fight for moderation; and who (it is to be hoped justly) appropriate to themselves wholly the character of moderate men: neither is it a small presage of a glorious and blessed state of the church, in its approaching periods, that so many of our young men are smitten with the love of moderation, and generally burn with desire to appear in that noble and divine character.

This hath inspired me with the ambition and expectation of being helpful in training up as many as are desirous of it, in this most useful of all sciences. For however perfectly it is known, and however steddily[20] practised by many who are adepts; and notwithstanding there are some young men, of pregnant parts, who make a sudden and surprising proficiency, without much assistance; yet I have often observed, that there are several persons, who err, in many instances, from the right path, boggle at sundry particular steps of their leaders, and take a long time before they are thoroughly confirmed in their

19. **a moderate, and a zealous, high-flying, wild party** — by "moderate" the narrator means the Moderate party (latitudinarian, polite, Enlightenment-influenced, supportive of patronage), and by "zealous, high-flying, wild" he means the Evangelical / Popular / orthodox party, to which Witherspoon himself belonged. The loaded adjectives are the narrator's, not Witherspoon's.

20. **steddily** — variant 18th-century spelling of *steadily*.

principles and practice. The same persons also, by an unstable conduct, or by an imprudent, or unseasonable discovery of their designs, have brought a reproach upon their party, and been an obstruction to whatever work they had then in hand.

— [P. 18] —

These bad effects, I humbly conceive, flow chiefly, if not only, from the want of a complete system of moderation, containing all the principles of it, and giving a distinct view of their mutual influence one upon another, as well as proving their reasonableness, and shewing, by examples, how they ought to be put in practice.

There is no work of this kind, to my knowledge, yet extant; which renders my present undertaking of it the more laudable; and will, I hope, render it the more acceptable.

I must inform the reader, that after I was fully convinced of the necessity of some such piece as what follows, but before I entered upon it myself, I earnestly intreated[21] several of the most eminent men of the moderate stamp among us, those burning and shining lights of our church, who are, and are esteemed to be, our leaders, that some of them would set about it. However, they all devolved it upon me; and made this satisfying excuse for themselves, that they were so busied in *acting* moderation, that they could not have time to *write* upon it. This soon led me to think, what would become of many noble designs, and what advantage our discontented zealots might take, if any of the expert steersmen of this ecclesiastical vessel of ours should retire from the helm, but so long time as would be necessary to bring a work of such a nature, to the perfection in strength, symmetry, and elegance, that, the reader will perceive, even this of mine is arrived at.

I shall now proceed to the principal part of the work, after I have informed the reader of the plan of it; which is briefly this, to

21. **intreated** — archaic spelling of *entreated*, urgently asked.

enumerate distinctly, and in their proper order and connection, all the several maxims upon which moderate men conduct themselves: and forasmuch as the justice of many of them, being refined pieces of policy, is not very evident at first sight, I shall subjoin to each an illustration, and confirmation of it, from reason, or experience, or both. *N. B.* I shall make but very little use of scripture, because that is contrary to some of the maxims themselves; as will be seen in the sequel.

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MAXIM I.

All ecclesiastical persons, of whatever rank, whether principals of colleges, professors of divinity, ministers, or even probationers[23], that are suspected of heresy, are to be esteemed men of great genius, vast learning, and uncommon worth; and are, by all means, to be supported and protected.

ALL moderate men have a kind of fellow-feeling with heresy; and as soon as they hear of any one suspected, or in danger of being prosecuted for it, zealously and unanimously rife up in his defence. This fact is unquestionable. I never knew a moderate man in my life, that did not love and honour a heretic, or that had not an implacable hatred at the persons and characters of heresy-hunters[24]; a name with which we have thought proper to stigmatize these sons of Belial[25], who begin and carry on prosecutions against men for heresy, in church-courts.

It is related of the apostle John, and an ugly story it is, that upon going into a public bath, and observing the heretic Cerinthus[26] there before him, he retired with the utmost precipitation, lest the edifice

23. probationers — men licensed by a presbytery to preach while awaiting a call to a particular parish and ordination; the 18th-century term for what are now called licentiates in many denominations.

24. heresy-hunters — a derisive term for those who prosecute heresy cases in church courts; the narrator treats zeal for doctrinal purity as itself the real vice.

25. sons of Belial — a biblical expression (e.g. Deut. 13:13, 1 Sam. 2:12) meaning "worthless or wicked men." The narrator applies it ironically to the orthodox who prosecute heretics.

26. Cerinthus — a 1st/2nd-century gnostic heretic. Irenaeus and Eusebius preserve the story of the apostle John fleeing the bathhouse rather than share it with Cerinthus. The narrator's ally Dr Middleton argued the story was a later fabrication.

should fall, and crush him, when in company with such an enemy of the truth. If the story be true, the apostle's conduct was ridiculous and wild: but Dr Middleton[27] has shown that the story is not true; and indeed the known benevolence and charity of John's writings make it highly improbable. However, not to enter into that controversy, whether it be true or not, the conduct of all moderate men is directly opposite.

As to the justice of this maxim, many solid reasons may be given for it. — Compassion itself, which is one of the finest and most benevolent feelings of the human heart, moves them to the relief of their distressed brother. — Another very plain reason may be given for it: Moderate men are, by their very name and constitution, the reverse, in all respects, of bigotted[28] zealots. Now, it is well known, that many of this last sort, both clergy and common people, when they hear of a man suspected of heresy, conceive an aversion at him, even before they

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know any thing of the case; nor, after he is acquitted, (as they are all of them commonly in our church-courts), can they ever come to entertain a favourable opinion of him. The reverse of this then is, to be as early and as vigorous in his defence, as they are in his prosecution, and as implicit in our belief of his orthodoxy, as they are in their belief of his error.

I remember, when I was discoursing once to this purpose, a certain raw unexperienced person said, he had always thought, that not moderation, but lukewarmness and indifference to truth, was the reverse of excessive zeal; and that moderation was situated in the middle betwixt the two. To whom I answerd, Young man, you do

27. **Dr Middleton** — Conyers Middleton (1683–1750), Cambridge divine whose *Free Inquiry* (1749) attacked the credibility of early-church miracle stories. A favourite source of the Moderates; deplored by the orthodox.

28. **bigotted** — archaic spelling of *bigoted*.

not reflect, that no fierce man can be resisted but by one as fierce, nor overcome but by one fiercer than himself; if, therefore, no body would oppose the zealots, but such calm midsmen as you mention, in every such instance the balance of power must lean to their side, and the poor heretic must fall a sacrifice, to the no small detriment of the cause of moderation; which, by the by, is commonly supported by the heretics in their stations, and therefore they deserve a grateful return.

This brings to my mind another reason for the maxim, *viz.* That heretics being so nearly related to the moderate men, have a right to claim their protection out of friendship and personal regard. This serves a very noble end; for it vindicates the Christian religion from the objection of some infidels, who affirm, that it does not recommend private friendship: now, moderate men having all a very great regard to private friendship, and personal connections, do, by their practice, which is the most solid way, confute this slander.

I may add to these another argument for the great character of heretics, as asserted in the maxim, which I picked up from the preaching of a Seceding minister[29]. He told his hearers, that when the devil looks out for an instrument to propagate error, he never makes choice of a weak filly man, but one able and learned; as well knowing, I suppose, that though God can support his cause by any instrument whatever, yet he needs always the best and most sufficient he can get. Now, though I hope no man

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will reckon me of this fanatic's principles, so far as to think the devil the force of error; yet the citation serves my purpose, as it shews that he himself was convinced of the ability and learning of heretics;

29. **Seceding minister** — a minister of the *Associate Presbytery* (the Secession), a body that had withdrawn from the Church of Scotland in 1733 under Ebenezer Erskine, largely in protest against patronage and Moderate ascendancy. The narrator can barely mention them without sneering.

and all the world knows, that the testimony of an enemy is the strongest of all evidences upon a man's side.

I shall conclude this maxim with observing, that such tenderness for heretics, however due from some, is yet, in many of the moderate character, an instance of the most heroic and generous friendship. It is quite disinterested, as they themselves run not the smallest hazard of ever being in the like circumstances. Heretics are commonly an honest sort of people, but, with all their book-learning, of no great stock of prudence or policy. They publish and assert whatever they believe upon all points, without considering the reception it is like to meet with, from those of opposite principles. They affront the public to its face, which Lord Shaftsbury[30] tells us ought not to be done. On the other hand, men thorough-paced[31] in moderation, discover their principles only at such times, and to such persons, as are able to bear them. By this means they preserve themselves from heresy: and indeed they cannot possibly fall into it, unless by mistake; in which case, as soon as they are challenged, (if it is like to be attended with any temporal inconveniency), they deny it, explain it away, or repent, and ask pardon.

In all this they follow the noble example of Mr ——, who, in the Assembly-debates upon Professor Simson[32]'s affair, happening to say something that was challenged by one present as heresy, immediately replied, *Moderator, If that be heresy, I renounce it.*

30. **Lord Shaftsbury** — Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), author of *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711). His polite, rationalist moralism was a chief intellectual resource of the Moderate party.

31. **thorough-paced** — fully trained, perfectly disciplined; literally of a horse trained to all paces.

32. **Professor Simson** — John Simson (c. 1667–1740), Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, tried twice by the General Assembly for heterodox teaching on the Trinity and the person of Christ (1714–17, 1726–29). A defining episode in the Moderate-vs-orthodox struggle.

MAXIM II.

When any man is charged with loose practices, or tendencies to immorality, he is to be screened and protected, as much as possible; especially if the faults laid to his charge be, as they are incomparably well termed in a sermon, preached by a hopeful youth, that made some noise lately, good-humoured vices[34].

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The reason upon which this maxim is founded, may be taken from the reasons of the former, *mutatis mutandis*[35]; there being scarcely any of them that does not hold equally in both cases. A libertine[36] is a kind of practical heretic, and is to be treated as such. Dr Tillotson[37] observes, in one of his sermons, that the worst of all heresies is a bad life: now, if instead of *worst*, which is an uncomely expression, you would read *greatest*, in that passage, then a libertine is the greatest of all heretics, and to be honoured in proportion. Even the apostle Paul (who is very seldom of any use to us in our reasonings) seems to suppose, that they are men of most knowledge, who are most free and bold in their practice; and that they are only

34. ***good-humoured vices*** — the satirical coinage at the heart of Maxim II: vices dressed up as cheerful sociability — wit, conviviality, free manners, mild indulgence — which the Moderate narrator treats as positive virtues rather than sins.

35. ***mutatis mutandis*** — Latin, "with the necessary changes having been made"; i.e., the same reasoning applies once adjusted for the different subject matter.

36. **Libertine** — a morally lax, dissolute, or freethinking person; in 18th-century usage often fused sexual loose-living with religious scepticism.

37. **Dr Tillotson** — John Tillotson (1630–1694), Archbishop of Canterbury, whose plain, rationalist sermons the Moderates admired and the orthodox thought doctrinally thin.

weak brethren who are filled with scruples. The weak man is restrained and confined by his narrow conscience; but the strong man believeth that he may EAT, and, by parity of reason, DRINK all things.

In order to understand the nature of *good-humoured vices*, the reader may please to take notice, that it is an observation of Lord Shaftsbury, that "the best time for thinking upon religious subjects, is when a man is merry, and in good humour:" and so far is this observation drawn from nature, that it is the time commonly chosen for that purpose, by many who never heard of his Lordship, or his writings. Whatever, therefore, serves to promote merriment, and heighten good humour, must, in so far, serve for the discovery of religious truth. But as there are many ways of making a person merry, which narrow-minded people will call *vice*; from thence, in compliance with common language, arises the new compound *good-humoured vices*. It is not, however, so to be understood, as if either the inventor of it, or those who love and patronize him, mean any thing by it but what is, *in their apprehension*, both innocent and laudable.

Let it also be observed, that as gravity is almost a necessary consequence of solitude, *good-humoured vices* are certainly *social pleasures*, and such as flow from, and show benevolence; and this is an affection for which our whole fraternity have the highest regard, insomuch that no surer mark can be taken of a man's being ONE OF US, than

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the frequent returns of this expression in his discourses or writings.

It will serve further for the support of this maxim, that according to modern discoveries, there is a great analogy between the *moral virtues*, or, if you will, the *science of morals*, and the *fine arts*; and it is on account of this analogy, that most of the present reigning expressions

upon the subject of morals, are borrowed from the arts, as *beauty, order, proportion, harmony, decency, &c.* It is also established long since, and well known as a principle in the fine arts, that a certain freedom and boldness of manner is what chiefly constitutes grace and beauty. Why then should not approbation be founded upon the same grounds in both cases? Why should not a bold practice be as beautiful in real, as a bold hand is in imitated life? especially as all great geniuses have actually laid claim to this as their peculiar privilege, not to be confined to common forms; and that in opposition to the bulk of mankind, who, through want of taste, are not able to relish the finest performances in any of the kinds.

I must not, however, omit taking notice, to prevent mistakes, of one exception that must be made from this maxim; that is, that when the person to whose charge any faults are laid, is reputed orthodox in his principles, in the common acceptation of that word, or comes in by orthodox influence, in that case they are all to be taken for granted as true, and the evil of them set forth in the liveliest colours. In consequence of this, he is to be prosecuted and torn to pieces on account of these crimes. But if it so happen, that he cannot be convicted upon a trial, then it is best to make use of things as they really are; that is, to express suspicions, to give ingenious and dubious hints, and, if possible, ruin him without any trial at all. There was a noble example of this given a few years ago, in the case of a settlement in the bounds of a presbytery[38], very many of whom are eminent in moderation. In that case, there were several faults laid to the charge of the candidate; and yet, though he himself very much insisted upon an inquiry into their truth, and a judgment upon their

38. **Settlement** — the formal induction of a minister into a parish, equivalent to an installation. Under the patronage system restored in 1712, the heritor (lay patron) could present a minister whether the congregation wanted him or not; the Moderates generally supported patronage, the Popular party opposed it. Due to this controversy, the Evangelical Party left the Church of Scotland in the Disruption of 1843 and formed the Free Church of Scotland.

relevancy[39], the presbytery wisely refused to do either the one or the other, but left them

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to have their own natural weight in fame, rumour, and conversation.

The necessity of this exception is very evident: for, in the supposed case, all the reasons for protection to the young man fail; to satisfy himself of which, let the reader view these reasons, as they are annexed to the first maxim, and save my book from the deformity of repetition.

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39. **Relevancy** — a Scots legal term: the judgment whether charges, *if proved*, would in law warrant the censure sought. To refuse to pronounce on relevancy was to leave an accusation neither proven nor cleared — a classic tactic for smearing without the risks of a trial.

MAXIM III.

It is a necessary part of the character of a moderate man, never to speak of the Confession of Faith[41] *but with a sneer; to give sly hints, that he does not thoroughly believe it; and to make the word orthodoxy a term of contempt and reproach.*

The Confession of Faith, which we are now all laid under a disagreeable necessity to subscribe, was framed in times of hot religious zeal; and therefore it can hardly be supposed to contain any thing agreeable to our sentiments, in these cool and refreshing days of moderation. So true is this, that I do not remember to have heard any moderate man speak well of it, or recommend it, in a sermon, or private discourse, in my time. And, indeed, nothing can be more ridiculous, than to make a fixed standard for opinions, which change just as the fashion of cloaths[42] and dress. No complete system can be settled for all ages, except the maxims I am now compiling and illustrating; and their great perfection lies in their being ambulatory[43], so that they may be applied differently, with the change of times.

Upon this head some may be ready to object, That if the Confession of Faith be built upon the sacred scriptures, then, change what will, it cannot, as the foundation upon which it rests remains always firm and the same. In answer to this, I beg leave to make a

41. **Confession of Faith** — the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), the doctrinal standard to which Church of Scotland ministers were required to subscribe at ordination. The narrator treats this subscription as an embarrassing formality.

42. **cloaths** — archaic spelling of *clothes*.

43. **ambulatory** — moveable, capable of being shifted; the narrator means his maxims are flexible.

very new, and therefore striking comparison: When a lady looks at a mirror, she sees herself in a certain attitude and dress, but in her native beauty and colour; should her eye, on a sudden, be tinctured with the jaundice, she sees herself all yellow and spotted; yet the mirror remains the same faithful mirror still, and the alteration arises, not from it, but from the object that looks at it. I beg leave to make another comparison: When an old philosopher looked at the evening-star, he beheld nothing but a little twinkling orb, round and regular like the rest; but when a modern views it with a telescope, he talks of phases, and horns, and mountains, and what not? now, this arises not from any alteration in the star, but from his superior assistance in looking at it. The application of both these similitudes I leave to the reader.

But besides these general reasons, there is one very strong particular reason why moderate men cannot love the Confession of Faith: Moderation evidently implies a large share of charity, and consequently a good and favourable opinion of those that differ from our church; but a rigid adherence to the Confession of Faith, and high esteem of it, nearly borders upon, or gives great suspicion of harsh opinions of those that differ from us: and does not experience rise up and ratify this observation? Who are the narrow-minded, bigotted, uncharitable persons among us? who are the severe censurers of those that differ in judgment? who are the damners[44] of the adorable Heathens, Socrates, Plato[45], Marcus Ant-

44. **damners** — those who consign others to damnation in their judgment; the narrator's sneer at the orthodox who deny salvation to the virtuous pagan philosophers.

45. **Socrates, Plato** — held up by the Moderates (especially via Shaftesbury and Hutcheson) as examples of virtuous pagans; the narrator ranks them implicitly above the apostles.

oninus[46], &c.? in fine[47], who are persecutors of the inimitable heretics among ourselves? Who but the admirers of this antiquated composition, who pin their faith to other mens sleeves, and will not endure one jot less or different belief from what their fathers had before them! It is therefore plain, that the moderate man, who desires to inclose all intelligent beings in one benevolent embrace, must have an utter abhorrence at that vile hedge of distinction, the Confession of Faith.

I shall briefly mention a trifling objection to this part of our character, That by our subscription we sacrifice *sincerity*, the queen of virtues, to private gain and advantage. To which I answer, in the first place, That the objection proves too much; and therefore must be false, and can prove nothing: for, allowing the justice of the objection, it would follow, that a vast number, perhaps a majority, of the clergy of the church of England are villains; their printed sermons being, many of them, diametrically opposite

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to the articles which they subscribe. Now, as this supposition can never be admitted by any charitable man, the objection from whence it flows, as a necessary consequence, must fall to the ground.

But further, what is there more insincere in our subscriptions, than in those expressions of compliment and civility, which all acknowledge lawful, although they rarely express the meaning of the heart! The design is sufficiently understood in both cases; and our subscriptions have this advantage above forms of compliment, in point of honesty, that we are at a great deal of pains usually to persuade the world that we do not believe what we sign; whereas the

46. **Marcus Antoninus** — Marcus Aurelius (121–180), the Stoic Roman emperor whose *Meditations* the Moderates admired as a pattern of natural virtue without revelation.

47. ***in fine*** — Latin/legal idiom: "in short," "in conclusion."

complaisant[48] gentleman is very seldom at any pains about the matter.

What is said might suffice in so clear a case; but I am here able to give a proof of the improvement of the age, by communicating to the reader a new way of subscribing the Confession of Faith, in a perfect consistency with sincerity, if that be thought of any consequence: it is taken from the method of attesting some of our gentlemen elders to the General Assembly. Many insist, that they ought to be attested, and do attest them, as qualified in all respects, if the attestors are wholly ignorant about the matter; because, in that case, there is no evidence to the contrary, and the presumption ought to lie on the favourable side. Now, as every new discovery should be applied to all the purposes for which it may be useful, let this method be adopted by the intrants into the ministry[49], and applied to their subscription of the Confession of Faith. Nothing is more easy than for them to keep themselves wholly ignorant of what it contains; and then they may, with a good conscience, subscribe it as true, because it ought to be so.

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48. **complaisant** — obliging, eager to please (from French); not the same as *complacent*.

49. **Intrants** — candidates entering the ministry, i.e. those about to be licensed or ordained.

MAXIM IV.

A good preacher must not only have all the above and subsequent principles of moderation in him, as the source of every thing that is good; but must, over and above, have the following special marks and signs of a talent for preaching.

1. His subjects must be confined to social duties.

2. He must recommend them only from rational considerations, viz. the beauty and comely proportions of virtue, and its advantages in the present life, without any regard to a future state of more extended self-interest.

3. His authorities must be drawn from Heathen writers, NONE, or as few as possible, from scripture.

4. He must be very unacceptable to the common people.

THESE four marks of a good preacher, or rules for preaching well, (for they serve equally for both purposes), I shall endeavour distinctly to illustrate and confirm, that this important branch of my subject may be fully understood.

As to the *first* of these rules, That a preacher's subjects must be confined to *social duties*, it is quite necessary in a moderate man, because his moderation teaches him to avoid all the high flights of evangelic enthusiasm[50], and the mysteries of grace, which the common people are so fond of. It may be observed, nay, it is observed, that all of our stamp avoid the word *grace* as much as possible, and have agreed to substitute the *moral virtues* in the room of

50. **evangelic enthusiasm** — in 18th-century usage "enthusiasm" was a negative word meaning religious fervour or pretended inspiration; "evangelic enthusiasm" was the Moderates' dismissive label for Reformed gospel preaching on grace, conversion, and the Spirit's work.

the *graces of the Spirit*, which is the orthodox expression. And indeed it is not in this only, but in all other cases, that we endeavour to improve the phraseology, and show, that besides sentiment, even in language itself, we are far superior to, and wiser than our fathers before us. I could show this by a great many examples, but that it would be too tedious; and therefore only add, to the one mentioned above, that where an ancient orthodox man, or even an old-fashioned modern, that thinks religion can never be mended, either in matter or manner, would have said, *a great degree of sanctification*, a man of moderation and politeness will say, *a high pitch of virtue*[51]. Now, as this is the case, it is plain a moderate preacher must confine his subjects to social duties chiefly, and not insist on such passages of scripture as will, by the very repetition of them, contaminate his style, and may perhaps diffuse a rank smell of orthodoxy through the whole of his discourse.

After all, I cannot refuse, that it is still a more

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excellent way, for those who have talents equal to the undertaking, to seize an orthodox text, explain it quite away from its ordinary sense, and constrain it to speak the main parts of our own scheme. Thus a noble champion of ours chose once for his subject, Rom. viii. 2. *For the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death:* which he explained in this manner; *the law of the spirit of life,* that is, the moral sense[52]—; *in Christ Jesus*—, which is the sum of the Christian religion, &c. The advantage of this way is, that it is tearing the weapons out of the

51. a high pitch of virtue — Witherspoon's satirical substitute for "a great degree of sanctification": the Moderates preferred aesthetic-Stoic vocabulary (pitch, taste, proportion) to Reformed doctrinal vocabulary (grace, sanctification, the Spirit).

52. moral sense — the inward faculty of approving virtue and disapproving vice, posited by Shaftesbury and elaborated by Hutcheson; a key Moderate idea, which the narrator substitutes for the biblical categories of conscience and the Spirit's work.

hands of the orthodox, and turning them against themselves. And it may perhaps, in time, have the effect to make our hearers affix our sense to their beloved scriptures; or at least, which is the next thing, prevent them from being able to find any other.—However, I must acknowledge, that this way of doing is not for every man's management; and therefore I continue my advice to the generality, still to adhere to the rule as first delivered.

The *second* rule will be easily confirmed, That duties are to be recommended only from *rational considerations*. What can be imagined more foolish than to contradict this? If there be any thing in a sermon different from rational considerations, it must be irrational, that is to say, absurd. It is in this part of our scheme that we moderate men obtain a glorious triumph over our adversaries and despisers. Who but must smile, when they hear the contemptible, vulgar, ignorant, hot-headed country-elders, or silly women, led captive by them at their will, saying, they do not love this rational way of going to heaven!

But to explain this method a little further, the rational way of preaching is sometimes set in opposition to the pathetic way of raising the passions. This last is what we greatly disapprove of: there is something immoderate in the very idea of raising the passions; and therefore it is contrary to our character: nor was it ever known, that a truly moderate man raised or moved any affection in his hearers, unless perhaps the affection of anger against himself. We leave that to your vehement bawlers[53], or your whining lamenters[54], that are continually telling,

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they will spend and be spent for the salvation of their hearers, which Lord Shaftsbury elegantly derides, by calling it the *heroic pas-*

53. **bawlers** — noisy preachers, those who shout in the pulpit. The narrator's sneer at evangelical zeal.

sion of saving souls. And let any unprejudiced person judge, whether there is not something vastly great, something like a heroic fortitude in that man, that can talk of future judgment, heaven and hell, with as much coolness and indifference as if it were a common matter. To say the truth, indeed, we do not often meddle with these alarming themes. However, as I observed upon the first mark of a good preacher, that it is glorious to rob the orthodox of a text, and make it bend to our plan; so it is also an uncommon excellence, to treat these subjects with calmness, and to prove that we ought to do so. Thus a great proficient in our way, lately preaching upon Acts xxiv. 25. where Paul made Felix to tremble[55] by his discourse, proved from it, that ministers ought not to raise the passions of their hearers. An ignorant observer would have thought that the passion of terror was raised in Felix, to a great degree, and that he was little better than a Cambuslang convict[56]. But mark the lucky expression our hero got hold of: *As he reasoned of righteousness*, &c.; *as he reasoned*, that is, *argued, and proved by rational considerations*.

This example gives me a fine opportunity of making a kind of contrast, and shewing, from fact, the difference between an orthodox and a moderate preacher. I myself heard one of the first kind, upon the text just now mentioned; and his first observation

54. **whining lamenters** — the narrator's contemptuous label for evangelical preachers who appeal to the affections; cf. Whitefield's impassioned style.

55. **Paul made Felix to tremble** — Acts 24:25. Paul, on trial before the Roman procurator Felix, "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and Felix "trembled." The Moderate preacher in the anecdote turns this story of convicting preaching into a proof that ministers should *not* stir the passions of their hearers.

56. **Cambuslang convict** — a reference to the Cambuslang Wark of 1742, a revival of powerful evangelical preaching (including by Whitefield) near Glasgow, marked by visible distress and conversion. "Cambuslang convict" is the narrator's sneer at anyone visibly stricken under preaching — the very thing the Moderates wished to avoid.

was, That the apostle Paul was a faithful reprover; speaking home to Felix, 1. Of *righteousness*; to convince him of any iniquity he had been guilty of in his government. 2. Of *temperance*; which he said should be translated *continence*, and was probably intended as a reproof to him and Drusilla[57], who were living in adultery. His next, and main observation, was, That Felix was *convicted*, but *stifled* his convictions, and delayed his repentance, saying, *Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee*. Then followed a great deal of stuff, which I do not incline to transcribe; but it was just what the vulgar call experimental preaching[58], I suppose to distinguish it from rational.

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But how contrary to this did our moderate friend? He first observed, that St Paul was a *moral*, or a *legal preacher*; discoursing of *righteousness* and *temperance*, without a word of *faith*: and then, that he was a *reasoning preacher*, that did not strive to raise peoples passions, but informed their judgment. I was indeed a little disappointed upon consulting the original, to find that the word used, which is διαγγέλλω[59] signifies only, *continuing his discourse*, and so might be either in the *reasoning* or *pathetic* way; but I was satisfied by reflecting, that the word evidently includes both; and so reasoning being the best, it is to be supposed the apostle preferred it.

Agreeably to this rule, Lord Shaftsbury, and after him a bright luminary in our own church, gives an advice to all moderate

57. **Drusilla** — the wife of Felix, a Jewess whom he had taken from her previous husband (Acts 24:24); hence the orthodox preacher's reading that Paul's sermon on temperance / continence was pointed at their adultery.

58. **experimental preaching** — a standard Puritan/evangelical term meaning preaching directed to the *experience* of the hearer — conviction of sin, assurance of grace, the inward work of the Spirit. The Moderate narrator uses it dismissively as a synonym for emotional enthusiasm.

clergymen, not to affect that idle title of *ambassadors* or *plenipotentiaries*[60] *from heaven*, to fondly claimed by zealots: and I take the liberty to suppose, that the reason of the advice was the same in both, *viz. That under this character zealots put on an air of authority, and deliver their message with a pathos, to which they would otherwise have been strangers*. His Lordship, indeed, explodes the conceit sufficiently; he asks, *Gentlemen, where is your commission? how has it been conveyed? where are the letters-patent? where the credentials?* with many more questions, easier for his Lordship to ask, than for some persons to answer.

The *third* rule, *viz.* recommending *virtue* from the authority and examples of the *Heathens*, is not only highly proper, because they were very virtuous, but hath this manifest advantage attending it, that it is a proper way of reasoning to two quite opposite kinds of persons. One is, such as are real Christians, who will be ashamed by the superior excellence of mere Heathens, as they call them, and whom they so much despise. The other is, our present living Heathens, who pay no regard to the Christian religion at all; and therefore will only be moved by the authority of the persons they esteem. It is well known, there are multitudes in our island, who reckon Socrates and Plato to have been much greater men than any of the apostles, although (as the moderate preacher I mentioned lately told his hearers) the apostle Paul

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59. διαγγέλλω (*diangellō*) — Greek, "to proclaim, declare thoroughly." The narrator's learned argument here is a sophistry: he takes a neutral Greek verb and pretends it supports cool "rational" preaching as opposed to Paul's actual pathos.

60. **plenipotentiaries** — fully-empowered ambassadors. Evangelical preachers spoke of themselves as Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20); Shaftesbury derided the claim.

had an university-education, and was instructed in logic by Professor Gamaliel[61]. Therefore let religion be constantly and uniformly called *virtue*, and let the *Heathen philosophers* be set up as the great patterns and promoters of it. Upon this head, I must particularly recommend M. Antoninus by name, because an eminent person, of the moderate character, says, his Meditations is the BEST book that ever was written for forming the heart.

But perhaps the last part of this third rule will be thought to need most illustration and defence, *viz.* That NONE at all, or very little use is to be made of *scripture*. And really, to deal plainly, the great reason of this is, that very few of the scripture motives and arguments are of the moderate stamp; the most part of them are drawn from orthodox principles: for example, the apostle Paul cannot even say, *Husbands, love your wives*, but his argument and example comes in these words, *as Christ also loved the church*. The apostle John also speaks in a very mysterious way, of union with Christ, and abiding in him, in order to bringing forth fruit, which is his way of speaking for a virtuous life. Now, let any indifferent person judge, how this kind of expression, and others of the like nature, such as mortifying the deeds of the body through the Spirit, would agree with the other parts of our discourses: they would be like opposite kinds of fluids which will not compound; they would be quite heterogeneous, which is against all the rules of fine writing, and hinders it from being an uniform, beautiful, and comely Whole. Horace, in his Art of Poetry, gives this as his very first observation,

Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam Jungere si velit—[62]

61. Gamaliel — Pharisee, member of the Sanhedrin, and Paul's teacher (Acts 22:3); the narrator's mock-academic title "Professor" is part of the joke about reducing the apostles to university men.

62. *Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam Jungere si velit* — Horace, *Ars Poetica* lines 1–2: "If a painter should choose to join a horse's neck to a human head..." Horace's opening example of grotesque artistic inconsistency. The narrator applies it to mixing Reformed doctrine with polite moralism.

Which my learned reader cannot fail both to remember and understand, and which I desire him to apply to this subject we are now upon. If it be said, that sermons are not poems, and therefore not to be composed by the rules of poetry: I answer, it is a mistake; many of our sermons, especially those composed by the younger sort among us, are poems; at least they are full of poetical

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flights, which comes much to the same thing: not to mention that the rule agrees equally to prose and poetry. How often have I heard parts of Mr Addison[63]'s Cato, Young's Night-Thoughts[64], and divers other poems, in sermons? and, to say the truth, they were none of the worst parts of them. However, I would offer my advice, as that of a person of some experience, to all young preachers, not to do Dr Young the honour of borrowing any thing from him again, because he is a snarling, sullen, gloomy, melancholy mortal, cites a great deal of scripture; and particularly, because he has given a vile sneer at the practice I am just now recommending, in the following two lines of his Universal Passion.

When doctors scripture for the classics quit,
Polite apostates from God's grace to wit.

I have only another advice to give upon this head, and that is, That when our young preachers think proper to borrow from modern printed poems, they would be pleased to transprose[65] them a little, so to speak, that they may not be too easily discerned by

63. **Mr Addison** — Joseph Addison (1672–1719), English essayist and poet, co-founder of *The Spectator*; his tragedy *Cato* (1713) was much quoted in 18th-century preaching.

64. ***Night-Thoughts*** — Edward Young (1683–1765), Anglican clergyman and poet; *The Complaint, or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1742–45) was a long meditative poem widely admired and frequently mined by preachers.

65. **transprose** — to adapt or re-work; literally to turn verse into prose while keeping its substance.

young gentlemen who read the Magazines. However, I am in great hopes we shall shortly be quite above the necessity of borrowing from any body, in order to make our sermons poetry: there are some persons of genius among us, that can make very good poetry of their own; of which I could produce some recent instances; but I do not think it at present expedient.

The *fourth* and last rule for a preacher, is, That he must be *very unacceptable to the people*. The Spectator, I remember, somewhere says, that most of the critics in Great Britain seem to act as if the first rule of dramatic writing[66] were, *not to please*. Now, what they make the first rule of writing plays, I make the last rule for composing sermons; not as being the *least*, but the *most* important. It is indeed the grand criterion, the most indispensable rule of all. Though one should pretend to adhere to all the former rules, and be wanting in this alone, he would be no more than *a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*[67]; pardon the expression, the importance of the matter requireth it. I shall put a case: Suppose

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a man should have the approbation of the very best judges, *viz.* those whose taste we ourselves allow to be good, if at the same time he happens to be acceptable to the common people, it is a sign that he must have some subtile refined fault, which has escaped the observation of the good judges aforesaid; for there is no man, even of our own fraternity, so perfect and uniform in judging right, as the common people are in judging wrong.

I hope there is little need of assigning reasons for this great characteristic of the art of preaching; I suppose it will be allowed to be, if not altogether, at least next to self-evident: all the several

66. **dramatic writing** — the art of writing drama; the narrator steals a rule of dramatic composition from *The Spectator* and applies it to sermons.

67. ***a founding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*** — 1 Corinthians 13:1. The narrator quotes Paul to insist on the indispensable rule that a preacher must be *unpopular*.

reasons that have been given for the particular maxims of moderation, concur in establishing this; for the people are all declared enemies of moderation, in its principles and practice; and therefore, if moderation be right, they must be wrong. There is a known story of a Heathen orator, who, when the common people gave a shout of applause, during his pronouncing an oration, immediately turned about to a friend, and asked him, what mistake he had committed. Now, if an audience of vulgar Heathens was allowed to be so infallibly wrong in their judgment, the same thing must hold, *a fortiori*[68], in an audience of vulgar Christians.

From this it evidently follows, that a popular preacher essentially signifies a bad preacher; and it is always so understood by us, whenever we use the expression. If we but hear it reported of any one, that he is very popular among the lower sort, we are under no difficulty of giving his character, without having heard him preach ourselves. In this case, fame is a certain guide to truth, by being inverted; for we detest and despise him, precisely in the same proportion that the people admire him. On the other hand, the truly moderate man is not only above the applause of the multitude, but he glories in their hatred, and rejoices in himself, in proportion as he has been so happy as to provoke and disoblige them. Of this I could give several notable examples, were it not that it must certainly offend their modesty, not only to praise

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them in print, but even to publish their highest virtues.

But now, upon the whole, as a great critic observes, that there is sometimes more beauty shown in a composition, by receding from the rules of art, when an important point is to be gained, than by strictly adhering to them; so, all these rules notwithstanding, it shall

68. ***a fortiori*** — Latin, "from the stronger"; a logical term meaning "with even greater reason."

be allowable for any moderate man, upon an extraordinary emergency, to break them for a good end: as for instance, he may speak even in Whitefield[69]'s style, when his settlement has the misfortune to depend upon the people; which I have known done with good success. We are also well satisfied, that Mr T——r of Norwich[70], and such like first-rate writers, should make pompous collections of scripture-texts, as their truly laudable intention is, by altering Christianity, to reconcile it to moderation and common sense; and to find out a meaning to words, which the writers of them, as living in the infancy of the church, had not discernment enough to intend.

To conclude this maxim, it would be too formal for me, and too tedious to the reader, to enumerate all the objections that are, by some, raised against our way of preaching: I shall therefore mention but one, and show it is false; hoping that the reader will suppose, there is no more foundation for any of the rest. It is alledged, there is no method in our discourses, but that they consist in random flights, and general declamations. Nothing more untrue. The polite reader, or hearer, knows, that there may be an excellent and regular method, where there are no formal distinctions of *firstly*, *secondly*, and *thirdly*: but, to cut off all occasion of cavil, let the world hereby know, that one of our most famed preachers chose once for his text, John xi. 39[71]. and of that verse the following words, *He stinketh*. He

69. **Whitefield** — George Whitefield (1714–1770), the English evangelist whose open-air preaching and impassioned style the Moderates despised but occasionally imitated when it suited them.

70. **Mr T——r of Norwich** — John Taylor (1694–1761), Presbyterian minister at Norwich, author of *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin* (1740); a leading Arian/rationalist whose re-readings of Scripture the Moderates valued.

71. **John xi. 39** — the raising of Lazarus. "*He stinketh*" (KJV) is Martha's remark about the four-day-dead Lazarus. The narrator offers this as a model of three-point expository method — turning a real resurrection narrative into a satirical outline on "the threefold state of a bad man."

observed, we had there (or thereabouts) a description of the threefold state of a bad man: first, he *sickened*; secondly, he *died*; thirdly, he *stank*. This I take to have been an accuracy in point of method, to which it will not be easy to find a parallel.

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MAXIM V.

A minister must endeavour to acquire as great a degree of politeness in his carriage and behaviour, and to catch as much of the air and manner of a fine gentleman, as possibly he can.

THIS is usually a distinguishing mark between the moderate and the orthodox; and how much we have the advantage in it is extremely obvious. Good manners is undoubtedly the most excellent of all accomplishments, and, in some measure, supplies the place of them all when they are wanting. And surely nothing can be more necessary to, or more ornamental and becoming in a minister: it gains him easy access into the world, and frees him from that rigid severity which renders many of them so odious and detestable to the polite part of it. In former times, ministers were so monkish and recluse, for ordinary, and so formal when they did happen to appear, that all the jovial part of mankind, particularly rakes and libertines[72], shunned and fled from them; or, when unavoidably thrown into their company, were constrained, and had no kind of confidence to repose in them: whereas now, let a moderate, modern, well-bred minister go into promiscuous company, they stand in no manner of awe; and will even swear with all imaginable liberty. This gives the minister an opportunity of understanding their character, and of perhaps sometimes reasoning in an easy and genteel manner against swearing. This, though indeed it seldom reforms them, yet it is as seldom taken amiss; which shews the counsel to have been administered with prudence.

72. rakes and libertines — fashionable dissolute men about town, much satirised in 18th-century literature; the Moderate narrator wants ministers to be able to move freely in their company.

How is it possible that a minister can understand wickedness, unless he either practises it himself, (but much of that will not yet pass in the world), or allows the wicked to be bold in his presence? To do otherwise, would be to do in practice what I have known narrow-minded bigotted students do as to speculation, *viz.* avoid reading their adversaries books because they were erroneous; whereas it is evident no error can be refuted till it be understood.

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The setting the different characters of ministers in immediate opposition, will put this matter past all doubt, as the sun of truth rising upon the stars of error, darkens and makes them to disappear. Some there are, who may be easily known to be ministers, by their very dress, their grave demure looks, and their confined precise conversation. How contemptible is this! and how like to some of the meanest employments among us; as sailors, who are known by their rolling walk, and taylors, by the shivering shrug of their shoulders! But our truly accomplished clergy put off so entirely every thing that is peculiar to their profession, that were you to see them in the streets, meet with them at a visit, or spend an evening with them in a tavern, you would not once suspect them for men of that character. Agreeably to this, I remember an excellent thing said by a gentleman, in commendation of a minister, *that he had nothing at all of the clergyman about him.*

I shall have done with this maxim, when I have given my advice as to the method of attaining to it; which is, That students, probationers, and young clergymen, while their bodies and minds are yet flexible, should converse, and keep company, as much as may be, with officers of the army under five and twenty, of whom there are no small number in the nation, and with young gentlemen of fortune, particularly such as, by the early and happy death of their parents, have come to their estates before they arrived at the years of majority. Scarce one of these but is a noble pattern to form upon; for

they have had the opportunity of following nature, which is the all-comprehensive rule of the ancients, and of acquiring a free manner of thinking, speaking, and acting, without either the pedantry of learning, or the stiffness contracted by a strict adherence to the maxims of worldly prudence.

After all, I believe I might have spared myself the trouble of inserting this maxim, the present rising generation being, of themselves, sufficiently disposed to observe it. This I reckon they have, either constitutionally, or perhaps have learned it from the inimitable Lord Shaftsbury, who, in so lively a manner, sets forth the evil of universities, and recommends conversation with

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the polite Peripatetics[73], as the only way of arriving at true knowledge.

73. **polite Peripatetics** — a mocking phrase. Aristotle's followers were called Peripatetics because they walked while teaching; Shaftesbury advocated polite conversation as an alternative to university learning, so "polite Peripatetics" means elegant gentlemen-philosophers conducting education by drawing-room chat.

MAXIM VI.

It is not only unnecessary for a moderate man to have much learning, but he ought to be filled with a contempt of all kinds of learning but one; which is, to understand Leibnitz[76]'s scheme well; the chief parts of which are so beautifully painted, and so harmoniously sung by Lord Shaftsbury, and which has been so well licked into form and method by the late immortal Mr H——n[77].

This maxim is necessary, because without it the former could not be attained to. Much study is a great enemy to politeness in men, just as a great care of household-affairs spoils the free careless air of a fine lady: and whether politeness is to be sacrificed to learning, let the impartial world judge. Besides, the scheme which I have permitted the moderate man to study, doth actually supersede the use of all other learning, because it contains the knowledge of the *whole*, and the good of the *whole*; more than which, I hope, will be allowed to be not only needless, but impossible.

This scheme excels in brevity; for it may be understood in a very short time; which, I suppose, prompted a certain clergyman to say, that any student might get as much divinity as he would ever have occasion for in six weeks. It is also quite agreeable to the improvements that have been made in arts and sciences of late years;

76. **Leibnitz** — Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), whose *Theodicy* (1710) argued that this is the best of all possible worlds. His optimistic cosmic-harmony scheme underpinned the Moderate "good of the whole" ethics.

77. **Mr H——n** — Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow. His benevolence-centred ethics and doctrine of a "moral sense" were the leading influence on the Moderate clergy; Witherspoon regarded him as a prime corrupter of Scots divinity.

for every thing is now more compendiously taught, and more superficially understood, than formerly, and yet as well, and better to all the purposes of life. In the very mechanic arts, laborious diligence gives way to elegance and ease; as the lumpish, strong, old Gothic buildings, to more genteel, though slighter, modern ones. There have been schemes published for teaching children to read by way of diversion. Every year gives us a shorter method of learning some branch of knowledge. In short, in these last days the quintessence[78] of every thing has been extracted, and is presented us, as it were, in little phials[79];

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so that we may come to all learning by one act of intuition. Agreeably to all this, have we not seen in fact, many students of divinity brought up in hot-beds, who have become speakers in general assemblies, and strenuous supporters of a falling church, before their beards were grown, to the perfect astonishment of an observing world!

I must also observe, that there is a providential fitness of that scheme, in another respect, for the present age and time. When the fees of colleges, and expense of boarding is raised; when the rate of living is quite altered, and when a spiteful landed interest, and a heedless parliament, have refused to grant any augmentation to our stipends; there is no other way remains for us, but to cheapen our education, by taking less time to it, and arriving at the point designed by a nearer cut. Then there will be no need at all for the critical study of the scriptures, for reading large bodies of divinity, for an acquaintance with church-history, or the writings of those poor creatures the Christian fathers; but all is absorbed into the

78. **quintessence** — the pure, distilled essence of a thing; from medieval alchemy, the "fifth element" beyond earth, water, air, and fire.

79. **phial** — a small glass vessel for liquids; here a metaphor for the "essence" of learning distilled into compact form.

good of the *whole*: of which I may say, seriously and soberly, what Dr Tillotson says ironically of transubstantiation[80], that it is not only true, but it is all truth, and will not suffer any thing to be true but itself.

We find that moderate men have mostly, by constitution, too much spirit to submit to the drudgery of the kinds of learning above mentioned, and despise all who do so. There is no controversy now about Arian, Arminian, Pelagian, or Socinian[81] tenets, but only whether this good-of-the-whole scheme holds. This shews, by the by, the injustice and malignity of those poor beings the Seceders[82], who cry out of erroneous doctrines in the church, and assert, that Arminianism is publicly taught by many. It is known, that they mean by the moderate men, when they speak so; and yet I will venture to affirm, that there are not a few young men of that character, who, if they were asked, could not tell what the five Arminian articles[83] are, so little do they regard Arminianism. I myself, the reader will perceive, know the number of them; but

80. transubstantiation — the Roman Catholic doctrine that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are changed into the body and blood of Christ. Tillotson famously ridiculed it; the narrator redeploys the ridicule against the "good-of-the-whole" scheme.

81. Arian, Arminian, Pelagian, or Socinian — classic doctrinal deviations: Arianism denies the full deity of Christ; Arminianism rejects the Reformed doctrines of unconditional election and irresistible grace; Pelagianism denies original sin and asserts unaided human ability to obey God; Socinianism denies the Trinity and atonement.

82. Seceders — the *Associate Presbytery* (Secession of 1733), and by this date also the *Relief* church (1761), which had left or were leaving the Church of Scotland chiefly over patronage. The narrator says, in effect: let the common evangelicals follow them; we Moderates will keep the establishment.

83. five Arminian articles — the five points of the Remonstrance (1610) by the followers of Jacobus Arminius, which the Synod of Dort (1618–19) rejected: conditional election, unlimited atonement, total depravity (qualified), resistible grace, and the possibility of falling from grace.

whether I know any more about them or not, I shall preserve as a secret in my own mind.

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It will perhaps be objected against this maxim, That the moderate party commonly set up on a pretence of being more learned than their adversaries; and are, in fact, thought to be very learned in their sermons by the vulgar, who, for that reason, hate them. Now, as to their pretending to be more learned than their adversaries, it is most just; for they have, as has been shewn[84], got hold of the sum-total of learning, although they did not calculate it themselves. And as to their being thought learned in their sermons by the vulgar, it is sufficient for that purpose that they be unintelligible. Scattering a few phrases in their sermons, as *harmony, order, proportion, taste, sense of beauty, balance of the affections*, &c. will easily persuade the people that they are learned: and this persuasion is, to all intents and purposes, the same thing as if it were true. It is one of those deceitful feelings which Mr H—, in his Essays, has shown to be so beautiful and useful. These phrases they may easily get in books not above the size of an octavo[85]; and if they incline to be very deep, they may get abundance of citations from the ancient Heathen authors in Cudworth's Intellectual System[86], and mostly translated to their hand.

I shall now subjoin a short catalogue of the most necessary and useful books, the thorough understanding of which will make a

84. shew / shewn — archaic spelling of *show / shown*; standard in 18th-century English.

85. octavo — a book size (roughly 6 × 9 inches), formed by folding a printer's sheet three times to give eight leaves. A modest-sized book, not a scholarly folio.

86. Cudworth's Intellectual System — Ralph Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), a massive Christian Platonist work densely stocked with quotations from the ancient pagan philosophers — from which Moderate preachers could mine impressive-sounding citations at second hand.

truly learned moderate man: *Leibnitz's Theodicee*[87]*, and his Letters, Shaftesbury's Characteristics, Collins's Enquiry*[88] *into Human liberty, all Mr H——n's pieces, Christianity as Old as the Creation*[89]*, D——n's Best Scheme, and H——'s Moral Essays*[*]*.*

> ** It hath been suggested to me, that another author of our own country ought to have been added to the above catalogue; but I judged it improper, for two reasons. One is, that I do not find that author in so high esteem among the moderate, as to deserve a place in so very nice and chosen a collection. But the other, and principal reason, is, that the author here intended, professeth himself a Sceptic*[94]*; the meaning of which, if I understand it right, is, either that he does not believe there is any such thing as truth, or that he himself is but seeking after truth, and has not yet found it. Now, this is by no means the case with the moderate, who are already in possession of the ne plus ultra*[95] *of human knowledge. For though some of their doctrines are changeable, by reason of the essential difference of persons, things, and times; yet, during the period of any doctrine, I*

87. **Leibnitz's Theodicee** — see Leibnitz note above; the book that gave the word *theodicy* (the defence of God's justice in the face of evil).

88. **Collins's Enquiry** — Anthony Collins (1676–1729), deist, author of *A Philosophical Inquiry concerning Human Liberty* (1717), which argued for hard determinism against free will.

89. ***Christianity as Old as the Creation*** — Matthew Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730), nicknamed "the deist's Bible": it argued that genuine religion is identical with the law of nature, making special revelation superfluous.

94. **Sceptic** — the unnamed Scots author who "professeth himself a Sceptic" is David Hume (1711–1776), whose *Philosophical Essays* (later the *Enquiry*) were then in circulation. The narrator grudgingly excludes Hume on the pretext that he is too openly doubtful to join the dogmatic Moderates.

95. ***ne plus ultra*** — Latin, "no further"; the absolute limit, the ultimate point.

> *have no where known stronger, or severer dogmatists; as appears from their neglect of farther inquiry, and sovereign contempt of all opposers. In a certain university, about seven years ago, (how it is now, I cannot so certainly tell), if a man had spoken honourably of Dr Samuel Clarke[96], it cannot be conceived with what derision he was treated by every boy of sixteen, who was wiser than to pay any regard to such a numscull[97], an enemy to the doctrine of necessity, and wholly ignorant of the moral sense.*

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The two last are Scots authors; and it is with pleasure I can assure my countrymen, they are by far the most perfect of them all, carrying the consequences of the scheme to the most ravishing height. As to poetry, it will be sufficient to read *the Pleasures of the Imagination*[98], and the *Tragedy of Agis*[99], if it be published; because in it dramatic poetry is carried to the summit of perfection: and it is believed, by the author's friends, that there never will be a tragedy published after it, unless by some body that is delirious. But whether the knowledge of this effect, and the compassion thence arising to future authors, may not, in a person of so much humility and self-denial, and of so consummate and disinterested benevolence, as that theatrical divine, wholly prevent the publication, I cannot tell; and therefore must

96. **Dr Samuel Clarke** — Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), Newtonian divine and philosophical theologian; his *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (1705) argued for free will and against the fatalism the Moderates drew from Leibniz.

97. **numscull** — variant of *numbskull*: a stupid, witless person.

98. ***the Pleasures of the Imagination*** — Mark Akenside's philosophical poem (1744), drawing heavily on Shaftesbury and Addison's *Spectator* essays on imagination and taste.

99. ***Tragedy of Agis*** — a tragedy by John Home (1722–1808), a Moderate minister who scandalised the orthodox by writing plays (his *Douglas*, 1756, caused the so-called "Douglas affair" in the Assembly). *Agis* was eventually staged in 1758; the footnote in the original text updates the fifth edition.

leave it to be brought forth by the midwife Occasion, from the womb of Time.†

> *† Agis, a tragedy, was published in the year 1758.*

But to give a still higher proof of my deep concern for the improvement and edification of ingenuous youth, I have taken the pains to extract very faithfully the sum and substance of the above library, and do here present it to the world, under a name which is not without a meaning, though not intelligible to all, *viz.*

The Athenian Creed[100]

I believe in the beauty and comely proportions of Dame Nature, and in almighty Fate, her only parent and guardian; for it hath been most graciously obliged (blessed be its name) to make us all very good.

I believe that the universe is a huge machine, wound up from everlasting by necessity, and consisting of an infinite number of *links* and *chains*, each in a progressive motion towards the zenith of perfection, and meridian

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of glory; that I myself am a little glorious piece of clock-work, a wheel within a wheel, or rather a pendulum in this grand machine, swinging hither and thither by the different impulses of fate and destiny; that my soul (if I have any) is an imperceptible bundle of exceeding minute corpuscles, much smaller than the finest Holland sand[101]; and that certain persons, in a very eminent station, are nothing else but a huge collection of necessary agents who can do nothing at all.

I believe that there is no ill in the universe, nor any such thing as virtue absolutely considered; that those things vulgarly called *sins*, are only errors in the judgment, and foils to set off the beauty of Nature, or patches to adorn her face; that the whole race of intelligent beings, even the devils themselves, (if there are any), shall

100. **The ATHENIAN CREED** — a blasphemous parody of the Apostles' Creed, summarising the Moderate/deistical "library" the narrator has just listed. Each clause turns Christian doctrine into a Stoic / Shaftesburian / Leibnizian axiom.

101. **Holland sand** — very fine sand, imported from Holland, sprinkled on wet ink to dry a page before blotting paper was common.

finally be happy; so that Judas Iscariot is by this time a glorified saint[102], and it is good for him that he hath been born.

In fine, I believe in the divinity of L. S——[103], the saintship of Marcus Antoninus, the perspicuity and sublimity of A——e[104], and the perpetual duration of Mr H——n's works, notwithstanding their present tendency to oblivion. Amen.

102. **Judas Iscariot is by this time a glorified saint** — caricatures the universalist tendency in Shaftesburian optimism: if everything serves the good of the whole, then all rational beings — even Judas and the devils — must eventually share in the universal happiness.

103. **L. S——** — Lord Shaftesbury (see note above); placed in the first article of the mock-creed in the position of God.

104. **A——e** — Aristotle: the creed substitutes him for the Holy Spirit ("perspicuity and sublimity").

MAXIM VII.

A moderate man must endeavour, as much as he handsomely can, to put off any appearances of devotion, and avoid all unnecessary exercises of religious worship, whether public or private.

I FULLY intended, upon this part of my subject, to have been at some pains in shewing the great indecency of a grave and apparently serious carriage, or of introducing any religious subject of conversation into promiscuous company: but when I consider how successfully all visible religion was attacked, both by wits and preachers, immediately after the restoration of King Charles II[105].; how constantly any disposition of this sort hath been borne down by all men of taste ever since that time, which is now near a whole century; as also how seldom any religious discourse is to be met with at this day, either among

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clergy or laity, I shall only rejoice in myself, and congratulate my reader, upon the purity of the times, and proceed to the other part of the maxim.

Now, as to the public exercise of religious worship; although a certain measure of them is reasonable enough, and though the office by which we have our bread obliges us to be often engaged in them; yet a truly moderate man, without renouncing his calling, has it in his power to pare off a great many superfluities with which the

105. **restoration of King Charles II** — the return of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 after the Commonwealth. The narrator regards the Restoration's anti-Puritan wits, libertines, and Latitudinarian preachers as having successfully discredited visible religion in public life.

orthodox clergy are apt to overload religion, and render it unpalatable to the polite world.

Being members of church-judicatures[106], and, we hope, the majority in most of them, the moderate party can discourage and stifle all motions for extraordinary fasts or thanksgivings; which experience has taught us serve only to promote idleness, and discourage industry. Upon the day that Henry V. fought at Agincourt[107], a solemn fast was kept in England for his success; and some historians are pleased to say, that the prayers of the nation had some share in procuring the victory; but later histories have disproved this; and now it can be demonstrated upon paper, that a fast-day in Scotland loses 50,000 pounds to the nation, while nobody can make any calculation what it wins. For this reason, it was very refreshing to hear, as we did lately, that even in the most distant and northerly corners of this country, there is a set of clergy of a heroic spirit, who are resolved to reform their people, and beat them out of that unpolite and barbarous inclination, which many of them still retain, of hearing sermons.

With a view to the same good end, we can curtail our business at home, both as to the number and length of our pulpit-performances. In our own families, though it would not perhaps yet be convenient to imitate the *beau monde*[108] so very quickly, in discard-

106. **church-judicatures** — the courts of the Church of Scotland: kirk-session, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly. The narrator is noting that a Moderate majority in these courts can be used to suppress evangelical motions for days of fasting or thanksgiving.

107. **Henry V. fought at Agincourt** — the English victory over the French on 25 October 1415 (St Crispin's Day). Henry V had ordered public prayer and a fast across England for his army's success; the narrator cites this as the sort of old piety now out of fashion.

108. ***beau monde*** — French, literally "beautiful world"; fashionable high society. The narrator's ideal audience, whose sensibilities the Moderate minister is to accommodate.

ing the worship of God altogether; yet we may, by degrees, sometimes omit it, through hurry of business, at other times be dropping, now and then at least, some parts of it: and in gentlemens families, take care to give discreet intimations that we do not incline to put them out of their ordinary

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way, or occasion the least interruption to the mirth of the company.

Sometimes, indeed, it may happen, by a concurrence of circumstances, that one of us may, at bed-time, be unequally yoked[109] with an orthodox brother, who may propose a little unseasonable devotion between ourselves, before we lie down to sleep: but there are twenty ways of throwing cold water upon such a motion; or, if it should be insisted upon, I could recommend a moderate way of complying with it, from the example of one of our friends, who, on a like occasion, yielded so far, that he stood up at the back of a chair, and said, *O Lord, we thank thee for Mr Bayle's Dictionary*[110]*. Amen.* This was so far from spoiling good company, that it contributed wonderfully to promote social mirth, and sweetened the young men, in a most agreeable manner, for their rest. Whatever is forced is unnatural, and ought to be avoided; and therefore, what the Puritan

109. **unequally yoked** — an inversion of 2 Corinthians 6:14 ("Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"). Paul uses the phrase of believers with unbelievers; the Moderate narrator flips it, so that it is the Moderate who is "unequally yoked" with an *orthodox* brother who wants to pray with him.

110. **Mr Bayle's Dictionary** — Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), French Huguenot philosopher, author of the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697). Bayle's *Dictionary* was a monument of sceptical erudition, notorious for its long footnotes retailing every doubt and scandal from ancient and modern history; to the orthodox it was a chief weapon of Enlightenment scepticism against revealed religion. Thanking God "for Mr Bayle's Dictionary" is the Moderate's mock-grace — urbanely blasphemous.

said of square caps[111], we may apply to many modes of devotion, That he would not wear them, because his head was round.

The necessity of such a conduct cannot be denied, when it is considered what effect the length and frequency of public devotion has had in driving most of the fashionable gentry[112] from our churches altogether; and that even such of them as still vouchsafe their company sometimes, are yet driven away from the sacrament of the Lord's supper, where the service is expected to be more tedious and tiresome. Now, the only way to regain them to the church, is to accommodate the worship, as much as may be, to their taste: the manner of doing which is so well known, that I will not spend time in explaining it.

I confess there has been sometimes an ugly objection thrown up against this part of my argument, *viz.* That this desertion of public worship, by those in high life, seems, in fact, to be cotemporary with, and to increase, in a pretty exact proportion, to the attempts that have been, and are made to suit it to their taste. It is alledged, That they are led to such a conduct, not by the dictates of their reason, but by the depravation of their hearts; and therefore make use of the behaviour of the

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clergy as an excuse, and justification of their conduct. In answer to this objection, I shall not pretend to say what use gentlemen may sometimes make of our conduct, for I have known them often very

111. **the Puritan said of square caps** — square academic or clerical caps (the precursor of the mortarboard) were imposed on English clergy by the 1566 Vestiarian Controversy and were resented by the Puritans as Popish remnants. The old jest is that a certain Puritan refused to wear his square cap "because his head was round" — perhaps punning on the Roundheads of the Civil War. The narrator uses the story to justify dispensing with any devotional form that feels imposed.

112. **gentry** — the class of well-born landowners just below the nobility; in the Moderate ecclesiology these were the patrons whose tastes the minister was expected to consult.

preposterous in their judgment, condemning others for what they freely indulge in themselves, and no less unthankful, rendering evil for good. But still I say, there remains no strength in the objection to a man of moderate principles; for it plainly comes much to the same thing at last, whether the mountain comes to the mouse, or the mouse to the mountain. If I should meet a friend half-way, that had got at a distance from me, though he should not move a foot, I am sure we would be nearer one another, than if I had kept my place as well as he.

But whatever be in this, I must acknowledge, that to be constantly whining and praying, looks so extremely orthodox-like, that I cannot help conceiving a prejudice at it, for this very reason; and I doubt not but every moderate man will have the very same fellow-feeling. In truth, a great abundance of devotion has such a tendency to inflame one with zeal, that any man who would maintain his moderation, had best keep out of the reach of such ensnaring influence. Besides, it has been an old remark, and I begin to suspect there is some ground for it, that let one embrace what system of divinity he will, it is impossible to pray but according to the orthodox system. And whatever laudable pains have been taken, by some of our friends, to avoid this inconvenience; yet, from what I have observed, in the most successful of them, I must own, I can, at present, see no other remedy but to deal as little that way as possible.

MAXIM VIII.

In church-settlements[115]*, which are the principal causes that come before ministers for judgment, the only thing to be regarded, is, who the patron, and the great and noble heritors*[116] *are for; the inclinations of the common people are to be utterly despised.*

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That this maxim is invariably observed by all moderate men, is certain, and may be attested by all that ever were present at a General Assembly of this national church. The case is not now as formerly, when presentations[117] were held a grievance; for a *presentation* is all in all to a moderate man; and when there is no presentation, the greatness and nobility of the heritors upon one side. I was witness once to a cause (which indeed unhappily miscarried), but there was a noble stand made for it by the moderate party, because there was a lord upon the side of the minority, although he had no interest at all

115. **Settlement** — the formal induction of a minister into a parish, equivalent to an installation. Under the patronage system restored in 1712, the heritor (lay patron) could present a minister whether the congregation wanted him or not; the Moderates generally supported patronage, the Popular party opposed it. Due to this controversy, the Evangelical Party left the Church of Scotland in the Disruption of 1843 and formed the Free Church of Scotland.

116. **heritors** — a Scots legal term for the landholders of a parish. Under the Scottish system, the heritors were the hereditary proprietors of land in a parish, responsible for the minister's stipend, the upkeep of church and manse, and (after 1712) with an effective voice in calling a minister alongside the lay patron.

117. **presentation** — the formal legal document by which a lay patron nominated a candidate to a vacant parish. The 1712 Patronage Act restored this power to heritors of the land, overriding congregational choice; resisting "presentations" became the chief grievance of the Popular party and a principal cause of the 1733 Secession.

in the parish, but a small bit of ground which he had got from a neighbour, in order to run a dike[118] straight. This appearance greatly rejoiced me, as being a token to what perfection the spirit of moderation was arrived.

There are many reasons upon which this maxim is founded; as the implacable hatred we bear to the elders and common people, and their constant wrong judgment, which has been illustrated above. As this is so very evident, I cannot pass it, without expressing my grief and astonishment, that so clear-sighted an author, and, in all respects, so agreeable to our sentiments, as Lord Shaftsbury, should have said, in his *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*[119], that it belongs to men of slavish principles, to affect *"a superiority over the vulgar, and to despise the multitude."* This hath made me doubt the truth of an assertion of Mr G. L.[120] one of our own disciples, *"that perfection is attainable in this life;"* for, if ever any one attained to perfection, surely Lord Shaftsbury was the man. But, to lessen the difficulty a little, it is probable he had something in his view quite different from settling of kirks[121], when he wrote in this manner; for had he lived to our times, and been an heritor in Scotland, I can hardly allow myself to think, that ever he would have appeared on

118. **dike** — Scots for a wall or boundary (usually a drystone dyke). "To run a dike straight" here means to straighten a field boundary — a petty agricultural interest by which even a lord with no real concern in a parish came to count as a "heritor" and wield influence in the settlement.

119. ***Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*** — the second treatise in Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* (1711). The quotation the narrator is embarrassed to find in his own hero's writings — that despising the multitude is the mark of *slavish* principles — cuts against the Moderates' contempt for the common people.

120. **Mr G. L.** — one of the narrator's Moderate colleagues, deliberately anonymised (Witherspoon's convention throughout); the satirical target is the doctrine that "perfection is attainable in this life," a claim Witherspoon treats as characteristic Moderate self-flattery.

121. **kirks** — Scots for *churches* or *parishes*; "settling of kirks" = inducting ministers into vacant parishes.

the side of the Christian people; though, without all question, he would have been chosen an elder, and sent up, duly attested, to the General Assembly.

But to return: The natural respect we owe to those in great and high stations, claims from us the testimony of it, required in the maxim. There is an original and essential difference between gentry and common people,

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which ought to be particularly kept up here. For this, we have the authority of a certain worthy laird[122] in the country, who always maintained, upon his mind, a sense of his dignity, not as a man, but as a gentleman. Of this disposition he gave the following laudable instance: Being a member of the kirk-session[123] in his parish, the excise-officer[124] happened to come before them for fornication; and besides the ecclesiastical censure, it was thought proper to apply to the civil magistrate to get him fined according to law: but as the law appoints different fines for men in different stations, when some proposed he should be fined at the rate of a gentleman, the Worshipful member above mentioned, though known to be very zealous against vice, strenuously opposed his having so much honour, and gave the following excellent reason for it: *"Since God Almighty has been pleased to make a distinction between gentlemen and other men, why should not we keep up this distinction in all cases?"* and so he was fined only as a commoner.

122. **laird** — Scots: a landed proprietor; the owner of a small or moderate estate, roughly equivalent to an English squire.

123. **kirk-session** — the lowest court in the Scottish presbyterian system: the minister and ruling elders of a single congregation, responsible for local discipline, catechising, and examination of communicants.

124. **excise-officer** — a government-appointed collector of excise duties on goods such as whisky, ale, malt, and tobacco. Typically a man of modest social station, held in low regard in Scotland.

Another thing strongly pleads for gentlemen having the chief hand in settling kirks, that now-a-days very few of our principal gentry attend ordinances, or receive any benefit by a minister after he is settled, unless, perhaps, talking of the news at a private visit, or playing a game at back-gammon[125]; and therefore it is but fair, that, in lieu of the edification of the common people, they should have the honour or profit of conferring the benefice[126]. I shall only further add, that having no view of attending upon him for ordinary, they must be the best judges of his preaching-gifts, as being most disinterested: for which reason, non-residing heritors, instead of deserving to be cut out altogether, as the stupid and undiscerning orthodox would have it, are by much to be preferred to those that reside.

The reader will easily perceive, that I have here given much better reasons for this conduct than those commonly assigned, *viz.* the law, in the case of patrons; and the payment of the stipend, in the case of heritors. For, as to the first of these, it is quite from the purpose; for the law maintains its own ground, as far as it goes, and is irresistible: the only question is, How we shall act

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as to what is left to us to determine: if the law hindered us to determine on any side we pleased, such causes never would be pleaded before us. As to the other, about the heritors paying the stipend, it is not just; for the whole nation pays it: the heritor gets his lands with that burden upon them at first; and when one buys land from another, he never pays for the stipend: so that really an heritor is never a penny the poorer of the stipend, except that happening commonly to see the money first, he may, perhaps, be sorry that any

125. **back-gammon** — the board game; used here as a frivolous social pastime by which idle gentry occupy the minister.

126. **benefice** — the income (stipend, glebe, manse) attached to a parish living; to *confer a benefice* was to bestow this income on a newly settled minister.

body should get it but himself. However, though these reasons be not sufficient at bottom, I deny not but it may be very proper to assign them to such as are ignorant enough to yield to them, or who have so squeamish stomachs as not to be able to digest the solid reasons upon which I have grounded my maxim. It is with the mind as with the body, it must be fed with such things as it is able to bear, and as will best agree with its frame and constitution.

MAXIM IX.

While a settlement is carrying on, the candidate against whom there is a strong opposition from the people, must be looked upon, and every where declared to be, a person of great worth, and remarkable abilities; provided always, that if ever the same person, after he is settled, be at pains, and succeed, in gaining the peoples affection, he shall then fall as much below the ordinary standard in his character, as before he was raised above it.

Both parts of this maxim will appear very reasonable to all that see with our eyes. The people being against a man, is a certain sign of his being a good preacher, as has been formerly proved: it is also a pretty sure sign of his being of moderate principles, which make the comers thereunto perfect; and these two things are sufficient to justify us in raising his character. It is indeed often absolutely necessary, when a process is in agitation, that it may help him out with a scanty concurrence, and have an influence upon the church-courts, which are composed of a mixed multitude. Nor is it easy to conceive,

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how excellent and well-invented a weapon this is, the giving a man an extraordinary and high character. It necessarily imprints a kind of veneration of him on the minds of his judges; and hath this peculiar advantage, that there is no parrying of it; for whatever some few, of different principles, may think, they dare not plainly contradict it. Every man has it in his power to speak well of another, but nobody must take the liberty to speak ill of a man in a public

court, unless he can also venture to give him a libel[127]. Many a time have I heard young men highly extolled in church-courts, when their settlement was in dependence, who, in strict truth, were but middling kind of men, and some of them very heavy, who afterwards proved no small incumbrance upon the moderate body.

As to the other part of the maxim, taking away their character for ability when they apostatise to orthodoxy, this will be easily accounted for, if it be remembered how they came by it. It was freely given them; and therefore it may be taken away at pleasure: it was given to bring them in as an additional strength to the moderate interest; and therefore, when they forsake that interest, it is but just to deprive them of it. If any shall object, that this is not agreeable to the strict rules of veracity, I desire it may be remembered, that the present fashionable scheme of moral philosophy is much improved in comparison of that which prevailed some time ago. Virtue does not now consist in acting agreeably to the nature of things, as Dr Clarke affirms; nor in acting according to truth, which an old schoolmaster, one Woollaston[128], once wrote a book to prove; but in the good of the *whole*; and therefore an illustrious and noble end sanctifies the means of attaining it. Our sentiments, in this respect, are described by an anonymous poet, who, I believe, meant no good to us; however it points out the character pretty plainly thus:

127. **libel** — in Scots ecclesiastical law, a formal written indictment or charge filed in a church court. "Giving him a libel" here means formally charging him — which one could not casually do without evidence.

128. **Woollaston** — William Wollaston (1659–1724), English divine and philosopher, author of *The Religion of Nature Delineated* (1722), which argued that moral truth consists in acting agreeably to the nature of things and that every immoral act is essentially a lie. The narrator dismisses this as an older, outmoded rationalist ethics now displaced by the "good of the whole" scheme.

To second him rose surly PETER, An angry bigot for good-nature: That truth should valued be by measure, And weight, he thought;

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That inch of truth, in courtesy, To span of interest should give way; And pound of gain, for ounce of lie, Is cheaply bought.

If it be farther objected, That still this only satisfies ourselves, whereas, in the case in hand, it is necessary to satisfy the world: As to this, we can freely say, that the man was good, but now he is bad: and that is no contradiction; for though the Confession of Faith maintains the infallible perseverance of the saints in grace, yet we never affirmed the necessary perseverance of men in moderation, these two things being entirely distinct the one from the other. Some of our friends do fall away now and then: our strength, for ordinary, consists in young men; for there are several who, in old age, thro' the decay of their faculties, begin to incline a little to orthodoxy, and then we term them, not old men, but old wives[129]. However, there are also some, who not only persevere, but gloriously improve in moderation to the latest old age, and to their dying day; of which number was the late Rev. Mr J. R.[130] in K. whose name I have thought proper to record in this immortal work, that it may be had in everlasting remembrance.

129. **old wives** — 18th-century usage: foolish, credulous old women; here a condescending label the Moderates apply to their own colleagues who, in old age, turn back toward orthodoxy.

130. **Mr J. R. in K.** — another anonymised Moderate minister; place-name abbreviated to a single letter on Witherspoon's usual convention. The jokey "immortalised" memorial is Witherspoon's device for ridiculing a particular Moderate without naming him.

MAXIM X.

Whenever we have got a settlement decided over the belly[132] of perhaps the whole people in the parish, by a majority in the General Assembly, the victory should be improved, by appointing some of the orthodox opposers of the settlement to execute it, especially those of them that pretend to have a scruple of conscience at having an active hand in any such settlement.

They do not deserve a victory who know not how to push it, or to improve the advantage they have gained. A sentence of the General Assembly, even as of any other court, signifies nothing if it be not executed. To rest satisfied with the victory we have gained, by the bare decision, would indeed be yielding it back again, and losing in fact, what we gained in appearance. This is

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self-evident. But the next point is, Who shall be employed in executing it; those who appointed it, or those who pretend a scruple of conscience at doing what appears to their disordered intellects to be what they call *sinful*? Now, as to this, allow me only to ask a few plain questions. Is not every society divided into the governing and the governed, the masters and the servants? What is the subject of any debate in the Assembly that ends in a vote, but to determine who is the one, and who is the other? When once a vote has made us

132. **over the belly** — Scots idiom: against the will of, in defiance of. A settlement carried "over the belly" of the people is one forced on a parish despite the congregation's united opposition. Such forced settlements were the chief flashpoint of the patronage controversy and repeatedly led to riot, withdrawal, and eventual secession.

masters, does not the same vote make the minority servants? And do I need to ask further, If there is any piece of drudgery to be performed, who it belongs to, the masters or the servants? Apply this then to the case in hand: Who would hazard his own life in fording a river, if he had a servant to try the depth of it before him? Who would choose to go to a pulpit, under a shower of stones from an enraged populace, if he had others under his authority, whom he could send upon the same ungracious errand?

Now, the usefulness of this conduct is very evident; for it is plain, they will either obey or disobey. If the first is the case, then we shall have the honour of bringing them, and they themselves the profit and advantage of being brought, into the hatred and abhorrence of the common people; in commendation of which state, enough has been said already. If they disobey, they must be deposed, and cast out as incorrigible, to make way for those that are better than themselves. This will be to the advantage of the church; for young men, *cæteris paribus*[133], are much better than old.

As this method of purging the church of corrupt members is like to be a prevailing measure in our days, I shall endeavour to support it by a few, but these demonstrative arguments; in most of which, indeed, I shall have little more than the honour of recording the sentiments and reasoning of some eminent men that were members of the two last General Assemblies.

In the first place, it is certain, that the command of a proper authority is sufficient to make any action, not only innocent and lawful, but perfectly right, and strictly obligatory; insomuch that if an executioner should be

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commanded to hang his father or son, for praying to God, or reading his Bible; nay, if one of Jesus Christ's disciples had happened

133. ***cæteris paribus*** — Latin, "other things being equal"; a scholastic qualifier.

to have been a Roman soldier, and should have been commanded to crucify his master, he should have betrayed the most egregious ignorance of the Christian religion, had he made the least difficulty in executing such orders.

It is to no purpose here to object the immutability of moral laws, and the supreme authority of God: for if obedience to human authority be one of his laws, as it plainly is, then all his other laws must be submitted to such alterations and suspensions as our superiors think proper. The apostles do indeed sometimes speak of obeying God rather than man[134]; but we can explain this as easily as we do another text, in the third chapter of the Romans[135], which seems to teach, that we should not do evil that good may come: for as, in the one case, whatever promotes good cannot be evil; so, in the other, if human authority be once duly interposed, it is obeying God to comply with whatever is enjoined thereby; and therefore it is impossible that ever there can an interference happen. Besides, some allowance must, no doubt, be made for the difference of times, and disadvantages which all the ancient writers lay under, the late fine improvements in the science of morals not having then been excogitated. But I can assure the reader, the principle which I have laid down, is now the doctrine of this church, wherein both divines and lawyers who are members of our Assemblies, are entirely agreed, and will not suffer any body to call it in question. And what an obvious beauty has Moral Virtue gained from the delicate and skilful hands that have lately been employed in dressing her Ladyship! She

134. **obeying God rather than man** — Acts 5:29. Peter and the apostles' defence before the Sanhedrin: *"We ought to obey God rather than men."* The narrator's breezy "we can explain this as easily as we do another text" is a confession that the Moderate method is to explain away any Scripture that resists its theory.

135. **the third chapter of the Romans** — specifically Romans 3:8, where Paul repudiates the slander that Christians taught "Let us do evil, that good may come." The narrator's casuistry — that if ends are *good enough* no means can be evil — is precisely the view Paul condemns.

was once stiff and rigid, like ice or cold iron; now she is yielding as water, and, like iron hot from the furnace, can easily be beaten into what shape you please. And here I must say, I think it some pity that so fine a genius as Grotius[136] did not flourish somewhat later, or that the moral sense was not started a little earlier, and so that great man preserved from falling into so gross a blunder as the maintaining, that *"even military authority may be resisted; and that a case can be given,*

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when a soldier ought to disobey orders:" for now it is a settled point, that even ecclesiastical authority (which, if there were any difference, I allow ought rather to be the milder of the two) is sufficient to bear down before it what were once called the eternal, no less, and immutable laws of morality; and, by divine authority, is paramount to divine authority itself.

I shall only observe two very plain and clear advantages in this principle, whereby it will appear, how happy it is that the church hath fallen so entirely in with it, and proceeds so uniformly upon it.

The first is, that in case of necessity, an action which nobody would choose perhaps to take the weight of upon them, may yet be done without the least hazard of any body's being called to account for it in the other world. If the doer of an action were to be the judge of its lawfulness, he might be damned perhaps for doing it, in case it were found to be wrong; but upon this principle of implicit obedience to his superiors, there is no repelling his defence: It was not his province to judge whether it was lawful or unlawful; and the

136. **Grotius** — Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Dutch jurist, theologian, and founder of modern international law. In his *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (1625) he argued that there are cases in which military orders may lawfully be disobeyed. The narrator treats this concession of the limits of authority as an embarrassing defect in so great a man — preferable, he says, if Grotius had lived long enough to be enlightened by Hutcheson's "moral sense."

Assembly or Commission who gave the order, being bodies-politic, are, by that time, all dissolved, and appear only in the capacity of individuals.

The other advantage is this, that if the supreme court, of any kind, were allowed to be the only proper judge of the lawfulness of its own appointments, it would be impossible, in the nature of things, that ever there could be a separation in the church, or a rebellion in the state. The justness of this consequence is so evident, that I shall not spend any time in illustrating it, but heartily wish the principle, from which it flows, were universally embraced.

In the second place, the disobedient brethren have but one pretence for their conduct, which is groundless, *viz.* a *scruple of conscience*: as to which, hear Dr Goodman[137], a noble English writer: *"A tender conscience is nothing else but an ignorant and uninstructed mind; or a sickly, melancholy, and superstitious understanding."* I could easily shew, that there is no such thing as a real scruple of conscience: the lawyers in the General Assembly,

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who are men of as great penetration as any in the land, have, most of them, plainly declared, that they do not conceive it possible. A certain learned gentleman of this court hath assured us, that taking away ministers' stipends would enlighten their conscience. The renowned author of *Hudibras*[138] is known to be of the same opinion: from which two authorities, I will endeavour to amend Dr

137. **Dr Goodman** — John Goodman (1625–1690), English churchman, author of *The Penitent Pardoned* and *A Serious and Compassionate Inquiry into the Causes of the Present Neglect and Contempt of the Protestant Religion* (1674). His witticism against "tender consciences" is weaponised by the narrator against Evangelical scruples about executing forced settlements.

138. ***Hudibras*** — Samuel Butler's satirical mock-epic (published in three parts, 1663–1678), which savagely ridiculed the Presbyterians and Independents of the Civil War and Commonwealth era. Its jibes at "tender conscience" as a cover for self-interest were proverbial.

Goodman's definition; for a tender conscience is not an ignorant mind, but a full stomach. This accounts for appearances better, and particularly for the epithet of *tender* commonly given to it, as all physicians are agreed, that a wound upon a full stomach is very dangerous. Having thus rooted up the very foundation of this pretence, it is needless to go through the several particulars insisted upon by the disobedient as straitening to them; and therefore I shall but in a word mention one of them. They pretend it is a profane farce to confer, in a solemn manner, the care of the souls of a certain people, when nothing is really conferred but a legal title to a benefice: as also, that the candidate cannot conscientiously answer several of the questions commonly put on those occasions. But is it not extremely strange, that anybody can be so dull as not to regard these questions in their only true and proper light, as a necessary piece of formality, without which a charge of horning[139] for the stipends could not be raised? And as to the other part of the objection, whether it be not much more a mock ceremony, to ordain a man to a congregation, when a title to the benefice cannot be conferred, I shall leave the reader to determine, as if the case were his own.

The third principle upon which our conduct is founded, is of such undoubted verity, that the bare mentioning of it is sufficient to convince all the world how little it stands in need of any proof; accordingly no moderate man views it in any other light than as an axiom, or self-evident truth; namely, That if any excuse for disobedience were once admitted, or any indulgence granted to these tender-conscienced inferiors, there would be an end of all government in an instant; neither commands nor obedience could

139. **charge of horning** — a Scots legal term for a writ issued under the royal horn, ordering a debtor to pay within a specified time on pain of outlawry. The narrator's point: without the formal ordination questions, the minister's civil right to sue for his stipend would be unenforceable. A bitter observation — that the solemn ordination vows have been reduced to paperwork for recovering wages.

proceed one step further, but every individual instrument of power, in that fatal society, astonished

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at the monstrous phenomenon, would stare at one another; all the wheels of the political machine would stop at once; nay, would split into ten thousand pieces; every relation and connection of their parts would be instantly dissolved, and the beautiful *Whole* would rush into a wild chaos of anarchy and confusion. The reader will easily believe I am too wise to offer a proof of an axiom or self-evident truth*; however, I think it but fair to inform him, that such is the nature of paper and ink, that they have not the power of doing it all the justice even in narration, of which it is capable elsewhere. Whoever has heard the demonstrative tone, or beheld the infallible air, and gesture of certainty, with which it has been asserted by an Assembly-orator, would be ashamed that he ever stood in need to be put in mind of it: for my own part, I am so entirely influenced by it, that if the most faithful, diligent, and useful servant should, in the humblest manner, represent to me, that he had a scruple about executing any of my orders, and beg to be excused, suppose from shaving me on Sunday morning, and I should unfortunately be so far off my guard, as for once to indulge him, I would immediately dissolve my whole family, and never more think of lodging with a living soul under the same unhappy roof.

Against this principle, however, some have presumed to object particular instances in scripture-history of such excuses being actually admitted, without any apparent dissolution of the

constitution; such as Gideon's[140] passing from his order to his son to kill the two princes of Midian, and slaying them himself; and that of Saul[141], who, when his guards refused to fall upon the priests, committed that affair to another, without any farther noise. Now, not to mention the difficulty of arguing from facts of an ancient date, cited only by one author, and that very curtly, I humbly conceive these instances produced,

* *I desire that this general assertion may not be misunderstood, as if I intended a reflection upon some late discoveries in moral philosophy*[142]*: for though an axiom, or self-evident truth, cannot be proved; yet a great genius, who can do any thing, may take a few of these same axioms, dignify and adorn them, by writing an essay round-about each of them, and prove that they ought to be called* feelings. *This is greatly to the advantage of the commonwealth of learning, as experience hath shewn.*

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make directly against the objection: for it appears to me very evident, that the kingdom was taken from Saul, and given to David, for this very reason, he being unfit to govern, by thus allowing his

140. **Gideon's passing from his order to his son** — Judges 8:18–21. Gideon commands his firstborn Jether to slay the captured Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna; when the young man flinches, Gideon kills them himself. The narrator reads the incident as evidence that allowing a subordinate's scruple caused God to withhold hereditary rule from Gideon's house — a strained reading to support his theory that superiors must always enforce obedience.

141. **Saul** — 1 Samuel 22:16–18. Saul orders his guards to slay the priests of Nob for having aided David; they refuse, and he has Doeg the Edomite execute them instead. The narrator reads Saul's indulgence of his guards' scruple as the reason "the kingdom was taken from Saul" — again a self-serving misreading.

142. **late discoveries in moral philosophy** — Hutcheson's doctrine (adopted by the Moderates) that virtue is grasped by a "moral sense" — an immediate feeling rather than a rational judgment. Witherspoon's footnote is a direct swipe: dignifying one's gut feelings as *feelings* and calling them axiomatic is, he suggests, the Moderates' main contribution to the "commonwealth of learning."

authority to be trampled upon. Nor will it be easy to assign any different reason, why none of the posterity of Gideon were ever permitted to rule Israel. There are some later instances of that sort, nearer home, thrown up by shallow politicians; as that of the hangman at Ayr[143], who refused to execute the Whigs[144] in King Charles II's time; and that which happened a few years ago among ourselves, when the civil government overlooked the disobedience of a set of refractory clergymen who refused to read the act of parliament anent[145] Captain Porteous[146]. In the first of these cases, the judges acted in a laudable manner; for they deprived the man of his benefice: and, for the crime of this disobedience, I am persuaded he died childless, for I have never heard of any of his posterity in that part of the country. In the other case, I confess the government was much to be blamed; and have long been of opinion, that their

143. **the hangman at Ayr** — during the Killing Times of Charles II's persecution of the Covenanters (c. 1680–88), the hangman at Ayr refused to execute the condemned Covenanters ("Whigs"). Deprived of his office for this conscientious refusal, he was, according to local tradition, cursed with a childless posterity. The narrator adopts this as a warning for disobedient Moderate clergymen.

144. **Whigs** — used by the narrator for the persecuted Covenanters of the late-17th-century Killing Times; "Whig" had been a Scots nickname for the Covenanters since the 1640s, and only later took on its English political meaning.

145. **anent** — Scots/archaic: *concerning*, *in regard to*.

146. **Captain Porteous** — John Porteous, Captain of the Edinburgh City Guard, who in April 1736 ordered his men to fire on a crowd at a public execution, killing several. Convicted of murder and sentenced to hang, he was reprieved by the Crown; enraged Edinburgh citizens then broke into the Tolbooth on the night of 7 September 1736 and lynched him. Parliament responded with a punitive Act requiring every Scots minister to read it from the pulpit once a month for a year; many evangelical ministers refused, and the government, surprisingly, did not prosecute — a lenity the narrator regards as a fatal precedent.

detestable lenity, at that time, was the cause of the late rebellion[147], which followed so soon after it. It is to be hoped they will take warning for the time to come; for I am persuaded one other instance of the same kind would effectually seat the Pretender[148] upon the throne of Britain.

The last principle which I shall mention, and which, with the rest, I am sure is abundantly sufficient to support the maxim laid down for our conduct, is, That the best method of conviction, and, of all others, the most proper for a church-court, is that of authority, supported in its highest rigour by censures, which may be felt by men of the dullest capacities, as deposition, and suspension from benefice as well as office. If the goodness of an argument, or the excellency of a method, is to be measured by the frequency of recourse that is had to it, I think none can dispute precedency with this. It must be allowed to be, of all others, the most Christian method[149]; it reigned over the whole church without a rival, for many ages: and though Protestants, for a while, pretended to find fault with it in the hands of their enemies; yet, which of them all, when they became able to make use

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147. **the late rebellion** — the Jacobite rising of 1745 led by Prince Charles Edward Stuart, which reached as far south as Derby before being defeated at Culloden (16 April 1746). The narrator's absurd claim is that government leniency over the Porteous Act refusals emboldened Scots disaffection and thereby caused the '45.

148. **the Pretender** — Charles Edward Stuart (1720–1788), "Bonnie Prince Charlie," the Young Pretender, exiled Stuart claimant to the British throne after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. By 1753 his cause had been effectively destroyed at Culloden, but the memory of the '45 was vivid and the threat rhetorically potent.

149. **the most Christian method** — bitterly ironic. The narrator endorses discipline by ecclesiastical authority — deposition, suspension from benefice — as "Christian" on the grounds that the medieval Catholic Church used it without rival for centuries. Witherspoon thereby makes the Moderate policy look like a Protestant revival of the Inquisition.

of it, have not tried it in their turn? And whether we consider the majority, by whose hands this weapon is to be wielded, or the minority, upon whom the weight of it must fall, it will plainly appear to be admirably suited to the present times. As to the beasts of burden, who fall to be driven by this method, they are known to be such dull and lifeless animals (as they are most of them past the vigour of youth) that no other argument can make any impression upon them. However a horse might be managed, who is a generous creature, no body could think of another method to make an ass move, but constantly to belabour its sides. There cannot be a clearer evidence of the dulness and stupidity of these obstinate beings we have to do with, than the expence of rhetoric that has been thrown away upon them, to persuade them of a thing as clear as the sun, *viz.* that if they had any conscience they would depose themselves, and yield their place to more pliable successors. They even pretend conscience here again; and tell us, they are placed in a station which they dare not desert, unless they be thrust out of it. Now, let the reader judge how incapable of persuasion one must be, to find difficulty in so plain a case; and therefore how unnecessary it is, that a more effectual method should be tried.

On the other hand, the majority in Assemblies and Commissions seems, at present, to be peculiarly adapted to such a method of conviction as I have mentioned. One part of our strength lies in the laity who attend our judicatures; these, as they possess no benefice in the church, they are out of the reach of this sort of censure, and therefore are only capable of inflicting, but not of suffering it; and as they are not much accustomed to solving cases of conscience, what other method can occur to them, when things of this nature are thrown in their way, than the more gentleman-like method, for

which Alexander the Great[150] is so justly celebrated, *viz.* cutting the troublesome knot, which they would find tedious and difficult to untie? The rest of our side consists in clergy of the youngest sort; who, as they are imitators of the manners of gentlemen, may be supposed to act with the same spirit in public judgment. Though

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they can give flourishes of rhetoric enough; nay, though of one of them in particular, I may literally say,

He cannot ope His mouth, but out there flies a trope[152]*;*

yet as for logic, it is well known this part of education is fallen into great contempt; and it is not to be expected, that such brisk and lively spirits, who always hated every thing that looked scholastic-like, can bear to be tied down to the strict methods of argumentation. But though we were greater masters in this method of conviction, yet our blood may easily be supposed too warm for any thing that is so slow, and at best so uncertain in its success. No; we are now the majority, and our power, as a late acquisition, is the more agreeable for being new; we must taste the sweets of authority, which can only be by compelling our inferiors to obey us. If our sentences are executed, it is the same thing to the new incumbent, the same thing to the church in general, and the same thing to us, whether the executors are willing or unwilling: for, as to that whole matter of conscience, about which so much noise is made, I have already related our sentiments; from whence it is evident, that such

150. **Alexander the Great** — the legendary episode of the Gordian knot: in 333 BC Alexander, told that whoever could untie the great knot in the temple at Gordium would rule Asia, sliced it open with his sword. "The more gentleman-like method" of cutting rather than untying becomes the narrator's metaphor for ecclesiastical authority simply overriding troublesome cases of conscience.

152. **trope** — a figure of speech; here the narrator is mock-quoting a satirical couplet (probably a borrowing or near-quotation from Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*) to describe a young Moderate orator who is all rhetorical flourish and no logic.

nonsense, as laying a violent temptation in mens way to act against the light of their own mind, is nothing but words without a meaning. And as to the expression of the apostle Paul, about church-power, which he uses over and over again, that it is *for edification, and not for destruction*[153]; it is no secret, that there is a various reading; and if once we had, *for destruction, and not for edification*, established as the true reading, which, if we were dealers in criticism, might perhaps be easily done, we should not only get rid of this troublesome text, but make an acquisition of it on our side of the question, to the confusion of our greatest enemies.

153. ***for edification, and not for destruction*** — 2 Corinthians 10:8 and 13:10. Paul twice insists that apostolic authority is given *for building up, not for tearing down*. The narrator's final satirical flourish — that he would gladly invert the text if he had the scholarship — is Witherspoon showing that the Moderate policy of forced settlements and disciplinary severities has in fact reversed Paul's intent.

MAXIM XI.

The character which moderate men give their adversaries, of the orthodox party, must always be that of knaves or fools; and, as occasion serves, the same person (if it will pass) may be represented as a knave at one time, and as a fool at another.

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THE justice of this proceeding may be easily made appear. The principles of moderation being so very evident to reason, it is a demonstration, that none but unreasonable men can resist their influence: and, therefore, we cannot suppose, that such as are against us can be so from conscience. Besides, setting aside the superior intrinsic excellence of the one set of principles above the other, there are much stronger carnal motives, to speak in their own style, to act in their way, than in ours; and therefore there is great ground to conclude, that they act from hypocrisy, but not so of us. They please the people; we please, at least endeavour to please, those of high rank. Now, there are many remarkable advantages they gain by pleasing the people; whereas it is evident, *ex post facto*[154], that we gain nothing by pleasing the gentry; for they never trampled upon us so much as of late; and have entirely defeated our application to parliament for augmentation of stipend. So far are we from being in any respect the better of the gentry, that we have really great reason to complain of them; for when we have endeavoured to ingratiate ourselves with them, by softness and complaisance, and by going considerable lengths with them in their freedom, they, oftentimes, most ungenerously despise us but the more: nay, many of them have first taught us to live at a high rate, and then refuse to give us any thing to

154. ***ex post facto*** — Latin, "after the fact"; here, "as can be seen in hindsight."

keep it up. Now, as we men of reason could not but foresee this, it is plain, nothing but the most disinterested virtue could lead us to act as we have done. Whereas, on the other hand, the orthodox have gained, and do possess the esteem of the common people; and so, it is plain, they could have no other view in their conduct but to attain it. However, to shew our charity, we allow there are some on their side who are indifferently honest; but these are men of very weak intellectuals, as is evident from their not thinking as we do.

The other part of the maxim is abundantly reasonable, but not so easily put in practice, *viz.* representing the same

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individual person sometimes as a *knave*, and sometimes as a *fool*. This affair is sometimes unluckily managed, when it is incautiously attempted. In order to its being done successfully, therefore, let the two following rules be observed.

1*st*, Let a man be represented as a knave and a hypocrite to one sort of people in the world; and let him be represented as a fool, not to the same, but to another sort: let the first be chiefly your better sort of people, particularly those among them that hate much profession of religion, and are apt to call all strictness hypocrisy: the other, it is plain, must be the simple and credulous.

The *second* rule is, That, if possible, there should be different persons employed in spreading these different calumnies of the same man. By this apparent consistency in every one's opinion with itself, they will be the more easily maintained, and be the less liable to discovery: and thus, as the several wheels of a watch, by opposite motions, promote the same end; so the several members of the moderate body, by seemingly different and opposite means, conspire in promoting the good of the whole. The principle upon which these two rules are founded, is, That probability ought to be studied in every falsehood we would have believed; which principle is laid

down, and finely illustrated, in the *Art of Political Lying*, said to be wrote by one Dr Arbuthnot[155].

It will not, I hope, be reckoned wandering from my subject, when I observe, that the very same principle of studying probability is to be applied to the celebration of the characters of our friends, as well as the defamation of our enemies. These two designs, indeed, have a very strong connection, and do mutually support and promote one another. Praising one character is, by necessary and manifest consequence, a defamation of its opposite: and, in some cases, which may easily be conceived, it is the most eligible, and the most effectual way of doing it. I have been present at a conversation, where the chief intention of one of the speakers, and what he had most at heart, was to ruin the character and reputation of a certain person, who happened to be mentioned, with his hearers; but as he could not well know, whether they were

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able to bear a large quantity of unmixed reproach, he chose the wiser and safer method, of celebrating another character, and drawing it with all his art, in such a manner as the strongest opposition possible might appear, in some of its circumstances, to that of the person intended to be wounded by reflection.

But in this, as in the former case, great judgment and prudence must be used; nothing must be said, the contrary to which is, or may be easily known to be true; and particularly all the antiquated orthodox phrases, in giving a minister's character, are to be religiously avoided. The necessity of this direction will best appear

155. **Dr Arbuthnot** — John Arbuthnot (1667–1735), physician and satirist, friend of Swift and Pope. *The Art of Political Lying* (1712) is his mock-treatise on crafting convincing falsehoods.

from an example: Suppose I should say of Momus[156], he was a youth of early, and continues to be a man of eminent piety, walking with God, and spending many hours every day in secret devotion; has a deep and a strong sense, upon his mind, of the worth and value of time, and lays it out wholly in fitting others, and himself, for eternity; has so sacred a regard for truth, that he never tells a lie, even in jest; has a most humble deportment, and is perfectly free from that prevailing fault, of triumphing over the weak or shamefaced by raillery or impudence; has been frequently heard to express his displeasure at all levity of carriage, and frothy, unprofitable discourse, in persons of the sacred character; and as he was always himself remarkable for a purity of conversation, so he cannot allow the most distant allusion to obscenity to pass without a reproof: in short, his whole behaviour commands both the reverence and love of all who have the happiness of his acquaintance.—I say, if I should draw the character of Momus in this manner, as some authors do those of the Puritan clergy about a hundred years ago, it is probable he would give me no thanks: and indeed he would owe me none; for it would have much more the air of a satire than of a panegyric.

It is, however, possible to draw a character of the same person which shall have some truth, and much probability in it; and which, as being the character of a modern, shall be much more in the modern commendatory style.—He is a man of a most sprightly

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and lively fancy, of an inexhaustible fund of wit and humour, where he pleases to display it, though the iniquity of the times has, in some measure, checked its indulgence. He is, notwithstanding the grimness of his countenance, entirely free from any sourness or moroseness of temper, so that, in his conversation, a man may enjoy

156. **Momus** — in Greek mythology, the god of mockery and satire; used here as a generic placeholder name ("let's call him Momus") for a Moderate minister whose real name Witherspoon declines to give.

all manner of ease and freedom. He is a most genteel and elegant preacher and poet; and, to my knowledge, a man of a warm and good heart[157].

157. This expression, *a man of a good heart*, is much in fashion among the moderate, and of great significance and beauty; but it is only to be used in speaking to persons of some degree of taste; for I knew a particular instance in which it disabused the person it was intended to gain.

MAXIM XII.

As to the world in general, a moderate man is to have great charity for Atheists and Deists[159] in principle, and for persons that are loose and vicious in their practice; but none at all for those that have a high profession of religion, and a great pretence to strictness in their walk and conversation.

This maxim seems to be pretty strongly laid; and yet, upon a strict inquiry, it will be found that we follow it very exactly. That we have charity for the first mentioned sort of persons, is evident; for we endeavour to accommodate ourselves to them, and draw as near them as possibly we can, insisting upon nothing in our sermons but what may be said to be a part, or an improvement, of the law of nature. And as to our having no charity for the other sort, it is as evident; witness the odious idea we have affixed to the name of a professor, (unless when it is meant of a professor in a college); and witness our ironical way of speaking, when we lay of a man, he has a *grave sanctified air*. Nay, even holinesses and godlinesses are seldom taken by us in a very good sense: when we say, *One of the holy brethren*, or, *A good godly lady*, they would mistake us very much that would think we had a high opinion of any of these persons.

This our conduct a certain young man of the orthodox side, reflected very severely upon, as he thought, in

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a sermon, which he afterwards printed, in words to this purpose: "They can indeed talk very fluently of universal benevolence, and a

159. **deist** — one who holds that God exists but rejects revelation, miracles, and the divinity of Christ; the Moderate party drew heavily on deistical sources (Shaftesbury, Tindal, Collins).

charitable candid disposition—; but their charity is confined to those who savour their opinions, or perhaps are indifferent about religion altogether; while the least appearance of serious devotion, or fervent zeal for God, is enough to forfeit it. Indeed this charity is as mysterious as the faith of the most bigotted Catholic; it is equally full of contradictions; and seems resolved to found itself, not upon evidence, but upon the want of it. Where every thing has the worst appearance, there they will believe well; but where the outward conduct is blameless, they candidly suspect that nothing but hypocrisy lies at the bottom." But, with the leave of this smart youth, what he says of us is very true, and we maintain it to be right: for the very meaning of charity is to believe without evidence; it is no charity at all to believe good of a man when we see it, but when we do not see it. It is with charity in sentiment, as with charity in supplying the wants of the necessitous; we do not give alms to the rich but to the poor. In like manner, when there are all outward appearances of goodness, it requires no charity to believe well of the persons: but when there are none at all, or perhaps very many to the contrary, then I will maintain it is charity, and charity in its perfection, to believe well of them. Some object to this, Well, since it is your will, have charity for them; but have charity also for such as are apparently good. Oh! the stupid world! and slow of heart to conceive! is it not evident to a demonstration, that if the appearance of wickedness be the foundation of charity, the appearance of goodness, which is its opposite, must be the foundation of a quite contrary judgment, *viz.* suspecting, or rather believing ill of them? If any still insist, That if not charity, yet justice should incline us to believe well of them, as I have seemingly confessed: I answer, That we have no occasion for justice, if we have charity; for charity is more

than justice, even as the whole is more than a part: but though I have supposed, *argumentandi gratia*[160], that justice requires this; yet it

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is not my sentiment; for the persons meant being usually great enemies to us, are thereby cut off from any claim in justice to our good opinion; and being also, as has been proved, improper objects of charity, it remains that we should hate them with perfect hatred, as in fact we do.

160. ***argumentandi gratia*** — Latin, "for the sake of argument."

MAXIM XIII.

All moderate men are joined together in the strictest bond of union, and do never fail to support and defend one another to the utmost, be the cause they are engaged in what it will.

This maxim I do not infer so much for the instruction of the ignorant, as for the perfection of my own plan, and the honour of the whole body; for I have hardly ever known it fail in any instance whatever. And as this character belongs, without controversy, to all the moderate; so it belongs to them by an exclusive privilege; for they do most loudly complain of, and load with most opprobrious epithets, any of the orthodox who attempt to imitate them in it; as has been sometimes known. Nothing indeed can be more just and reasonable than these complaints; for such conduct in the orthodox is a plain desertion of their own principles, a robbery and invasion of the property of others. Conscience, upon which they pretend to act, is, of all things, the most stiff and inflexible; and cannot, by any art, be moulded into another shape than that which it naturally bears; whereas the whole principles of moderation are most gentle and ductile, and may be applied to almost all purposes imaginable.

If any, through an envious infidelity, entertain a doubt of the truth asserted in the maxim, they are referred, for satisfaction, to the history of the proceedings of this church for these twenty years bygast[161], which I take to have been the true reforming period; and are hereby defied to produce an instance in which any moderate man, wife or unwise, old or young, grave or sprightly, failed to concur in

161. **bygast** — Scots/archaic for *past* or *past-gone*; "twenty years bygast" = the last twenty years.

supporting one of his own side, whatever was his cause, active or passive, a project for advancement,

or the danger of a prosecution. Let but one of us start a scheme, in which he may find his account, or become candidate for an office, the whole, upon the first impulse, as the concordant strings of a musical instrument answer to the touch, return and reverberate the sound. If Momus unwarily makes a sally into the territories of *good-humoured vice*, and is unhappily betrayed by those who ought not to have been trusted; how powerfully is he upheld by the gravest of the party, and the uncharitable malevolent enemy flung and destroyed, like the bear in the fable, for disturbing the hive of industrious bees? Nay, as a yet stronger instance, (being more against nature), I could shew, in the records of a certain presbytery, declarations signed by the most moderate hands, and yet containing as high and ranting expressions in favour of the rights of the Christian people, as ever were used by the most orthodox writer; because, by a wonderful concurrence of circumstances, they served, at that time, to promote the settlement of a moderate man.

Every eye must immediately perceive the beauty and excellence of this part of our character. What more amiable than union? or what more necessary to the support of any society? and what more hateful and horrid than discord and division? Is it not also, by this very means, that we have obtained the victory, and do still preserve our superiority over the orthodox party? They are wholly ignorant of the laws of society, as they have been lately well explained by some of our brethren in print; and know not that all who enter into it, give up their rights as individuals, and are bound *to follow what they disapprove*; to see with the eyes, and act for the interest of the whole body.

It must be no small commendation of such conduct, that in so doing we either follow, or are followed, by the most eminent and illustrious characters in this nation. It is probable there may be

several controverted elections tried before the parliament in a short time; and I dare say, any wise man will foretell their issue in each case, much more certainly from the character of the person, than from the merits of the cause. And it is with some

pleasure I observe, that whoever begun this practice first, we have carried it to the greatest perfection; for, amongst us, the characters of men have been openly pled in defence of their cause, which, if I am not mistaken, hath hardly ever been done in any civil court.

How admirably does this principle fall in with the scheme of philosophy upon which the present generation is formed! It illustrates the truth of Mr H——n's doctrine, That virtue is founded upon instinct and affection, and not upon reason; that benevolence is its source, support, and perfection; and that all the particular rules of conduct are to be suspended, when they seem to interfere with the general good. In short, it shews, that the moderate are a transcript, in miniature, and do most distinctly exhibit the order, proportion, and unity of design of the universal system.

Time would fail me if I should go through all the excellencies of this crowning maxim; and therefore I shall only further observe, that it excels all the known principles of action for clearness and perspicuity. In order to determine which side to chuse in a disputed question, it requires no long discussions of reason, no critical inquiry into the truth of controverted facts, but only some knowledge of the characters of men; a study much more agreeable, as well as more common, than that of books. To speak more properly, it requires no study at all of any kind; for, as to the gross, or general tendency of a character, common fame communicates the impression, and seldom or never deceives us. This is probably the reason that the maxim, as has been observed at the beginning of the illustration, is constantly and unerringly followed by the moderate of every age and condition: on which account I give it as my opinion,

that it be added to the number of the *feelings*, which are, at present, so much upon the growing hand.

Thus I have laid down and illustrated these excellent maxims, not without labour and expence of thought; and, I think, carried them so far as to make a complete system for the education and accomplishment of a moderate clergyman, for his guidance in public judgment, and

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his direction as to private practice. And now, courteous reader, as a traveller, after having gone through the different parts of a country, ascends some eminence to review the whole, let us stand still and rejoice over the happy state of our mother-church of Scotland, in which moderation so greatly prevails; and let us rejoice in hope of what improvements she may yet arrive at, by adhering to these maxims, now digested into such admirable form and order. O what noble, sublime, and impenetrable sermons shall now be preached! what victories and triumphs shall be obtained over the stupid populace, by forced settlements, which never have such a beautiful and orderly form, as when finished by soldiers, marching in comely array, with shining arms; a perfect image of the church-militant! and what perfectly virtuous and sinless lives shall be led by these clergy, who, with steady eye, regard the good of this vast *whole*, which never yet went wrong! There is nothing, indeed, that any way tarnishes the beauty of this prospect, but the miscarriage of the augmentation-scheme[162]; over which I could now lament in elegiac strains, but that my hope is not yet quite extinct; for who can tell, whether, when we shall have brought moderation to perfection, when we shall have driven away the whole common people to the Seceders, who alone are fit for them, and captivated the hearts of the gentry to a love of

162. **augmentation-scheme** — a campaign for increasing the stipends (salaries) of Church of Scotland ministers, repeatedly pressed on Parliament in the 18th century; often defeated by opposition from the landed interest.

our solitary temples, they may not be pleased to allow us more stipends, because we shall have nothing to do but to spend them?

I would now propose, that the next ensuing General Assembly would appoint (what indeed I might not without reason expect, whether they appoint it or not) that all the professors of divinity in the nation shall lecture one day, every week, upon this system of moderation, that our youth may be trained up, from their infancy, in a taste for it. This, I am sure, will be much more profitable than any of the antiquated systems of divinity, as Pictet or Turretine[163]: nay, I am persuaded, it is more exactly calculated for the present times, than even the more modern authors, Epictetus[164] and Marcus Antoninus, which last, in Mr Foulis's translation[165], hath, by many young divines,

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in their first year, been mistaken for *Markii Medulla Theologia*[166].

If this my treatise shall meet with the success and acceptance that it justly deserves, it is my intention to offer to the public, a still more minute and particular delineation of the moderate character, either

163. **Pictet or Turretine** — Benedict Pictet (1655–1724) and Francis Turretin (1623–1687), Genevan Reformed scholastic theologians whose dogmatics textbooks were standard in Scots divinity faculties. The narrator wishes them replaced by Marcus Aurelius.

164. **Epictetus** — the Stoic philosopher (c. 50 – c. 135), author of the *Enchiridion*; here named with Marcus Aurelius as the narrator's preferred non-Christian spiritual reading.

165. **Mr Foulis's translation** — Robert Foulis (1707–1776), the celebrated Glasgow printer and bookseller, published elegant editions of classical authors; his firm issued a translation of Marcus Aurelius.

166. ***Markii Medulla Theologia*** — Johannes Marckius (à Marck, 1656–1731), Dutch Reformed theologian whose *Medulla Theologiae Christianae* ("Marrow of Christian Theology", 1690) was a standard systematic textbook in Scottish divinity halls; the narrator imagines students confusing it with a translation of Marcus Aurelius.

in another book, of a different form from this, or, perhaps, in a second edition of the same; which shall, in that case, be the text, and to which I will add large explanatory notes, containing much private history, and referring to many particular facts, in order to render it the more grateful, as well as the more instructing to the reader. I have also by me the *stamina vitæ*[167] of many useful and edifying treatises, which shall be produced in due time, as the muses shall give assistance: such as, The art of making a flourished sermon with very little matter, by a proper mixture of similes, and by repeating every paragraph over again in the form of a soliloquy: One resolution of all cases of conscience, from the good of the whole scheme: A directory for prayer, upon the same scheme: The horrid sin and danger of ministers spending too much time in catechising and visiting in country-parishes; I do not make any mention of towns, to avoid giving offence; as also, lest it should prove true what I have heard, that the practice is scarcely known in any of our great towns, in which case, my reasonings would look like beating the air. These, with many others, I am, with assiduous care, purchasing materials for completing, by observation and conversation, that our church may go on, in a progressive motion, toward the zenith of perfection, and meridian of glory.

I shall now shut up this work, by acquainting the reader with a secret, which, perhaps, he would otherwise not advert to, *viz.* that I enjoy the pleasure of having done a thing seemingly quite impracticable. I have given the moderate, and those who desire to be instructed in that science, a complete view of the maxims and principles of moderation, without, at the same time, prostituting or giving them up to the possession of every common reader. Perhaps some will ask, how I imagine I have effected this? I answer, that I have so framed the whole of my book, that

167. ***stamina vitæ*** — Latin, "threads of life"; figuratively, the vital essence or germ of a work.

it is really intelligible only to persons duly qualified; and to every such person it is transparent as the spring-water. I have given only moderate reasons for moderate principles, so that however strongly they may convince some, *viz.* those of our kidney, others they will be so far from convincing, that they will be thought to operate a quite contrary way. I have managed this so carefully, that I could venture to lay a wager of all that I am worth, that this treatise shall be taken, by very many, to be the work of an orthodox pen, and to be intended as a banter upon moderate men, and their way. They will be tempted to laugh at us, whom they will imagine to be exposed by this revelation of our mysteries: but how ingeniously are they deceived? for, by that very means, every properly prejudiced mind is furnished with a complete system, upon which to form his sentiments, and regulate his conduct.

FINIS.