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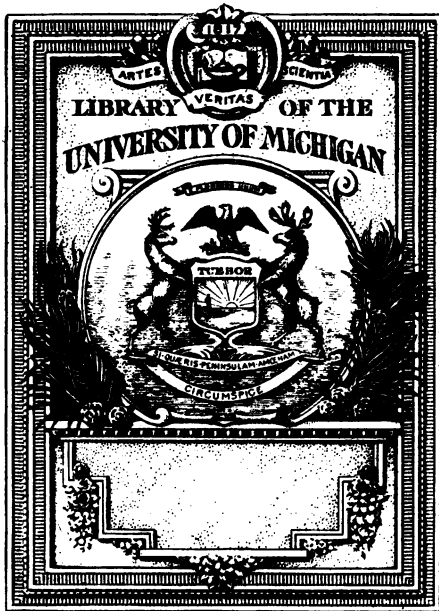
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A
TREATISE
CONCERNING
Christian Prudence :
OR THE
PRINCIPLES
OF

Practical Wisdom,

FITTED
To the Use of Human Life,
AND DESIGN'D
For the Better Regulation of it.

By JOHN NORRIS, Rector of
Bemerton near Sarum.

L O N D O N : *ri*
Printed for *Samuel Manship*, at the Ship against the
Royal-Exchange in Cornhil, 1710.



Philosophy
Norman
12-18-46

5715

THE P R E F A C E.

I Presume that my Reader will not think that the Subject of this Treatise (I do not say the Author) needs any Apology, being in it self of as great Importance as any to be sure in all Christian Morality, and the more necessary to be consider'd because so very little has been said upon it. For indeed I cannot but reckon it among the Desiderata of the Press, not knowing any Profess Discourse concerning it that we have extant. That which comes nearest to it is that of M. Charron, but whoever will be at the pains to read that Book, will find considering the difference of the Subject, and the different way of handling it, that there is not much less need of such a Treatise as this, than there would be if the other had never been in the World.

I have sometimes thought with my self, that if the whole System of Christian Vertues were distinctly treated of, it would be a very great, useful, and noble Work. The first link of this Golden Chain I have attempted to finish in my Treatise of Humility, and I could wish that some other more

The Preface.

able hand would go on with the rest, it being for one of my little Health, and less Abilities, too great an Undertaking. But however, though it be too much for me, to treat of all the Christian Vertues singly, yet I have now done that which may in some Measure answer the Design of such an undertaking in the general, by treating of that Vertue which sits at the Helm, and governs all the rest, conducts the whole Movement of Life, and is as it were a kind of Universal Vertue. So that in treating of this, one treats of all, and gives as it were a System of Christian Morality, which is what I design in this Work.

My Subject is of a Practical Nature, and I have endeavoured to handle it in a Practical and Useful a Manner as I could, so as to serve the great End of Christian Edification. Accordingly I have avoided Notion and Controversy as much as might well be with due Justice to my Subject. For indeed though a Subject be never so Practical, yet if a Man will go to the bottom of it, and give a clear and thorough Account of things, he will find a necessity of engaging sometimes in Notional Considerations, that may be requisite to clear the Subject to the Capable, tho' they do not much Inlighten or Edify the common Reader. Which is the Apology I make for some few Passages that will here be found of this kind, but which unless I would have treated of things with a superficial Smoothness rather than a rational Depth, I could not well avoid. Which I think is Reason enough why they should not be avoided. For in short, the Best Readers are to be

The Preface.

be confid^d as well as the Most; and if I have had regard to both, I hope neither will be much displeas^d.

Here I beg leave to explain my self a little further in a word or two upon what I say page 65. concerning Speculative and Practicall Knowledge. By Speculative, meaning that which Contemplates Truth for it self, and so rests in the Contemplation of it without any further Reference. By Practicall, that which Contemplates Truth for the sake of Action, or in order to it. Now what I have here to Remark is not concerning this Distinction it self, but the ground of it assigned by Baronius in the beginning of his Metaphysics, who makes it to be the Necessity and Contingency of things, telling us withal, that those Sciences which are about necessary things have Contemplation for their last End. For since necessary things do not depend upon us, and can neither be done nor alter^d by us, therefore we acquiesce in their Knowledge, without proceeding any further. But upon this my Observation was, that however Speculation may properly be of necessary Truth, yet that there is no necessity that all Knowledge of necessary Truth should be Speculative, or rest in the Contemplation of it as its last End, but may have a further reference, and be in order to Practice, as is plain in Morality and Divinity, where there are many necessary Truths, which yet the Mind does not acquiesce in the Knowledge of, but which have in themselves an order to Practice, and are by us so consider^d. But now to make this Proposition a little clearer, that we do not always
acquiesce

The Preface.

acquiesce in the Knowledge of Necessary Truth, or make the Contemplation of it our Last End, I think fit to distinguish. We may be said to acquiesce in the Knowledge of Necessary Things, either in opposition to the doing those very things, or in opposition to doing simply, or at large. Now if by our acquiescing in the Knowledge of Necessary Things, our excellent Author means in opposition to doing those very things, that indeed is granted, and that for the Reason assigned, because such things depend not upon us, nor can be done or alter'd by us. But if by acquiescing he means in opposition to doing simply or at large (as he should mean to make such a Knowledge Speculative, or to distinguish it from Practical) so I think it is not true that we do necessarily acquiesce in the knowledge of necessary things, since tho' we cannot do the things themselves, yet we can contemplate them in order to doing something else, and they may also have in themselves an order to Practice. So then there may be a Practical Knowledge of Necessary Truths, and consequently 'tis not necessary that we should acquiesce in the Knowledge of them as our Last End, but may refer them to the Moral use of Life. Some necessary Truths indeed are not capable of that Reference, as in the Mathematical Sciences, which therefore are studied for themselves in the way of pure Theory, and not in order to any Moral Practice that depends upon them, but there are others that are, as is plain in Morality and Divinity. For as the Rules of Morality are many of them Propositions of Necessary Truth, so they are
resolvable

The Preface.

resolvable into *Immutable* (that is *Necessary*) *Reasons*, which with all their necessity have also a *Practical Aspect*. As have also the *Perfections and Attributes of God*, in the *Knowledge of whom* we do not acquiesce, (unless it be with respect to *Happiness*, as satisfying our *Desires*, which is an *Acquiescence of the Will* rather than of the *Understanding*) but refer what we know of him to *Action*, the *Knowledge of God* serving to the love of him, and to the keeping of his *Commandments*. And accordingly *Divinity* is said to be an *Affective Science*, and tis in the *Schools* allow'd to be *Practical* as well as *Speculative*, the *End of our Divine Contemplations*, as well as of the *Commandment*, being *Charity*.

I shall say no more, than that since we have had so many *Idle and Frothy Trifles* (to say no worse) of late from the *Press*, 'tis time for something more *Serious and Solid* to appear, and that this *Treatise* is written with an *Honest and Charitable Design* to serve the *Interests of true Religion and Vertue*, and to make him that reads it *Wise unto Salvation*. I hope my *Reader* will join with me in the same *Design*, excusing whatever *Defects* he finds in the *Management of so difficult a Subject*, and endeavouring to *Profit* by all that he shall find here worthy of his *Consideration*. Some such things I hope he will find, and accept of my good *Meaning* in all. And so I commend both him, and the *Success of this my Labour upon him*, to the *Blessing of God*.

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** Note, That I would have the Title of the Fifth Chapter read not as it is there, but as it stands in the Contents.

To the Reverend

Dr. *Y O U N G E R*,

DEAN of *SALISBURY*.

S I R,

THAT I chuse to Address these my Considerations upon this Great and Noble Subject to *You*, is not that I think *You* need Instruction upon it, or my self Capable of giving it if *You* did, but to express the Respect which I think due to a Good and every way Worthy Man, and to whom I owe a particular Reverence for his Station in that Church to which I am so near a *Neighbour*.

Sir, I wish the Present here Humbly made *You* were worthy of *You*, and then I am sure I should present *You*

A 2

with

The Dedication.

with a Good Book. However tho' my Offering be Slender, according to my Abilities, yet I *Mean* what You Deserve, and therefore I hope Your Goodness will accept of what I Intend, and pardon what I Offer.

With this Publick Testimony of my Respect, You have my good Wilhes and hearty Prayers to Almighty God, that he would long Bless you with Lite and Health, to be Serviceable to His Church in these difficult Times by Your great Wisdom and Prudence, whereof there is to be seen in You a *Living Treatise*, and such as may serve to supply the Defects of that which is here with all Dutiful Submission Offer'd You, by

Reverend Sir,

Your very Humble Servant,

J. NORRIS.

THE

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T R E A T I S E
C O N C E R N I N G
C h r i s t i a n P r u d e n c e .

C H A P. I.

Of the Importance of Prudence.

i. **T**RUTH is so beautiful, and the Desire of Knowledge so natural, and the Pleasure in finding it so ingaging and transporting, that the most *temperate* Minds can hardly set themselves any Bounds in the search of it. And yet tho' Truth be the Object of Understanding, and such as is perfectly understood too by that Mind which is commensurate to it, that pure Light in which there is no Darkness at all, yet considering how limited our Intellectual Faculties are, and how narrow their Bounds, and how little Time we have in this

B World;

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World, either to get Knowledge, or to enjoy that which we have, and that after all our Inquiries and Endeavours, we must and shall be ignorant of many things, I think it must be allow'd that it becomes Man, and is one part of his Wisdom, to apply his Thoughts chiefly to the Consideration of such Things as are of the greatest Importance to him, and which he is most concern'd to know, that if he cannot so enlarge and extend his Faculties as to avoid *Ignorance*, yet he may at least so manage them, as not to sustain any *Damage* by it.

2. Now those Things I call Things of *Importance*, on which our Happiness depends, or which have such an ordination to it, or connection with it mediately or immediately, that by them we may, and without them we cannot be Happy. For there is this Proportion among others, between the Understanding and the Will, that as there are two sorts of *Good*, that which we desire for it self, which is an End, and that which we desire for the sake of something else, which is a Means; so in like manner there are two sorts of *Truth*, that which we contemplate for it self, and consequently acquiesce in the Contemplation of, without making any further progress, which is *speculative*, and that which we contemplate for the sake of, and in order to some farther Design, as suppose in order to Action, which is *practical Truth*. Truths of Importance then are Relative Truths, that have an Order or Reference to something farther, which

which something must be something desirable for it self, as the other is for that, or at least it must have a *reference* to something that is so self desirable, which must always be at the bottom. For there is a mediate and an immediate Importance. That is immediately important which has an immediate connection with the End, and that has a mediate Importance which has a necessary Reference to that which is so immediately connected. In the first Sense, *Vertue* suppose is of Importance as a Means to *Happiness*, in the second, Knowledge is of Importance as a Means to *Vertue*, both for the first Beginning, and farther Improvement and Confirmation of it. And accordingly we are required to add to our *Vertue Knowledge*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 5.

3. Of this *latter* sort of Importance is the Subject of our present Consideration, the great *Vertue of Prudence*, and more particularly *Christian Prudence*, than which nothing certainly can be more Important, and that tho' it be only in the secondary Sense of Importance. For so indeed we must acknowledge it to be, as not being *immediately* link'd with Happiness. And this perhaps may seem as a Diminution of its Moment, but indeed it is not, as being a Distinction of Order rather than Degree. For tho' it be not immediately connected with Happiness, as the next Means that serves to that End, yet it has so necessary a connection with those things that are so united to it, that without it Happiness is no more to be attain'd, than if it were connected

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with

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with it after the most immediate manner, or than it is to be attain'd without those things which have that immediate connection. And therefore tho' the Importance of Prudence be not so immediate as that of the other Vertues, because its connection with Happiness is not so, yet it is never the less urgent and pressing, since without Prudence I can be no more Vertuous, than without Vertue I can be Happy. Nay rather, this very thing will be found to turn to the Advantage of Prudence, that it has its Importance a little more remotely placed, since it gets hereby a larger Extent and more governing Influence, as taking in *Vertue* and *Happiness* both within the latitude of its compass, which is so far from lessening its Importance, that it really magnifies it, as a Weight set at a greater distance from the Center increases its Power.

4. But however since the Importance of Prudence is of a *mediate* kind, or once removed, the best and indeed only proper way to discover of what Importance it is to Happiness, will be to consider what connection it carries with *Vertue*, which is both the Natural and the Appointed Means of Happiness. Now this connection may be consider'd two ways, both in respect of the *Necessity*, and in respect of the Power or *Sufficiency* which it has as a Means to that End. Which accordingly we shall distinctly consider in two distinct Sections.

§ E C T.

S E C T. I.

Of the Necessity of Prudence to a Vertuous and Christian Life.

I. **N**OW as to this Part it is to be consider'd, that as there may be and are many things that are helpful and advantagious towards the doing Vertuous Actions, and leading a Vertuous Life, as good Education, good Conversation, good Examples, &c. So there is also a *unum necessarium*, a certain thing that is absolutely and indispensably necessary, and that is *Prudence*. 'Tis possible for a Man to be Vertuous, though perhaps at a hard rate, under the worst Education, in the most lewd and insnaring Company, and among the most corrupting Examples, as *Lot* was in *Sodom*; vexed as *St. Peter* says, but not *Debauch'd* with the filthy conversation of the wicked, *2 Pet. 2. 7.* but there is no possibility of a Man's being Vertuous without Prudence, nor could that just person have been so, though in a better place, if he had wanted that fundamental Qualification. For indeed it is the very ground-work and foundation of Goodness, and accordingly placed by Moralists among the *Cardinal* Vertues, whereof they are pleased to reckon four in proportion to the subjects which they perfect, and they have the Authority of *Aquinas* for it; but tho' the Vertues they specify may be allow'd to be

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6a. Art. 3.

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principal in their respective Kinds, yet simply and absolutely speaking 'tis plain, that there is but one great Cardinal Vertue, which is Prudence, that being indeed the true *Hinge* upon which all Morality turns. For,

2. Prudence is the Guide and Director of Human Life, the Compass whereby we steer the course of it through the various Waves of this troublesom and dangerous World, so as to arrive at the land of everlasting Life. 'Tis an Eye to our Mind, and a Torch to our Way, that interior Eye which makes the whole Body full of Light, and without which, it is as full of Darkness. 'Tis indeed the very Reason of Manners, the Mould and Model of Practice, *recta ratio agendorum* as 'tis call'd, and the very *Art* of Life. 'Tis that in living, which Logick is in reasoning, this conducting the Will in the choice of good, as the other does the understanding in the search and knowledge of Truth. Morality is a sort of *Building*, and not only the Christian Church, but a Christian Life is by the Apostle compared to it. *Building up your selves on your most holy Faith.* And, *rooted and built up in him.* Now this whole Building from first to last proceeds under the conduct and direction of Prudence, without which a Man can no more lead a Christian Life, or so much as do a good Action, than an Architect can Build a House well without his *Level* or his *Rule*.

3. For indeed Prudence is the *Immediate Rule* of Action. This I know is said of *Conscience*.
And

And 'tis very true that what a Man is immediately to follow, and to act by is his Conscience, or if you will his Judgment or Perswasion as to what he ought, or ought not to do. But this being sometimes wrong as well as right, does not always *regulate* the Action which it conducts. But that Prudence does. There is therefore a *conducting Rule*, and a *regulating Rule*. A Rule which a Man is to follow, and a Rule which leads him right. Now tho' a Man's Judgment or Conscience be his next Light, and what he is immediately to follow, even when wrong, yet 'tis his Prudence that leads him right, and so immediately *regulates* what he does. Not that this is the only rule of Action. There are other Rules besides this, and that are even superiour and præscriptive to it. The Primitive, Original, Independent, and indeed only Just and Adequate Rule of Action, that obliges by it self, and its own proper Authority, is the Will of God, as declared either by Nature, or by Revelation. Besides this, there is also a Secondary and Derivative Rule, subordinate to, and dependent upon the former, *viz.* The Laws of those to whom God requires us to be subject, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical. But still this does not hinder Prudence from being the immediate Rule that applies all this to the Direction of a Man's Conduct, that whereby he most nearly acts, and which regulates his Actions, by making them conformable to the other Rules, the Laws of God and Man respectively. For so the Mariner

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has the *Polar Star* for his guide in Sailing, and yet 'tis the *Compass* by which the Ship makes her Voyage, and whereby he immediately steers her Course.

4. And this I offer as the first Argument for the Necessity of Prudence to a Vertuous Life, because it has all the necessity of a *Guide* and a *Rule*, which to be sure is necessity enough. But besides this it is further to be consider'd Secondly, That Vertue is of an Elective Nature, consisting in a good Choice, and every Act of Vertue is also an Act of free Choice. For 'tis not enough that what we do be materially good, but we must do it well, and in a right manner, one condition of which is that it be *Chosen*, and not done as it were Mechanically, by a mere natural Movement, Impetus, or Passion. But now Choice being of good only, and there being two sorts of Good, that which is desirable for it self, and that which is desirable for something else, there are two things required to make our Choice good, a due End in the first place, and then due Means for the attainment of it. Whoever therefore designs to lead a Good, Vertuous, and Christian Life must do both these. He must first of all propose a right End to himself, and in the next place he must chuse and apply right and proper Means for the procurement of this end. Even as a Man that travels, or runs a race (to both which the Scripture alludes in the representation of a Christian Life) must assign to himself a certain proper place as the term of his Motion, and

and also take the right way to bring himself thither. And both these are equally necessary. For if his end be right, and his way wrong, he will be never the better for this right end for want of a right way to arrive at it. And so on the other hand, if his way be never so right, but his end wrong, tho' he may compass his End, yet he will be no more Happy than if he miss'd it, and so will be never the better for the rightness of his way. Perhaps much the worse. For if his end be wrong, it might be better if his way were wrong too, because a wrong way to a false end, may possibly be a true way to a right one. As for instance, suppose a Man proposes *Sensual Pleasure* as his End, and chuses Poverty as a means to this end. This Poverty that is unfit to minister to this false end, may yet be a true means to lead him to a better. Whereas a right way to a wrong end (such as Riches suppose would be to sensual Pleasure as giving him the Opportunities of enjoying it) tho' with respect to this end it may be said to lead him right, yet absolutely and upon the whole it must necessarily lead him wrong, and that because his *End* is so. There must be therefore a joint concurrence of both these Qualifications, the proposal of a right end, and the choice of right means in him that will lead a *Vertuous* Life. But now, as will appear further in what follows, this is the very thing we mean by *Prudence*, at least it is what essentially belongs to it. And therefore upon this account also there

is

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is an utter necessity of Prudence to a Life of Vertue.

5. But for a further proof of the same we may consider Thirdly, That Vertue is a *Rational Act*. For tho' the will be the immediate subject of it, yet 'tis also as true that 'tis subjected in the will as acting under the Conduct, and by the direction of the understanding, and following the practical Dictates of it. For the Will can chuse nothing but what the Understanding represents as good, that being the formal Object of it. But so far Vice as well as Vertue is a Rational Act. For even when a Man Sins, he does at that time think it best upon the whole to do as he does. Perhaps 'tis not his Habitual Thought, but 'tis what he thinks actually. Perhaps he did not think so *before*, nor will perhaps think so afterwards when the fury of his Passion, and the heat of the Temptation is over, but 'tis what he verily thinks *then*. For he can will nothing but what appears good to him, or else he would will Evil as Evil, which is impossible. So far therefore Vice is a rational Act as well as Vertue, that is, a Man's Will Acts according to his present Judgment and Understanding in the one as well as in the other, chusing that which appears best in both. But with this Difference, that in Sin things do not appear as they are, nor does the Sinner judge of them according to Truth. For he thinks Sin an eligible thing, and that 'tis upon the whole good to commit it. But now this is a false Proposition. Sin can never be good
or

or eligible in any Case, as being the greatest Evil, and 'tis his mistake to think that it can. And this is that very Ignorance, Folly, and Deception of Sin which the Scripture so often charges and reproaches it with. This is the Erroneous Judgment, the False and Abusive Persuasion, the *wrong Theory* that passes in the Mind of the Sinner before there is any Error in his Will. And in this it is that Moral Aphorism is verify'd, *Omnis peccans ignorat*, every Sinner is ignorant, which is most certain, understanding it of an Actual, not always of an Habitual Ignorance. But now in the practice of Vertue things really are as they do appear, and not only the Will follows the Understanding (for that it does also in the other case) but the understanding leads right, as following the very Truth, and representing that to be good which indeed is so. So that here real good and apparent good are not divided, as in the former case, but are one and the same; that which appears good, being in reality that good which it appears and is judged to be. And by this means it comes to pass that Vertue is a rational Act quite in another sense than Vice is or can be. For 'tis plain by the Premises that when Vice is said to be a rational Act, the denomination of *rational* is taken only from the *Subject*, Faculty, or Principle from whence it derives its original, and means no more than that it is an Act that depends upon and takes its rise from the Will, not acting blindly, that is at random, but under

der the conduct and government of the rational Faculty, and according to the Light of a Man's present, tho' mistaken understanding. But now when *Vertue* is said to be a rational Act, the Denomination is taken not barely from the Faculty it self, but from the right Use and good Management of that Faculty, meaning that 'tis an Act not only depending upon a rational Principle (for so Vice does too) but upon a rational Principle using its power of reason *well*, reasoning aright, and judging of things as they are in themselves. In this sense it is that Vertue is a rational Act, because it is the result and conclusion of a well inform'd and rectify'd Judgment, and from the due Application and right use of a Man's reason. But now the due use of Reason, and a right Judgment in *Practical* things is the same with *Prudence*, as will be shewn hereafter. And therefore if Vertue be in this sense a Rational Act, then 'tis also consequently as much an Act of *Prudence*. And if Vertue be an Act of Prudence, then (which is the conclusion intended) 'tis plain that Prudence is absolutely necessary to Vertue, as being an Ingredient into the very Nature and Constitution of it. For indeed 'tis Prudence and Discretion that goes through all our Vertues, and gives to every Vertue its order and measure, and makes it to be what it is. For what a strange thing for instance would *Zeal* be without Prudence. So far from being a Vertue, or of any real use to the world, that it would be an intolerable thing, and

and fit to be banish'd out of it. So again, *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, what would these great Christian Vertues be without Prudence to conduct them? Why we see by the Extravagancies to which some Imprudent and Indiscreet (tho' perhaps otherwise well meaning) Men have carried these things. Nay even *Charity* it self, as Noble and Divine a Vertue as it is, cannot do without it, but needs it as much as any, to direct when, how, to whom, and in what measure to distribute our Benevolence. So that Prudence is necessary not only to the government of our Passions, and to restrain us from *Vice*, but even to order and regulate our very *Vertues*.

6. Again Fourthly, As Vertue is an Act of Reason, so 'tis also an Act of Reason against *Passion*, and the Bias of corrupt nature to the contrary, our *natural Inclination to Evil*, as 'tis commonly, but I think not so properly call'd. Not that I should much contend about using an Expression so commonly receiv'd as this is, provided it be rightly understood. But how that is, wants a little Explaining, and the rather, because it has a Darknes from the Expression, which in the propriety of it I cannot think Intelligible. Love of Inclination is opposed to Love of Choice. For there are two sorts of Love, or two different ways rather of loving a thing, from *within*, or from *without*, for it self, or for the sake of another. As is plain in the example of End and Means. The End we love for it self, the Means we love for the sake of the
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the End. Now Love of Inclination is of the former sort, when we love a thing, not for the sake of something without it, but from within or for it self. But I think 'tis very plain, that so we cannot love Evil, since then we should love Evil as Evil, which is the Object of our natural Aversion rather than of our Love. Besides 'tis plain that we cannot love it for it self, because as such it has nothing in it self that is Lovely. *Chuse* it indeed we may as a means to good, or for the avoiding a greater Evil, but we cannot love it for it self, and so consequently cannot be rightly said to be naturally *Inclined* to it. When we love it, 'tis with a love of Choice, not with a love of Inclination. Pleasure we love with a love of Inclination, and for the sake of Pleasure we *chuse* Sin, but how we can be properly said to be inclined to it, I see not. Indeed there is an excellent Author who *Traité de la Conscience.* will have us to be naturally inclined either to Sin in general, or at least to P. 117. *particular* Sins. So he puts it. But as for Sin in general, 'tis plain that we cannot be inclin'd to that, since that would be to be inclined to Sin formally as such, which is manifestly absurd. And as for being inclined to particular Sins (the part which he seems most to favour) I do not see how that can be neither, and that because we do not love even particular Sins for themselves any more than Sin in general. For he that commits Theft or Adultery, for instance, does not love those Sins for themselves, but

but for the sake of the Pleasure or Profit which he expects by them. Which Pleasure or Profit he would much rather have without the Sins, and if he might, to be sure would by no means commit them ; but since he cannot, rather than want those gratifications, is induced to do it. So that all the *Inclination* that is in this matter respects the Pleasure and the Profit, and not the Sin. As corrupt therefore as our Natures are, I do not apprehend how they can be said in a proper sense to be *inclined* to Evil, nor do I look upon that as any part of their Corruption; or think it any Service to Religion to place so great an Article of it as that of our Original Corruption, in a thing which is no more consistent with Philosophic Truth than this Natural *Inclination* to Evil is. Not but that there most certainly is some weight in our Nature (and that's enough to salve the corruption of it) which moves and determines the Will to the *choice* of Evil, or else 'tis unaccountable how there should be so much of it in the World. But whether this be by way of a proper Natural *Inclination* to Evil, is the Question. I think it more intelligible to explain it thus. We naturally love Pleasure, and in particular that of Sense, and that to such an inordinate degree that we cannot refuse it, or moderate our selves in it without the Grace of God. How we come to have such an *inflamed* Propension to sensible good is another Question, and which would lead us too far to inquire. But that we have it, Experience shews,

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shews, and in this strong propension of our nature (not to *Evil*, but) to sensible *good* it is, that I take the corruption of it mainly to consist. Now tho' pleasure of Sense, as also all sensible good, be not Evil as such, and consequently the being inclined to *that* is not to be inclined to *Evil*, yet in some Cases or Circumstances it becomes morally Evil, as being in such Cases against the good of Man, and the order of Society. Accordingly in those Instances it is forbid by the Law of God, and so there is a Restraint laid upon our Appetites, which tho' natural and in the general innocent (at least as to the object) cannot however in those particular Instances be gratify'd without Sin. But still our desire to sensible good flames; and perhaps the fiercer for this Restraint. We love Pleasure, and the love of Pleasure in general carries us to desire the enjoyment of it in forbidden Instances, which tho' we do not covet as such, yet rather than want that Pleasure which we do so, we are willing to consent to. 'Tis the Love of sensible good therefore that carries us to Moral Evil, to which of it self we have no Natural *Inclination*. In short therefore, according to this account our love of Evil is not *Natural*, but *Violent*, we being plainly driven to it against the stream of our Nature (for Evil of all sorts is our Natural Abhorrence) by the Tide of our Passion, the love of sensible good, our true proper *Concupiscence*. But however, tho' we are not properly *inclined* to Evil, yet 'tis plain even by this Account that

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we have that in us which very strongly pushes us towards it, and that so strongly that 'tis all one for ought I know as to our *Practice* (tho' not in *Theory*) as if we were naturally *inclined* to it, the Difficulties of a Vertuous Life coming to be as great this way as the other. Which again infers the necessity of Prudence for the well acquitting our selves of those Difficulties.

7. For thus it is with us. The love of sensible good draws us to the pursuit of it even in its forbidden Instances, which we are tempted, that is, vehemently moved to indulge our selves in, rather than want that good. And this is the very Impulse which we have to Evil. Not to commit it therefore we must act against this Impulse, run counter to this Bias, and must strive, if not against the *Stream*, as having no natural Inclination to Evil, yet against the *Tide*, as having a very strong one for Pleasure. And this makes a Difficulty. And a very great Difficulty it is. 'Tis a hard thing for a Man so to command himself as to act against himself, that is, to act against an Inclination, if not to Evil, yet which to him is all one, an Inclination to that sensible good which drives him to it. For not to do what a Man has a mind to do, whether from an Inclination to the thing it self, or from a Movement impress'd by something else for which he has an Inclination, makes a contest and a struggle. Which would neither in this Case be avoided, if a Man *should* do what he has a mind to do, that is *Sin*, because he would act with

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Resistance, and with a *mixed* Will. For as on the one hand we have a motion to Sin rather than want Pleasure, so on the other hand we have at the same time a motion to want Pleasure rather than Sin. So that there will be a Reluctancy, which side so ever a Man shall determine for. In the mean time he is *divided*, and there is a *Competition* between sensible Good and moral Evil; sensible Good to which he is naturally inclined, and moral Evil to which he is as *such* averse, but which he has a motion to from the other. And the Competition is, whether he shall Sin rather than want such a sensible Good, or whether he shall want that sensible Good rather than Sin. He has a motion for both these, but can do but one, and the Question is which.

8. Reason would soon determine this if she might be heard, but Passion is *Deaf* as well as *Blind*. However, before any thing can be concluded in this matter, it must be resolved which of these is the greater Evil. And that Reason would soon resolve too, if the Appeal were made intirely to her, or if she could give her Judgment without Prejudice. If a Man were to answer this Question for *another* he would soon do it, and do it right, but neither so soon, nor so well, for *himself*. However he might do it for himself too, if he were to give Sentence when he is cool and sedate and unmoved, as a Man is when he writes Cases of Conscience in his study. He would then think this so clear a one, that
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he would hardly think it worth resolving. But Speculation is one thing, and Practice is another. In the former our *Habitual* Knowledge speaks, but our *Actual* in the latter, and 'tis our *Actual* Knowledge upon which our Practice depends. For we always Act by our present Light, which at that time generally shines but dimly. So that 'tis one thing to pass a general Sentence, and determin as it were *ex Cathedra*, and another thing to Act. In the first way who is it that will not *in Thesi* determine that 'tis best *not to Sin*. That's every Man's *Habitual* Sense. But when we come to Act, we have another Notion of the matter, as our Practice shews. For then our Thoughts are not always about us, and we have not always time to recollect them. Or if we do, we do it not fully, but leave something or other out of the Account, which if taken in would change the State and Manner of our Conduct. For our Capacity is so fill'd, and our Attention so broken and divided by the alluring appearances of *sensible Good*, that we cannot attend as we ought to do, nor as we have done, nor as we otherwise would do to the *Evil of Sin*, nor even to what we our selves know of it. An able *Professor* may be Baffled by those Objections in the Disputation, which he himself had answer'd in his Determination. This is our Case. When we come to Act and Exercise, our *Habitual* light fails us, and the Temptation baffles us even in what we well enough understand; and if it does not find us Ignorant, yet it makes us so, Actually

ally Ignorant of what we have an Habitual Knowledge. For the time is short, and we are in haste, and our Passion is inflamed by the nearness of the Object, and the opportunity of enjoying it is urgent, and our warm Imagination promises I know not what Happiness in the enjoyment of it, which we are disposed to believe, because the Object of our Passion being *Sensible, Present, and Certain*, makes a very Specious and Goodly Appearance. Whereas the *Evil of Sin* is a Notional and Intellectual thing, and that depends upon abstract Reasonings and Consequences, such as we are not then at leisure to pursue. And as for the *Effects* of it, the only affecting and awakening part, the Scene of that is laid in another world, in a remote, and as we then flatter our selves, very long *hereafter*. In the mean while sensible good makes the best advantage of the present Season, and we are drawn by the nearest Loadstone. And thus tho' *Sin* be really by far the greatest Evil, and even by our selves so esteem'd in the general, yet (such is the delusion of sense) when the Case comes to be particular, and we are proceeding to act, the privation of sensible good is most apt to appear so to us. So that (which is the result of this Consideration) unless a Man has then a good presence of mind, a wakefulness of thought, a lively sense of things, and of the just nature and moment of them, and a clear conviction of what is then best to be done, unless he has Sagacity and Foresight, and be always upon his guard,
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and has great Things in his Thoughts, and can see a great way before him, and knows how to make future things present, and to represent what's present as past and for ever gone, and so can hold the Ballance even between Time and Eternity, that is in one word, unless he has *Prudence*, he will give Sentence in favour of his darling Passion, and will chuse that Evil which offends his Reason, rather than lose that Good which flatters his Sense, and so will be *led away with the Error of the Wicked*, and imposed upon by the *Deceitfulness of Sin*.

9. Besides this general Disadvantage for the Practice of Vertue, from the contrary Bias of corrupt Nature attending all Men, there are also many particular Cases and Circumstances, from whence arise particular Difficulties. As first Natural Constitution. There are many Men that have a *Suavitas* as I may call it, an unhappy Temper and Constitution of Body, disposing and inclining them as we usually say to certain particular Vices, or more distinctly speaking according to the former Account, to certain particular *sensible Goods*, which rather than deny themselves they are tempted to commit such Sins, which accordingly we usually do, and in this Sense *may* properly call, the *Sins of their Constitution*. Not that their Constitution does directly incline them to the very Sins themselves, (no, Sin it self is our *Aversion*, and every way against the Nature of Man) but only to some Good of Sense, which rather than want they have a Motion to chuse

chuse Sin as the lesser Evil. There is great variety of Constitutions in the World with respect to the Health of the Soul, as well as that of the Body, and happy is he that has a good one. His Vertue has Nature of her side, and thrives as a Plant in a kind Soil. But many there are who are so unhappy as to have a bad one, so that they are good at a hard rate, and must do violence to their *Temper*, to act according to their *Reason*. But this is an uneasy and displeasing Work, and what few Men have Courage enough even to attempt, and much fewer to carry on with Success. And therefore such Persons had need of a great deal of *Prudence*, not to alter their Natural Constitution, for that's impossible, but so to manage and govern it that they may not be turn'd out of the way of Vertue by it, but may act well at the same time that they are as we say, *ill-disposed*. An ordinary measure of Prudence will not suffice for this. He had need be a very wise Man that shall govern the *Stars*, and truly not less wise that shall govern *himself* in such a juncture as this. For as Nature will *return*, so unless a Man be well furnish'd with Rational Considerations, and be full of Wise and Prudential Thoughts, it will *prevail* too, and the Bowl will run, not as the Hand directs, but as the *Bias* leads.

10. Next to our own particular Temper and Constitution, among the Disadvantages of a Vertuous Life, I place the Temper of *other Men*, whom we are concern'd either to cohabit, or converse

converse with, which oftentimes finds us as much work to manage, and gives us more Trouble than our own. For there are many Men that have something so very odd, cross-grain'd and untoward in their Tempers, and take so little care either to correct or manage them, that unless one has Prudence and Discretion enough for ones self and for them too, to remedy what may be redress'd, and to bear what cannot, one can't reasonably hope to live Peaceably, Vertuously, or so much as Innocently with them. Indeed if one were to live in a perfect Solitude, or in a *Platonic Commonwealth*, where Men are just as they should be, there would be no need of Prudence upon this account; but considering what the World is, and what our Ingagements are in it, I think a Man were as good put out to Sea without a Compass, as to pretend to live in the World without Prudence. As to go no farther than the case of *Drinking*. One would think it should be no hard matter to use a liberty so reasonable, as to take what one pleases of that as well as of any thing else, and that without *Offence*, which is then only reasonable when that Liberty is denied. And yet whoever knows the World cannot be ignorant how much Prudence is required, especially in some Societies of Men, so to use this most just Liberty as not to disoblige, and at the same time so to oblige as not to betray our Liberty by any undue compliance. And if it be so nice and tender a Point to please and humour the World in so small a matter as

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this, (small certainly to others, tho' of Consequence to the *Party concern'd*) how difficult then must it be to keep the Peace between us in the Case of *Civil Rights* and *Properties*, so as neither to be wanting in our just defence of the one, nor yet to break the other. In short, the World's a very difficult and troublesome place to live in, and a Man had need of a great deal of Prudence even in the best Times, but much more in bad, to carry him quietly through it. And accordingly when our Saviour Christ was sending his Disciples out into the World, tho' upon an Errand that might bespeak a very Kind and Hospitable Reception in it, he bids them be wise as Serpents, as well as harmless as Doves, *Mat. 10. 16.* And indeed, without the Wisdom of the Serpent, the Innocency of the Dove will not be very easy to be secured, any more than sufficient to *secure*.

II. After Temper and Natural Constitution, which is the first, comes Custom and Habit, which is a *second* Nature, and which if it be bad, is another great Disadvantage to our Vertue, and such as makes Prudence very necessary to the Practice and Exercise of it. For an evil Habit upon a viciously disposed Nature is as a *Bolt* or a *Bar* added to a *Lock*, to shut fast the Gate against Vertue. Indeed the first and best Prudence is to prevent Things coming to this pass; I mean, not to suffer our selves to be brought under the Power of any evil Habit. But when we are, (as there are few that are not in some
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measure or other) the next Prudence is to undo and break it off, and that as soon as we can, lest it grow more confirm'd and obstinate by staying upon us, and the *Bolt* and the *Bar* gather *Rust* by age, and so become more difficult to be removed. But what an undertaking is this, and how shall we go about it? 'Tis a Work of Time, as well as Labour, to conquer an evil Habit; 'tis not to be done at once, it must be unravell'd stitch by stitch, in the same manner, and by the same steps, as it was acquired. And what a hard thing is this to do, and what Pains must it cost if ever it be done. Accordingly the Scripture compares it to an *Ethiopian* changing his Skin. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accusom'd to do evil,* Jer. 13. 23. The words in their sound express an Impossibility, in like manner as when our Saviour says, that *'tis easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God;* but to be sure no less than an extreme difficulty is intended in both. 'Tis not so in our single Acts, we are Masters of them all the way, but of our Habits chiefly in the *beginning*, and they who do not prevent them then, very seldom get rid of them afterwards, however not without a great deal of difficulty; which makes the Examples of *late Penitents* so very rare, because they have so many old Habits to put off, as well as new ones to acquire. Their Sins are become a part of themselves, so that they are to change

change not only their *Spots*, but their very *Skin*.

12. But before either of these can be done, there is another Difficulty to be incounter'd, that of doing good and vertuous Acts while we are yet under the Power of a contrary Habit, and before the Impressions of it are perfectly defac'd. Such good Acts we must do, or else when will the Habit be removed? For how are inveterate Habits to be destroy'd but by contrary Acts? But how to do such Acts while we have Habits to the contrary upon us, and that are as yet so prevalent with us as to render Acts of an opposite kind more easy and pleasing to us, there's the Difficulty, and such a one as nothing but Experience can make us sensible of. To be vertuous at *any* rate is work enough, but to do Good while we have Habits to Evil upon us, with the confederate disadvantage of a corrupt Nature, and perhaps an ill Temper of our own into the bargain, to run counter to so many Biasses, and all on the same wrong side, this is no ordinary undertaking, and which must needs require a good stock of Prudence to atchieve it. For there are but two Human Principles of Action, *Inclination* and *Reason*. And since in the Practice of Vertue and Goodness, Inclination is supposed to run all the other way, we can here act only by Reason. And it must not be mere *Notional* Reason neither, for we see Men can make a shift to sin and be wicked in the midst of *abundance* of *Theory*, but it must be a present, actual, and awaken'd Sense and Consideration of Things,

Things, that Practical Reason and Judgment which we call *Prudence*. Whereof also a considerable measure is necessary to combat with the fore-mention'd Difficulties. For in short, Weight must contend against Weight, and 'tis in the Balance of the *Will* as in all others, where the heaviest Scale will weigh down.

13. But to urge the Necessity of Prudence yet farther, there is another great Disadvantage lies against the Practice of Vertue, and which we all labour under, and that is the *lateness* of our arrival to the use of our *Reason*. That by being born Infants, and passing so many Judgments upon Things as we do, before we have Reason enough to judge of any Thing as we ought, we take up abundance of Prejudices which indispose us for the Knowledge of *Truth*, was a good Observation of a Great Man. But it is capable of a farther Improvement than he has made of it, of a *Moral* as well as of a *Philosophical* Application, since the lateness of our coming to the Exercise of our Reason may be consider'd as a Disadvantage to Goodness and Vertue, as well as to Truth and Science. *Thus* : we are born Infants, and tho' Reason be our Natural Birth-right, yet 'tis an Inheritance in Reversion, and a great while it is before we come to be possess'd of it. In the mean time our *Senses* are in Perfection, and indeed in greater Perfection than ever, because of the fineness and tenderness of their Organs, which renders them more capable of Impressions. These therefore then sink the
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the deeper, and have the greater effect, and the more because there is then nothing to controul them. For in this *silent* interval of Reason Sense only speaks to us, and sensible Objects play their Batteries upon us, and we take their Impressions like Wax, and keep 'em like Steel, there being nothing either to hinder, or to deface them. For we are then all *Sense*, and sensible Objects are indear'd to us by our constant conversing with them: We are first Familiarized to them, and then in Love with them. And so the *World* with all its vain Pageantry, the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, insinuates it self into our Affections, and takes an early Possession of our Hearts. And by this means that love of sensible Good which, as was noted before, is the *Disease* of our Nature, and the very Bias that turns us upon Evil, which we chuse rather to commit than want that Good; I say this Love of sensible Good which was before kindled in our Natures, receives a new Ferment, and grows more and more inflamed, and withal more fix'd and rooted in us. So that by that time Reason comes, and would suggest better Things, and recommend to us Objects more worthy of our Love, she finds that Sense has been before-hand with her, and that our Affections are preingaged. She finds that Sense has had the Advantage not only of the first *Seizure*, but of a long settled Usurpation; and that 'twill be no very easy matter with these Disadvantages either to dispossess the Usurper, or to establish her self.

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14. But besides as 'tis a great while before we come to the *use* of our Reason, so even when we *are*, 'tis a much longer time after that before we come to a mature and *full* use of it. What we commonly call *Years of Discretion*, falls short of it by a long Cast, and is as it were but the dawning of it. For tho' our day has been then for some time broken, and our Light so far advanced as to subject us to Laws and Governments, so as to make us responsible to them for our Actions, we are not yet however so far come to our selves, as duly to consider our *true Good and Evil*, nor is our Reason so far awake, or grown so strong as to be an equal match either for her own Passions, or for the World's Temptations. So that 'tis still but *Morning* with us, and our Sun is yet at a good distance from the Meridian. In the mean time as it is getting thither, it is to contend with Clouds and Mists all the way, which tho' they do not stop its Progress, yet they interrupt its Light. The thing that I intend is, that our *Passions* are then very strong and violent, while our Reason is weak and imperfect, and require abundance of government while the other is hardly able so much as to hold the Reins. And so the heat of Passion hurries us along our youthful Stage, and while it does so, we must needs make many false Steps, commit many Follies and Indiscretions, lay in a stock for future Repentance, and withal contract many ill Habits, which will be work enough for our remaining Life to unlearn, and from
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which if we do not recover our selves about the *maturer* part of it (a very *Critical* Time for Men's breaking off their Vicious Habits and taking up wiser Measures) 'tis much if we ever do. If our Sun does not overcome the mist and break out then, about the *noon* of our lives, 'tis much if it be not *in* for the whole day. Accordingly 'tis observ'd, that 'tis very rare that Men grow Good and Vertuous either when very Young, or when very Old. Not when very Young, because of the violence of their Passions, those *Youthful Lusts* which the Apostle speaks of. Nor yet when very Old, because of their Evil Habits, which, if they have carried them through the maturer season of their lives, and kept them till then, are too confirm'd upon them to be removed by any ordinary Remedy. And indeed 'twill be work enough to do it even at the maturer part, tho' they *should* be so fortunate as to take that Critical Season for it. That indeed is the most likely time, after Passion begins to cool, and before our Habits are too much confirm'd, but even then 'tis a great Work, to *dare to be Wise* and Good, and what cannot be done without a great deal of Prudence and rational Application. I shall now dismiss this Consideration with this Remarque. We reckon that *late Penitents* have a great disadvantage as to Goodness because of the many ill Habits which they have contracted. And 'tis very true. But indeed this is in great measure the Case of us all, by reason of the long interval not only from our
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Birth to the use of our Reason, but even from that to our coming to the *full* use of it, which is much longer. In all which dark Interval, Passion being very strong in us, and Reason but weak and infirm, the consequence is, that (without a special Grace preventing and securing us) we must fall into many Disorders, and so contract ill Habits, which to grapple with will be a great Contention, and to overcome as great a Victory, but not to be hoped for without as great a Prudence.

15. To these Considerations if we further add the great Disadvantage of *Youth* by reason of Carelessness, Inadvertency, and want of Experience, as well as particular Lusts and Passions, and the Sins that by that means are incident to it; the great Prejudice of *Education*, which if it be bad, gives a Man a wrong turn for his whole Life. What a *World* it is that we are to live in, and the manifold Temptations of it, which are so insidiously placed, and lye as it were in Ambush for us, that we can hardly move a step without treading upon a Snare. The great Vanity of the *Age*, and the Corruption and Danger of *Conversation*, and what an Art it is to manage it so as neither to give Offence to those we converse with, nor to take Injury by them. The great Contagion of *Example*, and the as great Prevalency of bad ones, and how hard it is, and how much Prudence it demands, to be able to stem such a strong tide, so as not to follow a multitude to do Evil. The inticements of
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Wicked Men, and their false Maxims of Honour, and their malignant Opposition, that Contradiction of *Sinners* whereof the Scripture speaks, if you refuse to comply with their Inticements, and to come into their Measures, it being sufficient matter for either *Sport* or *Quarrel* if you will not be Mad for Company, run with them to the same excess of Riot, and be Damn'd for a Frolick. Add to this the more solemn Persecutions that often arise for Righteousness sake from Laws and Governments, and the ill use of that Power which God has ordain'd for Edification and not for Destruction, which was the case of the Primitive Christians, and has been of others since, and may at any time be ours. To which we may add the great difficulty of *Afflictions* in general, and the Prudence that is necessary both to bear them, and to improve them as we ought. Nor are we to forget the danger of some Callings and Professions, as also of some Circumstances and Conditions in the World. Adversity and Prosperity, Poverty and Riches are both great Tryals, and accordingly the wise Man was for neither of them. Poverty is much the safer of the two, there being no *Camel*, nor Needle's Eye to be found there. And yet if a Man's Condition in the World be very low, he had need of a great deal of Prudence to keep him in Temper, and to prevent the natural Resentments of Envy and Discontent. And if his Condition be very high in the World, especially if it comes to be so by a sudden Promotion, he had need have

have a good steddiness of Head to bear that Height, a Height that is so strange and unfamiliar to him. These, and such like, (for in so great Plenty one can't well rake clean) are the Difficulties, Discouragements and Disadvantages, that attend the Exercise of Vertue and Practice of a good Christian Life, in passing through which, *Prudence* will be as necessary as a *Torch* is to a Traveller that is to take a Journey in dark and difficult ways. General Theory, and Habitual Knowledge, will not do, there must be a particular sense of things, a present actual and practical Light to conduct a Man through the difficult stages of a Vertuous Life. For to resume our last Comparison, the Traveller may have a general Knowledge of the Country, and well enough understand the *Geography* of it, nay he may be acquainted with the particular Roads, and yet if it be dark, and the ways foul or difficult, he had need travel with a Torch in his hand, that so he may neither take a wrong way, nor blunder or stumble in the right.

16. But to give a stricter, clearer and briefer Demonstration of this Matter, *viz.* the Necessity of Prudence to the Practice of a Vertuous Life, I shall only suppose one Principle, and that as uncontested a one as any in Morality, that there is no willing Evil as Evil, upon which I thus reason. Therefore a Man must act as he thinks, that is, must act that which he then thinks best to be done, or else 'tis plain that he must will Evil as Evil, contrary to the Principle supposed.

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But now if a Man must act as he then thinks, then 'tis plain, that if he acts ill he must then think ill; so 'tis as plain on the other hand, that if at that time he thinks ill, he must and will most certainly act ill; that is, if at the Point of Action he thinks that to be good or eligible which really and truly is not so, then he will chuse and act that which really is not good; that is, he will act amiss, as well as think amiss, and that because he can act no otherwise than as he at that time thinks. Now from hence this Conclusion will follow, That for a Man's acting right, 'tis necessary he should at that time *think* right. But now to think or judge right in the very Instant of Action, is that very Practical Wisdom which we call *Prudence*. And consequently, without *Prudence* there can be no such thing as a Vertuous Life.

17. All that can be reasonably question'd here is, whether *general Theory*, or mere Notional and Habitual Knowledge, may not serve to supply its place. In Answer to which (besides a Touch or two which I have given upon it already) I do not deny, but that Notional and Habitual Knowledge is a very good Foundation for a truly Vertuous and Christian Life, so far am I from siding with those who make Ignorance to be the Mother of Devotion. It must certainly be a *blind* Devotion whereof Ignorance is the Mother, and not that reasonable Service which the Apostle speaks of. Knowledge certainly is a
much

much better Principle for *that*, and he that has it has a very great Advantage; as having now nothing to do but to reduce that his Habitual Knowledge to act, so as to have a present Apprehension, a lively and affecting Sense of what he knows. But however a mere Notional and Habitual Knowledge will not do. The *Angels* that sinn'd had it, and yet they sinn'd, nay they have it still, and yet still they sin. And so 'tis with *Men* too, who not only sin *with* their Knowledge, but *against* their Knowledge, that is; their Habitual Knowledge, for as for Actual they have then none to sin against, being then actually ignorant of what they habitually know. There is therefore something more required to make a Man good and vertuous than Habitual Knowledge, even an Actual and Present Sense of what he knows, and that because 'tis our Actual and not our Habitual Thought upon which our Practice immediately depends; and which is the next Principle of Action. Even in Sin a Man acts as he then thinks; follows the present determination of his Mind, or his practical Judgment. He may sin against his Habitual (which is enough to falve what we call sinning against Knowledge) but cannot sin against his Actual Thought. For 'tis *that* which determines him; and if that his last Thought be wrong, his Practice will be wrong too; and he will infallibly sin, whatever his Habitual Judgment or Knowledge be. Whence it is plain that Habitual Knowledge, tho' even of the most An-

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gical Clarity and Brightness, cannot possibly supply the place of *Prudence* in order to the purpose of a Vertuous Life. On the contrary, *Prudence* can do much better without Notional Knowledge, than Notional Knowledge can do without *Prudence*. Which by the way may be applied to the Solution of a Difficulty, at first appearance a little surprizing, why so many weak ignorant People should be good and vertuous, when so many knowing, learned, and which is more, even *judicious* Men, are lewd and vicious: This shews that Notional Knowledge is one thing, and *Prudence* is another, and that these weak People, as they call them, are not weak in *Prudence*, tho' they are in Knowledge; but what they want in Theory they have in the other, which more than supplies that want: 'Tis true indeed they have but little Light, but that little is in their hands, ready for their use, and so they walk well by it. Whereas the other, tho' their Lamps are better furnish'd with Oyl, and so can give more Light, yet they take them not with them, but leave them at home, and tho' they can if they please go home and fetch them, yet in the mean time for want of them they stumble and fall. And no wonder, for as I have observ'd already, and cannot too often repeat it, 'tis our *present* Light that leads us, and a Candle in a Man's Hand will do him more Service for the directing his Steps, than Sun, Moon, and Stars under the Horizon. Those Lumina-
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ries, as great as they are, give Light only to the World to whom they are *present*.

18. There is therefore no dispensing with *Prudence*. We may dispense with Wit, we may dispense with Notional Knowledge, we may dispense with Learning, we may dispense even with clearness and distinctness of Conception, and what is the consequence of it, exactness of Judgment, (for there are many good and vertuous Men that have none of these Qualifications) but there is no dispensing with *Prudence*. And yet it must be confess'd, that there is a great latitude and variety in this matter, that Prudence is not alike necessary for all, but that a far less degree of it will serve some than others. Princes and great Persons, Men of Station or Men of Business, those who have all the Opportunities of gratifying their Lusts, or are involv'd in a multitude of Affairs, had need have a good stock of Prudence to guard their Vertue. And therefore I think *Solomon* was very much in the right, when he pray'd God to endue him with Wisdom to qualify him for his Royal Charge. As for Men of a lower Sphere, and of a more private and less involv'd Life, here a less measure may do. As also when a Man's Natural Inclinations do not carry him to any Vice, or when he has no Temptation or Opportunity to commit it, when he meets with no extraordinary Trials, and is involv'd in no Difficulties, but his way lies clean and strait before him, and he has no Counter-interest to deny, (the general Corruption of

Nature only excepted) or Passion to countermand, or Competition to controul, so that he need not sacrifice his Inclination to his Duty, because there is little or no Competition between them, but may be Vertuous with almost as little Trouble or Expence as otherwise, the Scale hanging pretty even on both sides. In such a Case as this (which may be supposed to be much the Case of some Men, at least for some time of their Lives) there will be no need of such abundance of Prudence. A little Light will serve in a good Way. But then as such a Man's Vertue will be of no great value, as having so very little Self-denial and sacrifice of the Will in it, so it is also of as little stability, indeed very precarious and uncertain. He may hold his course for a while in plain and even Ground, as a Ship sails gently on in a calm Sea without finding much work for the Pilot; but let any thing of a Difficulty be thrown in his way, and the Man presently stumbles, and his ungrounded *Complexional* Vertue sinks, as the House did that was built upon the Sand. Or if it stands, it must be by the help and support of a more than ordinary Prudence, without which however we may be Vertuous, yet there is no *security* of our Vertue. So then Prudence is always necessary more or less, or if we could suppose that some particular good Actions may be done (as perhaps they may *materially* consider'd) that are not under its positive Conduct and Direction, yet what's this to the leading of a Vertuous or Christian Life? For

For tho' a Ship, by the help of a favourable Wind and Tide, might take a right Course for a little way without any Body sitting at the Stern, yet it can't be supposed that it should make a *Voyage* at that rate; nor, I presume, would any one therefore pretend that a Needle and Compass were not necessary for Navigation.

S E C T. II.

Of the Power and Sufficiency of Prudence to a Vertuous Life.

I. **I** Have already endeavour'd to represent the Necessity of this great Cardinal Vertue, the Vertue of Prudence, and I think it appears in a full Light. But yet however 'tis to be remember'd, that this is but one side of the connection that it has with Vertue. There is also another to be consider'd by him that will do it Justice, it being no less *sufficient* for the Practice of Vertue, than necessary to it. For as we cannot be good and vertuous without it, so we shall not fail to be so with it. This alone will serve to make us so, that is, I mean, as an immediate Principle. For tho' all that is good in us must be finally resolv'd into the *Grace* of God, preventing us that we may have a good Will, and working with us when we have that good Will, as our Church expresses it, yet it being one part of the *Grace* of God to enlighten our Understandings, and to fix and stay our Minds in the

Sense and Consideration of those Things which would move and effectually work upon our Wills, which is true Spiritual Witdom, this will not hinder, but rather imply and infer that the next and immediate Cause of our Goodness and Vertue may be Prudence. And that it actually is so, and such as will not fail (I need not say with the Grace of God, for that's included as acting *by* Prudence) to effect and procure Goodness in us, may easily and with great brevity be made appear upon the foregoing Principles. *Thus.* Every Man must act as he thinks, that is, as he then thinks when he acts. Which is all one with that common Maxim of the Schools, that the Will follows the last practical Dictate of the Understanding, which I take to be a clear Principle. For as for that Complaint of *Medea*, of seeing and approving better things, and doing worse, that I take to be no Contradiction to this rightly understood, which is only of our Speculative, Universal and Habitual Judgment, which indeed we do not always follow. But if any one will say, that the meaning of that celebrated Passage is, that what we see and approve as best by a *practical* Knowledge or Judgment, when we consider the thing as cloath'd with all its Circumstances, and so pronounce our final Sentence upon it, that even *that* we do not follow, then I deny the Proposition. And that for this plain Reason, because this would run us into the confes'd Absurdity of willing Evil as Evil. For the avoiding of which we must say, that every
 Man

Man acts as he then thinks. And therefore as if he thinks ill, he must act ill, so if he thinks well he must as necessarily act well. That is, if he judges that to be best when he acts, which indeed is so, then he will also chuse and act that very Good which he then pronounc'd to be such, since he cannot go against that his practical Judgment without willing Evil as Evil, which cannot be. So then a just and right sense of things infers a conformity of Practice. Not indeed if it be only Notional and Habitual, because a Man may go off from that again, may form another Judgment after that, and such as is contrary to it, and 'tis a Man's last Judgment like his last *Will and Testament*, that stands and takes effect. But if this just and right Sense be also a present and an actual Sense, it must needs draw the Will along with it. For the Object of the Will being apparent Good, if that appears to a Man as Good which really is so at the time of Action, there can be nothing wanting to regulate his Practice. And for this Reason it is that Goodness and Vertue is so often represented in Scripture by the name of *Wisdom*, and made the result and product of a good Judgment, and rectify'd Understanding. *A good Understanding have all they that do his Commandments*, Psal. 111. A good *Understanding* (I mean one that is practically Good, actually right in its Judgment of Things at the very time of Action) never fails to make a good *Will*, and to secure a good Choice. To which I further add, That the

Reasons

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Reasons and Arguments for Piety and Goodness are so substantially strong, and the Motives of Religion (especially those which are taken from another World) so very perswasive in themselves, that if they are rightly consider'd, duely weigh'd, and the sense of them be present and actual upon a Man's Mind, their own proper weight will make them effectual. An Habitual and Dormant Sense of these Things may indeed consist with an Immoral Life, and so a Man may hold any Truth in Unrighteousness, but a Present and an Actual Sense cannot, because the Things are so momentous and important that they want only to appear as they are. So that in sum, tho' a Man may sin against Habitual Knowledge, yet there is no sinning against *Prudence*. We may sin indeed against *Prudence objective*, but there is no sinning against *Prudence subjective*. That is in plainer words, we may sin against the Laws and Rules of *Prudence*, or against what *Prudence*, if we had it, would direct us to; but we cannot possibly sin against that *Prudence* which is actually inherent in us, which as 'tis necessary to *Vertue*, so 'tis also sufficient to secure it even under the greatest Temptations, and the very worst of Circumstances.

2. The Scripture affords us a very lively and sensible Representation of this in the Examples of two very Eminent Persons, *Joseph* and *Moses*. The Case of *Joseph* was extraordinary. He was tempted indeed to a common Sin, but with peculiar Circumstances. He was got from the low Condition

Condition of a Slave into the Favour of his Lord, and the Favour of his *Mistress* too, who assaulted his Vertue with Immodest Love. He was a Young Man, and of like Passions with other Men of his Age, and had now a fair Opportunity, not only of gratifying those Juvenile Passions which were then strong and flaming, but also of making his Fortune, and advancing himself at Court, finding himself beloved by one of so much Interest there. To comply with her Desires was the ready way to oblige her to employ that Interest for him, and to deny it was not only to lose a Friend, but to make an Enemy, and to incur all that the Malice of a provoked Love could do. So that the Temptation was every way well laid, and such as in the course of Things one would have expected should have succeeded. And had it not fell'n upon a Person of a proportionable Prudence, no doubt but that it would. But he had his Thoughts about him, consider'd the *natural* Wickedness of the Action, (for as yet there was no express Law of God against it, which by the way shews that there is a Morality in Actions antecedent to any *positive* Law) what an Unworthiness and Ingratitude it would be to his Master to whom he owed all Fidelity, and the rather for his reposing so much Trust in him, and withal what an Offence it would be against God: And accordingly he refused her lowd Proposal with this discreet, and considerate Answer, *Behold, my Master wotteth not what is with me in the House,*
and

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and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand. There is none greater in this House than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his Wife. How then can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God? Gen. 39. 8, 9. In this Answer are couch'd all the foretouch'd Considerations, which it seems he had then before him in a present and actual View. And so the late Learned Bishop of Ely explains it in his Comment upon the Place. *How shall I commit such a Wickedness as Adultery? Such a great Wickedness? Against so kind a Master, who so intirely trusts in my Integrity? Especially since it cannot be committed without the highest Offence to God?* Now, I say, these were wise and great Thoughts, and such as for their Moment and Importance ought to take place. But yet had they been only so many speculative Notions, *sheath'd* under a general Power or Habit, he might have yielded to the Fair Tempter notwithstanding all this. But they stood before him as so many *naked* and *drawn* Swords pointed at his Breast, like the drawn Sword of the Angel forbidding the Advance of the Prophet. As the Considerations were in themselves great, so he had a practical and present sense of them, then actually shining out upon his Mind, and giving him a prevailing conviction of what was best to be done. Accordingly upon this he acted; and by this his Innocence was preserv'd, being under the safe Protection and Guardianship of Wisdom.

3. Moses

3. *Moses* encounter'd if not a greater, yet a brighter and more dazzling Temptation, especially to one who had had a Royal Education. For such was his, who from an exposed Infant was adopted the Son of the Princess, who as *Philo* notes, tho' Married for a long time could not yet be a Mother, and was very desirous of a Child that might succeed to the Hereditary Crown, which otherwise must go to a strange Family. So she makes him her Son, despairing of a more Natural Heir, and that he might be indeed taken for such, she had, as *Philo* tells us, made her self by Art big before-hand. Accordingly he tells us that he was taken for her Son, stood in the Hopes or Expectations of all as the next Taker to the *Egyptian* Crown, and was call'd nothing less than the *Young King*. And this perhaps might please him for a while; but when he had some more Years over his head, he saw through the Vanities into the Dangers of a Court Life, would not accept of that Honour and Grandeur which the World so idolizes, but chose rather to be little and good, than to be great and wicked. For so the Scripture tells us, *Heb* 11. 24, 25, 26. that *Moses* when he was come to Years (perhaps that critical Maturity of Life we were speaking of before) refused to be call'd the Son of *Pharaoh's* Daughter: Choosing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a season. Esteeming the Repraach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures

In Vita Mo-
is. Lib. 1.
p. 604. Paris
Edit.

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Treasures in Egypt. For he had respect unto the *Recompence of the Reward.* Now the wise Men of the World may reflect upon this, if they please, and 'tis likely they will, as a wrong step in *Moses's* Conduct; but indeed it was an Act of the highest Prudence and Discretion, and shews that he was *learned* in some other *Wisdom*, besides that of the *Egyptians*. For the Result of his Choice in short was to prefer even afflicted Innocence and Vertue before the transient Pleasures of a Vicious Life, an Heavenly before an Earthly Crown. And was not this a wise Choice, and was it not Wisdom that determin'd him to make it? For tho' if the Question were put in the general, to which of these the Preference is to be given, any one of common Sense that understood the Terms of it, would judge as he did, as to a Notional and Speculative Judgment; yet to keep up to this Judgment, and to live under a present and actual Sense of it, and to have the Convictions of it all clear and glowing upon ones Mind, *that's* the Difficulty; and 'twas this very thing (not a mere Notional Knowledge, which another might have had as well as he, and have find'd with it) that influenced and directed *Moses* in his Conduct, and made him chuse the *better Part*. He not only believ'd a Future *Recompence* with a general and habitual Faith, but had the *Celestial Glories* in his present actual View, saw how far they outshone those of the *Egyptian Court and Crown*, and that neither the Pleasures nor the Afflictions of

of this present time were worthy to be compared with the Glory that should be reveal'd. And so says the Text, *For he had respect, or turn'd away his Eye towards the Recompence of the Reward.* And again, *He indured as seeing him who is invisible,* v. 27.

4. Here let me beg my Reader to make a short Pause, and consider what a vain empty thing the Greatness of this present World is, and how vain and little it will appear when beheld in a true *Point of View*, and with the lessening end of the Prospective, not that which makes it less than it is, but which represents it in its *true littleness*. This World is naturally dear to us, and indeed has the advantage of the other, as making its court to us by our Senses, but of all things in the World there is nothing that so intirely subdues us to it, and that so generally triumphs over the Hearts of Men, as its *Greatness*, those Characters of Honour, Dignity and Power, whereby we are elevated above the common Level, and stand upon a little higher Ground than our Neighbours. For this gratifies our Pride and Ambition, Vices that bear the greatest sway in our corrupt Nature, and accordingly while the other Objects of the World inflame our Hearts, this melts them down, or rather quite steals them away from us. Accordingly St. *John* mentions the *Pride of Life* in the last place, as the greatest of the World's Temptations; 1 *John* 2. 16. And accordingly this was the Temptation which the Devil most depended upon, as
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his Master-piece, in his Assault of the Son of God, and so kept it in reserve as his last, presuming that this would do if all others fail'd, and the rather, because it prevail'd once upon himself. And yet after all there is something greater than all the Greatness of the World, and that is the Mind that despises it, as being indeed, notwithstanding the room that it takes up in our Hearts, and the Figure that it makes in our Imaginations, a very little and light Thing when weigh'd in the Ballance of a right and enlighten'd Judgment. And accordingly here we have a Person of good Sense, and (lest narrowness of Spirit should be objected) of an enlarged Education, and brought up in a Princely way and manner, actually despising it, and rejecting it with Contempt. Nor was this the first time

Jewish Antiquities.
B. 2. Chap. 5.

that he did so, if *Josephus* informs us right. For when *Pharaoh* in Complement to his Daughter *Thermuthis* put the Crown upon the Infant's Head, he pull'd it off, threw it down, and spurn'd it with his Feet. And how he was grown up to be a Man, he shew'd it no better respect, refusing to be call'd the Son of *Pharaoh's* Daughter, and so disclaiming all Title and Relation to the Crown. And this he did when 'twas offer'd to him, and that in the very Temple where this Idol is worship'd, the *Royal Court*. Those who cannot come at Greatness, may look at it with the same Indifference as a Man does at the Sky which he cannot touch, nor is concern'd whether he can or

no ; but 'tis quite another thing when the Scene of its Glory opens to us within our reach. And so a Philosopher may read a Lecture upon the Contempt of the World in his *School*, and a Monk may practice it in his *Cloister*, but 'tis quite another thing to do it in a *Court*, where there is so much regard had to Human Greatness, as if there were nothing else to be admired. But what was it that made *Moses* act at this odd rate ? Was it a mere Notional Knowledge of the World's Vanity ? But who has not that ? *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*, says *Solomon* ; and who is there that will not subscribe to that as a Proposition universally true ? 'Tis demonstrable from the nature of things that it must be so, and Experience shews that it is so, and every one is convinc'd of it, I mean *Notionally* convinc'd. But the eager and passionate Pursuits wherewith they follow the World as long as they have any Breath to run, shew that they have not an *actual* Conviction of this Habitual Knowledge. But this it seems *Moses* had ; and 'twas this that made him do that uncourtly, but indeed very wise and judicious Action, to refuse the Crown of *Egypt*, when it could not be had but at the Price of his Innocence, and to prefer not only a private, but an *afflicted* Condition before it. In all which as he acted Prudently, so 'twas Prudence that made him do as he did. Nor is it any Contradiction to this Account, that the Scripture resolves it into *Faith*. For so says the Author to the *Hebrews*, *By Faith Moses when he*

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was come to years, &c. But this makes no real Opposition. For tho' Faith was the ultimate, yet Prudence might be the immediate Principle. And this indeed was the very truth of the matter. Faith laid the general Foundation, and Prudence built upon it. The Foundation was that *Recompence of Reward* wherewith God repays the Obedience of his Servants, particularly those who for his sake renounce this present World. Now upon this Principle of Faith Prudence thus reason'd. If then there be such a Future *Recompence of Reward* to be expected, then 'tis best for me to chuse rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a season. And consequently, to renounce a Temporal and Corruptible, that I may have an Eternal and Incorruptible Crown. Thus he reason'd, and thus he acted, and both with the greatest *Prudence* as well as Faith.

5. And thus we may see the Force and Power of Prudence for the Preservation and Security of Human Vertue, and that (as appears by these Examples) in two of the most dangerous Temptations and Vices, *Lust* and *Ambition*; Passions that are so strong and furious as if they would divide the Heart of Man between them, and indeed even the World it self. In which there is but one Temptation more that threatens our Vertue, and that is what St. *John* calls the *Lust of the Eye*, or Covetousness; which indeed is a Vice that tho' in the highest degree unreasonable
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and absurd, has yet this peculiar advantage, that it is most incident to Men in the wisest and most mature part of their Lives, and shelters it self under the grave and reputable Name even of *Prudence* it self. For that's the Character that covetous Men too often go under, they first usurp the name of Frugal and Thrifty, and that being really a commendable thing, and what becomes and belongs to a Wise Man, they thence find it an easy step to assume the name of Wise, Prudent, and Provident Persons. But yet however there is no reason to doubt but that true Prudence will be a sufficient guard and defence even here too. For he that has true Prudence, and is indeed a wise Man, besides the thorough Conviction that he has of the Vanity of the World in general, must needs also know the true worth of Money, that 'tis a *Means*, not an *End*, valuable only for its use, and not for it self, and he must needs know also what that *use* is, *viz.* to procure a supply for our present wants, to serve as a *Viaticum* in our way, and he knows that those wants are but few, and that a little will suffice for a few wants, and we may also suppose him to be so much Master of himself, and to have so much government of his Passions, as neither to make more needs than he naturally and indeed has, nor to lay in a supply for those which he has, beyond their measure. He must be therefore above the inordinate desire of *getting* or *having*, so as neither to covet what is another's, nor too greedily and too tenaciously to

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keep what is his own. A Prudent Man therefore can never be a Covetous Man. He may indeed be so reckoned by those who consider not his Circumstances, nor understand his Measures, as in like manner, a Covetous Man may with the Injudicious pass for Prudent and Discreet. But as a Covetous Man (whom the Scripture calls a Fool, *Thou Fool*, Luke 12. 20.) can really never be a Prudent Man, so neither can a Prudent Man be really Covetous. And thus there is no Temptation, and consequently no Sin (for who commits Sin for it self?) but what Prudence is a sure and infallible Guard against, which is that *Armour of Light*, that is a sufficient Defence against all the Works of *Darkness*.

6. And for this Reason it is, because Prudence is so necessary to our being Good and Vertuous, and withal of such force to make us so, that it is so much magnified, and also commended to us in Holy Scripture. St. *Ambrose* *De Paradiso.*
Cap. 3. makes the four Rivers of Paradise to signify the four Cardinal Vertues, and refers Prudence to the first of them, supposing it to be designed by *Pison*. But leaving Allegories to those that better understand them than I do, I shall content my self (and I hope my Reader) with a few plainer Observations to this purpose. *Moses* wishes it to his People, *O that they were wise, that they understood this, &c.* *Deut.* 32. 29. And King *David* begs it for himself, and as what alone would answer all that he need desire, *O grant me understanding and I shall live,*

live, Psal. 119. And says his Wise Son, *Prov.* 2. 10, 11. *When Wisdom entreteth into thy Heart, and Knowledge is pleasant unto thy Soul, Discretion shall preserve thee, Understanding shall keep thee, that is from Sin. For so he goes on, to deliver thee from the way of the evil Man, &c. And, to deliver thee from the strange Woman, &c.* Again says he, *Prov.* 3. 13. *Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding. For the Merchandise of it is better than the Merchandise of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold. She is more precious than Rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. She is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her.* Again says he in the same Chapter, *v. 21. Keep sound Wisdom and Discretion, so shall they be Life to thy Soul, and Grace to thy Neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.* Which agrees very well with what has been discours'd in this Section, concerning the Power that Prudence has to preserve us from Sin. Again says he with great Passion and Earnestness, *Prov.* 4. 5. *Get Wisdom, get Understanding, forget it not. Forsake her not and she shall preserve thee, love her and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing, (which is more than to call it a Cardinal Vertue) therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get Understanding.* Again he brings in Wisdom thus speaking of her self, *Prov.* 8. 34. *Blessed is the Man that heareth me, watching daily*

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at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors : For whoſo findeth me findeth Life. And again, Prov. 16. 22. *Understanding is a well-ſpring of Life unto him that bath it.* Like unto which we have in his Book of Eccleſiaſtes, *Wiſdom is a defence, and Money is a defence, but the excellency of Knowledge is, that Wiſdom giveth Life to them that have it,* Eccleſ. 7. 12. Solomon abounds upon this Theme ; but I ſhall only further obſerve, that Vertue and Vice, in the language of his Writings, are ordinarily deſcribed under the colours of Wiſdom and Folly ; not that Wiſdom and Vertue, Folly and Vice are formally the ſame, (for every body knows they are very diſtinct things) but they are deſcribed by Wiſdom and Folly as the true Principles and Cauſes of the one and the other reſpectively. Ignorance and Folly makes Men wicked, and Wiſdom and Prudence makes Men good and vertuous. And accordingly we find in the New Teſtament, Mat. 25. that our Saviour ſets forth the good and bad among the Profeſſors of his Goſpel, by the Characters of *wiſe and fooliſh Virgins*, both pretending to meet the Bridegroom, but one of them only, namely the wiſe, being in a ready Preparation to do ſo, and that becauſe they had a ſtock of Oyl in their Veſſels, and their Lamps were burning. Agreeable to this alſo it is, that Repentance, and the practice of Juſtice and Righteouſneſs, and all Moral Duties, is ſignified by the Name of the Wiſdom of the Juſt. For ſo it is reckon'd among the extraordinary Services

vices of *John the Baptist*, and as one great Success of his Ministry, that he should turn *the Disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just*, Luke 1. 17. Which supposes these Disobedient, before this their Conversion, to have been *Fools*; and that they cannot be otherwise but by turning to the Ways of God, the Practice of true Religion and Vertue, which is true Wisdom, that is, that which true Wisdom directs us to, and which it is an effective Principle of. And because it is so, Wisdom is part of the Character of a good Man, and becomes as necessary even as Innocence itself. And accordingly our Saviour links them both together in his Admonition to his Disciples, *Mat. 10. 16. Be wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves.* And 'tis remarkable that he gives Wisdom the Preference of Order, as being the Principle and Foundation of the other. For Vertue cannot subsist without Prudence, any more than it can be absent with it. And accordingly *St. Paul's* Advice to all Christians is, to *walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise*, *Eph. 5. 15.* He would have them wise in the first place, and then to do what all wise and considerate Men use to do, to *walk*, that is, to *live*, with Care and Circumspection. I shall alledge no more at present from Scripture, but so much (out of the abundance that is there to this purpose) I thought it necessary to alledge, that it may appear, that as great Things as have been said, nothing has been said too much in the Commendation before given of Prudence, from

the necessity and effectual serviceableness of it to a Vertuous Life, since it has Scripture, as well as the Reason of the Thing, for its Warrant.

7. Well, but then if, as we have seen, the Moral Power of Prudence be so great as to be a sufficient Qualification for Vertue, then we may hence infer in the first place, that whoever has true Prudence has all Vertues. Not that Prudence is in a formal Sense all Vertue, or that there is no other Vertue but Prudence, (for there is Moral as well as Intellectual Vertue) but that Prudence contains them all radically or seminal-ly, that is, it contains them all in its Power, and necessarily infers them as a Principle, and so is a kind of *universal Vertue*, as I may call it. This is what the Moralists mean, when speaking of the connection of the Vertues, they say they are all connected in *Prudence*, that is, as in their common Head or Principle. As indeed it is plain that they must be. For as there is no Vertue without Prudence, as appears from the conclusion of the first Section, so where true Prudence is there can be no Vertue wanting; since as is shewn in the second, Prudence alone is sufficient for Vertue, which it could not be, if where true Prudence is, any Vertue were not. And therefore he that has true Prudence must needs have all Vertue. Which agrees well to that antient Saying,

Nullum numen abest, si sit Prudentia praesens.

To

To say therefore of any one that he is a *prudent Man*, is a greater Character than most People are generally aware of; and we had need consider where we bestow it, there being indeed but few, exceeding few that deserve it, or upon whom we can, without the hazard of our own Prudence, bestow it.

8. Again *2dly*, If Prudence, as we have shewn, be sufficient for Vertue, then we may hence farther infer, that whoever has not Vertue has not Prudence. For if he had, then by that very Supposition he would also have Vertue, since Prudence is supposed to be sufficient for it. And therefore if he has not Vertue, that's a plain Argument that he is as destitute of the other. Wit he may have, and Cunning he may have, enough to deceive others, and himself too, and Learning he may have, and what's much more excellent, sound Judgment and Clearness of Understanding, but Prudence he cannot have, and so must pass for one of *Solomon's Fools*, however in the World he may go for a Wit, or a Politician, or even a very Oracle. For as 'tis his Ignorance and Folly that makes him wicked, so his Wickedness gives us a Right to call him a Fool, which we may the more freely do, because the Scripture gives him no better a Name. Which brings us to the old Maxim, That only Good Men are Wise, *Solus Probus Sapiens*. 'Tis a Title that some others pretend to, and which every one covets and is ambitious of, but which the good and vertuous only have a just Right to.

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to. Which by the way as it shews that there are but few wise Men in the World, so it may serve to reprove and condemn the Folly and Inconsistency of those who had rather be accounted *wise* than *good*, and accordingly are more jealous and impatient of what reflects upon their Wisdom, than of what reflects upon their Vertue; whereas 'tis the latter that gives them the best title to the former, there being no Reproach to a Man's Understanding like bad Morals. But as to the Truth of this second Inference, it may be made appear another way from the same Principle. For if Prudence has sufficient Power to make a Man vertuous, then as we may reason thus, that whoever has not Vertue has not Prudence, so we may as well reason thus, then 'tis for want of Prudence that Men are not good and vertuous. I say for want of Prudence, not for want of Notional Knowledge. For tho' some measure of this be requisite, and there may be some that want it even in this necessary measure, yet generally speaking 'tis not want of Notional Knowledge that makes Men so bad as they are, but mere want of Prudence and Discretion, because they have not an actual and present Sense of what habitually and in the general they know well enough, and perhaps much better than those whose Actions are more regular. And as want of Prudence is the cause of Mens Wickedness, so 'tis also, and for that very Reason, the cause of their final Ruin and Destruction. Which resolves into that of Solomon, *Fools dye for want of Wisdom*, Prov. 10. 21.

9. And

9. And thus I have shewn the *necessity* and the *sufficiency* of Prudence to a Vertuous Life, which are the two Branches of its Connection with Vertue, and consequently of its Importance. For the Importance of Prudence is absolutely speaking its Connection with Happiness, and it is connected with Happiness in the same manner, that is, by the same ways as it is connected with Vertue. And therefore since it has been shewn to be both necessary and sufficient for Vertue, it follows that it must have the like connection with Happiness. That of the other World especially, but not excluding the Happiness of the Life that now is, to the Happiness of which, Prudence, tho' perhaps it may not always be a Sufficient, is yet always a very *necessary* Condition and indispensable Qualification. For setting aside the Influence that Vertue has upon the Present as well as Future Happiness of Man, and that without Prudence there is no Vertue, as has been shewn, 'tis further to be consider'd that the Passions of Men are so unruly, and the Provocations which by this means they give one another are so many, that unless they have Prudence enough to govern their own Passions, and to bear other Mens Follies and Indiscretions, there will be no living together with any tolerable Comfort or Enjoyment in the World, nor will Human Life be any Happiness even to those who enjoy it in its best Circumstances, but rather Vexation of Spirit as well as Vanity. Not but that the Happiness of this Life, as well as that

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that of the other, may depend upon other more immediate Causes, particularly upon certain sociable Vertues, such as Justice, Charity, Humility, Meekness, Peaceableness; but still Prudence being at the bottom of all these, its last stay and dependance will still be upon that, as the weight of the Building makes its last rest upon the Foundation. So that we may say of Prudence what the Apostle says of Godliness, that *it is profitable unto all things, having if not the Promise, yet the Happiness of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* By all which it may now appear, what an Important Subject we have in hand, and why so many great and glorious Things are said of it in Holy Scripture, particularly in the Writings of *Solomon.*

C H A P.

C H A P. II.

Being an Enquiry into the Nature of Prudence, shewing what Prudence, and particularly Christian Prudence is, and how it differs from some other Things which carry a resemblance with it, such as Wit, Policy, &c. With a Remark that Prudence cannot consist with Fatality.

I. **W**E have seen the Importance of Prudence in the immediate Connection which it has with Vertue, and by Vertue with Happiness. Our next step shall be to inquire into the Nature of it, and to declare what it is. I was willing to consider the Importance of it first, that it might appear that we are not giving our *selves* a needless Trouble, nor providing for *others* a vain and useless Entertainment, but that the Subject we are considering is indeed worthy of our Consideration. Besides that the Use and Importance of a Thing is that side of it which principally moves and affects us, who are more concern'd in the Relative than in the Absolute Nature of Things, what they are to us, more than what they are in themselves, in their *Goodness* more than in their *Truth*. This also is first in view, and touches us before we are either capable,

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pable, or at leasure to make any farther Enquiry. So 'tis in Light, it strikes our Eyes before it awakens our Minds to consider what it is. We see by it, and feel Pleasure and Warmth from it a long time before we have any Notion of its Nature; or can enter into its Philosophy. At length our Curiosity is excited to consider what that is from which we receive so much Pleasure and Benefit, which entertains our Minds with Objects, gives Direction to our Way, and Comfort to our Lives.

2. Now for the better clearing our way to this matter, and in order to the giving a right Account of it, I think convenient in the first place to observe in the general that Prudence is not a Moral, but an Intellectual Vertue. It is indeed Moral in respect of the *Object*, because 'tis concern'd about things that are to be done, or that are to be avoided; but 'tis Intellectual in respect of the *Subject*, as being subjected or seated not in the Will but in the Understanding. For 'tis a directing and governing Vertue, not such as is directed or govern'd. For tho' there are certain Rules and Laws whereby it is to be govern'd, (otherwise Prudence would be an arbitrary and mutable thing, and not the same in all Men) yet it is not govern'd by any other *Vertue*, but is it self that Vertue which *directs* and governs all the rest, there being no Vertue but what is the effect of Prudence. For as Understanding is before willing, it being impossible there should be any Will of what is unknown, so the Understanding

standing must perceive and judge right before the Will can act right. Now as those Habits which immediately dispose the Will to act right, and are subjected in it, are properly what we call *Moral Vertues*, so that in the Understanding which directs and practically determines the Will so to act, is as properly an *Intellectual Vertue*. Such is Prudence, and therefore that it is an Intellectual Vertue is plain. A *Vertue*, because it determines the Will to that which is good. And an *Intellectual Vertue*, because it is subjected in the Understanding, tho' still Moral as to the Object, as was noted before. For indeed the Objects are really the same in Prudence and in those other Vertues which we call Moral, the things that are to be done being the Objects of both. But yet with this remarkable difference as to the Formality. They are the Objects of Prudence as so many *Practical Truths* which Reason approves and recommends, but they are the Objects of the Moral Vertues as they are desirable *Goods*. To clear this by an Example. To eat and drink moderately belongs at once to Prudence and Temperance. To Prudence, as directing such a proportion to be taken; to Temperance, as inclining the Will to take according to the measure by Prudence prescrib'd. So that tho' the Object be really the same in both, yet 'tis not under the same manner and formality that it is so, it belonging to Prudence after a more Rational and Intellectual way than to the other Vertues. So that even here where they

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they agree, they also differ. But that which I mainly insist upon is, that Prudence tho' Moral as to the Object, is yet as to the Subject a Vertue purely Intellectual, which makes the difference between that and the Moral Vertues clear and full.

3. From hence we may gather that Prudence is a sort of *Knowledge*, as belonging to the Rational and Intellectual part, whose Character and Distinction that is. 'Tis clear in the general that it must be Knowledge; but what sort of Knowledge, is the Question. To which I Answer first, Not an *Habitual* Knowledge, or such as a Man has in Power only, as the Knowledge of a Mathematical Proposition which a Man has in his Sleep; or when he does not think of it, or remember the grounds of the Demonstration, and yet he is said to know it, because he is so far Master of it, that he can demonstrate it whenever he has a mind to attend to it, and recollect himself. This I understand by an *Habitual* Knowledge. But Prudence is not such a *dormant* Knowledge as this, (since if it were, a Man might do a great many foolish and imprudent Acts with it, almost as many as without it) but a present and actual Knowledge, whereby a Man being awaken'd into a right sense of things, considers and actually sees and knows what is best and fittest to be done, as the Mathematician knows the Conclusion which he is inferring from its proper Principles. Only with this difference, that the Mathematician not only actually knows the

the Conclusion, but the Principles and Reasons upon which it is founded, and so his Knowledge is *Science* properly speaking. Whereas it is not necessary that our Prudent Man should always understand the Reasons of his Practical Proposition, that this or that is to be done, nor that the Reasons he has for it should be always demonstrative, nor is *Morality* perhaps in every Instance capable of such Reasons. 'Tis sufficient that he has such an apprehension or perception of things that are to be done, as may determine his Will to the doing of them, and such as may be call'd *Knowledge* in a large sense, and that it be present and actual, without which indeed his Will cannot be determin'd by it.

4. Again, as Prudence is not an Habitual but Actual, so neither is it a Speculative or Notional, but a Practical Knowledge. The general difference between which two I conceive to be this, That Speculative Knowledge contemplates Truth for it self, and accordingly stops and rests in the Contemplation of it, which is what we commonly call *Theory*. Whereas Practical Knowledge has an order or reference to Action; that is, it contemplates Truth (for that is common to both) not merely as Truth, but as a Rule or Principle of some Human or Moral Operation. The Ground of this (according to *Baronius*) is the Distinction that is in things, whereof some are necessary, and some contingent. Accordingly that Knowledge which contemplates necessary things, must needs rest in the Contemplation of

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them as its end. For such things not depending upon us, nor being in our Power to be done or alter'd by us, we have nothing to do but to contemplate them. But that Knowledge which has contingent things for its Object, need not rest in the Contemplation of them, but may proceed from thence to Action, because the things which it is concern'd about are such as depend upon us, and may be done by us. And this he makes to be the Ground of Speculative and Practical Science, taking the Division partly from the Object, and partly from the End. But this Account, as I humbly conceive, wants a little correction to make it right. For tho' it should be granted that Speculation is properly of necessary Truth, yet I see no necessity that all Knowledge of necessary Truth should be speculative, or rest in the Contemplation of it as its last term. For it may have a further Reference, and be both in the Nature of the Thing it self, and in the Intention of him that has it, in order to Practice. For nothing hinders, but that what is otherwise a speculative Truth may be practically consider'd, that is, may be consider'd not barely as a Truth, but as a Rule or Principle of some Moral Action that is to be form'd upon it. And many such necessary Truths there are both in Morality and in Divinity. And yet however, there is so much Truth in this Account, that if all Things were necessary, and nothing contingent, there could be no such thing as Practical Knowledge, but all would be pure Speculation.

Because

Because then, since we could not make any alteration in things, we could only contemplate them as they are in their own Immutable Natures, without referring what we knew of them to any Practical End. Which indeed would be impossible, because we could not then apply our Knowledge as a Rule or Principle for the *doing* any thing, since upon that Supposition there would be nothing to be *done* by us, all being Necessary and Immutable. So that *Contingency* at least is of the ground of this Distinction. But as for *Necessity* if that has any part in it, 'tis not that the knowledge of necessary things is always speculative (as our Metaphysician will have it) but because speculative Knowledge is always of necessary things. But whether the latter be indeed so or no, is besides my present purpose to dispute.

5. To go on therefore with our Subject, when Prudence is here said to be a *Practical Knowledge*, my meaning is not that 'tis only a knowledge of Practical things, as if 'twere the *Object* only that made the distinction. For there may be a *Notional Knowledge* of such things as in themselves are of a Practical Nature; as when a Man studies Divinity or Morality (as most 'tis to be fear'd do) only for knowledge sake, without any design of forming his Manners upon the Truths which he contemplates in either. Besides, if Prudence were only so far Practical, as that signifies a Knowledge of *Practical things*, then whoever had that Knowledge would thereby im-

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mediately become a Prudent Man, whereas the contrary is most evident by experience as well as reason, there being many Good Moralists that are Bad Men, and if Bad Men, to be sure not *Prudent Men*. And therefore when I make Prudence to be a Practical Knowledge, I don't mean only that 'tis a Knowledge of Practical things, but a Knowledge that has an order to *Practice*, that is, that it contemplates Moral Truths, not barely as Truths, but as Rules and Principles of Action. And therefore St. *Austin's* Notion of

De Lib. Arb.
L. 1. Cap. 13.

Prudence seems not so correct, when he defines it to be, *Appetendarum & vitandarum rerum Scientiam*, the knowledge of things to be desired, and to be avoided. This by what we have already said of Prudence (not to insist upon what remains for the completing its Notion) appears to be too large and general a definition of it, as making it Practical only, as a Science is said to be Practical, because it treats of Practical things, and considers certain Moral Truths. Besides, if Prudence were no more than the Knowledge of what is to be desired, and what is to be avoided, then Prudence would be all one with *Moral Knowledge*, that is, the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which as such is no Vertue, since it is in the Devil and the worst of Men, who by this Definition might also come in for a title to Prudence. Which would also then be so very cheap and common a thing, that there would be no occasion for that Question in *Job*, *Where shall wisdom*

wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding? Job 28. 12. For indeed where would it *not* be rather.

6. But tho' we are got beyond St. *Austin*, I think we are too general yet. And therefore to our foregoing Account of Prudence, that 'tis a Practical Knowledge, I further add that 'tis also a Knowledge actually directive of our Practice. For indeed to speak out at once what I have been driving at and making way for by these steps, I take Prudence, if not formally, yet materially and in the reality of the thing, to be the same with the last Practical Dictate of the Understanding, *judging rightly*, and directing the Will to the choice of that which is right and fit to be Chosen. This I do not offer as a formal Definition, but however such a one may now be given upon the forelaid grounds. For taking Practical Knowledge, not as it signifies a Knowledge of Practical things, but as a Knowledge that has an order to Practice or Operation, I would define Prudence thus, that 'tis a Practical Knowledge of Good and Evil, actually directive of the Will in the choice of that which is Good, and refusal of that which is Evil. I do not say of that which is *Morally* Good or Evil, because there may be Prudence in other things besides these which concern *Morality* (tho' that be the chief Scene of it) as in the ordering a Man's Civil Behaviour, or the management of his Temporal Affairs. And we are now considering the nature of Prudence at large, and therefore must define it in such general

ral Terms as may comprehend it in its full extent, which I suppose the foregoing Definition to do. But indeed if the Question be, not of Prudence at large, but of *Moral Prudence*, what that is, then we must restrain the Definition to Moral Good and Evil, excluding things of a more indifferent concernment, as our Behaviour, Temporal Affairs, &c. And if the Question be concerning *Christian Prudence*, we must make it straiter yet, that is not shorter, but more special and determinate, as in this or the like form. Christian Prudence is a Practical Knowledge of that Good which Christianity requires, and of that Evil which it forbids, actually directive of the Will in the choice of that Good, and the refusal of that Evil. In which Definition is taken in what belongs to the general Idea of Prudence, only adding such restrictions as are necessary to make it properly Christian. For Christian Prudence differs not from any other Prudence as to its general Measures, but only as to its Object, and its End; and let but a Christian be as careful to avoid Sin, and the Consequences of it, as the Man of the World is to avoid any Temporal Loss or Damage, and he will be as wise in *his Generation* as the other is in *his*. If it be said that there is some other Evil to be avoided by Christian Prudence besides the Evil of Sin, *viz.* that of Punishment, as also some other Good to be chosen besides Moral Good, *viz.* that of Happiness; I grant it; but this was not so necessary to be expressly set down as being
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virtually included in the other. However, instead of that Good which Christianity requires, and that Evil which it forbids, 'tis but to say, that Good which it *requires* and *promises*, and that Evil which it *forbids* and *threatens*, and the Definition will be in all its parts intire.

7. But to reflect back a little upon the preceding account of Prudence, it seems agreeable both to the nature of the thing, and to the common Notions which Men have about it, which tho' not digested into this form, are yet resolvable into it, or what comes very near it. For in the First place 'tis acknowledged to be an Intellectual Vertue, and to belong to the understanding as the Subject or Principle of it, and therefore its Character in the general must be *Knowledge*. Which is according to the Notion Men have of it, and accordingly Prudent Men are call'd *Wise Men*, and *discreet Men*, as on the contrary Imprudent Men are commonly call'd *Fools*, and their Conduct *Folly*. It must then in the general be *Knowledge*. But what *Knowledge*? Not *Habitual Knowledge*. For *Habitual Knowledge* is consistent with *Actual Ignorance* and *Folly*; besides, that it is not the immediate Principle of Action. For Men do not act immediately by their *Habitual Knowledge*, as appears plainly by this, because they many times act *against* it, as is manifest in the case of Sin. Neither are they reckon'd Prudent Men in the esteem of the World who have this *Quiescent* sort of *Knowledge*, which lies like Embers in the Ashes,

and gives neither Light nor Heat till it be blown up, but *they* rather whose Knowledge is in readiness for Action, and who have such a present sense of things as serves for the use of Life, in many Circumstances of which Men are put upon Acting before they have time to blow up those sleeping Embers we were speaking of. Besides, 'tis very well known that many that have this sort of Knowledge, even to Excellency and Perfection, are at the same time some of the most Imprudent Men in the World. 'Tis plain therefore that Prudence must not be an Habitual, but an *Actual* Knowledge. And 'tis as plain again that it must not be a Speculative Knowledge, but a Practical one, that is, a Knowledge in order to Practice. For indeed otherwise if it were only mere Knowledge, tho' never so much *in Act*, yet if it were not also in order *to Act* and Practice, there would be no reason why it should be a Vertue. That which makes it so is the Order which it has to *Practice*. And this also is very consonant to the Notions Men have of Prudence, who look upon it as that Vertue which serves to the conduct of their Lives, and the government of their Actions. For indeed one great difference whereby Prudence is distinguish'd from Theory is this, not only that Theory contemplates Truth for it self, and Prudence in order to some Operation, but that Theory has *only Truth* for its Object, whereas Prudence besides Truth has also for its Object (ultimately and terminatively) *Good and Evil*, it being for
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the sake of Good and Evil, that is, for the choosing the former and avoiding the latter, that it contemplates Truth. And herein it is that the practicalness of Prudence as distinct from pure Theory chiefly consists, in that it contemplates *Truth* for the sake of *Good*. For which reason in the Definition it is more properly call'd a Practical Knowledge of Good and Evil, than a Practical Knowledge of Truth. But once more, as it must be a Knowledge in order to Practice, so it must be also (to compleat all) actually directive of that Practice. For Prudence is the Vertue that governs all our Movements, and directs them to their right end, and that not only in this sense that whenever they are so directed 'tis that which does direct them, but that by Prudence they are sure to be so directed. Nothing directs them but that, and that does it effectually. For otherwise there might be no difference as to a Man's Conduct between Prudence and Imprudence, or between him that has it, and him that wants it. For he that wants it can but misconduct himself, and if he that has it may do the same, then (as to that) where's the difference? But this rather shews that he has it not, as indeed every wrong step that a Man makes shews that he wants Prudence as to that thing at least, how Prudent soever he may be in other matters. Which is a Consideration peculiar to this Case. A Man's acting wrong does not prove that he does not Notionally know what is right (if it did, we should have a very dark World of

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of it) but it is a decisive Argument that he wants *Prudence*, and why, but because if he had it he would be better directed by it. This therefore shews that *Prudence* must be actually directive, because those who do not direct themselves aright are not *Prudent Men*. Neither does the *World* so account them, which always judges *Men* to be *Wise* or *Foolish* according to the measures which they take. And so does a better *Authority*, who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom, *Jam. 3. 13.* And indeed this is one great thing wherein *Prudence* differs from, and goes beyond *Habitual Knowledge*, and *Speculative Knowledge*, yea, and *Practical Knowledge* at large; for all these have a directive Influence towards the order of a *Man's Conduct*, and do each of them in its proportion serve to that purpose. But yet so, that an ill *Conduct* is consistent with any, or all of them. But with *Prudence* it is not consistent, which shews that it has not only a directive tendency as some other things may have, but that it actually directs and conducts *Men* in the management of themselves and their *Concerns*. And indeed this *Actual Directiveness* is of the very Essence of *Prudence*, without which we can have no perfect conception of it. And thus having gone over the *Materials* of our *Definition*, and shewn it to be right as to the *Substance* of it, I suppose there will be no great difficulty as to the *Form*, which therefore I shall leave to shift for it self.

8. But

8. But before I proceed to other Considerations, it may be a further Illustration, and perhaps Confirmation of this matter if we consider the account which *Aristotle* gives of it. With whom as far as I agree, I shall have the Protection of his Authority (which I confess to be of greater weight with me in *Eschical* than in *Physical* Matters) and where I differ from him, I hope it will appear that I have some reason why I do so. *Aristotle* then in the 6th Book of his *Morals*, Chap. 5, lays down two Definitions of Prudence, tho' much of the same importance: His first Definition of it, as near as I can translate it, runs thus, that 'tis a true Habit with Reason Practical, concerning those things that are Good and Bad to Man. His other is, that 'tis a Habit with right reason, practical concerning things that are good to Man. To give these Definitions in *Greek* there is the less need, because I doubt that even in *English* they will be *Grasped* to the common Reader. But for the satisfaction of them that can understand it, the *Greek* of the first is, *ἀρετή ἐστὶν ἕξις ἀδελφὴ μετὰ λόγου πρακτικῆς, καὶ κατὰ ἀδελφότητα ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν.* That of the second is, *ἕξις ἀγαθῶν μετὰ λόγου πρακτικῆς, καὶ κατὰ ἀδελφότητα ἀγαθῶν πρακτικῆς.* That which makes these Definitions so blind is, that one does not well know how to dispose of the word (Reason) whether to join it with *Habit*, or with *Practical*. If with *Habit*, then 'tis, Prudence is a Habit with Reason, Practical concerning Good, and Evil. But a Habit with Reason seems to me an odd jumble, and what it means

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means unless it be a Rational Habit, is not easy to understand, and if it means that, I think 'tis but untowardly express'd. But if you join *Reason* with *Practical*, then 'tis, Prudence is a Habit *Practical* with *Reason*, or to express it more clearly, a Habit of Acting with Right Reason, concerning those things, or in those things which are Good and Evil to Man. Which indeed makes the better Sense, and is (so put) a clear Definition. But whether *true* or no may be a Question. But take it either way, there is this in common, that Prudence is here made to be a *Habit*, which perhaps has more Difficulty in it than most people are aware of. For if it be a Habit, 'tis plain, that it must be an Intellectual Habit, and so a sort of Knowledge, and by consequence it must be an Habitual Knowledge. But we have already shewn Prudence not to consist in Habitual but in Actual Knowledge. And it seems a clear Case that it does not consist in Habitual Knowledge at large. For Prudence, as all Men understand, is that whereby Men act aright. But Men are so far from acting aright by Habitual Knowledge, that they do not properly act by it at all, that not being the *Immediate* Principle of their Action. Nay, they very often act *against* it, and commit as many Follies with it as the most Ignorant can do. Nor are Men reckon'd Prudent for their Habitual Knowledge, for those unactive Notions of things which they have only in Power, and so far at command that they can recover them when they apply themselves to consider and

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reflect; but that which gains them this Character is that right sense of things which they are actually awaken'd into, and the proof that they give of it by an answerable Conduct. But now as *Aristotle* himself observes in the very entrance upon this Chapter, the way to know what Prudence is, is to consider who those are whom we call Prudent Men. 'Tis a good Remarque, and I am willing to stand by it. Who then are those whom we call Prudent, those who Habitually understand what is fit to be done, or those who have an Actual Sense of it when they are to Act? The latter without all Question are the Prudent Men both in the Opinion and in the Language of the World. And so 'tis also in that of Scripture, which expresses its Wise, and Good Men (the only Wise Men in Scripture) under the Characters of Consideration, Watchfulness, and girding up the loyns of the mind, 1 *Pet.* 1. 13. an allusion to Runners or Waiters, and signifying either way the greatest Preparation and Readiness of Mind. Which also makes the Character of the Wise Virgins in the Parable, and is the very thing that distinguishes them from the Foolish. Both had Lamps, but both had not Oyl. Only the Wise took Oyl with them, and this was their *Wisdom*.

9. But besides, if Prudence were Habitual Knowledge, then it would follow that wherever Habitual Knowledge is, there also must be Prudence, since nothing can be divided from it self. But this is so far from being true, that Habitual
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Knowledge even in the very fulness of its Light is consistent not only with the want of Prudence, but with the highest Imprudence in the World, as is plain in the Case of the *fall'n Angels*, who in the midst of all their Illuminations forgot themselves, and committed Folly, even the greatest Folly conceivable, that of *Rebelling* against God. Nor is this an uncommon Case among Men, who with a great deal of this sort of *Light* do works of *Darkness*. A most eminent Example of which, next to that of the Angels that sinn'd, we have in King *Solomon*, who in the midst of all his Habitual Light, Natural and Supernatural, went astray, and for some part of his Life at least, and that the latter part too, wanted *Prudence*, even that very Practical Wisdom of which he says such great things. For strange Women (and one would think they should be *strange* Women indeed) drew him aside, and turn'd away his Heart to strange Gods, even that Heart of his which was as large as the sand that is on the Sea shore. How art thou fall'n from Heaven, thou Bright Star of the Morning, how is thy Light Eclips'd, and thy Glory Darken'd, and cast into a Shade! Thou that had'st Wisdom for thy Spouse, and whose Pleasure and Happiness was in Vertue! And Oh how ought all Great and Good Men, and particularly Men of *Light* and *Knowledge*, take warning by thy Example, lest they also fall when they think they stand.

10. But

10. But neither is Habitual Knowledge the thing that Men understand by Prudence, but we consider them as distinct things, and are so far from being surprized to find one without the other, that 'tis a common saying with us, that such a Man is an Ingenious Man, or a very Knowing or Learned Man, but he wants *Prudence*, which could not be if Habitual Knowledge and Prudence were the same thing. And 'tis implied by that very Expression that they are not. But to conclude all in this short Argument, Prudence according to the ordinary Notion we have of it is in general (for this is not intended as a strict Definition) that Sense or Apprehension of things, whatever it be, that governs and directs Men in their Actions, so as to make them do as they should do. But *Habitual Knowledge* does not thus direct Men's Actions, partly as not being the Principle of Action, and partly as being consistent with the greatest Misconduct in Acting, and therefore Prudence is not *Habitual Knowledge*. But the Argument may be turn'd as well the other way. Prudence is that Sense which directs Mens Actions, But that Sense which directs Mens Actions, is that *Actual Sense* which they have when they Act. Therefore that *Actual Sense* which Men have when they Act is their Prudence. And so Prudence consists not in Habitual but in Actual Knowledge, according to the Tenour of the preceding account.

11. Not but that Habitual Knowledge is a very good *Foundation* for Prudence, as well as for
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Moral Vertue, and he that is truly Prudent will be sure to build upon it, by attending to its general Rules and Principles, and applying them to the regulation of his Actions. He will build upon it not Wood, Hay, and Stubble, but Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones, the substantial Vertues of Christian Life. But still the Foundation is one thing, and the Building is another ; and he that has this Foundation alone, I mean only *Habitual* Knowledge, tho' very capable of being improved into a *Wise* Man, is however as yet but a more *knowing Fool*. But the short is, Prudence must be that whatever it be, that makes a Man act Prudently, to do that which in every Circumstance or Occurrence is fit to be done. But now Habitual Knowledge is not that which makes a Man Act Prudently (unless it be in a remote and *dispositive* Sense, as a Foundation only, as was said before) and that partly because it is not the immediate Principle of Action, and partly because it is consistent with the contrary, there being no Folly or Misconduct so gross, but what is well consistent with Habitual Knowledge, and what Men most eminently qualify'd that way have been guilty of. And therefore Prudence does not consist in *Habitual* Knowledge.

12. But may there not be some difference between a Habit of Knowledge at large, and a Habit of knowing or right thinking when we *Act*, and tho' Prudence be not the former, may it not yet be the latter ? This I shall consider by and by. In the mean time I shall grant that there may

may be a Habit of Prudence *Materially* consider'd; that is, a Man by the frequent doing of Vertuous or Prudent Acts, may obtain a Habit of doing that which Prudence requires he should do. But then this is not properly a Habit of *Prudence*, but a Habit of *Vertue*. Of Vertue directly, and *per se* as we say, and of Prudence only by Accident, because the matter of Vertue and of Prudence is the same. And I shall also allow Prudence to be thus much further concern'd in it, that to a Man that has this Habit, a lesser measure of Prudence will serve to determine him to the practice of that Vertue, as being by his Habit already inclined to it, than what would serve another Man, who having not the advantage of such a Habit, is to do all by force of Thought and Consideration. So that this Habit is a great *Help* to Prudence, and such as may in some degree supply the place of it. For a less degree will by this advantage be able to do as *much*, and the same degree will be able to do *more*. But all this is not because Prudence is a Habit, but because the Habit happens to *incline* to the very same thing to which Prudence *directs*.

13. I shall advance a step nearer towards a Concession of Prudence being a Habit, and that is to grant that a Man by frequent Thought and Reflexion may arrive to a Habit of *Considerateness*. Which will be a double Advantage to him, partly as suspending his Action, and putting a stop to it, till he has such a sense of things as shall direct him how to proceed, and partly as

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erving as a Means to open his Thoughts, and awaken that sense in him. And so this Habit will be a great Friend to Prudence, and may serve to make him that has it a Prudent Man; but still his Prudence does not consist in that Habit (which is plainly of another kind) but in that actual sense of things rather into which that Habit of Considerateness serves to awaken him.

14. But are there not Men who we say are *Prudent Men*, and that when they do not Act, and of whom we may say the same even when they are *asleep*? True, and by this we mean that they are such as generally do Act Prudently, or that will as we reasonably presume Act so, whenever occasion is given. Well, but in the meantime, must there not be some fix'd and permanent Principle in them that shall determine them so to Act? And what is that but a *Habit* of Prudence? This, I think, is the last push of the Objection. But to this I say first, that there is nothing that properly determines Men to act Prudently as an immediate Principle, but that Actual sense which they have when they Act. Whatever is said to determine besides, does it only Mediatly and Indirectly, so far as 'tis assistant to the other. And this I say secondly, may be that *Habit of Considerateness* which I was speaking of before. The Men we are talking of, I suppose, to be arrived to this Habit of Considerateness, which is also what some Mens natural Temper disposes them to. And this Habit of Considerateness may be also supposed to fall in with a naturally

naturally good understanding, and with a good stock of Habitual Knowledge, the Principles of which (that in other Men would lye dormant) this Habit of Considerateness will 'tis like reduce to Act, and make a Practical Application of them to the direction of Life. And so these Men may in some sense be said to have a Habit of Prudence, that is, they have such a Habit, or Habits, as are useful and ministerial to beget Prudence in them, to strike a light into their Minds when they come to Act, and so to make them Act like Prudent Men. But they cannot be said for all this to have a Habit of Prudence in the same sense as we are said to have a Habit of *Temperance*. For the Habit of Temperance is supposed to be the very Vertue of Temperance; and when we say a Man has the Habit of Temperance, we mean that he has that Temperance which is a Habit. But in the present Case, this Habit of Prudence does not signify the very Vertue of Prudence; and when these Men are said to have a Habit of Prudence, we ought not to mean that they have that Prudence which is a Habit. For in the Case supposed 'tis plain, that these Habits are of another nature from Prudence, and that tho' they are assistant to it, yet that Prudence does not consist in any of them, but rather in something consequent to them, even in that Actual Practical Sense or Judgment which directs a Man's Actions.

15. I shall approach one step nearer towards a Concession yet. Prudence is that Knowledge or

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right sense of things which we have when we Act, and which directs our Actions. And one may conceive that by frequent Acting Prudently, and by having this right sense when we Act, we may acquire a Habit or Power of having it, and so may in this sense (which is more immediate than the other) be said to have a *Habit* of Prudence. But whether Prudence be formally that very Habit or Power, as in the Case of *Temperance*, is the Question. And it seems not. For Prudence is not Knowledge at large, but that Knowledge which directs us when we Act. But now a Knowledge which directs us when we Act, must be a Knowledge which we *have* when we Act. And that Knowledge which we *have* when we Act, is *Actual* Knowledge. And therefore tho' there may be a Habit of this directive Knowledge, yet it seems that this Knowledge cannot be it self a Habit, and that because an Act cannot be a Habit. It seems reasonable that Prudence should import Actual Knowledge, since if we have never so much Knowledge in Habit or Power, yet unless we have it in Act too, it can be of no service to us when we Act. But now if Prudence be Actual Knowledge, it is not very obvious to conceive how it can be a Habit too, unless an Act can be a Habit, that is, unless distinct things can be the same. It may here perhaps not be unworthy of our Observation that the Case seems different as to Knowledge, and as to Vertue. A Man by frequent abstaining may acquire a Habit of Temperance, that is, a Power that

that may facilitate the Act, and dispose him to the doing of it. And even this Habit of Temperance may also in a formal Sense *be* Temperance, because the subject of Temperance being the Will, the standing Bent and Inclination of it, as well as the Act may come under that moral Denomination; and 'tis a sign that the Vertue is the more rooted and settled in the Will, when it carries such a Bent or Inclination to it. But now tho' by frequent Meditation we may come to have a Habit or Power of Knowledge, as well as of Temperance, yet it does not seem so easy to conceive that this Habit or Power of Knowledge should formally be Knowledge (as that the Habit of Temperance should be Temperance) or that Knowledge should be a Habit, as it is usually said to be, Knowledge and the power of knowing seeming distinct things. Nor is it any addition to our Knowledge to say it is in power, but a Diminution rather, the Act in Knowledge being more than the Habit, tho' in Vertue the Habit be more than the Act. Whereby again it seems, that a Habit of Vertue and a Habit of Knowledge are of a different Consideration. But tho' we should allow a Habit of Knowledge to be Knowledge, and so Knowledge to be a Habit, yet Prudence being a special sort of Knowledge, a Knowledge which we have when we Act, and which directs us in Acting, and so importing a form of Actuality in it, there is not the same reason that this Knowledge should be a Habit, since tho' the Habit of Temperance

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be Temperance (that Denomination being common to both Act and Habit) yet it is not *that* Temperance which is the *Act* of that Vertue, nor can *that* Temperance at least be said to be a Habit, which seems to be the Case here. But do we not call him a Prudent Man that has a Habit of Prudence? Be it so in the general. But when we come to examine more explicitly what that is, we shall find that it is of thinking rightly when he Acts. And therefore must not Prudence be supposed to consist in that right thinking, which being an Actual Thought, one can't well conceive how it should be a Habit at the same time, Prudence and the Habit of Prudence seeming distinct things. All which may perhaps serve to explain (what otherwise might be thought a Difficulty) how the Habit of Temperance may be Temperance, and yet the Habit of Prudence may not be Prudence. I am sensible there may be some difference between Habitual Knowledge at large, and the Habit of knowing or right thinking when we Act. But still that Habit which we have of thinking rightly when we Act, is but Habitual Knowledge, tho' perhaps of a more perfect Kind; and therefore if Prudence be Actual Knowledge (as it seems plainly to be) then whether this may not be as good an Argument to prove that it is not this sort of Habitual Knowledge, as that it is not Habitual Knowledge at large, Actual Knowledge being opposed to Habitual in its full extent. And if it be not a Habit of Knowledge, what other Habit it should be I do not well understand. 16. I

16. I know not therefore whether I may not now make a Distinction, which before perhaps would have been thought too nice, and that is between a Habit of Prudence, and Prudence which is a Habit. A Habit of Prudence may be granted, meaning not that Prudence is it self a Habit, but only that there are some Habits that are assistant to Prudence, that befriend it, are subservient to it, and dispose Men for it, and such as in all reasonable Presumption will make Men Act *Prudently*. Or at most that we may have a power of Prudence. And this is all that the Objection proves. But the true point of the Question is, not whether there may be Habits in this manner assistant to Prudence, or whether there may be a Habit of Prudence it self, but whether Prudence it self be a *Habit*, as in *Aristotle's* Definition it is said to be. If it be, then it may lye dormant as all other Habits do, and that even when it should be awake. And then while the Pilot sleeps in his dark Cabin, what will become of the Vessel? However, since *Aristotle* and the strain of our common Morality will have Prudence to be a Habit, I shall not be positive in this matter (except only that it is not Habitual Knowledge at large, and so far I am positive) but would be understood rather as an Inquirer, or an Objectour, than by way of positive Assertion. But before I leave this matter, I have one short stricture to make upon this definition of *Aristotle*, according to the second and more intelligible rendering of it, *viz.* that Pru-

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dence is a Habit of acting with right reason as to those things which are Good and Evil to Man. Now the fault that I find with this is, that it is not a definition of what was intended to be defined by it, but of something else. For 'tis not a definition of *Prudence*, but rather of *Vertue* at large, this being the general Notion we have of Vertue, that 'tis a Habit of Acting according to right Reason.

17. And thus having in some measure settled the notion of Prudence, I shall now to prevent Confusion, proceed to shew how it differs from some other things which pretend Affinity with it, and are apt to be mistaken for it. And the first that makes this Pretension according to its usual pertness and forwardness, is *Wit*. A thing of the greatest uncertainty imaginable, that puts on a thousand shapes, and changes its dress with every Age and Climate, and is in one word a mere *Amusement*. But to come to clear and distinct Ideas if we can, where there is so much Confusion and Obscurity, I consider in the first place, that it must be something of the Intellectual kind, I mean that it belongs not to the Will, but to the *Understanding*. Not that it is the very Understanding it self, but a certain Operation of it. Now this Operation must be distinguish'd either by the *Matter* or by the *Manner* of it; by the Matter about which it is exercised, or by the Manner whereby it proceeds. For there is nothing but *Matter* and *Manner*, or, Being and manner of Being in all things. Not
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by the Matter of Object, for that is, or at least may be the same in Wit as in other mental Operations; neither does that distinguish any Operation of the Mind that I know of, unless it be *Science* whose Object is necessary Truth. The other Operations of the Mind have all one common Object, which is *Truth* in general; nor does Science it self transcend the Compass of that Scale, tho' the Truth which it Contemplates must have a particular Qualification. This Operation then which we call *Wit*, must receive its Distinction from the *Manner*. Not a *Logical Manner*, such as Composition or Division, Affirmation or Negation, &c. For Wit was never thought a part of Logic, however it may consist with it. And therefore it must be some other manner, and that I take to be the so ordering our Thoughts or Expressions as to strike the Fancies, move the Passions, or please the Imaginations of those to whom our Address is made. For the business of *Wit*, as I conceive, is not to instruct as *such*, but to please. Now this I suppose is done chiefly by considering things in their *generals*, and representing wherein they agree, as on the contrary, *Judgment* lies in distinguishing one thing from another, and shewing wherein they differ. And accordingly *Wit*, whose business is only to please, recedes generally from the plain, simple and downright way of Expression, (unless that should happen to be most *pleasing*, as in some Cases it is, and is then what we call *Humour*) and chuses rather to express things in the

the figurative way, that is, by their *likeness*, which therefore is most acceptable and entertaining ; partly, because Agreement (as having a resemblance of *Concord*) is more pleasing than Disagreement, which looks as a sort of *Discord* ; and partly, because it is more easily apprehended. Now by this compendious account it may appear that Wit is a very different thing from Judgment, tho' why it should differ so much from it as Mr.

Lock seems to intimate, when he
 Essay. Book. 2. C. 11. S. 2. says, that it *consists in something that is not perfectly conformable to Truth and good Reason*, I do not understand. For as on the one hand, Wit does not require a Conformity with Truth and Reason, so neither does it require a Disconformity, so as to *consist* in it, as if it were of the Essence of Wit not to bear an Examination at the Bar of Reason, but to be only a more agreeable sort of *Nonsense*. Some things I grant that are call'd Wit, may deserve no better a name ; but to give this as the notion of Wit, and to make it *Essential* to it that it be not according to Truth and Reason, is, I think, such an account of it as is not conformable to either of them. As distinct as Wit and Judgment are, I see nothing that should hinder but that they may meet both in the same Person, and in the same thing too. And I am much inclined to think that there are a great many useful and severe Truths that are capable of a very ornamental Dress ; and tho' they do not absolutely need it, yet will *take Paint* very well, so that the
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Truth shall neither spoil the Wit, nor the Wit spoil the Truth, but rather serve to recommend it with the greater Grace and Advantage. Or else truly I should have a much meaner Opinion of *Oratory* and *Poetry* than I have; nor should I think it very accountable why the Spirit of God in Holy Scripture should give us so many strains as it does of *Both*. But to return to the Business, It appears by what has been said, that Wit however consistent with Judgment (as I cannot but think it is) is yet a very distinct thing from it. And by the same it appears that it is also as distinct from *Knowledge* which goes to the bottom of things, and comprehends their Differences as well as their Agreements, Knowledge being no Knowledge any further than it is clear and distinct. Wit then is distinct from both these, tho' I see no necessity of its being *disconformable* to either, But now if Wit be a distinct thing from Judgment and Knowledge, it must be as distinct from *Prudence*, which is a sound Judgment and a practical Knowledge. Only it must be more distinct from Prudence than from Judgment or Knowledge, and that because Prudence is more than Judgment or Knowledge, being all that with an *Addition*. And for this reason I farther note, that Wit is also more distinct from Prudence than Judgment or Knowledge are distinct from it. For Prudence is Judgment and Knowledge with an Addition of something more special, but it cannot be said of Prudence that it is Wit, or of Wit that it is Prudence, at all. For they differ
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intirely, and according to their whole Ideas. Accordingly we find they are often separate, which is the most certain Mark of Distinction. There are a great many Witty Men, truly and properly Witty, nay, that have the brightest and the keenest Wits, of whom one may say what was once said of an eminent Person, that *he never said a foolish thing, nor ever did a wise one.* Many such Persons there are to whom both parts of this Character in great measure belong. Men that have abundance of Wit, that even shine and sparkle with it, and yet at the same time are the most Imprudent Men in the World, managing themselves with no Wisdom or Discretion, either as to this World, or the World to come. Concerning whom we have a very severe but true common saying, and that justifies all I have said in this matter, such a one has Wit enough, but that a *Fool has the keeping of it.*

18. *Policy* or *Cunning* comes a great deal nearer to *Prudence* than *Wit*, or indeed than any thing else, as being the most resembling *Imitator*, and as I may say, the very *Ape* of it; which perhaps is one reason why it pleases so little, and is indeed so very odious to all truly great and ingenuous Minds. *Wit* and *Prudence* are distinct all over, and stand divided like the opposite Points of the *Compass*; but *Policy* and *Prudence* are like *North* and *West*, that have some partial agreement and tendency towards each other. For *Policy* goes a great way towards a mixture with *Prudence*, and indeed is really
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Prudence in a great measure ; and what pity is it that it is not so throughout ! It bears, I fancy, much the same proportion to Prudence, as what we call *Sophistry* does to true Reasoning, and Philosophical Science. *Sophistry* is now used in an ill sense, but Originally it had a very good one. For at first all Artists, and even Philosophers themselves, were call'd Sophisters from the Grammatical derivation of the word *σοφιστής*, as being not only wise themselves, but *Teachers* of Wisdom. But afterwards, when those that set up for this Profession began to be lovers of Money, grew Mercenary, and for the sake of Gain corrupted the Sciences, and instead of true Knowledge and Wisdom set up something like it, consisting in Captious Questions, and Fallacious and Illusive Arguments, whereby Truth was only imitated, and Men's Understandings abused, instead of being enlighten'd or inform'd ; upon this the name of *Sophister* grew into disrepute, and so *Plato* found it in his time, and has writ several Dialogues about it, and so it stands with us now at this day. For by *Sophister* we mean a captious and cavilling Disputer, that would make that seem to be true which indeed is false. And so by *Sophistry* we mean the Art of deceiving by false reasoning, as also the false reasoning it self that is apt to deceive. And so by *Sophism*, we mean a false and fallacious Argument that carries only the appearance of Truth. Now much after the same manner it is that *Policy* stands in relation to Prudence and true Wisdom.

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It carries a very specious Appearance of it, and is often mistaken for it, and yet is not really the thing it seems to be, but a mere *Counterfeit*. It is indeed a trickish sort of Wisdom, a mere Juggle, and yet the Legerdemain is so very fine and clean, that the Trick is not easily discover'd, but often passes undiscern'd. And yet we know 'tis a Trick well enough in the general, and are so far from taking Craft or Cunning for true Prudence, that a Cunning Man is with us but a genteeler word for a *Knave*; but we can't so well tell where the Trick lies, and withal are apt to be imposed upon in particular Instances, wherein Cunning often passes for Prudence, tho' the things in the general are confessedly distinct. He that sees a Juggler do feats of Legerdemain, is satisfied well enough that it must be a Trick, not because he knows the manner how 'tis done, but because he knows very well that the thing in reality is *impossible*. And so 'tis in the Case of Policy and Prudence, which again makes it very parallel to a Fallacy or piece of Sophistry in reasoning. We know well enough that such an Argument must be a Fallacy, and that because we know the Conclusion is absolutely impossible, and that what is necessarily False can never be proved True, and yet there may be some difficulty in finding where the Fallacy lies, and 'tis what many can't do, that can do the other. And so those that know *Policy* to be only a false Appearance of Prudence, don't always know, especially in particular Instances, wherein that false

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Appearance: lies, nor how to lay open the Fallacy. So that every way a Politick Cunning Man is a *Sophister* in Prudence.

19. But to come to a greater exactness in this matter, I shall consider first, how far Policy agrees with Prudence, and then how and wherein it differs from it. First how far it *agrees*. Sophistry has some agreement with good Reasoning, or else it could not deceive, and so has Policy with Prudence. Indeed it agrees with it so much, that 'tis in great measure the very same thing. It meets it half way, and where it meets it there it centers with it. For whereas there are two general parts of Prudence, as we shall shew hereafter, one that consists in the proposal of a right end, and the other in prosecuting it by fit and convenient means. Policy strikes in with Prudence intirely as to the latter of these. For Policy prosecutes its End by as fit means as Prudence does, if not such as are absolutely fit in *themselves*, yet such however as are fit to the *End*, that is, effectual for its Attainment. For this is the very notion we have of a Politic or Cunning Man, we mean one that knows how to compass his End, that is, to use fit means for the obtaining of it. 'Tis not consider'd here whether the End be good, and such as ought to be design'd, nor whether the means be good, as that signifies *Lawful*, 'tis enough if they are good with respect to the End proposed, if they are fit for the *Purpose*, as we say, and he has the Character of a Cunning Man who by *any* means can obtain his End.

End. Policy therefore agrees with Prudence as to the Execution part; the use of fit or effectual means. Only Prudence goes further, and there begins the difference. Which I now come in the next place to consider.

20. Prudence is not only a good *Executor*, but a good *Designer* too. It does not only pursue its End by fit and proper Means, but also takes care that its End be good, and such as deserves to be pursued. And as to the Means also, it takes care that they be as worthy of the End, as well as effectual to obtain it, that is, that they be good and lawful, Morally as well as Physically good. Tho' I confess this is but one thing in the Case of Prudence, because such is its End, that no other means are effectual, but what are also good and lawful. But however, I mention these things distinctly, because they are formally distinct in themselves, and in the Case of Policy really and actually separate, which considers nothing in the means it uses but only their effectualness to the end, not regarding the goodness or lawfulness of them. If it does, 'tis somewhat extraordinary, and that exceeds the limits of Policy as such, and is an Advance towards true Prudence; and he that is thus Conscientious in the choice of his Means so as to consider the goodness of them, makes a sort of Composition which very seldom happens, and that is that of an *Honest Politician*. But Policy as such goes not so far, regarding nothing in the means but the usefulness of them to the end. And in that also
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it is faulty, proposing a wrong End for its aim, and such as is not fit, to be Prosecuted by any Means, much less, by bad ones. So that Policy fails of Prudence both in respect of the End and the Means too, not providing for a worthiness in the former, nor standing upon the lawfulness of the latter. In short then it agrees with Prudence in one respect, and it differs from it in two: It agrees with it as to the use of effectual means, but it differs from it partly as to the goodness of the End, and partly as to the lawfulness of those means, which tho' it may sometimes happen (for a Politician won't *refuse* means because they are Lawful) is yet purely Accidental to Policy:

21. From the whole we may gather that Policy is an imperfect Prudence, or Prudence in a certain respect, or in a limited Consideration, *secundum quid* according to the Scholastick Phrase. For tho' it be not Absolutely Prudence, or Prudence all over, yet 'tis Prudence as far as it goes, *viz.* as far as the effectualness of the means, and its only fault is, that it goes no farther; and accordingly our Saviour tells us, *that the Children of this World are in their generation wiser than the children of light*, Luke 16. 8. By saying that *they are wiser*, he implies that they are wise in part, since where the positive is not at all, or in any degree, there is no room for the comparative. And yet he does not say that they are absolutely Wise, no, nor absolutely *Wiser*, (for that they are not, because their End is so mean and unworthy, tho' their Conduct be never so

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shrewd) but only that they are Wiser in their *Generation*, that is, for the World, and in their way, being more dextrous and provident, more active and diligent in the securing their worldly Interests; than the Children of Light are as to the far greater concernments of a better Life. That is in short, they are Wiser as to the Means, tho' not so Wise as to the End.

22. And here indeed it is that the Wisdom of the World, and of all Worldly Men, chiefly fails. Their Wisdom fails as to the *End*, as that of the Children of Light does as to the *Means*, and we must take something from each; the Religious Man's End, and the Worldly Man's Sagacity and Diligence as to the use of Means, to make a compleat right Wise Man; but as it is, they are generally both Fools, one for proposing no worthier an End than he does, and the other for prosecuting his indeed excellent and right worthy End with no greater Care and Application. But however there is this Aggravation on the Worldly Man's side, that he often fails as to his *Means* as well as his End; I don't mean as to their Unaptness or Insufficiency (for that's a defect common to both; and in which Religious Men are most concern'd) but that they are not always so Honest and Lawful as they should be, a small Objection to them who have large Consciences, and narrow Hearts, and whose Godliness is their Gain. These are the Defects of Worldly Wisdom, and the Dishonours of Worldly Wise Men, the Alloy of their Metal, and the
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Dark Spots that are to be found in their Orb, or rather Hemisphere of Light. Their Aims are wrong, and so oftentimes are their measures too, I mean as to the Justice and Honesty of them; but still they are dextrous in their Management, and execute well what they ill propose, and in that respect like the unjust Steward are to be commended, because they *do Wisely*. That is Wisely so far. And could this worldly Wisdom be persuaded to correct and supply these defects; could it be brought to raise its Aim higher than this vain World, and where the Interests of it *may* be regarded, to be more Just and Conscientious in the use of its Means, it would then be true Wisdom, perfect and exact Prudence, that Wisdom which is from above. Whereas now by these Disorders, it sinks and degenerates into a *Serpentine* Subtilty and Craftiness, a little Devilish Cunning, and Trickish Policy, even that Wisdom which is from below, that is Earthly, Sensual, and Devilish. For there's a great deal of the Devil in the Character of Policy and Cunning. For the Devil (therefore very fitly call'd by the name of the *Old Serpent*) has a great deal of Cunning, tho' no true Wisdom or Prudence; and his Cunning is the more odious for the resemblance it has with Wisdom, as Aping, and at the same time belying so Divine and Excellent a Vertue.

23. And the same may be applied to Human Policy. But of all the sorts of it, the worst and the most Diabolical that I know of is, when

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Men play the *Politicians* in Religion, where if any where, there ought to be the greatest Plainness, Simplicity, and Integrity. Not but that innocent Arts and Stratagems may be used in Religion, which admits of contrivance and good management as well as other Concerns; and often suffers for the want of it. And indeed we cannot imploy what Artifice and Managery we are Masters of to a better purpose, than in the Service, and for the Interest and Advantage of Religion. Always provided that we joyn the Dove with the Serpent, and when they are together, take care that the Serpent do not devour the Dove. But the Policy which I condemn in Religion is of another kind, and there are two sorts of it. The first is, when Men think to serve Religion or what they call by that name, by Cozenage and Imposture, by Cheats and Fictions, by Falshoods and Deceits. Such as the Fabulous Traditions of the Jewish Doctors, and the Fabulous Divinity of the *Gnosticks*, made up of Gentilism and Judaism, and the Pious Frauds of the Church of *Rome*, particularly those of the *Legendary* way. The contrary to all which the Apostle declares, not only in that general Rule that we should not do Evil that Good may come, but more particularly when he says of himself and his fellow Apostles, *We have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 16. For if such Politic Practices are not allowable in the first Institution of

of Religion, there is as little reason why they should be used now. The Second sort is, when Men do make use of Religion as a Tool, in order to the bringing about some Worldly and Secular Ends. Interest is their Aim, the true Mark which they shoot at; and that they may take their Aim the better, they use Religion for their *Rest*. And accordingly, they will change one Religion for another, lay down old Principles and take up new ones, whenever the humour of the Age, the turn of the Times, reason of State, prospect of Preferment, or any emerging Juncture shall make it for their Advantage to do so. This is the Policy of *Temporizers*, Men that steer their course by the compass of Worldly Interest, and rather than baulk that, will make even Religion it self to truckle to it. And in this they are consistent with themselves. For they look upon Religion as a *Politic* Device, merely for Order and Government, and so no wonder if they make a *Politic* use of it. Which perhaps is all the use that some Men make of Religion. But tho' Religion be the best Policy, yet they are much mistaken if they think Policy the best Religion.

24. These two Methods of Policy agree in this, that they are both Abuses of Religion, but in this they differ, that in the former *Religion* is made, or at least pretended, as the End, and ill Means are made use of to serve it. In the latter Worldly Interest is the End, and that low End is serv'd by *Religion*. Both these are bad

Practices, but the latter much the worst of the two. For the former acknowledges the Preheminence of Religion, and pays some Reverence to it in that it makes it an End, however it may neglect or forget the Rule and Order of it in offering to serve it by undue Means. But the latter depreiates and undervalues Religion to the lowest degree; it even profanes and prostitutes it, and vilifies it to the very utmost, by post-poning it to the things of the World, the Means being always supposed to be of less worth and value than the End. And therefore he that shall pretend Religion, and give out that for the Word, when all the while his End is to enrich himself, or to greaten himself, or to carry on some Worldly or Politic Intrigue, which he thinks he can carry on much better with a shew of Religion than without it, and therefore puts on the Prophet's Mantle that he may the better deceive; 'tis plain, that such a one besides his Hypocrisy in pretending to be what he is not, offers also the greatest Affront and Abuse to Religion that he can possibly offer, by making it a Decoy to his Worldly, and perhaps worse Designs; and that he has really no Religion at all, nor Acts upon any Principle, unless it be that of *Secret Infidelity*.

25. As to Knowledge at large, Prudence differs from that not in the Kind, as it does from Wit and Cunning, but only as a more special from a general. For Prudence is a sort of Knowledge, as being an Intellectual Vertue as was observ'd before.

before. It is therefore not a thing simply different from Knowledge, but only in a certain respect, that is, it is Knowledge under certain Qualifications. Which Qualifications are, that it be Actual and Practical. Actual in opposition to Habitual, and Practical in opposition to Notional or Speculative. After which I need not add a third Qualification, that it be a Particular Knowledge in opposition to Universal, since if it be Actual it must be Singular or Particular. Prudence then does not differ so much from Knowledge at large as from some other things, being only a Specification of it. But as to *Science* strictly so call'd, there the difference may be a little wider, the Object of Science being *necessary Truths*, such as have an immutable Nature and cannot be otherwise than they are, and the Object of Prudence being things of a *contingent* Nature, that may or may not be, and that may be thus or otherwise. For necessary things are not in our Power, and consequently do not come under our Consultation or Advice. For as *Aristotle* well observes in the fore-cited place, no body does consult about things that cannot be otherwise, or that cannot be done by him. The Object therefore of Prudence (whereby it differs from Science) must be contingent things, and not only contingent things at large, but such of them as are within the Sphere of our Power, and may be either done or not done by us, such as *Human Actions*, Which by the way is a very considerable Argument for Liberty of Will, and against Fate and

Necessity, since where all things are immoveably fix'd, and as it were frozen up in a stiff Fatality, there can be no room for Prudence.

26. For one great Act or Office of Prudence (as we shall see by and by) is to consult, deliberate and advise about the *End* which is fit to be proposed by us, whether we shall place it in this or that. But if the End be absolutely fix'd and determin'd already, what need we consult or advise about it, or how can we consult about a thing that *must* infallibly be, and that does not depend upon our Power. And to again, another part of Prudence is to consult about the *Means*, but if the Means are also already fix'd and determin'd (as upon the supposition of an absolute necessity, whether in the way of Fatality, or in the way of an absolute Decree, it must be) there seems as little room for Consultation in this Case as in the other. And where neither End nor Means fall under Human Consultation, what place is left for Prudence, or what a Prudent Man has to do, will puzzle a Wiser Man than I am to understand. The best Prudence in this Case is in my Opinion, to sit still and be quiet, and not to give our selves a *needless* or a *vain* Concern about things which have already a Determination to one side not to be alter'd by us, and which are either *Necessary* or *Impossible* to be effected. But as for that Prudence which consists in a *Positive* direction of our Actions, there seems no place for it upon this Supposition, this Prudence (as all we here say upon it) supposing the natural

ral Liberty of the Will, and that we have some power to dispose of our selves, and of what we do.

C H A P. III.

Wherein the Acts or Offices of Prudence, and particularly Christian Prudence, are consider'd. And first of its general Offices, and that with respect both to End and Means.

I. **H**AVING in some measure settled the Nature and Notion of Prudence, and placed it in its right Light, the next thing that ought regularly to follow, should be the *Division* of it. But it being hardly worth while to make a distinct Chapter about that, especially since I design but one sort of Prudence as the Subject of this Treatise, and being willing not to stay my Reader (whose Edification I intend) in dry and barren places that afford no Moral Nutriment to his Mind, but to hasten as much as may be with Convenience to things of a more Practical Concern, I shall make so bold with the rules of Art for the Advantage of greater Edification, as to throw in here at the beginning of this Chapter what I shall think necessary to be observ'd concerning that Matter,

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2. In the Division of Prudence we are to consider the parts of it. Not those which they call *Integral Parts*, or *Potential Parts*, but those which they call *Subjective Parts*, that is, the several sorts or species that are contain'd under it. It may be then consider'd that Prudence may either respect a Man's self, or others. That which respects a Man's self may be call'd private or personal Prudence. That which respects others may be distinguish'd by the name of Public or Social Prudence. And this again may be diversify'd according as the nature of the society is, or the manner of its Administration. If it be a Family, we may call it Domestic Prudence; if a Country or Commonwealth, we may call it Civil or Politic Prudence; if an Army, Military Prudence, &c. with many other Inter-Divisions between these, particularly between a Family and a Commonwealth, for which we want a Name. And thus I range these things in compliance with the common way of speaking; but if I may be allow'd to say so, this seems to me to be Prudence in a large and improper sense, and to be a Division rather, after the manner of an Accident into its several Subjects, than of a general or universal into its Species. For 'tis all but Personal Prudence differently applied, as concern'd about different Objects, or in different Circumstances. So that one may as well say, Virginal, or Conjugal, or Vidual Prudence as any of these. For still the Immediate Object of these Prudences is a Man's own Actions, only those Actions are done.

done in different States, and exercised about different Persons and Things. So that all seems to resolve into *Personal Prudence*, only that *Personal Prudence* has a larger Scene in some Men than in others, which for ought I know may be all the difference. And whether that be foundation enough for so many formal Divisions, let others consider. However this is certain, that when we speak of Prudence absolutely, or Imprudence, we mean that which is *Personal*, and that in the strictest sense, whereby a Man disposes well or ill of his own Actions and Concerns. And accordingly, this is the Prudence which is intended as the Subject of the present Discourse, and whose Acts or Offices I proceed now to consider.

3. Now these are either general or particular. The general (which are the Subject of this Chapter) may I think conveniently be reduced to these two. First, To propose a right *End*. And secondly, To chuse and apply fit and proper *Means* for the Attainment of it. Here I take the liberty to suppose that Prudence respects the *End* as well as the *Means*. Wherein I differ from the account of our common Moralists, who will have Prudence to be concern'd only about the *Means*; so as to have this for its general Office to dispose of those things that are in order to the End, and not to prescribe or determine the End it self. Which they say belongs to Natural Reason. It does so, but I see not why it should not belong to Prudence too. Indeed 'tis commonly said that

that *Consultation* is not of the End, but of the Means only. And the same is also said of *Election*. And there is I own some ground for these Sayings, which in many Cases are true. For so a *Physician* does not consult or deliberate whether he shall *Cure* his Patient or no, but by what *Means*. Nor does an *Orator* deliberate whether he shall *perswade*, but *how*. But then I say first, that this is so oftentimes only upon *Supposition* of the End's being already fix'd. And then indeed there remains nothing to be consulted about or chosen but the Means, as in the Cases alledged. But before the fixing of the End there is room for both, or else how comes it to be fix'd. And tho' it be not ordinary for a *Physician* to deliberate whether he shall *Cure*, yet this is not barely as 'tis an *End*, but because it happens to be in an Instance, where he has, generally speaking, no Temptation to the contrary, and were any certain *Method* of *Cure* as unexceptionable, he would as little deliberate about *that*. But suppose a *Physician* be the next Heir to a great Estate after the decease of his Patient, may he not then deliberate about his *Cure*? Yes, no doubt but that absolutely speaking he may; and unless he bears a good honest Mind, 'tis easy to guess what the result of his *Deliberation* will be.

4. But to this I say Secondly, that whenever it is absolutely true, that *Consultation* is not of the End but of the Means only, this must be understood only of the general and ultimate
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End, *viz.* *Happiness*, and not of particular and intermediate Ends, *viz.* those things wherein this Happiness does or is supposed to consist. For tho' a Man does not consult or deliberate whether he shall be happy or no, yet he may very well inquire and advise wherein his Happiness is to be placed, whether in Riches, or Greatness, or the Pleasures of Sense, &c. and so consequently, whether he shall make these or something *better* his *End*. All this will admit of Deliberation; and it not only admits it, but requires it. Happiness in general indeed does not; not so much perhaps because it is an End, as because it is *such* an End. For Good in general is invincibly lovely, as having a sort of Infinity in it, and as fully answering all the Capacity of our Natures. And so there is no room for any Deliberation here, any more than there is for *Liberty*. But there is no particular Good, or End, but what a Man may consult, inquire and deliberate about, and upon such Inquisition made, *chuse* or refuse as his Reason and Judgment shall at that time direct, and that according to the strictest sense of *Choice*, as that signifies a free Preference or Acceptation of one Thing before another. I know the School-Moralists do not like the word *Choice* when applied to the End, but instead of that use the word *Intention*, meaning by it a *Tendency* only of the Will to the End, as attainable by such Means; that is, that the Will loves it as a Good, and intends it as an End, but does not properly *chuse* it.

It. But as to this I say the same as of *Consultation*, that this indeed is true as to Happiness, or Good in general, which is the Object of Will only, and not of Choice; because Choice implies *Liberty*, which here has no place. But as to particular Goods or Ends, I see no Reason why they may not come under our election as well as any thing else. And 'tis in such Goods and Ends as these, as I shall shew by and by, wherein Prudence is concern'd.

5. But to argue a little nearer to common Sense and Observation; do not Men very often chuse wrong Ends; I mean, wrong particular Ends: For Men are all right enough in the general: Happiness is so large, and at the same time so fair a Mark, that there is no possibility of missing it. No Body makes any mistakes here. But as for particular Ends, nothing is more common than for Men to make Blunders and Mistakes in them, to chuse the wrong instead of the right, while one makes Pleasure his end, and another Wealth, &c. And is not this done every day, and all the World over? And is not this the very Fault which we find with the Heathen Philosophers, particularly the *Epicureans*, that they were out in their Ends, in misplacing their Happiness? And is not this also the Fault which we charge upon the *Children of this World*, whom our Saviour pronounces wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light, that as wise as they are, they take a wrong Aim, and shoot well at a false mark; and so, upon the whole,

whole, we condemn them for Fools, tho' in their way wiser than the other. But now if these Men do not properly *chuse* these their wrong Ends, why do we find fault with them? And if they *do* chuse them, then an ill End may be chosen, tho' in it self not justly eligible, as being ill. And if an ill End may be chosen, then an End may be chosen; and if an End may be *chosen*, then 'tis plain (which is the Conclusion to be infer'd) that *Prudence*, which directs our Choice, must be concern'd in it. But in short, Prudence comprehends the intire disposal of a Man's self, and takes in his whole Conduct. But I think 'tis evident, that the End is an *Integral Part* of a Man's Conduct, and belongs to the Perfection of it, as well as the Means. And therefore I think it must be allow'd, that Prudence does not respect the Means only, but the End also, if not *principally*. And accordingly I shall make no scruple, with or without the Leave of the School-Morality, to lay down this as the first general Office of Prudence, especially of Christian Prudence, for a Man to propose to himself a right *End*.

6. But when I make this the first general Part or Office of Prudence, to propose a right End, I do not mean a right End in *general*. For there Men are never wrong, nor capable of erring. All Men are right in this, and they all consent in this. They all propose the same last End, *confusely* and in general to themselves. The Good and the Bad, the Prudent and the Imprudent, the

the Wise and the Foolish, as wide as they are from one another otherwise, all most Harmoniously agree here in proposing *good in general*, or Happiness for their End. So there is no need of any Moral Advice or Instruction upon this part, where Men are already determin'd and set right by Nature. Nor is it a matter capable of Choice, nor consequently of Prudence. For our Moralists are right as to their supposition, that where there is no Choice, Prudence can have no place. And therefore if it were true, as they say, that the End does not fall under our *Electi-on*, it would be also true what they farther say, that Prudence does not respect the End. But now this tho' not true absolutely, as we have shewn, is yet however very true as to Good in general, or Happiness, which is the Object not of our Free, but of our Natural Love, and so does by no means come under our *Election*, nor consequently within the Sphere of our Prudence, which being that which is to order and regulate our Choice, can be concern'd no farther than that reaches. 'Tis plain therefore that Prudence has nothing to do here, because Nature has already done all; nor, I presume, was it ever made a part of the Character of a Wise or Prudent Man, that he propos'd a right End to himself in this large and general sense. For so far at least we are all *Wise Men*.

7. By a right End therefore here we are to understand such as is right in the *particular*. Meaning, that that true and last End which all
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Men by the inclination of Nature, and not by any free choice, propose confusely and implicitly, as proposing that which can be found only therein, that this End be proposed distinctly and explicitly. Or to put it in more easy and familiar terms, that as a Man naturally proposes Good in general, or Happiness to himself as his End, so he should place this Happiness in the right Object, in that wherein it does truly *consist* as our common language runs, but perhaps more distinctly, in that (whatever it be) which is the true *Cause* of this Happiness to us. For Happiness is not a thing without us, but only a certain State, Condition, or Manner of Being, and whatever it is that can cause or give us that manner of Being, that I call the true Object of our Happiness, or that in which our Happiness does truly and particularly consist. The former of these, the School Moralists call *Formal* Happiness (tho' I think it might be as well, if not better, call'd *Subjective*) meaning by it that Happiness which is in the Man who is said to be Happy. The latter they call *Objective* Happiness, meaning by it that Good or End in whose fruition this *Formal* Happiness does consist. Now I say that then, and then only it is that a Man proposes to himself a right End, in the Sense and Intention of this first general Office of Prudence, when his *Objective* Happiness is right. For as to the *Formal* part, there he can never be wrong. And the Business of Prudence is not to direct or conduct us where we can never Err,
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but where we may, and often do. Which is in the Objective part, and therefore that's the part which Prudence is to secure. For indeed this Objective Happiness is really the same with the absolutely right and last End. There is only this Formal Difference between them, that 'tis call'd the last End, as 'tis that for whose sake we *Act*. And Objective Happiness, as 'tis that by which we are made *Happy*. But this is a Distinction of Reason only, arising from a different manner of conceiving, and not from the different nature of the things conceiv'd, which in reality are one and the same.

8. The right End therefore which Prudence prescribes is a right *particular* End, Object, or Cause of Happiness. But before we proceed any further, I must here take notice that this Office or Act of Prudence presupposes *another*, and that is, that every Man should propose a certain End to himself. By which I mean some last End or *Summum Bonum* as 'tis call'd, some good or other which he looks upon as desirable for it self, and which he makes the great scope and butt of his Life, to which he directs and levels all his Actions, and for the sake of which he does whatever he deliberately does. Some such End as this (for who has not his little Ends and Designs?) every Man ought in Prudence to prefix himself, and not to live at large and at random, and at all adventure as a great many do, without having any Mark or Aim in their View, except some little under Ends and Designs which

no one can be without, and that large one of Happiness in general, which is not to be reckon'd as a certain End, nor can they that propose that, only be said to propose a certain End to themselves, any more than a Ship can be said to be bound for a certain Country, only because it carries a Needle in it which points towards the *North*. Our Inclination to Happiness is no better, and therefore as such a Ship is rather loose than bound, as being under no particular Direction, so is he that steers his Course to no certain Point; but drives at large as Wind or Tide happen to carry him, and that notwithstanding his general Inclination to *Happiness*. There ought therefore to be something more determinate and particular to which a Man should tend, and direct his course, some certain Point or Center which shall receive and unite all his lines of Action. But there are a great many Men whose Actions are not like lines drawing *to* a Center, but like lines drawn *from* a Center, tending to no Point, but dispersing wider and wider as they go on, till they lose themselves in a wild Infinity. And all because they have no certain Aim in what they do, but Live and Act as their fancy, their Humour, their Passion, their Interest, their Pleasure, their Conversation, their any thing, shall happen to incline them. And thus having no fix'd End of their Actions, there is neither Reason *for* them nor Order *in* them, but all is Loose and Uncertain, Irregular and Disuniform, because indeed there is nothing to unite or regulate

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late them. For 'tis the having an End before one in all our Actions that does this, and therefore they that have no such fix'd End, must needs Act as some Men talk and write, without any Order or *Coherence*. Of such wandring, unprincipled *Planetary* Men as these it is that the Poet speaks when he says,

*Est aliquid quò tendis, & in quod dirigis Arcum ?
An passim sequeris Corvos, testâque lutoq; ?
Securus quo pes ferat, atq; ex tempore vivis.*

Where he compares those who have some fix'd and settled End, to them who shoot at a certain Mark, and those loose and unsettled Men who have none, to them who with dirt or shells, or whatever comes to hand, follow the Crows up and down from place to place, as they happen to lead 'em. The Image is very Lively, and very Natural, only it is like so very *many*, that 'tis impossible to tell for whom it was drawn.

9. We ought therefore by this first, great and general Rule of Prudence to fix some end to our selves, and that a *Right* one. For indeed, as dissolute and uncertain a State as it is: for a Man to have no End at all for the Scope of his Life, such a one being *unstable in all his ways*, like an unguided Ship that floats loosely upon the waves; yet I must needs say that of the two, 'tis much better to have no End at all, than to have a bad one. For tho' the former be more Brutish and Irrational, yet the latter is more **Vicious**

cious and Immoral. The former may carry in it more of an inconsiderate and unreflecting Mind, but the latter bespeaks a more wicked and corrupt Will. Indeed there is as much difference between them as between not designing at all, and designing ill. The undesigning Man has most of the Fool, but the Man that designs ill has most of the Knave. An ill Design is the worst thing that can be. Where there is a good End, there is always something good. For a good End will sanctify *indifferent* Means; and tho' it will not justify bad ones, yet however it retains its own Goodness, and in all the disorder of the Prosecution, there is a good End still. But a bad End spoils all. For tho' a good End will not justify bad Means, yet a bad End will serve to corrupt good ones; the very best Actions which a Man can do becoming Sins, if done for a bad End, or with an ill Design. So that where a bad End is, there is *nothing* good. And for this reason it must be acknowledged that the Children of Light, tho' not so careful and diligent in the prosecution of their End as they should be, and as so worthy an End deserves, nor consequently so wise in that respect as the Men of the World, (as our Lord tells us they are not) yet absolutely and upon the whole they are, if not wiser, yet better Men; a good End, tho' not so well prosecuted, being better than an ill End, tho' managed never so well. For indeed the very goodness of its management makes it upon the whole so much the worse,

because the ill End is by that the more effectually secured. It concerns us therefore above all things that our End be good, since if that be wrong nothing can be right.

10. What this right End is in particular, is not the concern of this Chapter to shew. But that it belongs to Prudence, especially that which is Christian, and is indeed the principal part of it, to have such a right End, is, I think, very plain. For Prudence is to direct a Man right in the whole conduct and disposal of himself. And therefore as it takes in the *End*, as was said before, so it necessarily requires a *right End*; and that because without a right End 'tis impossible this should be done. For besides that a right End is one principal part of a Man's Conduct, and consequently he that is out in that, is out in the first and leading part of Wisdom. When once a Man has fix'd himself a wrong End, he has cut out a false channel for the whole course of his Life, which in every step of it will partake of that *first Error*, since nothing can be done well, that is done with a wrong Design. And let a Man be never so skilful and dextrous afterwards in compassing this his wrong End, his Wisdom comes too late, and does indeed more harm than good. For this is so far from rectifying his first Mistake, that it only serves more infallibly to secure it to him, and to entail it upon him. 'Tis like travelling well in a false Road, or to a wrong Place, which only leads a Man the more out of his way, and sets

sets him the further off from his Journey's end. Or if you will have a nicer Comparison, 'tis like a Man's Reasoning well upon false Principles, which carries him off the wider from the Truth, and engages him the further in Error. The loose and *inconsequential* Reasoner has here the Advantage, because he in his wild ramble may happen to light upon Truth, whereas he that argues closely and consequentially upon a wrong Ground, is by the very train of his good Reasoning carried clear away from it. The closer he keeps to his Principle, the wider he departs from the Truth, and is misled even by his own steddiness.

II. By this it is apparent of what Consequence and Concernment it is to Human Life, that a Man's *End* be right. And yet in this it is wherein Men are generally wrong; and therefore how can one expect that their Lives and Actions should be more regular than they are, when even their very *Aim*, which should regulate them, is it self erroneous and misplaced. *If the Light which is in thee be Darkness, how great is that Darkness,* and how great Darkness and Confusion must it cause! As it did among the Gentile Philosophers. For this was their blind side, the part wherein their vain Philosophy fail'd. They mistook the great End of Man, the true *Summum Bonum*, and were no less deceiv'd in the Object of Happiness, than in the Object of Worship, as appears from their great Contests and Disputes, and the great variety of

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Opinions.

Opinions which they had concerning that matter, taken notice of by Learned Men, particularly *Varro* and *St. Austin*. Not but that there might be some among the wiser Heathens who placed Happiness in the right Object, among which *St. Austin* reckons the *Platonists*, who as he says, placed their *Summum Bonum* in the Fruition of God. But as others of them did not, so I do not see upon what grounds even those that did, could in a proper sense propose this *Summum Bonum* to themselves as an *End*, so as to be able to act with due regard to it, and in pursuance of it, or to govern their Lives by it, because they knew of no means whereby this Sovereign Good was by them *attainable*. For not only the excellency of a Good, but the attainableness of it, or at least the supposed attainableness, seems a necessary Condition of an End. For an End, being that for whose sake a Man acts, it must be conceiv'd as attainable, since a Man cannot act for the acquiring that which he does not think it possible for him to acquire. And therefore tho' some wise Heathens might upon the Consideration of the World's Vanity, and the Divine Excellencies, place Happiness in the Fruition of God, yet how they could propose the Enjoyment of such a Good as *their* End, unless they thought it attainable by them, I see not; and how they should think it so attainable is not much easier to comprehend, since they could not be ignorant what a great and strange elevation

tion of Human Nature this must be to enjoy such an End, and knew nothing of *him* who is the *Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

12. But that the *Gentiles* that knew not God (as St. Paul says 1 *Theff.* 4. 5.) should be mistaken in their End, is not so much to be admir'd as pity'd. The Wonder is that *Christians*, who both know God, and the Way and Means whereby they may arrive to the Fruition of so Beatific a Good, should err so widely as to take up with a wrong End. That they should be wanting in the *Means* is not near so strange, because that depends upon Diligence and Application, and upon a painful struggle with a Man's own Will and Passions. But as to the End, that being chiefly the concern of the Understanding, (the Will having no reason to refuse what the Understanding represents as such, however it may boggle at the *Means*) it is indeed a very wonderful thing that in the Light wherein *Christians* are placed, any of them should be mistaken *there.* And yet there are a great many that are, even as many as there are Children of this World. These are all mistaken in their End, or else our Saviour needed not to have express'd himself with so much Caution concerning them, in saying, that *they were in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light.* For were their End as right as their Means, they would be not only in their *Generation*, but absolutely wiser, and indeed would want nothing to fill up the Character of Wise and Prudent Men. But there it is that

that they fail ; and failing in this fundamental part of Wisdom, they must be contented with a far more inferiour Character, that of a little Devilish *Craft* and *Cunning*. For the most that they can pretend to is to be good levellers at a wrong Mark, to run well, but for a Prize that is not worth running for. *This they do to obtain a corruptible Crown.* They do in the Art of Living, as some Men do in that of Reasoning, who indeed Reason well, but 'tis to prove a wrong Proposition, that wherein the Question is not concern'd. And so these Worldly Men commit the same Blunder. Their Conduct is good, but their End is wrong, and so their Life, tho' carrying the shew of Wisdom, is really but a Fal-lacy, a very *Ignoratio Elenchi* all the way.

13. Only there are two ways of conceiving this. There are some of the Children of this World, whom we may conceive to make the World (by which I mean the Pleasures of Sense, or any other good this present Life affords) their End, directly, professedly, and as it were *in Thesi*, pronouncing this World their chief Good, setting up for the Interests of it, some in the way of Wealth, some in the way of Pleasure, and some in the way of Honour and Grandeur, and pretending to no more than to make the most of this sensible Life, and to enjoy as much of the World as they can, making *Gold their Hope*, and saying to the *fine Gold thou art my Confidence*, as *Job* expresses it ; or like the Rich Man in the Gospel, bespeaking a Rest and Repose
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for their Souls in the good Things of this Life. *Πυρ ἀνάμυς*, Soul stop thy self, or repose thy self. *Luke 12. 19.* All Infidels, and Atheistical Men, all profess'd Epicures and Sensualists, and all Covetous Men, those I mean who are guilty of that degree of Covetousness which *St. Paul* calls *Idolatry*, may be placed in this Class. For they that *Idolize* the World make a God of it, and they that make a God of it, to be sure make an *End* of it. But there are others again, who tho' they do not directly and professedly make the World their End, yet they do it constructively, and by consequence. They may not speak as the Rich Man did, (as perhaps there are not many that will) but they live and act both as he *did*, and as he *said*. And of such Children of the World as these, the World (the most fruitful of all Parents) is full. They cleave to the World, and pursue it in all its Interests, as if it were their *Summum Bonum*; and as far as one may judge by their Practice, they believe it so. For so 'tis also in *Idolatry*. We call them Idolaters, not only who formally and expressly set up a false God, but who pay that Religious Worship which is due only to God, to something else that is not God. In like manner, they who pursue the World as they would or should do their true End, and that love it as they should do God, with all their Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength, may be but too truly said to make an End of it. They do it Practically; and if their Notion be not according to their Practice, all that

that I can say is, that there are Hypocrites elsewhere as well as in Religion.

14. And thus I have represented the first and great general Office of Christian Prudence, and that is the Proposal of a right End. I now proceed to the second, which is the choice of right Means. By which I mean not only Naturally, but Morally right; that is, not only that they be such as have a sufficient aptness or efficacy for the obtaining the End proposed, but that they be also such as are otherwise good and lawful in themselves. A *Politician* perhaps would regard only the former of these, but a *Christian* must make Conscience of the latter, since even the best of Ends is not to be serv'd by bad Means, nor will justify their Badness, if the Doctrine of *St. Paul* be right, *Rom. 3. 8.* according to which we are not to do Evil that Good may come, not the least Evil for the sake of the greatest Good. The Means therefore must be Absolutely as well as Relatively good, good in themselves as well as good in order to the End, regular and lawful as well as naturally serviceable, and fit for the purpose. Indeed the *natural* Goodness of the End (I speak of the last End, which is an End only and not a Means) is enough to recommend it to our Choice, who have nothing else to consider in it, but only whether we can be Happy by it. But this will not suffice in the Means, they must have a Moral as well as a Natural Goodness. The reason of which difference may be this. The End is somewhat without us,
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and which we have nothing to do with any further than to enjoy it if we can. But the Means are our own Actions, which fall under the Obligation of a Rule, and for which we are accountable. Again, the End as such is not capable of any other Good but what is Natural; all that is to be look'd for there being *only* whether it be such a Good as can make us Happy. But the Means, as being our own Actions, are capable of Moral as well as Natural Good. Once more, the End is will'd for it self, as a self-desirable Good, and accordingly willing it only for it self, we are no further concern'd than only to consider it *absolutely* in it self, whether it be indeed such a Natural Good as is able to make us Happy; whereas the Means are will'd not for themselves, but for the sake of the End to which they serve, and accordingly 'tis requisite that they should be not only naturally fit and effectual to obtain it, but that they should be also worthy of it. And accordingly *St. Paul* tells us, *2 Tim. 2. 5.* that if a Man strive for masteries, yet is he not crown'd unless he strive *lawfully*, that is, unless he contends fairly, according to the stated and allow'd Rules of the Game, or Combat, be they what they will.

15. Now that this order of the Means is one general part of Prudence, I presume is as certain as any thing that belongs to it. The School-Morality will have Prudence concern'd in nothing else but the ordering and disposing of the Means, the contrary to which I have sufficiently shewn.

shewn. But that it is really concern'd in the choice of the Means, and to take care that they be right in *their* kind, as the End is in *its* kind, is, I think, too plain either to be denied, or to need much Proof. For the Means is part of a Man's Conduct as well as the End, and so must belong to Prudence, under whose Government and Direction that falls. For as on the one hand, good Means can't make a Man Happy without a right End, so neither on the other hand can a right End suffice for his Happiness, without good and proper Means to bring him to it. In the former Case he will fail of being Happy for want of Sufficiency in the Object to make him so, in the latter for want of a Possibility of enjoying it. And in this there is not much, if any difference. 'Tis true indeed, in the Concerns of *Morality* the End is by much the principal, since if the End be right, tho' it does not justify the badness of the Means, yet neither is it corrupted by it, but there is still something good, and we may say the Man *means* well. But if the End be wrong, all is wrong, nothing being good that is done with an ill Intention, or for a bad End. But as to *Happiness*, the Ballance seems to hang pretty even on both sides, the Means as to that being of like importance and necessity with the End. For a defect on either side will prove an equal Disappointment, it being all one to me if the Object wherein I place my Happiness be not sufficiently qualified to make me Happy, or if the Means which I use be not such

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as they ought to bring me to the fruition of it. So that here the choice of right Means is as necessary as the choice of a right End, and as much a part of Christian Prudence.

16. Here I must not omit to take notice, that the School-Moralists under this Part of Prudence which respects the Means, (to me a *part*, but with them the *whole*) are wont to consider a threefold Act of it. For as they make but one general office of Prudence, *viz.* the disposal of those Things that are to the End, or to direct concerning the Means, so they divide this one general Office into three Acts. Whereof the first is to consult or inquire about the Means. The second is to judge of them when they are found. And the third and last is to order, or command, that they be used or put in execution. Some express this one way, and some another, but I think this is the sum and substance of it. And in proportion to these three Acts of Prudence, with reference to the Means, they tell us of so many answerable Vertues, or Habits, which they call *Potential* Parts of Prudence, *viz.* *Enbulia*, or a Habit of Consulting or Deliberating: *Synesis*, properly Intelligence, but with them *Per-spicacity* or Discernment in Judging, particularly in those Things that are stated and defined by any Law. And lastly *Gnome*, by which they mean a Habit of Sentencing, as I may call it, or Determining, particularly in those matters which are not defined by any Law, and yet come under our Practice, and which therefore there is
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the greater Difficulty ; in which Cases a Man must use his Natural Reason as well as he can, as having no other Guide. Now I do not deny but there may be such Vertues, and that they may accompany Prudence, and may be also serviceable and assistant to it, but why they should call them *Potential* Parts of it is not so easy to understand. For a Potential Part answers to a Potential Whole, and as a Potential Whole is such a Whole as contains its Parts not actually, but in Power only or Capacity, and signifies the same as a general or universal, so a Potential Part must be such a Part as is not actually contain'd in its Whole but in Power only, and so must signify the same as a Species, or Individual, which indeed are Potential Parts of the General, contain'd not so properly in it, as under it, as being within the extent and reach of it.

17. But what Impropriety soever there may be in these Mens way of Speaking, their Notion as to those three Acts of Prudence before mention'd is, I think, right enough, and it may be worth our while to bestow a few Reflections upon them. The first of them is *Consultation* or *Inquiry*, which indeed is very necessary, and what becomes every Wise or Prudent Man. When once a Man has propos'd to himself an End, such as he takes to be right, his next business is to consult, inquire, or deliberate, not whether there be *any* means for the attaining it or no (for 'tis suppos'd that a Man will not propose himself an End which he thinks *unattainable*)
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but what they are, and which of them is fittest for his Purpose. In order to which he must compare them both with the End it self, and with one another. With the End, that he may know whether they are absolutely fit and proper; with one another, that he may know which of them to prefer. For so the Traveller, when he has once proposed and determin'd with himself to go to such a place, he next considers of the means. But in order to direct himself right as to that, he first turns his thoughts to the place again, and considers whereabouts it is, and in what Situation it lies, that he may thence take some general measures how to come at it. Then he takes care to inform himself more particularly, either by Map or some other Intelligence, about the ways that lead thither. Then he consults and advises which is the best of these ways, which the nearest, which the cleanest, which the safest, which the easiest to find, or whatever else it is that may recommend one way before another. And so in all other Cases, the first thing we do or should begin with after the fixing of the End, is to consult and deliberate about the Means, and the greater any End or Undertaking is, the greater this Consultation should be. And accordingly in the *Mosaic* Account of the Creation we find, that even God himself is brought in as it were *consulting* and advising about the Production of Man. Not to signify any real Deliberation within himself, or any Difficulty in the work, but to represent to us

the Dignity of Man, and that he was made with admirable Wisdom, and great Prudence, as the Learned Bishop of *Ely* expresses it in his Comment upon the Place. Agreeable to which is also the Language of the Apostle concerning God, when he says of him, that he *worketh all things after the Counsel of his own Will*, Ephes. 1. 11. Not that God can properly deliberate, for that implies Imperfection, as supposing some degree of Ignorance; but this is *Humanly* spoken, as many other things are, and signifies only that God does not proceed by mere Will and arbitrary Pleasure in the Government of the World, but that his Will is directed by the highest Reason, and that his Providential Conduct is in all things as perfectly Wise and Prudent, as if he had consulted and advised about it never so much. But however, tho' God be not strictly capable of Deliberation, yet this may serve to recommend it to us who are, and is a great Rebuke to all Rashness and Precipitation, and Inconsiderateness in Undertaking, one of the greatest Enemies in the World to a Prudent Conduct. And therefore says *Solomon*, *With the well advised is Wisdom*, Prov. 13. 10. And again says he, *Every Purpose is establish'd by Counsel, and with good Advice make War*, Prov. 20. 18.

18. But before I leave this Head of *Consultation*, I have two necessary Remarks further to offer upon it. One is, that tho' our common Morality appropriates it to the Means only, yet it is also no less applicable to the End. Not indeed

deed to the general End, or Happiness *abstractly* consider'd, which is necessarily and unrefusably lovely, but it may very well be applied to *concrete* Happiness, or to that particular Object wherein Happiness is supposed to consist. For sure a Man may very well consult and deliberate, tho' not whether he shall be happy or no, yet *wherein* he shall place his Happiness, whether in Riches, Honour, or Pleasure, or in something more excellent than any thing this World can afford. This will very well bear an Inquiry, as appears by the Diversity of Opinions which the Wise Men of old fell into about it. My other Remark is, That this Consultation about the Means, has its chief place in those Means that lead to a subordinate End. For as to those Means which serve in order to the ultimate End, that is, to that particular Object wherein Happiness does consist, or which is the true and immediate Cause of it, there is not abundance of Deliberation to be used about *them*, not perhaps so much as is to be used about the *Beatific Object* it self. For as to that Disputes have been, and may be; but that being once rightly fix'd, there is not much need or room for a great deal of Deliberation about the Means that lead to it, or that are required to put us in possession of it. Especially to us *Christians*, whom God has taken care to ease of a great part of this Trouble, by describing to us in large Characters the way that leads to Happiness. We have his Spirit, and his Word; and if our Ears

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do not hear a Word behind us, *Isa.* 30. 21. yet our Eyes at least may see a plain Rule before us, that tells us, this is the way, walk ye in it. *He hath shew'd thee, O Man, what is good, &c. Micah* 6. 8.

19. That which follows Consultation is *Judgment*. For when we have consider'd and inquired about finding the Means, the next thing we have to do is to judge of them when found. To judge of them both as to their Natural and as to their Moral Capacity, whether they are sufficient for the obtaining the End, and whether fit and lawful to be employ'd for that purpose, and withal, which of them in either respect is to be prefer'd. After we have thus duely consulted and inquired, then, and not till then, we are fit to *judge*; and how happy were it if we would suspend our Judgment of Things till then. What abundance of Error, and what abundance of Sin should we by this means avoid! While we suspend we are safe, and when we proceed not to judge till after we have *well* consider'd and advis'd upon the matter, we take the best way to be safe too. For Attention begets Light, and if we will *see*, we must first *look*, and the more we look upon the Object the better we shall see, and the more we shall discover of it. And if by thus considering we come to a clear Perception, then we may safely judge and act too; but if we have not that Light we must stay till we have, remain in our *Suspence*, and not venture out in the *dark*, by acting what
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we doubt of. Indeed we are told in the Case of a *doubting Conscience*, that the exprefs Command of a lawful Authority is to over-rule any such Doubt, so as to warrant and oblige a Man to act notwithstanding. Which indeed I acknowledge. But then this, as I apprehend, is to be understood only of that Doubt which a Man has concerning the Action it self simply consider'd, whether it be in it self lawful or no. Such a Doubt as this is without doubt to be over-ruled by a lawful Authority, whose weight must needs turn an equal Ballance. But if the Doubt be upon the *whole*, taking in and including with the Action the Authority also that commands it, whether even *then* it be to be done, I do not see how a Man can act under such a Doubt as that; for there I think St. *Paul's* Rule takes place, that *whatever is not of Faith is Sin*, Rom. 14. 23. Every Man ought to come to a Resolution one way or other before he acts, and be satisfy'd in his Mind of the lawfulness of what he is about. And the way to be so is to consult and deliberate well before-hand, before we judge or act. And 'tis for want of this that Men run into so much Error as they do, and into so much Sin, the Fruit and Consequence of Error. But consulting and deliberating are thoughtful and painful things, to judge and act is much more easy and ready, and Men are in a great deal of Impatience, and so like hasty Travellers they take the shorter cut before the better way, preferring their Ease before Truth or Innocence.

20. The third and last Act of Prudence with respect to the Means, is that *Order* or *Command* which it gives for their use or execution. For when a Man has well weigh'd and consider'd the Means to any End, and finds them every way fit for his Purpose, what else has the Mind more to do but to give order for the putting them in Practice? This I confess to be but a Metaphorical kind of Expression; and therefore to bring it to a greater simplicity and clearness, I think we must interpret this *Order* or *Command* as they call it, to be only an *Illative* kind of Judgment, that such Means before judged of and approved should be actually used or applied. For the whole matter lies in this Syllogism. The right Means is to be used: But this is so, Therefore this is to be used. Now the first Proposition here, Prudence (as now concern'd about the Means) proceeds upon as a supposition, as being included in the proposal of the End. For whoever proposes any End in good earnest, is presumed in the same act to will the right Means to obtain it, consciously and in general, tho' not distinctly and in particular. This therefore is here supposed, that the right Means are to be used. But then as to the second Proposition; *This is the right Means*, this directly expresses that second Act of Prudence which they call *Judgment*, and implies also the first, that of *Consultation*, as depending upon it. Then as to the last Proposition or Conclusion, *Therefore this is to be used*, this contains that Prudential Act which

which they call the *Order* or *Command*, and tho' an Illative Judgment is yet but Judgment still, differing from the other only in this, that whereas that is a simple and direct Judgment, this is a complex and illative one; and again, that whereas that is a Judgment concerning the *fitness* of the Means, this is a Judgment concerning the actual *use* or application of them, that is in short, 'tis a Judgment for the doing of that which the former Judgment pronounc'd fit to be done. So that it is properly a Practical Judgment or Dictate of the Mind, that last Dictate which the Will is said to follow, and which produces Consent in the Will, and by the Will those Motions or Operations (*Imperate Acts* as they are call'd) which are perform'd by the mediation of the Body, and its external Organs. And this I take to be that Order or *Imperial Act* of the Mind wherein Prudence is concern'd. There is indeed another sort of Order or Command belonging to the Will, which is both more proper and more immediate, that whereby the Parts of the Body are moved. But I do not take Prudence, as being an Intellectual Vertue, to be properly concern'd in this, but rather in that Order which is Intellectual, and which seems to be no other than a *Judicial Act*. For indeed I understand not how the Mind can be said to order or command the doing of any thing, any otherwise than by judging that it should be done.

21. And now Prudence has done her Part. And where that ends, there the *Executive Powers* begin. For the Understanding having given its Orders for the use of such Means (in the way that I have explain'd) to the Will, if they consist in internal Acts, such as the Love of God, &c. the Will then executes them her self, but if in external, then the Will transmits these Orders to the inferiour Faculties, that is to speak out of Metaphor, moves those Faculties to act, or rather by the Power she has over the Animal Spirits by Vertue of the Law of Union between the Soul and Body, causes such Motions in the Organs or Parts of it, as are required to the performance of such Actions. And in this it is, that what we call the *Use*, or the Application, or Execution of the Means, does properly consist. Which *Use* depends more immediately upon the Will and the members of the Body, but remotely and originally upon the Understanding, upon the Will as the first *Mover*, and upon the Understanding as the first *Director*. And by that it is that Prudence (which is an Intellectual Act, and properly speaking goes no further than the Mind) comes to be concern'd in it.

22. And thus I have now done also with the second general Office of Prudence, that which respects the Means, which I have distinctly represented in the three particular Acts of it; all which I comprehend, as we usually do, under that one general Name of the *Choice* of right Means. Now what these right Means are, is not the

the proper business of this Chapter to shew, which is concern'd no further than the general Offices of Prudence. To particularize these Means will be the business of the next. However there is a general sort of Question relating to this matter which may be here ask'd, and that is, Whether besides the Moral Goodness, and Natural Aptness or Effectualness of the Means (two qualifications of them already mention'd) the *Simplicity* of them may not be another Condition to make them right, and required by Prudence. The Thing that I mean plainly is, Whether Prudence requires that a Man should always act by the simplest Means, that is, should take the nearest and shortest way to his End. The Occasion of my putting this Question is, because an Eminent Author has made this a Character of the Divine Conduct and Wisdom, to act always by the *most simple ways*. Upon which Principle he lays a great weight, drawing from it Consequences of the greatest Importance to the Order both of Nature and Grace. Now I must needs say, that this appears to me a very clear and certain Proposition with respect to *God*. Which our most Excellent Author thus briefly at once demonstrates and explains. I suppose, says he, that God would have the Body *A* should strike against the Body *B*. Now since God knows all things, he well knows that *A* can go to strike *B* by innumerable crooked Lines, and by one only right one. But God only wills that *A* should strike *B*, And we suppose, that he

he wills the transport of *A* towards *B* for no other purpose, but only for the sake of this impulse. Therefore *A* must be transfer'd towards *B* by the shortest way, or by a right Line. For if the Body *A* were transfer'd to *B* by a crooked Line, that would shew either that the Transporter knew no other way, or else that he did not only will the concurrence of these Bodies, but also the means to effect it, otherwise than in relation to the concurrence it self, which is against the Supposition. Again, says he, there is as much more Action requisite to transfer a Body from *A* to *B* by a Crooked Line, than by a Right Line, as the Crooked is greater than the Right. If therefore God should transfer *A* to *B* by a Crooked Line double to a Right, half the Action of God would be wholly useles. And so one half of it would be done without Design, and without any End, as well as without Effect. Moreover, says he, Action in God is Will. Therefore there must be more Will in God to make *A* to be transported Circularly than Directly. But now we have already supposed, that God had no Will as to the Motion of *A*, but only with respect to the Impulse. Therefore there is not Will enough in God to move *A* by a Crooked Line. And consequently, 'tis a Contradiction that *A* should move by a Crooked Line to *B*. And so it is a Contradiction that God should not act by the most simple ways, unless we suppose that God in the choice of the ways he makes use of to execute his Designs, has something

thing else in view besides those same Designs, which in our Supposition is a Contradiction. Other Considerations he has to this purpose, and from the whole concludes, that according to this manner of conceiving Things, God cannot employ more Will than he needs must to execute his Designs. So that he always acts by the most simple ways with relation to them.

23. This carries a strict Mathematical Evidence, and there is no disputing against it. And therefore there is the more reason to insist upon the Question, Whether this would not be Wisdom in us also to act after this compendious manner. The generality of Men would perhaps like well enough to have it so, who as backward as they are to imitate God, are but too forward to do what looks like Imitation of him here. For they also are for acting by the most simple ways and means, are frugal and thrifty in their Religious Services, keep at the greatest distance from *Supererogation*, are afraid of nothing more than of doing too much, stand hard in dealing for Heaven, and are for going thither as Cheap, and with as little Trouble as they can, and by the *shortest cut*. And can we blame this their frugal Management? They understand the worth of Goodness, and the value of good Actions, and so are not for throwing any of them away, not even for Heaven it self. To what purpose is this wast, as was said in another Case, they think may be as well applyed here. And indeed if this be Wisdom, the World is full of these wise

wife and prudent Men. And the Young Rich Man in the Gospel, *Mat. 19. 22.* that came so briskly to our Saviour Christ, to inquire what he should do to have Eternal Life, and went away so sorrowful from him, because he was bid sell all that he had and give to the Poor, might be one of them. For perhaps he did not formally and expressly chuse to lose Heaven, rather than part with his Estate (that would have been madness even to sottishness and extravagance) but only thought the Demand somewhat hard, and hoped to have it upon easier terms. In the mean time goes away sorrowful, because he could not have it at his own Price. This Man was a little too short in his *Ways* and *Means*, and so, like a good Husband as he was, lost Heaven to save the Charge of a Journey thither.

24. Well, but as to the Argument, I think it must be granted, that if all other things were equal, this sparingness or compendiousness of the Means, which is a Perfection in the Divine Conduct, would be so also in ours; and it would be *our* Wisdom as well as *his* to act by the most simple ways, there being no reason why any Intelligent Being should do any thing in vain, or to no purpose. And so far indeed the Ballance is even on both sides. 'Tis true indeed the Wills and Acts of God are of an Infinite Value, and so the waste and profusion would be the greater if any of them should be thrown away. But still a Superfluity is a Superfluity, and there is this in common between him and us, that there

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is no reason on either side why any thing should be done in *vain*. Here therefore there is an equality. But yet upon the whole there is a vast difference in the Case between him and us, and that both as to the End, and as to the Means. As to the *End*; the End which God proposes is a certain, precise, determinate End, that consists as it were in an Indivisible, as in the Instance alludg'd, that there should be a Contingency suppose of *A* and *B*. But now the Happiness of Heaven, which is the End of a Christian, has a latitude in it, and admits of great variety of degrees. So that that measure of Goodness which will serve for the lowest degree of Happiness, will not serve for a higher. Then as to the *Means*, as God precisely knows his End, so he as precisely knows the very least Means that will serve to acquire it; he knows exactly what will just do, the very shortest *Line* that leads to his *Point*. But now this we have not such an exact knowledge of. For tho' we know the Terms of our Salvation in the general, yet I suppose it cannot be said that we precisely know to a grain, or a scruple, the lowest degree of Holiness or Goodness that will carry us to Heaven, that just so much Repentance, or just so much Charity, to the Nicety of a *Right Line* that lies the shortest between its Points, will serve the turn. So that here is a great disparity in the Case. And therefore to answer the Argument more formally; Whereas it is urged, that there is no reason why a Reasonable Being should do any thing in vain,

vain, I acknowledge it as a clear and incontestable Principle ; but then I deny the Consequence, that it thence follows that 'tis Prudence in a Christian to act by the most simple ways in order to his End, or to employ the least Means that he can for the obtaining of it. And that for these two Reasons ; partly because he does not precisely know those least Means, and therefore it would be Prudence in him, as it is in a Traveller, rather to take a *compass*, and go somewhat about, than to venture upon a shorter cut which he has not a certain knowledge of. And partly because tho' he did know these least Means, the lowest measure of Goodness that would bring him to Heaven never so precisely, yet there is so much Latitude in the Happiness of that Place, that that least degree of Goodness, which would be sufficient for the lowest degree of Happiness, would be too little for a higher. To which it may be further added, That that Man shews himself to have but little love or value for either God or Goodness, that is for *praising* as little of the one, and *enjoying* as little of the other as he possibly can. And besides, after all there is no such thing properly and absolutely speaking as the least Means to Happiness, since as our Goodness (which is the only Means to Happiness) increases, our Happiness will be found to increase with it. Upon the whole therefore I conclude, that it is not advisable in Prudence for a Christian to act after this compendious manner with reference to his End,

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to be for the *minimum quod sic* as we say in Religion, to tread upon the very edge, and go as near as he can to Hell in his way to Heaven, endeavouring after no more Goodness than he thinks will just serve to carry him thither, but rather on the contrary, to *work out his Salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. 2. 12. and to *give all diligence to make his Calling and Election sure*, 2 Pet. 1. 10. and in order to this, to be forward and zealous, active and industrious in the Service of God, and the Practice of all Christian Duties, even *abounding in the Work of the Lord*, 1 Cor. 15. and making an ample Provision, and *laying up in store for himself a good foundation of good Works*, 1 Tim. 6. if by any means he may lay hold on Eternal Life, and *attain unto the Resurrection of the Dead*, Phil. 3. 11.

25. Before I conclude this Chapter, I have one general Remark to make upon this Part of Prudence relating to the Means, answerable to that which was made before upon the other relating to the End. It was there observ'd, that that is the Part wherein the Wisdom of the World (which accordingly is said to be Foolishness with God) chiefly fails, and wherein the Children of this World, all Worldly-minded Men, are most wanting. Now as the Children of the World fail chiefly in that Part which concerns the *End*, so the Children of Light fail chiefly in this which respects the *Means*. Our Lord himself has made the Observation, and Experience bears witness to it, they either chusing wrong Means for

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for the obtaining their excellent End, or not imploying sufficient Care and Diligence in the use of the right. Of the first sort are they who have a Zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, as the Apostle speaks *Rom. 10. 2.* That have a Zealous and truly Conscientious desire in their Way to serve and glorify God, but that their Way is wrong, and their Zeal, tho' warm, is yet blind. Such as imbrace false Religions, or that serve God in superstitious and mistaken Ways of Worship, or that place Religion in such Things, wherein the true Spirit and Life of it does not consist. Of the second sort are all slack, careless, lukewarm and indifferent Christians, that are right enough as to their *End*, and as to the *Means* too, so far as their Judgment and Choice is concern'd; but their singular Fault and most surprizing Folly is, that they do not imploy that *Care* and Diligence in the use and application of them for the compassing their End, that becomes either it or themselves. Strange indeed it is that so much Darknes should mix with so much Light; (for what communion has Light with Darknes?) but so it is, this is their blind and dark side, their weak and feeble part; and here it is that the Men of the World infinitely outdo and distance them; nay, they are outdone by *themselves*, taking much more Care, and using much better Management in the Affairs of the World (tho' that be not *their* End, as 'tis the *others*) than they do in their great Concern of all, their one thing
necessary.

necessary. For indeed should they be in all their other Affairs, as they are in those Things that concern their Happiness and Eternal Welfare, they would even in the common Judgment of the World pass for very *Fools*. And so they would however, if Men did judge of Things and Persons rightly, and as they truly are. But I know not how it comes to pass, *that* Folly which would be excused no where else, finds Allowance, a Toleration, and as it were a *Sanctuary* in Religion.

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C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Particular Acts or Offices of Christian Prudence, with respect to both End and Means. Which Means are shewn to be God's Commandments, and consequently that 'tis our Wisdom to keep them.

I. **G**eneral prepare the way to Particular, and Particular serve to clear and enlighten General Considerations, which indeed of themselves (however useful for Order and Distinction's sake) have always something dark and uncertain in them, and leave the Reader in suspense till their blank and empty spaces are fill'd up, and their loose and wandring Ideas are contracted and reduced to some certain and determinate Instance. And therefore having already taken a general survey of the Acts and Offices of Prudence, which are as it were the first Shoots or Branches that spring from this great Root and Principle of all Goodness, let us now go on to consider what its Particular Acts and Offices are. And because Particulars always retain and include the nature of the General, as being that and something more, therefore since the General Acts of Prudence concern the End, and the Means of obtaining it, we must keep within the same common bounds in our Account of its Particular

ticular Acts, which accordingly dispose themselves in a twofold general order, one relating to the End, and the other to the Means.

2. There is but one particular Act of Prudence relating to the End, all the rest will be found to respect the Means. Now that which relates to the End is this, that we propose *God* only as our last End. To place it in Happiness is not enough, because that tho' a right End as far as it goes, is yet too general, and does not go far enough. Besides the *general* Part of Prudence goes beyond *that*, as reaching, tho' indefinitely, to a right particular Object of Happiness; that is, to that Object whatever it be, wherein Happiness does consist. The particular Part of Prudence therefore must do that determinately, which the general does indeterminately and at large; that is, it must point out God to us as our last End, and that because that Happiness which we naturally and with one consent desire in general, can be found only in Him, as the true Object and Cause of it. For Prudence proceeds according to the Order and in the Form of this Practical Syllogism. That is to be made our End which is the true Object of our Happiness. But God is the true Object of our Happiness. Therefore God is to be made our End. The first Proposition of the Argument expresses the general Part of Prudence, consisting in the Proposal of a Right End. The Conclusion is that particular Part of it which we are now considering, as placing that Right

End in God. The middle or assuming Proposition contains the Reason of this Determination, which is because God is our true Beatific Object, all the Happiness we are capable of, and all that we seek or desire being to be found only in Him.

3. That it is not to be found in any Thing *out* of Him is most certain, whether it be Riches, or Honour, or Greatness, or Fame, or Glory, or Power, or any Good of the Mind, or of the Body, tho' it be even *sensible Pleasure* it self. And this the School-Moralists, according to their Topical way, have abundantly proved; and 'tis plain enough in it self that Happiness cannot consist in these things, (tho' by Mens eager pursuit of some of them one would think that they *thought* it did) only *Pleasure* seems to carry an appearance of something more than ordinary, as if Happiness, which flies our search every where else, might at length be found there. And accordingly there it is that some have placed it, the *Epicureans* among the old Philosophers, and since them the *Mahometans* in their Notion and Doctrin of a *sensual Paradise*, to which perhaps some of our *Millenaries* may approach a little too near in their Account of Christ's Thousand Years Reign upon Earth. More particularly and above all *Cerintbus*, who is said to have placed our Happiness for a Thousand Years after this Life in the Pleasures of the Body. Which indeed, bating only the limitation as to the term of duration, is much the same with the *Mahometan*

metan Notion. But that the Happiness of Man cannot consist in any Pleasure of Sense, tho' never so much greater than the present Laws of Nature allow, seems a very Reasonable Presumption. For if it does, it must be either in the Sense of Objective, or in the Sense of Formal Happiness; that is, either that sensible Pleasure is that which is the efficient Cause of our Happiness, or that it is that wherein our Happiness does formally consist. That it is not the efficient Cause or Object of our Happiness is plain, since Pleasure being only a Sensation, is a certain manner or modality of our own Being, really not different from our selves, Modes not really differing from the Substances whose Modes they are. And therefore to say that sensible Pleasure is the Cause or Object of our Happiness, is as much as to say that we are our own *Beatific Object*, or an Object of Happiness to our selves. Which cannot be, partly, because our Desires go out of our selves after other Objects, whereby it appears that they are not satisfy'd by any thing within our selves. And partly, because they have a capacity for, and a tendency to an Infinite Object, whereas we our selves are Finite, and so are too narrow and strait-laced for our selves, and cannot satisfy even our own Desires.

4. If therefore sensible Pleasure be our Happiness, it must be in the *formal* sense of that Expression, *viz.* that Happiness does formally consist in it. But as to that 'tis to be consider'd, that tho' this Pleasure, as all other, be properly

of the Soul, and not of the Body (the latter not being a Subject capable of it) yet 'tis of the Soul not immediately or by it self, but by the mediation of the Body; that, as I take it, being the difference between sensible and intellectual Pleasure. But now that Pleasure which the Soulresents in this secondary and indirect way, by the mediation of the Body, however it may affect us in a sensible way, we may presume not to be in it self so natural and congenial to the Soul, or so absolutely high, noble and truly delectable, as those Pleasures which the Soulresents directly and immediately by her self, and from her own Thoughts, without being beholden to any Bodily Motions or Impressions to excite them; and the rather because those *Perceptions* which the Soul has immediately by her self, such as Thought, Reasoning, or Science, are much more perfect and excellent than that *Perception* of Things which she has by the Body, which we distinguish by the name of *Sight*. As for Instance, That Notional and Intellectual Perception which I have of a Right Line, is much more clear and perfect, than what appears to my Sense as such; it being certain that what Sense represents as a Right Line is not really so. Intellectual then is more perfect than sensible Vision. And so 'tis also as to intellectual and sensible Pleasure, which carry the like Proportion to each other. But now our Happiness cannot consist in any operation that is less perfect, and consequently not in sensible Pleasure. Besides, that the

the Pleasures that are in the Rational and Intellectual way must needs excel those that are in the way of Sensation, as much as Reason is above Sense. For indeed the Pleasures of Sense are not the Pleasures of the Man as such, as not being the Pleasures of his most noble Faculty, which gives him his Character and Distinction, and therefore again Happiness does not consist in *them*. And we may further consider that the Pleasures of Sense are capable of excess, and admit of a vicious and criminal Indulgence, and accordingly we need a particular Vertue, that of *Temperance*, whose business it is to moderate and regulate our use of them, and to set bounds to our gratifications of that kind. But now we can never be *too Happy*; nor does Happiness need any Government or Moderation. And since sensible Pleasure does need and even require it, we may hence further observe, that this is an Argument that it interferes with some greater Good, and indisposes and unfits us for the enjoyment of it; that being indeed the only reason of its becoming evil, or of its needing any restraint. For sensible Pleasure is simply and absolutely good in it self; and therefore if ever it be evil, it must be as unfitting us for a greater Good. Therefore there is then a greater Good than sensible Pleasure, and consequently, 'tis not in that sort of Pleasure that our Happiness does consist. Besides after all if it did, we should in no case be ashamed of it, for we are never ashamed of Happiness. But there is a Natural Shame that

attends some Pleasures of Sense, even when regular and according to the order of Nature. Which seems to be a natural Admonition to us that the final Happiness of Man does not consist in such Pleasures, but that he is capable of, and intended for far greater things.

5. And thus having shewn that the Happiness of Man does not consist in the Pleasure of Sense, which looks the most like it, and is the most courted for it of any thing in the World, I need not undertake to shew that it is not to be found in Riches, Greatness, or Power; the greatest thing that recommends them to Mens Esteem being this, that they serve to furnish them with Means and Opportunities for the enjoyment of the other. But besides, we may take a shorter cut than by treading the several steps of that beaten Road, and that is by shewing at once that the Happiness of Man cannot possibly consist in any created Good. For as by Happiness it self formally consider'd, we must mean such a state of well-being wherein the Mind totally acquiesces, and takes full Rest and Satisfaction; so that which is the Object of Happiness must be such a Good as perfectly satisfies and quiets the Mind, fills all its Capacities, contents all its Desires, and so gives her an absolute Tranquillity and Repose. But now that the Creature does not in fact do this is plain by Experience, from the Vanity which we find in all things, and that Restlessness and desire of Change which is consequent upon it. We try one thing after
another,

another, as the searching Bee wanders from Flower to Flower, but we go off from every one with Disappointment and a deluded Expectation. Every thing almost promises, but nothing answers, and even the succession of new Enjoyments (the best Remedy for the Emptiness we find in each singly) rather amuses than satisfies. And as no created Good actually does this, so 'tis plain by Reason that it cannot do it. For the Object of the Will is not this Good, or that Good according to a limited or partial Acceptation, but Good in general, or *universal Good*, in like manner as the Object of the Understanding is *universal Truth*. The Object of the Understanding is Being in its full latitude, or according to the common reason of Being, and so the Object of the Will is Good at large, and according to the common reason of Good. And accordingly, as nothing can terminate the Capacity of the Understanding but what has some way or other the Reason of all Being, so nothing can satisfy the Capacity of the Will but what has some way or other the Reason of all Good. That is in short, it must be a universal Good that must satisfy the Mind, and consequently that must make it truly Happy. But now this the Creature is not, as being a limited Good, and by participation only, according to the respective limitations of those Ideal Reasons whereby every thing was produced. As its Being is, so is its Goodness, both of them of a limited and contracted extent, and therefore neither
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of them fit to satisfy the Capacity of that Mind which aspires after all Being, and all Good. Every Creature therefore must confess its utter insufficiency to be the Object of our Happiness, nay, the whole collection and amassment of created Good must acknowledge the same; the very *Depth* and *Abyss* of it must say that *it is not in me.*

6. But then where is it else? Why if it be not *out* of God, 'tis plain that it must be *in* him. And there 'tis most certain that it is. He is the Fountain of Eternal Blessedness; the true Center of Everlasting Rest, and all the Springs of our Happiness are in him. He is our chief Good, and our last End, as being both self-desirable, and every way sufficient for our Happiness. For he is All Being; and All Goodness, that very *universal Good* which is the intire and adequate Object of the Will, to which the Point of its Inclination stands bent, and towards which its whole Weight leans as towards a Center; and therefore being that which is the Object of its Inclinations, he must needs be able to satisfy them. For no Faculty goes beyond its Object, but its highest and last Perfection is to obtain it, and to exercise its Operations about it. And therefore God being that universal Good which is the Natural Object of the Will, as it cannot be satisfy'd with any thing short of him, so 'tis plain that it cannot aspire to any thing beyond him; and therefore must needs center and acquiesce in him. *When I awake up after thy likeness,*

ness, I shall be satisfy'd with it, Psal. 17. 16. Then, and not before. Which all resolves into that pious and devout Saying of St. *Austin, Fecisti nos ad te, & inquietum est Cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.* Thou hast made us for thy self, and our Heart has no rest, till it rests in thee. *Confes. lib. 1. cap. 1.*

7. It must be therefore the particular Part and Office of Prudence, especially that which is *Christian*, to make God our End. For the general Part of Prudence reaching as far as this, that we should chuse a right End, and this right End appearing to be God, it follows plainly that the particular Part of it must be that we should place it in *him*. For indeed it would be a vast Folly and Imprudence (the greatest that any Man can possibly be guilty of) not to make God our End. For what can we expect but Vanity and Disappointment all over, a fruitless Labour, and a deluded and *abortive* Hope, if we place our Happiness any where else but in him who is the true Object of it? 'Tis like leaning with our full force upon that which cannot bear our weight, the Consequence of which is to fall with Violence, and receive Hurt and Ruin instead of Rest and Support. And what a Folly must this be, especially for a Christian, since the clear Revelations of the Gospel concerning the true End and Final Happiness of Man, that which was darkly intimated to *Abraham* in those general words, *I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward, Gen. 15. 1.* being clearly reveal'd by our Saviour Christ,

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Christ, the true Light of the World, when he tells us, that *this is Life Eternal to know thee the only true God*, John 17. 3. And when he assigns this as the Reason of that Blessedness which he pronounces to the Pure in Heart; *because they shall see God*, Mat. 5. 8. And accordingly our *Life* (which is that word whereby the sovereign and final Happiness of Man is express'd in the New Testament) is said to be *hid with Christ in God*, Col. 3. 3. With whom also the Psalmist assures us is *the Fountain of Life*, Psal. 36. and that *in his Presence is Fulness of Joy*, Psal. 16. And therefore since God has not only given us a Nature capable of Happiness, but has also indued us with Faculties and Desires which nothing but himself can satisfy, and he both can and will, and lest we should miss the true and great End of our Being, has been pleas'd to point it out to us, and to tell us that Himself is the Good which we so passionately desire, and so blindly seek, it must be the very Foolishness of Folly for any Christian not to make God his End, much more so far to forget himself and him, as to place it in any thing of this vain World, whether it be directly and professedly, according to the Language of the Rich Epicure, *Soul take thine Ease*, or whether it be constructively and by consequence, or in a practical way, by pursuing the World, and cleaving to its Interests, as if it were his End and chief Good: This is to be a Child of *Darkness*, and not a Child of *Light*; and besides the Folly and

and Imprudence of the Conduct, bespeaks also such a Contempt of God, and of his Immense Greatness and Goodness, as nothing can either parallel or excuse. Especially since the Mediatorial undertaking of the Son of God for us, who has been pleas'd to concern himself so far for our Happiness as to make this great and excellent End attainable by us, preparing and providing, and procuring a Union and Communion of God with Man, by uniting them both in his own Person. Whether therefore we consider the Super-excellency, or the Attainableness of so great a Good, or the Manner or Price whereby it becomes attainable, God by all means is to be made our End, the End of our Desires, and the End of our Designs, the End of our Undertakings, and the End of our Actions, and the End of all our Hopes, to which we are to refer whatever we think, whatever we speak, and whatever we act, and in one word, to which our whole Life is to be directed. And all this is but a compliance with God's own Designs, and a striking in with his Wise and Gracious Counsels towards us. For when he made us, he made us for *himself*, to serve and glorify him here, and to be Happy in him for ever hereafter. And therefore to make God our End, is but to design that for our selves, which God had designed for us before. And we cannot do more wisely than to follow, nor more foolishly than to depart from the Conduct of so *unerring* a Guide.

8. And

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8. And yet thus foolishly we do. For before we proceed any further, I must here observe, that this Rule of Christian Prudence is transgress'd not only by the *Children of the World*, who make that their End, whether they be *Epicureans* whose God is their Belly, or *Sensualists* who are lovers of Pleasure more than lovers of God, or *Covetous Men* who in the *Apostle's Account* are Idolaters, but more or less by all *Sinners*. For every Sin is in some measure a turning from God, and a conversion to the Creature. Than which nothing worse can be said of any reasonable Agent in the Conduct of himself, and the use of his Liberty. And yet this is what all Sin partakes of more or less, being a Declension from the chief Good, and an Application to something else that has only the Shadow of it. But this is more eminently verify'd of all wilful, deliberate, and habitual Sins, or of such single Acts as by reason of their gross Enormity are equivalent to Habits. Which falls in with what the *School-Divines* tell us of the last End being placed in the Creature by all mortal Sins. Wherein I see nothing but what (so far) is right; since 'tis plain that such Sins are Aversions from God, and Conversions to the Creature, if not directly, yet at least constructively and by consequence, since God is disobey'd, and his Favour forfeited, and his Displeasure wilfully incurred, for the sake of some created Good. 'Tis certain therefore that in all such Sins God is deserted, and something else, like an Idol, set up in his

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room, whether it be the Lust of the Flesh, or the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life. And this is the very Complaint which God himself makes by the Prophet, *They have forsaken me the Fountain of Living Waters, and hewed them out Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no Water.* Jer. 2. 13.

9. And so much as to the particular Office of Christian Prudence relating to the *End*. What we have next to consider are those particular Acts of it which concern the *Means* to this End. But before we proceed to this Part, there is a certain general Consideration to be taken in our way, (general I mean as to what is to follow, tho' particular with respect to the Subject of the foregoing Chapter) and that is the *Concern* that every Christian ought to have, and the Care that he ought to take for the obtaining and securing this his right and great End, *viz.* the Fruition and Enjoyment of God. For 'tis the thorough Concern and hearty Care that we have for the End, that must oblige and determin us to the use and application of the Means, and that will not fail to do it; according to that School Maxim, *Qui vult Finem, &c.* *He that wills the End,* (that is absolutely and effectually, with a compleat and perfect Will) *wills all those things that are necessary to the End.* For 'tis the End that gives Order, and Measure, and even Amability it self to the Means, and which also gives Motion to the Agent or Efficient, who as he applies himself to the Means for the sake of the End, so

so he prosecutes them in proportion to the Value and Concern which he has for the other. For tho' the End does not properly exercise the Office of a Final Cause as to the Love or Desire of *it self*, but only as to the Desire of the *Means*, that is, as by the Desire of it self it moves the Will to the choice of fit and proper Means for its Attainment, as *Vasquez* has shewn at large, yet however there must be an antecedent concern and value for the End, or else

In Primam secundam.
Tom. 1. Disput. 3.
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the Agent will have no inducement to apply himself to the Means for the sake of it. Since 'tis wholly upon the Account of the former, that the latter has any Application made to it. And therefore before we come to the particular Means, we should first consider the general Concern and Care that Christians ought to have about the End it self, and how to attain it; this being a *preparatory Consideration* to introduce the other: The necessity of using the Means being founded upon the Importance of the End.

10. Now this Consideration falls very much in with that of a worthy Author, which he calls *the Necessity of Caring for the Soul*. For what is it to take Care of the Soul, but only to take Care that it may be Happy? And what is it to take Care that it may be Happy, but only to take Care about the obtaining that supreme and sovereign Good which is our true End, and which only can make us Happy? So that this seems to come about to one and the same thing, which

which is the *Importance of being Happy*, and the Concern that every Christian should have about the obtaining that chief and final Good which only can make him so. And because the worthy Person now mention'd has spoken so much and so well upon this matter, or at least upon what is equivalent to it, I shall not need to enlarge much upon this Part, wherein I am so happily prevented. However let me further remark, that this matter is very movingly set forth (the best way of expressing a thing of that consequence) by the trembling Jaylor's Question, *Sirs, What must I do to be saved?* Acts 16. 30. The *Answer* to this Question refers to the particular *Means* whose Consideration is to follow. But the *Question* it self primarily respects and expresses the Importance of the *End*, which indeed is the greatest, and only truly great Concern in the World. And accordingly our Saviour calls it, the *one thing needful*, Luke 10. 42. in opposition to the *many* things which *trouble* and *distract* us in this busy Life, which are all but so many Trifles and Amusements in comparison of that *one thing*. Even *Business* which of all things relating to this World carries the face of the greatest Seriousness and Gravity, and pretends to be of the weightiest Consequence, is but a Trifle compared to this. For indeed a Man has but *one* great *Business* properly in the World, and that is to make sure his Everlasting Happiness, and to secure to himself the Fruition of that excellent Good which is the true End of

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his Being. This is the *whole* of Man, his only considerable Interest and Concern, and that upon which all depends. 'Tis not necessary that he should be born to an Estate, or be so fortunate as to get one; 'tis not necessary that he should succeed in his Attempts for this or that Dignity or Preferment, that he should live long to enjoy his Wealth or Greatness, or even that he should live at all; but it is most absolutely necessary, and of the last Importance, that he should arrive to his End, that he should attain to the Fruition of God, whose Loving-kindness is better than Life, and without whom he cannot be Happy. All the rest may be spared, but there is no dispensing with this. Should he lose all besides, and gain this one thing, yet still he would be Happy. And should he gain all besides, and lose this one thing, yet still he would be Miserable. For what Gain will ever make amends for such a Loss? Not that of the whole World, if we will believe our Saviour Christ. *What shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* Mark 8. Which is then only lost, when it loses God. 'Tis the Concern therefore of every Christian, and one great part of his Prudence and Wisdom, after he has fixed this his right End, to endeavour by much Consideration to possess his Mind with a due sense of its Moment and Importance, and of what Consequence it is that he should take care to succeed in this one Affair, whatever he fails or miscarries in besides. Which when he

he is thoroughly convinced of, he will then think it necessary to apply himself to the use of such particular Means as are requisite for the Accomplishment of his great Design.

II. And this brings us to the Consideration of the *particular* Acts and Offices of Christian Prudence with respect to these Means. Now these particular Acts may be all first sum'd up in one * general one, and that is, to chuse those very Means to this our great End, which God, who is our End, has chosen for us already. This must needs be a very Prudential Act in us to follow the Direction and Conduct of God, to chuse those Means to our End which God has already chosen for us, and directed us to. I confess it is so far but an *implicit* choice, but at the same time 'tis a very *safe* one, and a very *wise* one. For God knowing most perfectly the Capacity of our Nature, and the End for which he made us, must needs know what Means are most fit to serve and procure that End; and his Infinite Goodness will not suffer him so far to abuse and impose upon our Weakness as to direct us wrong, to do that by us which he has forbidden us under a Curse to do by one another, to make the *blind to go out of his way*, Deut. 27. 18. And therefore even without inquiring into the intrinsic Nature or Reason of these Means, we may securely depend upon this in general, and rest intirely satisfy'd that the way which the All-wise and Good God

* Note, That this is call'd general as to what follows, tho' particular as to what goes before.

has prescribed to us must needs be the right, and indeed very best way to conduct us to our End, and consequently that it must be our Wisdom to chuse that very way to walk in. For if it be thought a good Argument why we should submit to the Order of God's Providence, and be content with such a State or Condition of Life as he is pleas'd to allot us in the World, because God who sees through all, and to the End of all things, knows what upon the whole is truly Best for us, I know not why it should not be as good an Argument for Subjection to his *Laws*, and for our chusing those Means to our final Happiness which God himself has prescribed us. For this is but resigning our Judgment to God's Judgment, and our Choice to his Choice, and to take him for our Guide (and to be sure a very good one in the way that leads to *himself*) and to be willing that he who cannot err should chuse for us. Which certainly no Prudent Man can be against. We are all willing enough that God should chuse our *End* for us, there God and we are agreed, because we naturally love Happiness. But we differ as to the *way*, and there we leave our Guide, and are willing to chuse for our selves, and would fain be Happy in ways of our own devising. Which is the true original Cause of all the Sins which are committed in the World. But all this is for want of a right sense of God and of our selves. For 'tis plain, that there is every whit as much reason why we should refer our selves to the Choice

Choice of God as to the *Means*, as there is that we should accept his Choice as to the *End*. And therefore Christian Prudence should as much direct us to that, as Nature inclines us to this.

12. But now these Means which God has already chosen for us, and by his Choice and Direction warranted us to chuse and follow, are more *explicitly*, his Laws and Commandments. Which were both given and intended by God for our Direction to Happiness, and are also the true and only Means that lead to it. And first they were given by God with this *Design*. For as God made us for himself, so the Government which he exercises over us, and the Laws which he prescribes us, are but a pursuance of the same kind Design; namely, to bring us to *himself*. For since we can't suppose him to propose any Advantage of his own in concerning himself so far about us as to undertake the Government of us, and to give us any Laws or Rules of Life, and since we can as little suppose that he does it for so poor a Reason as only to shew his *Dominion* and Authority over us, and much less that he does it for no Reason at all, but out of mere Arbitrary Will and Pleasure, 'tis very reasonable to conclude, that the Laws of God are given us with this Design, to *shew us the Path of Life*, the true way that leads to Happiness, that by them we might attain to that great End for which we were made, *viz.* Everlasting Felicity in the Fruition of God our chief Good. So that in short, the Design of God in giving us

his Laws is to bring us to himself, in whom only we can be Happy. A Consideration which by the way should serve mightily to indear the Laws of God to us, and invite us to yield a free, ready, and chearful Obedience to them, even to *run the way of his Commandments*, since that which is the way of his Commandments is by him designed as the way of our Happiness; especially if it be also the *true way* that really leads to that End.

13. Now indeed this is the Case. The Laws and Commandments of God as they were given for our Direction to Happiness, and with a design of conducting us to our End, so are they in reality the true Way and Means that actually lead to it. This falls in with, and may fairly be gather'd from that Reply of our Saviour's to the forward Inquirer, concerning the way to Heaven, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments*, Mat. 19. 17. So then the keeping the Commandments of God is the Path of Life, the Way of the Kingdom, the direct Road that leads to Happiness, described to us by him, who is himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Men may imploy their Wits, consult their Ease, and flatter their Hopes in the invention of other ways, but if we will believe our Guide, the way of Happiness is the way of Obedience; the Practice of those good Moral Duties which the Law of God, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ (which differs not from the other as to the things required, but only as to the manner of the execution)

action) jointly oblige us to. These are the things which St. Paul tells us are *good and profitable unto Men*, Tit. 3. 8. Now the very Notion of *profitable* or *useful*, (*ἀφίλιον τις ἀρτίσμων*) is that which serves as a Means in order to an End; and so we say *Bonum Utile*, meaning by it the good of the Means which is desired for the sake of something else, in opposition to *Bonum Jucundum*, which is desired for it self. These are the two great Goods of Man, and which he is concern'd in Prudence to obtain for himself, the Good of the End which is *Bonum Jucundum* or Happiness, and the Good of the Means which is *Bonum Utile* or Profitable Good; for as for *Bonum Honestum* that falls under *Utile*. But now this Profitable Good, or the Good of the Means, according to St. Paul, are *good Works*, all Moral Duties, and the several Vertues of Christian Life. These are the Things which are good and profitable unto Men, that really do them Good, and are for their Benefit and Advantage, as leading them to their End; whereas other Things which Men make such a pother about, serve only to put them out of their way, or to let and hinder them in it. And accordingly 'tis remarkable, that our Saviour Christ knowing that in all Moral Institution the proposal of the End is the great Perswasive, begins his Divine Sermon upon the Mount with *Blessedness*, and then recommends certain Vertues or Moral Dispositions of Mind, as the Means whereby that Blessedness is to be attain'd. Let those who exalt Faith to

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the Prejudice or Neglect of a good Life consider this. As also they that decry *Morality*. For what is *Morality* but the right Institution of a Man's Life and *Manners*, according to the Laws and Commandments of God, which indeed is neither better nor worse than the right and only way to arrive to the Enjoyment of him and of all Happiness.

14. That it is so by Divine Order and Appointment; is plain by the whole Tenour and Constitution of the Gospel, since even the *Conditional*, which is the most favourable and indulgent part of it, indispensably requires it of us. For the Gospel, as I said before, differs not from the Law as to the things required, but only as to the manner of the exaction. It exacts the very same things, but not with the same rigour, as allowing place for Repentance, and Pardon upon that Condition. For in the Gospel we must distinguish the Rule from the Covenant. The Gospel consider'd as a *Rule* of Life abates nothing of the Law, but requires the very same Obedience which that did, even such as is perfect and without Sin. For otherwise how do we Sin (as 'tis plain we do) whenever we come short of it. For all Sin supposes an Obligation to the contrary; and where there is no Law, there can be no Transgression. If therefore there be Transgression in all Defects of perfect Obedience, 'tis plain that we are still under a Rule obliging us to it. Thus far therefore there is no Abatement, but what was Duty before

fore is Duty still, and what was Sin before is Sin still. What Abatement there is therefore must be on the other side, in the *Covenant Part* of the Gospel, which indeed is that Part of it which is properly opposed to the Law. For the Gospel is not opposed to the Law as a Rule, that being alike in both. Nor are they properly opposed under the Consideration of *Faith* and *Works*, (Faith it self being a Work) but as a *Covenant* of Faith and a *Covenant* of Works. Such was the Law, it was a *Covenant* of Works. Not that good Works were then more required than they are now, or had a greater effect; but because all depended upon the Perfection of those Works, there being no provision for a Supply in case of any Defect. In opposition to this the Gospel is a *Covenant* of Faith, or a *Covenant* of Grace. Not that good Works are hereby superseded or excluded from being the Means and Way to Happiness, that's a great Mistake; but because the Perfection of them is not absolutely insisted upon. Not insisted upon, but *how*? 'Tis certain that it ~~is~~ insisted upon by the *Rule* of the Gospel as much, if not more than ever. But that which does not insist upon it is the *Covenant Part*, which indeed accepts of less, *viz.* Repentance and sincerity of Obedience, (that is, a hearty endeavour to *obey*) instead of perfect and unsinning Righteousness. And here lies the Abatement, and a great one it is. For in this respect the Gospel relieves those as a *Covenant*, whom it would condemn as a *Rule*.
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Because as a Rule it obliges to Perfection, which as Human Nature now is, cannot be perform'd; whereas the Covenant Part exacts no more from us, that is, makes no more the *Condition* of our Happiness, than a sincere endeavour to keep God's Commandments, and Repentance where we do not. But then 'tis to be remember'd that even this Conditional or Covenant Part, which is the *Gracious* Part of the Gospel, is full as strict and rigid, as far as its demands go, as the other Part of the Gospel, or as even the *Law* it self. For the Covenant Part of the Gospel does as obstinately insist upon Repentance and a sincere endeavour to keep God's Commandments, as the Law does upon perfect Obedience, as allowing Pardon only upon that Condition. More than that is not required, but of that there is no Abatement or Dispensation. So that Obedience to the Laws of God is still the Way and Means that must lead us to Happiness; and 'tis the Language of the Gospel, as well as of the Law, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.*

15. And thus it appears that the Commandments of God, those Moral Duties which he has injoin'd us, are the Way and Means whereby we must arrive at our End, by the positive order and constitution of God. And accordingly St. Paul tells us *Heb. 12. 14.* that *without Holiness no Man shall see him.* But I must further add, that they are also the Means to Happiness in the nature of the thing it self, which is the true Reason

Reason why they are injoin'd us. For God having made us for himself, directs us to those Means which will bring us to himself, and make us Happy in him. Accordingly he accommodates his Laws to the nature of things, wherein finding this Difference antecedently to any constitution of his own about them, that some things are naturally, that is, in their natural tendency or efficiency, for our Good, and other things as naturally tending to our Hurt; the former he commands, and the latter he forbids. And all in pursuance of the End for which he made us, and because he would have us Happy. Now that there is this difference in things with relation to the Happiness of Man in this Life, whether as privately consider'd, or as a Member of Society, is plain from the Effects, and by Experience. For who does not see that *Temperance*, for Instance, is more conducive to that good State and Temper of the Body which we call *Health*, than Intemperance, and consequently to the good State of the Mind too as depending upon that of the other? So again, as to the Public Interest, who does not see that *Honesty* and *Justice*, *Love* and *Charity*, *Faithfulness* and *Truth*, &c. are more for the Happiness and Well-being of Society, than the contrary Dispositions or Practices? The Vertue and Power which Plants and Herbs have variously to affect our Bodies, either by way of wholsom Physic, or in the way of Poyson, is not more plain or certain than the different Influence which cer-
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tain Dispositions and Practices have, even in a *natural* way of operation, upon either the well or ill Being of Society. And God in his Laws concerning these things, does but do as the Physician does by those whose Health he takes the charge of. He prescribes the wholsom Diet or Physic, and forbids the Poyson, but *makes* neither.

16. And the same Observation holds as well as to the Happiness of the other Life, which being of a Relative Nature as all Happiness is, and resulting from a certain Proportion and Agreement between the Faculty and the Object, must depend upon and require a certain Temper and Disposition of the Mind, as a Natural Qualification for the Enjoyment of it. We find it is so even in the Pleasures of *Sense*. Let the Ear be Unmusically disposed, the sweetest Sounds put together with the greatest Art of the most skilful Musician will give it no Entertainment. And so if the Organs of Taste are under an indisposition by any disorder of the Parts, either naturally or by a Disease (as suppose in a Fever) the Table is spread in vain with the most delicious Food, which as it finds no Taste, so it gives no Pleasure. And if it be thus in the lowest Pleasures, those of Sense, can it be otherwise in the highest, those of Intellect and Pure Reason? Shall an invited Guest rise empty, or sit idle at a nice and plentiful Table, merely because he wants a Stomach to eat, or a Palate to relish what he finds there. And shall an indisposed

sed Soul enjoy God, or is there no Disposition requisite to make it relish or find pleasure in the Preparations of the Heavenly Banquet? Are those the *only* Pleasures that are to be enjoy'd by us at any rate, and howsoever we come disposed to them? No without doubt there are dispositions for this as well as for other Enjoyments, a certain Temper of Mind which is to make us *meet partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, as the Apostle speaks *Col. 1. 12.* This the Gospel mystically signifies by the *Wedding garment*, when it compares the Kingdom of Heaven (strictly and immediately that of Grace, but more largely and ultimately that of Glory) to a *Feast*, because of its Plenty, and Variety. And that a *Marriage Feast*, because of its Joy and Delight. And a Marriage-Feast made by a *King*, because of its great State, Magnificence and Grandeur. And made by a King for his own *Son*, because of its being all full of Love and Endearment. And yet notwithstanding all this Festival Preparation, the unprepared Guest was turned out for want of a *Nuptial Robe*. But according to the Morality of the Parable, if he had been permitted to stay he would not have fared much better, but would only have incurred the Penance of being present at a Feast, without having a part in its Joy and Entertainment.

17. Now this Beatific Temper that qualifies us for Happiness, must in the general be to be *like* that Sovereign Good which is the Object of it, that

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that is, to be like God, to have our Minds conformable to his Mind, and our Wills conformable to his Will, to resemble him as far as he is imitable by us, to have something in our selves answerable to those excellencies which we shall find and behold in him, and so to have a God-like and Divine Frame of Spirit, or as the Apostle expresses it, to be *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 2 Pet. 1. 4. And that for this clear Reason, because without being in some measure like God, 'tis not naturally possible we should enjoy him, or take any Delight or Satisfaction in beholding his excellent Glory, all Pleasure and Delectation being founded in Agreeableness and Proportion. *When I awake up after thy Likeness, I shall be satisfied with it*, Psal. 17. Lord, what a satisfying Likeness is thine? Our Likeness to the World makes us love it, but the love of it does not satisfy; O make us like unto Thee, that we may be satisfy'd in Thee.

18. More particularly this Temper that naturally qualifies and capacitates us for Happiness, consists in those good Habits, and vertuous Dispositions of Mind, which the Rule of God's Word, and particularly the Moral and Preceptive Part of the Gospel, that which we call *Practical Christianity*, enjoins and recommends to us as our Christian Duty: Such as Justice and Righteousness, Goodness and Charity, Truth and Faithfulness, Holiness and Purity, &c. Because in these things consists the Moral Part of the Divine Nature, that which affects his Will, and which

which is the only part wherein we can pretend to imitate or resemble him. And accordingly these, and the like Vertues, are call'd his *communicable* Attributes or Perfections, as being such as are derivable to us from him, and which we may have in common with him, in opposition to those Perfections of his which he has in peculiar to himself, and whereof no Creature can partake. And therefore there is a necessity of our resembling him or communicating with him in these, or else we cannot be *like* him at all, and so, as was said before, shall not be capable of *enjoying* him. And accordingly we are exhorted to be Holy because God is Holy. To be Perfect as our Father in Heaven is Perfect, to be Followers of God as dear Children, to be Holy in all manner of Conversation, as he that has call'd us is Holy, &c. But St. John's words are particularly remarkable to the present purpose. *Every Man that hath this Hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure,* 1 Joh. 3. 3. He had been last speaking of the Beatific Vision, and of the transforming effect of it, which is to make us like God. *We shall be like him,* says he, *for we shall see him as he is.* But then he puts us in mind of another Likeness which is to go before it, as a Qualification for it, and that is to be like him in *Purity*. And for this he draws an Argument from our Hope of enjoying God. *Every Man that has this Hope (that is the Hope of seeing God as he is) purifies himself even as he is pure, that so he may be a meet partaker* of

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of that Blessedness, which as our Saviour informs us is reserv'd for the *Pure in Heart*. In short therefore, there is a necessity for us, as to be *like God*, that we may enjoy him, so also to be indued with Moral and Vertuous Dispositions of Mind; without which we cannot be like him, nor consequently enjoy him. And accordingly the Psalmist puts both these Qualifications together, *I will behold thy Face in Righteousness, and when I awake up after thy Likeness, I shall be satisfy'd with it.*

19. But there are two Moral Dispositions, which are more particularly necessary to qualify us for the Fruition of our last End, and to make us meet Partakers of that Happiness which consists in it, and that is, *Charity* and *Purity*. That Charity as it refers to our *Neighbour*, and signifies our Benevolence or Good-will towards him is a necessary Qualification is plain, because without this Love to our Neighbour we cannot be like God, who is all Love and Goodness, overflowing with Kindness to all his Creatures, and doing Good to them as far as they are capable of his Goodness. And accordingly the Disciple of Love inforces Brotherly Love, and exhorts to the Practice of it from this very Consideration. *Beloved, let us love one another. For Love is of God. And every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, 1 John 4. 7.* That is, gives Evidence that he has a right Knowledge of God, both of his Nature and of his Will; that he has well consider'd, and well understands what

what God is in himself, as well as what he requires of us. On the other side he tells us, that he that loves not, *knows not God*, implying that his Heart betrays his Head, and shews that he is perfectly ignorant of the Nature of God, and a mere stranger to him, how high soever he may pretend to soar in his Speculations of him, And all for this common Reason, because *God is Love*. Again says he, *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him*, 1 John 4. 16. And if God be Love, then we must be affected with the same good and loving Spirit, if ever we mean to be Happy with him, or in him. Then as to Charity as it relates to *God*, and signifies the Love or Desire of him as our chief Good, this is so immediate and necessary a Qualification for Happiness as nothing can be more, since all Enjoyment depends upon the Love of what we are possess'd of, and therefore unless we love God, 'tis impossible we should enjoy him. And for this reason it is that the Love of God is so strictly injoin'd, and in so high a measure, no less than that of the whole Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength, and that the Precept which requires it is call'd the First and the Great Commandment. First and great in many respects, and in this among the rest, that 'tis the Principal and most Fundamental Qualification for *Happiness*, as immediately respecting the Object of it, which if we do not love, we can never enjoy.

20. The other great Moral Qualification that is more especially necessary to fit and dispose us for Happiness in the enjoyment of God the true Object of it, is *Purity*, that part of it more particularly which relates to the Pleasures of *Sense*. Meaning by it such a Habit or Disposition of Mind whereby we are moderately affected towards all such Pleasures, including such Means as are necessary to work that Moderateness or Indifferency of Affection in our Minds. Particularly these two. First, such a due Repression of our Thoughts and Desires, and Government of our Passions, as may keep them within compass, and hinder them from running out too eagerly after such Pleasures. And Secondly, such a Denial, Privation, and Abstemiousness in the use of all such Pleasures as may deaden us to the love and desire of them, and prevent our being inflav'd and subdued by them. This comes under the Christian Duties of *Self-denial* and *Mortification*, one great end of which is to wean us from sensible Objects, and Pleasures, the love of which is always inflamed by Indulgence, and as much abated by Privation and Abstinence. Now the reason how the being thus affected towards the Pleasures of *Sense* comes to be such a Qualification for the Final Happiness of Man is this. God the Object of this Happiness is a *Spiritual Being*, and the Happiness of Heaven, which consists in the Fruition of him, is all over of a *Rational and Intellectual Nature*. 'Tis no other, in short, but the Pleasure of the Understanding

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contemplating the Supreme Truth, and of the Will transported with the Love of the Sovereign Good. And therefore the Love of sensible Pleasure, if once it comes to be strong and vehement, must needs very much indispose us for the enjoyment of a Good so purely Spiritual; and a Happiness so purely Intellectual as this is; and if ever it rises so high as to subdue the Mind to it, and to become the prevailing and governing Affection of the Soul; (the Case and Character of those, who are *lovers of Pleasure more than lovers of God*, 2 Tim. 3. 4.) it must needs utterly unfit and unqualify us for both: For what can a sensualized Soul, that has contracted a Passion and a Fondness for sensible Objects and Pleasures, find in Heaven, that will suit or relish with that his vicious and distemper'd Taste? A *Mahometan* Paradise would suit such Inclinations and Affections very well; but in Heaven they would meet with nothing but *Frustration* and Disappointment. Heaven would afford no entertainment for such Passions, and such Passions would as much unfit and indispose for Heaven: And therefore St. Peter; with a pressing earnestness; cautions us against them; upon the account of their Enmity and Hostility against our better Part. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, abstain from Fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul*, 1 Pet. 2. 11. They war against the Soul not only by betraying us into Sin, either by consenting to them in unlawful Circumstances, or by indulg-

ing them in an immoderate degree; but also and chiefly as making us unfit for the enjoyment, and indisposing us for the relish of a far greater Good, and more noble Happiness. And accordingly 'tis observable that St. *John*, among all the Moral Dispositions, singles out this of *Purity*, whereby to express our Preparation for Heaven. *Every Man that has this Hope purifies himself, &c.* And our Saviour applies this Purity to the *Heart*, to shew how that ought to be affected and disposed for Happiness. *Blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see God.* O infinite Purity, what Heart will be fit to see thee if thou dost not purge and cleanse it? O purify us by thy Grace, and so fit us for thy Glory.

21. Here I find occasion for two Observations which may deserve to be taken in our way. One is, that this is one part of the Immorality of sensual Pleasure, whenever it is Immoral, that it naturally unfits us for that Happiness which consists in the Fruition of our last End. I say whenever it is Immoral. For the Pleasure of Sense is not in it self absolutely Evil as such, but a natural Good. But it may become Evil, either by being consented to in undue Circumstances, such as are not for the good of Society, or in such a degree as is not for the private good of the Person at present, or lastly this third way, as unfitting him for the Happiness of another Life. For if a Good be in its kind never so great, yet if it deprives us of a greater Good, or unfits us for the enjoyment of it, in that

that case it becomes Evil, as doing us more Hurt than Good, and consequently upon the whole, *Hurt*. And could we suppose any thing higher or greater than the Fruition of God, and that we should be thereby render'd unfit for the enjoyment of that higher and greater Good, even the Fruition of *God* himself would thereby become Evil. But God being our chief Good and last End, this cannot possibly be. The other Observation relates to the *measure* and due order of *Christian Temperance*, which in consequence of the Premises must be extended beyond that of *Bodily Health*. 'Tis true indeed any Injury done to that in the prosecution of sensible Pleasures, is enough to make us Intemperate; but I cannot think the keeping within those bounds sufficient to fulfil the Duty of Temperance. For a Man may go very far in those Indulgencies towards the discomposing the Moral Temper of his Mind, and the unfitting himself for the Enjoyment of God, and the pure Spiritual Joys of Heaven, and yet still keep within the compass of not injuring his Health, or rendring his Body less apt to serve as an Instrument to his Soul. To allow our selves therefore in the desire or use of sensible Pleasures, as in Eating and Drinking, &c. so far as is consistent with our Health, and the good State of our Bodies, is not a just Notion of *Christian Temperance*, but the good State of the Mind must be also taken into the Account, not only that it be not disturb'd at present as to the Rational part, as in Drunkenness, but

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also and chiefly, that it be not disorder'd and discomposed for the future, that the Affectionate part of the Soul (which is its Taste or Palate) be not by too free Indulgences in the low Pleasures of Sense so far corrupted and debauch'd, as not to relish the far higher Enjoyments of another Life, those pure Pleasures which are on the Right Hand of God, in whose Presence is *Fulness of Joy*, but such as pure and well-affected Souls can only tast.

22. This I take to be if not the *full* Notion of Christian Temperance, yet at least what is necessary to *fill* it, and to be a great Branch of that *Sobriety* recommended by the Apostle, *1st. 2. 12.* as the first part of the Duty of Man, and which in all reason may be supposed to respect his State in the other World as well as in this, and to take its measures from it. And this gives a good account why *Mortification* and *Self-denial* should be so much insisted upon as Christian Duties in the Gospel. For tho' they are of great use even as to our present state, yet there is much more reason both for the Duties themselves, and for the Precepts and Exhortations concerning them, upon the Consideration of their being *Preparatory Exercises* in order to the Happiness of a Future State. Every Christian therefore owes so much to himself, and the concern which he cannot but have for his own Happiness, as to prepare here for what he hopes for hereafter, and in consequence of this to *purify* himself as *St. John* advises, and as *St. Paul*, to make

make no *provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof.* But rather by Habitual Mortification, and all Self-denying Practices to endeavour to get above the Body, and the inferior relishes and gratifications of the Animal Life, and according to the fore-mention'd Admonition of St. *Peter*, to consider himself as a *Stranger* and a *Pilgrim*, one that is not in his Native Country, but hastening to it, and accordingly to abstain from whatever in his *way* may make him unfit for his *End*, and particularly from *Fleshly Lusts* which war against the Soul.

23. Well then by these Considerations it now appears what are the *Means* that lead to our great End, that the Commandments of God and the Duties of Christian Life are those Means, and that in the nature of the thing as well as by Divine Constitution. And this I take to be one great part of their Morality, or Moral Goodness, *viz.* the Natural Aptness and Tendency which they have to fit and dispose us for our *final* Happiness. And for this reason it is that God, who is willing we should be Happy, having made us for that very End, requires them of us, and obliges us to them by all the Authority he has over us, and that because he knows that without those Moral Dispositions we cannot be Happy, as not being *meet Partakers* of that sovereign Good wherein Happiness does consist. For this reason it is for instance that he commands us to *love* him. 'Tis not that he covets our Love, or sets any value upon it merely as

such. For what is our Love to him? Nothing at all. But tho' it be nothing to *him*, yet it is something to our *selves*, as being a necessary qualification for our Happiness. For without loving God we cannot enjoy him, and this God knows, and therefore he requires that we should love him. And not only so, but that we should love him with all our Heart, Soul and Mind and Strength, and that because he knows that a less degree of Love than that, is neither worthy of him, nor will qualify us to be Happy in him. And so in other Instances. God suits his Laws to *our* Nature, and to the nature of *things*, making those things our Duty which of themselves have a natural alliance and connexion with our Interest, and are conducive to our Happiness, so that while we do our Duty to *him*, we may serve and benefit our selves at the same time, and in the same Instance. And this is that which makes the Laws of God to be so good, so excellent, and so reasonable as they are, and to deserve all those great Characters and high Commendations which the Psalmist bestows upon them in the 119th Psalm. And this is that also which makes the Service of God to be truly a reasonable Service, and indeed perfect Freedom. For nothing certainly can be more reasonable than for a Man to prosecute his own good, nor consequently than to serve and obey God, since that of it self is a certain Means to that End, and his own Good is the natural Fruit of that Obedience. And how should this indear the Service
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of God to us, make us in love with our Duty to him, willing to be subject to his Government, and to yield the most free, ready and chearful Obedience to his Laws, and to do his Will on Earth even as the Angels do it in Heaven, since our own Benefit and Advantage is both the Reason of his Laws, and the natural Effect and Consequence of keeping them. Every Wise therefore and Prudent Christian should look upon the Laws and Commandments of God, not as so many imperious Curbs and Restraints or Retrenchments of our Liberty, nor as so many arbitrary Impositions, much less as Burthens and Grievances (as Human Laws for want of Wisdom or Goodness in those that make them may sometimes be) but as so many kind Provisions and Expedients for our Happiness, and so many gracious Instructions to direct and bring us to our true End, and in this view to yield them Obedience, not such as is forced and violent, servile and extorted by Fear, such as Slaves pay to Tyrants, but such as is liberal and ingenuous, and wherein Love is the prevailing Principle, as becomes one that is under a Government so good and gracious, and so every way directed and administer'd for the best Advantage of the Subject, as that of God's is.

24. And now since it appears that the Means that lead to our End, the great High-way of Happiness, are no other than God's Commandments, it also further appears, and that by the same light, what the particular Acts and Offices
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of Christian Prudence are. That they are indeed no other than this, to have a distinct Regard, and to pay a due Obedience and Observance to all the Commandments of God, and to put on such good Dispositions of Mind, and to practice such Vertues and Moral Duties as they require from us. This is our Wisdom, and indeed the wisest thing we can do, not to indulge our own Fancies, or fulfil our own Will, or to follow the Devices and Desires of our own Hearts, but to apply our selves to keep God's Commandments, and to take hold of those *Paths of Life* which he has described to us. This is true Wisdom and Prudence, and that which the Holy Ghost in Scripture every where commends for such, in whose Account and Language a wise Man and a good Man, a wicked Man and a Fool are the same. He therefore that is truly Wise and Prudent will apply himself to the keeping of God's Commandments, as the safest and indeed only sure way and means to his End, and by this he will give a better proof of his Wisdom than by all the little Plots and cunning Intrigues of Human or Worldly Policy, or by the most acute and subtile Reasonings and Discourses of the Learned. These things cast a glaring and a dazzling Light upon Mens Eyes, and may make a great Noise and Figure in the World, but after all the true Wisdom of Man is to attain his End, and consequently to apply himself to the choice and use of such Means as will help him to attain it. And therefore since the Commandments of

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of God are truly those Means, it follows that it must needs be our Wisdom and Prudence to keep them, according to the words of *Moses* to the People of *Israel*, when he exhorted them to Obedience, *Keep therefore and do them, for this is your Wisdom and your Understanding*, Deut. 4. 6. Which falls in with those words of *Job*, *And unto Man he said, Behold the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil is Understanding*, Job 28. 28.

25. It is it seems not only Wisdom, but our Wisdom, the Wisdom of *Man*, the Wisdom that belongs to his *Nature*, as being made for Happiness, that belongs to the present *State* and *Condition* of his Nature, as having Capacities for *fully* qualifying himself for this Happiness, whereas his Faculties will carry him but a very little way in Theory, and the Notional Knowledge of Things. The Wisdom that belongs to his present *Circumstances* in this World, which is wholly in order to the other, and is no further considerable than as a Preparation to it. The Wisdom that belongs to his *Duty*, it being a Duty bound upon every Man by the Principle of Self-preservation, to consult his own Final Happiness, and to apply himself to the Means that are necessary to that great End. And after this I need not say the Wisdom that belongs to his *Interest*; nothing being more plain than that every Man's greatest Interest and principal Concern is to be Everlastingly Happy. Upon all which Considerations it appears, that the study
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and practice of Piety and Religion, the devoting our selves to the Service of God, and to the Obedience of his Laws, is the true and proper Wisdom of Man, in which he is concern'd principally to imploy and improve himself, and to which all his other Learning and Knowledge ought to be refer'd.

26. And thus having shewn that 'tis our Wisdom to serve God and keep his Commandments, as being the true Means that lead to our End, I know not what I have further to add upon this Consideration, unless it be to carry the extent of it so far as to observe that 'tis our Wisdom to do the same, that is, to walk by these Rules which God has given us, and to live Good and Religious Lives, not only upon the Principles of Christian Faith, but even supposing the *Doubtfulness* of those Religious Grounds we have hitherto gone upon, and the uncertainty of a Future State. Were these things as doubtful as some would wish, yet with a Prudent Man this would make no difference in the Conduct of his Life, which would be just the same as if they were never so certain. The Reason of which is very clear, because in all Cases of Moment, especially in a matter of this vast Concernment, where *all* is at stake, it is a Rule of Prudence for a Man to take the safest side, and to expose himself to as little Hazard as is possible. But now 'tis plain, that the safest side is the side of Religion, there being no Hazard run that way by him that lives according to its Rules, if it

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should prove to be false, whereas there is the greatest Hazard in the World run the other way by him that transgresses the Rules of Religion, if it should at last prove true. And therefore were the Reasons equal on the side of Faith, and the side of Infidelity, yet there is such a vast inequality in the Consequences of each Supposition, that still the Wisdom of Piety would be justify'd of all her Children, and the good Man would act with the greatest Prudence and Discretion, and the wicked Man with the greatest Folly and Madnes in the World. Therefore every way Religion is our best Wisdom ; and accordingly I shall conclude this Chapter, with what the wise Preacher makes the conclusion of the whole matter, viz. *Fear God, and keep his Commandments : For this is the whole of Man. Eccles. 12. 13.*

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

Wherein is consider'd how far Christian Prudence is concern'd in the order and manner of keeping God's Commandments. And particularly of the Wisdom of Repentance.

1. **W**E have gone through (by God's Assistance) the Acts and Offices of Christian Prudence, both General and Particular, and that both with respect to the End, and to the Means. And having shewn that this last consists in keeping the Commandments of God; we are now led to consider an Inquiry which upon this occasion may be made concerning the *order* and *manner* of keeping these Commandments, and how far Christian Prudence is concern'd in them.

2. Now as to this there is no reasonable Doubt to be made, but that if the Commandments of God are taken in the largest extent so as to include Positive as well as Natural or Moral Precepts, we are then to have the greatest regard to *Moral Duties*, the Duties of Natural Religion, to prefer them before the other in our Esteem, and (in case of competition) in our Observance too, so as to leave the other undone rather than these when ever they cannot be done both, 'Tis true indeed our Saviour tells the Hypocritical Pha-

Pharisees, *These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*, Mat. 23. 23. But this only shews what ought to be done *out* of the Case of Competition, that then they ought to be done both in opposition to the Pharisees Partiality, who with a scrupulous observation of the former, neglected the latter. Whereas our Saviour would have them do both, not blaming them for their exactness in paying Tithes (tho' in a disputed Instance) but only reprovng and condemning their Hypocrisy and partial Neglect in not joining with it the observance of certain other things of a Moral Concernment, which he would have done without any Prejudice to the former. But then this is to be understood only *out* of the Case of Competition; when both *may* be done, both *must* be done. But when the Case is so that but one of them can be done, our Saviour has given us a Rule to direct us which that shall be. For as by telling us of more and less weighty matters of the Law he implies that there is an *order* in God's Commandments, so he has taken care to inform us what that Order is in those words, *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice*, Mat. 9. 13. that is, Mercy rather than Sacrifice, or before Sacrifice, when both cannot be had.

3. This Text by the way may be improved into a very good Argument for the Moral or Natural Goodness of certain Actions, and that they have not all their Goodness from the Authority which commands them. For if so, how
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comes Mercy here to be prefer'd before Sacrifice? Not upon the account of its being *commanded*, since that Reason might be pleaded as well in behalf of Sacrifice, that being commanded as well as Mercy. If therefore Mercy be prefer'd before Sacrifice, it must not be for the sake of that Authority which they have in common, but upon the consideration of something peculiar wherein they differ. Which something not being without, must be taken from within, from the nature of the things themselves, something *in* Mercy that is not in Sacrifice. Which can be only this, that Mercy is in it self morally and intrinsically good, and therefore well-pleasing and acceptable to God, whereas Sacrifice was only a positive Rite and Institution, and therefore only acceptable to God because done in Obedience to his Command. So that in short, the one was good because required, and the other was required because it was in it self good. Which lays a sufficient ground for the Preference here given.

4. And that both on God's part, and ours too. God has a great deal of reason to prefer those things which are morally good in themselves, and commanded too, before those which are only the latter. For as well as he likes to have Obedience paid to his Authority, whatever the Instance be, he cannot but like better to have it paid where the *Stamp* of the same Authority is imprinted upon *Materials* that have a more intrinsic value of their own. And so as
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for our part, we have as good reason to set a greater value upon the Moral, than the Positive Part of the Divine Law. And that because the Moral Part is good in it self, and commanded too, whereas the other is only commanded. And 'tis plain, that a Command with and grounded upon a Moral Reason is more, and ought to weigh more with us than a mere solitary Command. God himself who requires both, does yet lay a greater stress upon one than he does upon the other. He prefers *Mercy* before *Sacrifice*, and so should we, a Moral before a Positive Injunction. For as the Preference shews the Morality, as was before argued, so the Morality does as much infer the Preference. Which also appears very plain from the Scribes Answer to our Saviour, and our Saviour's Approbation of him as answering *discreetly*, when he declared, that to fulfil the two Precepts of Charity was more than all whole Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices. In which he agreed with *Samuel*, who tells *Saul* that to obey was better than Sacrifice.

5. There is therefore a *comparative* as well as absolute regard to be had to the Commandments of God. And every prudent and well-advised Christian will observe this Order, and tho' he pays a universal respect to all the Parts of God's Law, and makes Conscience to observe them, as well knowing that *Obedience* it self to the Divine Authority is always *Moral*, however the Instances may be Positive, yet he will make a Distinction where there is a Difference, a Distinction

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distinction between the more and less weighty Matters, and accordingly will prefer those Moral Precepts which are founded upon Eternal and Immutable Reasons, and are commanded too, before such positive Injunctions as have only the warrant of Divine Authority to enforce them. For Wisdom is a lover and an observer of Order, and one great part of it is to proportion our love, value and esteem to the moment and weight of things, so as to regard those things most which are of the greatest worth and importance. And therefore since the Moral part of the Divine Law has this Character, this is that part which will be most regarded by a Wise and Prudent Christian, and prefer'd too in his Observance, before any mere positive Institution, tho' not to the Prejudice of it. This is a Consideration of great use in Christian Life, and it holds as well in the Case of *Repentance*, where for the same reason every truly Wise and Prudent Christian will think himself concern'd to Repent more earnestly and to humble himself more sorrowfully for his *Immoralities*, than for his Neglects or Transgressions of any purely positive Command. And so in all Cases he will give the Preference to the Moral part of his Duty, tho' truly Conscientious of the whole. So far is he from the indiscreet and mistaken Zeal of those who lay the greatest stress upon the least matters, strain at Gnats, and swallow Camels, and prefer Rituals and positive Institutions before Moral Duties, and the practice of Natural Religion, which indeed is the Bane and

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and Corruption of all true Religion and Piety, and as much against all Christian Wisdom and Prudence.

6. And here it may fall under the Concern which Christian Prudence has in the order of keeping God's Commandments further to observe, that not only Moral Duties are to be prefer'd before positive Injunctions, but that even of Moral Duties those which concern our Neighbour have a peculiar Importance, which a Prudent Christian will have a regard to. It would sound oddly to say that the Duties we owe to our Neighbour should be prefer'd before those which we owe to God, and indeed Absolutely speaking, I think it is not true. The very *Order* of the Commandments, which consist of a First and Second Table, the former containing the Duties respecting God, and the latter those which respect our Neighbour, plainly implies the contrary. And our Saviour says expressly of the *Love* of God (which is the Sum of all that we owe to God, as the Love of our Neighbour is the Sum of all that we owe to *him*) that it is not only the First, but the *great* Commandment of the Law. And yet as great as it is there are Times and Circumstances when the Duties of Religion, those which immediately relate to God (for in a large Sense all our Duties are Duties of Religion) may and ought to give place to the Duties which we owe to our Neighbour, and we may and must prefer works of Charity before works of Piety ; so that in this sense also Mercy is to go before

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Sacrifice, as Sacrifice stands not only for *Positive* Duties, but also for the Duties which we owe immediately to *God*, of whose worship Sacrifice was a Solemn part. I may and ought to leave my Prayers unsaid (which are my *Spiritual Sacrifice*) rather than not do a work of Charity when I see a due Object of it, and Opportunity for it, and to neglect or withhold it then upon a pretence of serving God, would be as great Hypocrisy, as to refuse relieving Father or Mother in Distress upon the pretence of *Corban*, or of having devoted or made a Religious offering of

* Dr. *Whitby*. that whereby they were to do it, or as a * Learned Expositor chuses rather to understand it, of having obliged themselves by Vow not to do it. 'Tis an abuse of Religion, and not the least of those many which are put upon it, to pretend it as a Dispensation from doing a good Office to our Neighbour; for true Religion never stands in the way of Charity, or hinders him that has it from a good work. So far from that, that an Act of Charity done to our Neighbour is more pleasing to God (that is he is more willing we should do it) than an Act of Religious Worship done to himself. 'Tis true indeed there was once a Case when Religion was not to be neglected upon a pretence of *Charity* to the Poor, as when the Pious Woman express'd her devout Respect and Affection to our Saviour by anointing his head, after the manner of the Eastern Countries who used to do so at their Feasts and Banquets, to which the *Psalmist* alludes,

Judes, *Psal.* 23. *Thou preparest a Table before me in the presence of my Enemies, thou anointest my head with oyl, &c.* In justification of which *Action* says our Saviour, *the Poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always.* But this very Reason lying now as much on the other side, that of Religion, we may now take it for a Rule of Christian Prudence, that Charity to our Neighbour is not to be neglected upon a pretence of Religion, but that Charity (if there be not room for both) is rather to take place. Not that Alms or any Act of Mercy is in it self absolutely speaking better than the Love of God or the Religious Worship of him, but because the Worship of God is not so confined to any certain time, but that another time may do as well, whereas the Necessities of our Neighbour are pressing and urgent, and our Opportunities of doing him good, transient and passing, so that if an Opportunity is not *used*, it is *lost*, at least for that time, and whether we shall have another is very uncertain. And accordingly we are bid not to neglect such Opportunities, but *as we have Opportunity to do good to all men.* And for this reason a Prudent Christian will by no means upon a pretence of Piety or Devotion pass over an Opportunity of doing good to his Neighbour, as knowing that with *such Sacrifices* also God is well pleased, and indeed as the Case stands, better than with the other, for the doing of which tho' in it self not less excellent, yet the Reasons are not so urgent, because the Omission may be better supplied. And

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therefore a Prudent Christian will at any time intermit the Offices of Piety for those of Charity, looking upon himself as much better employ'd in doing good to the Bodies or Souls of Men than when upon his Knees in Prayers to God, or in the most Divine Contemplations. Accordingly

* Third Book of
the Life of *Moses*.

* *Philo* observes, that *Moses* tho' for some time in suspence whether he should continue his Divine Intercourse with God in the Mount, or descend to remedy the disorders of the People, was yet by Divine order determin'd to go down, which well expresses the Case now before us, and what our Duty is in it. We must descend from our Mount of Pious and Divine Contemplations at the Call of Charity, and not suffer the Concerns of our necessitous Brother to lye unregarded, while we are talking with God, who will dispense with our Services to himself, rather than a good Office shall be neglected. And here also *he will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice.*

7. But we are further concern'd to make another Distinction because of another Difference, and that is between Religion of the *End*, and Religion of the *Means*, according to the Distinction used by a late Divine of our Church, and whereby he has well express'd and comprehend'd the whole Duty of Man. By Religion of the *End*, meaning all that Heavenly Vertue wherein the Perfection and Happiness of Human Nature consists. Which is the same with those Moral Duties we have been speaking of as the *Means*
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to our great End, that *Morality* which is so much decried by some, who little consider the stress that God lays upon it in Scripture, *he has shew'd thee O Man what is good*, &c. and how contemptibly he speaks of the positive part of his own Service, when even zealously practiced without the observance of Moral Duties. *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices?* &c. *Isa.* I. 11. By Religion of the Means he intends to comprehend all that Duty which does either Naturally or by Institution respect and drive at that of the End. Now before I apply this Distinction, I have one remarque to make upon it, for the better understanding it, which is this, that what our worthy Author calls Religion of the End, is indeed a Means with respect to Happiness, and an End only with respect to those Ministerial Duties which serve to it. So that his Religion of the End falls in with those Means to our End we have been speaking of, *viz.* the Moral Vertues, which as all other subordinate and intermediate Ends, are Means and End too, Means with respect to the last End to which they serve, and at the same time an End with respect to those mediate Duties which serve to *them*. But with respect to the ultimate End it self, *viz.* Happiness, so they are *both* Means. Only one is an Immediate, and the other is a Mediate or Remote Means, or a Means to a Means. The Immediate Means to Happiness is Moral Vertue, the remote are such ministerial Duties and Practices as serve to the Acquisition or Advantage of that Moral

Goodness which directly qualifies us for Happiness. But this being an End with reference to the other, tho' otherwise a Means, we will consider it so according to the Distinction premised, which therefore I shall retain, meaning by Religion of the End, those Duties of Religion which have a Moral and an Intrinsic goodness in them, and by Religion of the Means such Duties or Practices as are only Instrumental and Subservient to the other.

8. This being thus settled, I have now to observe upon it, that Christian Prudence which weighs and measures the Reasons and Moments of things, does farther require that we should prefer Religion of the End, those Vertues and Acts of Religion which have a Moral and Intrinsic Goodness in them before any Means whatsoever that serve to them, tho' of Divine Appointment. The reason of this is plain even upon the common Principles of Morality, because the End is always more excellent than the Means, the End having an Intrinsic Goodness of its own, and so being self-desirable, whereas all the goodness of the Means is only the Order and Relation which it has to the End, and accordingly it is not desirable for it self, but only for the sake of the other. And therefore 'tis a plain case that the Moral part of Christianity which has the nature of an End to those Instrumental and Ministerial Duties that serve to it, however it be it self a Means in Order to Happiness, ought in all Reason, Justice, and Prudence to be preferred before

fore them. But if you will consider them both as Means (as indeed they are in order to the ultimate end of all) then I say that the nearer any Means is to the End, and the more close the Connection is that it has with it, the more valuable it is. Now this is the Case. The Moral Vertues are the direct and immediate Means to Happiness, and that so necessary, that there is no natural possibility of being Happy without them. Whereas the other are more remote, and besides (which ought carefully to be heeded) do not serve neither as *necessary* Qualifications for Happiness, but only serve as convenient Helps and Advantages to those things which are necessary Qualifications for it. So that every way Religion of the End is justly preferable to that of the Means, and the Moral Duties of Religion ought, tho' not to exclude, yet to take place of the Instrumental. And therefore every Wise and Prudent Christian whose *Zeal is according to Knowledge*, will be so far from resting in those Instrumental Duties, or placing all Religion in them as some do, that he will apply himself chiefly to the practice of Moral Goodness, those Duties of Religion which have an internal Excellency, and are founded not upon mutable Circumstances, but immutable and everlasting Reasons, and to the other so far as either by Nature or Institution they serve as means to these. And thus every thing is in its right Place and Order, and there is a Beauty in the whole.

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9. But to bring all this to a particular Instance. Our Prudent Christian therefore will by no means prefer the *Preaching* or *Hearing* the Word of God, as much a Divine Ordinance as it is, before the Christian Duty of *Prayer*, especially when performed in Publick. For Prayer tho' in some respects a means of Grace, is also Religion of the End too, as being a moral Duty, and an Act of natural Religion, whereby a Creature acknowledges his Dependency upon God, and withal confesses the Power, the Wisdom, the Goodness, the Mercy of his great Creator and Benefactor, imploring his aid, and giving Thanks for his Blessings. So that 'tis an Act of great *Humility* and *Gratitude*, and of *Love* too, whereby the Soul ascends to God in devout and affectionate Breathings and Aspirations. Besides, 'tis also an Act of *Repentance* in confessing and begging Pardon for our Sins. So that there is a great deal of Morality in Prayer, for which it is to be regarded as a thing intrinsically good in it self, as being directly and as such the *Service and Worship of God*. But now hearing the word of God, tho' it be an Ordinance of God and a Means of Grace, yet it is no more than a *Means*, and accordingly is no further valuable than as it serves in order to Prayer and other Christian Duties, to build Men up in Faith and Holiness of Life, that which we properly mean by *Edification*. And therefore to place all Religion in *Hearing Sermons*, or to rest in it as a completion of our Duty is to mistake the Scaffold for the Building, and

and to turn the Means into an End, and to prefer Hearing before *Prayer* (which is a direct Act of Divine Worship) as those do who come to Church and endure the Prayers only for the sake of the Sermon; this is to prefer the Means before the End, which is contrary to all the Principles of Reason as well as Religion, and I must needs add, a strange way of serving God, who is the God of Order, and not of Confusion, according to the Apostle. But this 'tis when Men have a Zeal for Religion, but don't know where to place it, nor how to express it, and so set up Superstition in the stead of it.

10. And here indeed the fault will be found to lie. The Men concern'd in the present Reflection have more *Zeal* than *Knowledge*, and so they have an inordinate Zeal, a Zeal that is not according to Knowledge, that does not accord with the Principles and Measures of right Reason, or a well inform'd Judgment, or with the Right and Truth of the matter, an *Erroneous Preposterous Zeal*. As some Men have inordinate *Passions* and Affections (what we call *Lusts*) so these Men are acted by an inordinate *Zeal*, which oftentimes occasions as much Disorder, and does as much hurt in the World as any *Lusts* whatsoever. And this makes them overvalue some things, and as much undervalue others, and to place Religion in such things wherein it does not truly consist. For we must distinguish between what Religion *is*, and what it *requires*. There are more things required in Religion, than what constitute the
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the Nature and Essence of it. As to return to the Instance before mention'd. *Hearing* is a Christian Duty as being appointed by God as a Means for our Edification. But Religion cannot properly be said to consist in Hearing. For Hearing is not in it self a Religious Act as Prayer is, nor is it an Act of Charity to our Neighbour, nor is there any Moral Goodness in the thing as such, nor is a Man the better for the very work of Hearing it self, any otherwise than as he designs well in it, and directs it to a right End, and imployes it to that purpose, which is what makes any indifferent Action good, that is Relatively speaking, and to the Person that does it, who is to be commended for his good Intention whatever the Instance be. But still Hearing in the Nature of the thing as such is no proper Act of Religion, tho' required by it, and so one of its Duties. But that wherein Religion does truly consist, and which constitute the inward Form and Essence of it are those Moral Vertues and Dispositions of Mind, and such good Practices, as make us like God, and serve to fit and qualify us for the enjoyment of him, such as perfect our Nature, and make it capable of its true and final Happiness. For the great Business of Religion is to fit us for our End, and accordingly whatever other things may be required of us and become our Duty, as ministring to Religion, yet Religion it self must as to the Substance and Essence of it, consist only in those things which directly qualify us for Happiness. More particularly in
Charity

Charity and Purity. And accordingly St. James tells us, that *Pure Religion and undefiled before God is this, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World,* Jam. i. 27. Let not Men then place Religion in such things wherein the true Nature and Power of it does not lye, for that's the way to spend that Zeal in lesser things which is due to greater. But let every thing have its proper Place and Order, and then if they should find reason to abate some of their Zeal for some Things, they will have the more to spare for others of greater moment; and so upon the whole will not be less *Religious*, but only more *Prudent*. And then I think there will be no harm done.

11. Before I leave this Consideration of the *Order* to be observ'd by every Wise Man in keeping the Law of God, I ought perhaps further to remark that it may in some measure be applied even to the *Moral Part* of it, and that not only with respect to Circumstances, as before, but even absolutely consider'd. For tho' all the *Moral Precepts* of the Law are founded upon stable and immutable Reasons, such as are taken from the Fittingness and Agreement which they have with our Nature, and the natural serviceableness which they have to our End; yet I think 'tis very possible that some of them may be more necessary Means to it than others, and may have a more qualifying Influence upon our Happiness. The Lawyer that inquired of our Savi-

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our which was the Great Commandment of the Law supposed, according to the Jewish Notion, that some such was so, that is, greater than the rest. And our Saviour was so far from finding Fault with his Supposition, that he proceeds upon the same, and tells him which was it. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.* Mat. 22. 37. And this says he is the First and Great Commandment. And 'tis reasonable to think that one part of its Greatness may be this, that it more eminently and directly qualifies us for the Enjoyment of God, in whom our Happiness consists. And that it does so seems plain, nothing being so immediately and indispensably necessary to the Enjoyment of any Good as the *love* of it, since all Pleasure is but the result of the possession of what we *love*, which makes what we call *Fruition*. So that the *Love* of God must needs be the great leading Preparative for Heaven, and the principal Ingredient of our Heavenly Blessedness. And for the Reasons before specify'd *Purity* may be another. And therefore our Prudent Christian who considers the Proportion that the Means bear to the End, tho' without Partiality or Hypocrisy he has regard to the whole *Morality* of the Gospel, yet he may think he has Reason to apply himself more particularly to these two Christian Duties, the Practice of *Divine Love*, and the Practice of *Purity*, to love God with the whole Force of his Mind, and to cleanse himself from all Filthiness

ness both of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God. And in fear too lest if he should not be inwardly and thoroughly Pure, he shall not be fit to see him, or capable of enjoying him. Always remembering that of St. Bernard, *Quanta solitudine Fratres, quanto studio danda est opera, ut mundari possit Oculus, quo videndus est*

In Fest. Om. Sanct. Sermon. 1.

Dens. With how much Care Brethren, with how much Diligence should we endeavour, that our Eye may be made clean, wherewith God is to be seen.

12. And so much for the *Order* of our Obedience. The next thing wherein Christian Prudence is concern'd is the *Manner* of keeping God's Commandments. Now as to this, I think, the main Difficulty is in the *doing*, and not in determining what in Prudence ought to be done. For if Wisdom be consulted upon this matter, her Answer I presume will be, that we should keep them in as good a manner as we can. I shall not, nor need I here meddle with that Question, whether we are bound in every thing to do our *best*, as not considering at present to what *Conscience* obliges, but only to what *Prudence* advises, which may well be what is best, whatever becomes of the other Question. For if we are strictly bound to do what is best, to be sure we are then in Prudence concern'd to do it. And if we are *not* strictly bound under pain of Sin to do what is best, yet this will not hinder but that in point of *Prudence* it may be most

most adviseable so to do. As I think it is very plain that it is. For since the Commandments of God (that is those Moral Duties which are required of us) are the natural Means that qualify us for Happiness, it follows that the better they are kept by *us*, the more we shall be qualify'd by *them*. On the other side, 'tis the part of every Prudent Man to obtain as much of his End as he can, and accordingly to prosecute it in as good a manner as he can. From which two things put together it clearly follows, that however the *Casuists* may determin as to strict Duty, yet in Point of Prudence it is most adviseable for every Christian to do his best, and to endeavour to serve God, and keep his Commandments, in the very best and most perfect manner that he is able to attain to, and that because as in keeping them he is prosecuting his End, so the better he keeps them the more qualify'd he will be for it, and consequently the more Happy in it. And no Wise Man acting as such, would be less Happy, when he may be more.

13. Setting aside therefore all Inducements of either Love or Fear, all Arguments of Gratitude or Generosity, all the Reasonableness and Justice of serving God, conforming our Wills to his Will, submitting to his Government and living in Obedience to his Laws, all the Pleasures and Satisfactions of Religion, and the present Benefit and Advantage both to Soul and Body which we reap by it; I say tho' we should set aside these

these and such like Considerations, yet there is a *Prudential* Consideration sufficient to ingage every wise Christian, every true *Child of Light*, to endeavour to do his best, and be as good and vertuous as he can, and that because the better he is the happier he will be, every addition to his Vertue being so much stock laid in for his Future Happiness. The Question concerning *Degrees of Glory*, unless it be put for Argument sake, as many other Questions are, is but an idle Question. For it cannot be put seriously but by one that is ignorant of the nature of things, as well as of what may be collected from Divine Revelation for the Affirmative. Had the Scripture said nothing about it, yet the very Nature and Necessity of the Thing infers it. For since Moral Goodness and Vertue is a natural Qualification for Happiness, it necessarily follows that the more Goodness the more Happiness, and consequently that the Best Man must needs be the *Happiest* Man. And therefore 'tis great Prudence for every Christian to strive and labour to be *excellently* good, even as good as he can well be according to the measure of that Grace which is imparted to him, that so his Happiness may be the greater. As to reduce this to an *Instance*. Our Saviour annexes a particular Blessedness to Purity of Heart, which he exemplifies by the Priviledge which it gives those that have it to *see God*. Whence we may gather that Purity of Heart is a particular Disposition and Qualification for the *Beatific Vision*, and accordingly

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that those who have most of this Purity will be most Happy, as either seeing more of God, or as being more pleas'd and delighted with what they see of him, as being more conformable to the Temper of their own Minds. And therefore every Prudent Christian that proposes this as his End, or as St. *John* expresses it, *that has this Hope*, will study to *purify* himself as much as he can, that so he may be a more meet Partaker of that Happiness which is promised to the Pure in Heart, and so may have a larger share of it.

14. Let not therefore any Christian content himself with his present State, or his past Attainments in Goodness; much less let him professedly and designedly set up for a low and slender Degree of it, such as he thinks may just carry him to Heaven. He may be mistaken in his Measure, and when weigh'd in the Ballance may be found wanting. But suppose he be not, yet however he stands in his own Light, and is frugal and sparing to his own greater Loss and Disadvantage. For 'tis but an ill Thrift to deal hardly for Heaven, and to think to take the nearest way to go thither, since besides the danger of miscarrying, so much as a Man abates of Goodness, so much he abates of his greatest Perfection, and cuts short his own Happiness. And where is the Gain or the Wisdom of such a Thrift? Indeed it is Loss and Folly all over. Let us not therefore rest satisfy'd with narrow and scanty Measures, much less directly and expressly

pressly design them. For besides that 'tis not very easy to persevere in such a weak and languishing state of Piety, that is just ready to dye (every little blast of Temptation being ready to blow out a Lamp that is fed with so little Oyl) suppose we *should* persevere in it, yet however we cannot receive much Satisfaction from it, or enjoy much repose of Mind in it, there being so little difference between such an imperfect state of Goodness and some states of Sin, that we cannot be well assured even of the *safety* of our Condition. 'Tis only an *advanced* and well establish'd Piety that can give us that Satisfaction, upon which all the Calm and Tranquillity of our Mind depends. But suppose the other could give it too, yet still there is no getting over this Consideration, that the more we come short in Goodness, the more we shall fall short in Happiness; that every Abatement in the former is so much deducted from the latter, a Jewel taken out of our Crown. And therefore let not him that pretends to Christian Prudence act so unadvisedly, and against the Principles of it, as to sit down with a low infant-state of Goodness, but rather let him endeavour to grow in Grace, and always to abound in the Work of the Lord, not contenting himself with his present State, but always studying to excel himself, to grow better and better, and to make a constant Progress in Religion, correcting what is amiss, and supplying what is wanting, and aspiring after the largest measures and fullest de-

degrees of Holiness, always remembering that all the while he is thus serving God he is consulting his own Interest, and prosecuting his own great End, and that the more Goodness he brings with him to Heaven, the more Happiness he will be sure to find there.

15. In consequence of this, and in pursuance of the same Principle our Wise and Prudent Christian will begin *betimes*, and set out early in the ways of Piety and Religion, not only that he may have the advantage of the Morning, the proper time for Travelling, and the Satisfaction of serving God in the Prime of his Age, and the Vigour of his Strength, when he has most Temptations to serve *divers Lusts and Vanities*, and is most apt to forget him whose he is, and whom he ought to serve, but also that he may lengthen his Day, and have the more time to serve God in, and to fit and prepare himself for the Fruition of him in Glory. That he may have the more time before him to correct his Disorders, to fill up his Deficiencies, to make himself Master of his Passions, to purify his Heart, to perfect his Habits, to adorn his Soul with all Heavenly Vertues, and in fine, to compose the State and Frame of his Mind for Happiness, and to put himself in a due Order for Heaven. For these Reasons 'tis Christian Prudence to begin *betimes* to run the way of God's Commandments, and to set out early in our Christian Race, and not to defer *that* work to the declining part of our Life, which ought to be

be the Business of the whole. Whoever does so is like to serve God but little, and himself and his own Interest less, and conducts himself by such a Measure as will not pass for Wisdom in any other Affair, tho' of far less concernment. And therefore I see no reason why it should here. On the contrary, true Christian Wisdom condemns this Conduct upon many accounts, and particularly as disadvantageous to our growth and perfection in goodness, and consequently to the due pursuance and prosecution of our great End, for which, it is *that* which must qualify us. And because our Qualification for Happiness depends upon the good state of our Minds, and the more time we have for disposing our selves into this good state, the more we can do towards it, and the sooner we begin, the more time we are like to have, therefore Christian Prudence is for beginning betimes, and declares altogether for an *Early*, as well as for an *Eminent* and Excellent Piety.

16. But if it be our Christian Prudence, as to keep the Commandments of God, so also to keep them in the best manner that we can, and to endeavour after Excellency and Perfection in Religion, then what shall we think of those who serve God by halves, that halt between Religion and their Lusts, the *Almost Christians*? Why there is no doubt but that the Practice of such Men is directly against the Principles of *Christian Wisdom*, and must be very severely condemn'd by it. And because it is a Character so general, and that be-

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speaks so great Imprudence in those *many* that are guilty of it, I think it may be of good Service to Religion if upon this proper Occasion we bestow some Reflections upon it. I shall therefore discourse this matter a little at large, and that we may have a more distinct account of it, I shall consider,

First, The natural Power and Influence of Religion upon the Minds of Men, and the great Impression it makes upon them.

Secondly, The Corrupt Perverseness of Human Nature in resisting this Impression, so as not to suffer it for the most part to rise any higher in Men, than to the *Almost* perswading of them. As King *Agrippa* said of himself, *Almost thou perswadest me to be a Christian.*

Thirdly, The great Imprudence of this lame and indifferent way of serving God, and of being a Christian by halves.

17. And First, as to the *natural power* and influence of Religion upon the Minds of Men. This one would think were hardly any at all by the tenour and course of the World, because we see so little of it appear in the Lives and Manners of Men, who seem to look upon Religion as a thing made for weak and low spirited People, and by those that understand themselves better to be profess'd, rather than Practic'd. But however the Operations of Religion may be corrupted or defeated, corrupted as in the *Superstitious*, and
defeated

defeated as in the *Profane*, it still retains a natural Power and Influence, and that too considerable in its Force, and universal in its Extent. It works mightily in the hearts of Men, even the Wicked and Disobedient, and there is not a Soul that has the use of its Reason, and the liberty of Thought and Reflection but either feels, or at least some time or other has felt its Impressions. Religion is the *Sun* of the Moral World, diffusing all round it a Sphere of Light and Life, and what the *Psalmist* says of the Natural Sun may be applied to this; *It goes forth from the uttermost part of Heaven, and runs about unto the end of it again, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof, Psal. 19. 6.* reaching even the lower parts of the Earth, to the concoction of Minerals, as well as to the Invigoration of Plants and Trees. Working upon hard and obdurate Tempers, as well as upon more soft and tractable Spirits. And therefore the *Psalmist* immediately adds, *the Law of the Lord is an undefiled Law, converting the Soul, the Testimony of the Lord is sure and giveth wisdom to the simple.* That is, is in it self and of its own Nature, of a converting and inlightning Quality and Vertue, tho' perhaps it may not actually produce those Effects upon Spirits whose hard and stubborn Constitutions resist and overcome its reforming Efficacy.

18. But however it still has this Efficacy and Vertue, and works even where its workings are not effectual. It weighs and presses as a weight in a Ballance, however it may be *outweigh'd* and

overborn by a Counterweight in the prevailing Scale. Or like a Spring in a Watch, which has a natural bent, effort, and endeavour, and such as will actually make the Watch go, if there be no Obstruction to hinder the motion of the Wheels, but whether there be or no, yet still that presses and endeavours. Men are all made for Religion, and accordingly there is a Bias in Human Nature that naturally inclines them to it, whereof the *Superstition* of the Pagan World is a sensible and convincing, tho' miserable Instance, as betraying the great Corruption of Mankind at the same time. But still the native force of Religion shines and displays it self through that Corruption, nay appears by it, as the wild extravagant notes of Birds in a Forest shew however that they are Musically inclined, and have an Impression of Harmony upon them, since they will be singing, tho' it be out of tune. Were there not a natural inclination to Religion, there would be no such thing as *Superstition*, which is only a mistaken and misconducted Zeal for it, and therefore confesses its Power, at the same time that it corrupts its Purity. But indeed there is an Impression of Religion upon all the World, which tho' they can make a shift to frustrate and overcome, yet they cannot utterly shake off, in so much that none can satisfy themselves without some Religion or other, will have a bad one rather than none, and they whose ill fortune it is to be engaged in *False Religions* are oftentimes as zealous in them as they who have embraced the

the *True*. And tho' most of the latter (with sadness be it spoken) are not so far under the power of the True Religion, as to conform their lives to it, yet they have a great many imperfect Motions, Inclinations, Half Consents, and *Velleities* or Wouldings to do so, and very severe Rebukes and Reprehensions from their Consciences for not doing it. Whereby Religion shews its Force and Energy, tho' it cannot perfect and accomplish its work, and continues its claim, tho' it cannot get a full and intire possession. The short is, Good Men obey it, Superstitious Men abuse it, and Wicked Men resist and oppose it, but all Men more or less feel and confess its *Power*.

19. And indeed how can it be otherwise, since Truth and Good are the natural and proper Objects of our Faculties, which are form'd and adjusted for the Contemplation of the former, and for the Desire and Enjoyment of the latter. All Good is naturally and necessarily desirable, as all Evil is in the like manner Hateful. And as when some outward Considerations determin us to the choice of Evil, we still hate it with a natural Hatred (as is plain from that Reluctance which accompanies our choice) so when such Reasons from without determin us to the refusal of good, we still love it with a natural love, which tho' it may be over-ruled, is not to be extinguish'd, but keeps its Absolute, even when it has lost its comparative weight. There can be no pure unmixt Hatred of Good, any more than pure love of
Evil,

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Evil, but as our willing of Evil is always with a mixture of nilling, tho' willing may prevail, so our nilling of good has always a mixture of willing, tho' the nilling side be that which carries it. According to that of the Apostle, *the good that I would, I do not*, intimating that he in some measure loved and will'd it, even when he could not obtain of himself, or find in his Heart (as we say) to do it. So that those who do not love Religion enough to practice it, do yet really love it; and those who do not hate Vice enough to decline and forbear it, do yet really hate and abhor it, and would not commit it, but for the avoiding of something they think a greater Evil, and hate worse. In which Junctures indeed they commit it, and here lies the Error and Folly of Sin. But naturally every Man hates Vice and loves Vertue, and here is the Rectitude and Order of Nature. So that Religion can never cease to have a Power, and to make an impression upon the minds of Men, as long as the love of Good, and hatred of Evil is thus natural and necessary to them.

20. But besides this, there is such a Beauty, such a Reason, such an Excellency, such an Order, such a Justness, Fitness, and Becomingness, such a native Light and Lustre in Religion as being the natural means both to the present Perfection, and future Happiness of Man, or as the Apostle words it, *being profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, that it cannot chuse but approve it self
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to the Judgments, work upon the Affections, move the Hearts, and attract the Wills of its Beholders, even those who by reason of the Counterweight of some more prevailing Lust or Passion, cannot be intirely brought over to its Direction and Government. And I would venture to appeal to the Consciences of Sensual and Wicked Men, whether it be not really so? Whether, even while they are transgressing the Rules of Religion, and courting their own Ruin and Destruction, they do not at the same time consent to the Law of God that it is good, yea and delight in it too in some degree after the inward man, and whether they do not then find a Law in their *Minds* warring against the Law in their *Members*, as well (that is as truly, tho' not so successfully) as a Law in their *Members* warring against the Law of their *Minds*, and whether the Spirit does not lust against the Flesh, as well as the Flesh against the Spirit, tho' the latter be unhappily foil'd in the contest? And I would appeal to them again, whether they do not find the ways of Vice planted with Thorns and Briars, yea, with sharp Goads and Swords Points, and when they are about to break those natural Fences and commit a Sin, whether they do not meet with a sacred Horror dwelling upon the confines of it, and guarding and deterring them from it, as the drawn Sword of the Angel did *Balaam* in his unlawful Passage? And if yet notwithstanding this they *will* go on, whether they have not many Unwillingnesses to overcome, many Counter-

ter-strivings to master, many Reluctancies to get over, many uncertain Ballancings and Fluctuations of a dubious Will to settle, before they can accomplish their Folly, and at last do it against their minds, and with an ill will, parting with their Innocence as the distressed Merchant does with his precious Lading, when he is constrain'd to compound with it for his Life, by casting it into the threatenng Sea.

21. And let me ask them again when they *have* sin'd, and the Passion that deceiv'd them into it is pretty well over, whether they do not now hear the Voice of God walking in the Garden in the cool of the Day, and see the Light and Beauty of Religion breaking out afresh, and shining forth upon their Minds, whether they do not feel it solliciting and inclining them to Repentance, yea, labouring and wrestling with them, and drawing them with the Cords of Love, and whether they are not sometimes in a good Mind, upon the very Brink and Point of Conversion, very near the Kingdom of God, *Almost perswaded to be Christians* ? And tho' they have not the Heart and Resolution to be so quite, yet let me ask them again, whether they do not secretly wish they *could* live the *Life*, as well as dye the *Death* of the Righteous; Whether they do not inwardly approve, admire, and reverence that Goodness and Vertue in others, which they cannot be perswaded to practice themselves; Whether they are not unwilling that their Children should imitate them in their Debaucheries,
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and tho' they are loath to be at the expence of setting them good Examples, yet whether they generally care they should follow their bad ones; and in fine, tho' they are not intirely under the Power of Religion, yet whether they are not oftentimes effectually restrain'd and determin'd by it, and with *Herod*, are not only faintly inclined, but actually prevail'd upon to do *many things*? For when all's done, tho' Religion has not that Force and Effect that it should, yet 'tis a great Weight, Check and Restraint upon the Minds of Men, such as very much lets and controuls the freedom and liberty of Sinning, as well as lessens and allays the Pleasure and Satisfaction of *Sin*, and tho' it cannot absolutely stop the course of the *Sinner*, (so hot and eager is he in the pursuit of Death) yet it slackens and retards his motion, takes off the wheels of his mad Chariot, and makes him drive but *heavily*. Nay, it oftentimes effectually stops and restrains him, sets Bounds to that Wickedness which it cannot wholly prevent, and says to the swelling Tide of his Passion, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud Waves be stay'd. For nothing more common than for Men to startle at some Sins, when at the same time they scruple not the commission of others. He that would be bribed by thirty pieces of Silver to take a Purse upon the High-way, would not perhaps at that rate have been tempted to sell his Saviour, or now to deny him; and I make no question but that many a one that lives
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not according to his Religion, would yet dye rather than be guilty of so heinous a Crime as solemnly to renounce or abjure it. Religion therefore restrains him here, tho' it cannot do it there; and I doubt not but that as bad as the World is, it is yet a Paradise in comparison of what it *would* be, if there were no Religion in it. All which things witness the great Power that Religion naturally has upon the Minds of Men. And yet as great as it is there is something greater. In this sense also it may be said that the strong Man arm'd keeps his Palace, *Luk. 11. 21.* but there is a stronger than he, that overcomes him, and takes from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divides his spoil, and that is,

22. *2ly,* The corrupt Perverseness of Human Nature that resists the Impressions of Religion, and suffers it not for the most part to proceed any farther in its attempts upon the Minds of Men, than *almost to persuade* them. And indeed the Force of Truth and Power of Religion are not more discover'd by the strong Impressions which they make upon Mens Minds, than the Perverseness and Corruption of our Wills is in resisting and baffling those Impressions. And the Gospel History gives us a plain Instance and Experiment of each in a Person of considerable Eminence and Quality, whose fair Inclination and Disposedness to imbrace Christianity proved ineffectual and abortive by a more prevailing Interest. He was it seems *almost*, but not quite persuaded

perswaded to be a *Christian*. In that he went so far, he discovers the Power and Influence of Religion, but in that he stop'd there, and went no farther, he betrays the Corruption of his own Heart and Will, which it seems was the heaviest end of the Ballance, and that which actually weigh'd down with him. Whereof he makes a free and ingenuous Confession, which tho' it proceeded from one that never pretended himself a Convert to Christianity, may yet perhaps as well become the mouths of most of its *Professors*, who I fear might justly say of themselves (had they the Ingenuity to own so reproachful a Truth) what King *Agrippa* did, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

23. Then it seems he was not absolutely and fully perswaded. And yet he was partly and in some measure wrought upon, so as to stand disposed and inclining towards a Conversion. *Poor Agrippa.* He had heard *St. Paul* giving an account of his manner of Life from his Youth, and of his Miraculous Conversion to Christianity, and his Call to the Apostleship, with great Plainness, Modesty, and Simplicity, and was not a little affected with his Discourse. Especially with that Rhetorical and insinuating part of it, *King Agrippa believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest.* Which nearly touch'd him, and left a very sensible Impression upon his Heart. But yet there was something more prevalent within him that obstinately held out against the Siege, and would not suffer him to make a Surrender.

render. He stood hopefully affected towards the Faith of Christ, and had a good mind (as we say) to be a Christian, but Fear, Interest, or his Pagan Prejudices outweigh'd that Inclination; so that after some uncertain Suspences, at last the Scale turn'd for *Infidelity*. Now this is the Case in *Christian Practice* as well as *Faith*, and represents to us the State of a Soul imperfectly resolv'd for Goodness, and effectually determin'd to the contrary by a more powerful weight. So that Goodness and Vertue has only a faint Velocity, while Vice and Wickedness are possess'd of the compleat Will. A state of Mind which St. *Austin* acknowledges to have been once very much his own, and whereof he has given us a very lively Image in these words, than which I do not remember that I have read any thing

Confes. lib. 8.
cap. 5.

more truly elegant. *Ita sarcina sæculi, velut somno assoleat, dulciter premebat. Et Cogitationes quibus meditabar in te, similes erant conatibus expergisci voluntium, qui tamen superati soporis altitudine remerguntur.* And indeed our Thoughts and Resolutions of Piety and Goodness are too much like the Endeavours of those that are trying to wake out of a deep Sleep, into which they sink back again, overcome by the dead weight that hangs upon them.

24. This weight is the Corruption of Human Nature. And sure it must be a great strength of Corruption and Perverseness that shall resist and overcome so mighty a Force as that of Religion,

ligion, and render all its Motions and Workings succesless and ineffectual, especially considering that the Grace of God's Holy Spirit is also assisting on the side of Religion, besides all that Eternal Rewards and Punishments can do to recommend and inforce it. But such it seems is that of Man. There is a Strength or *Weakness* if you will in his Nature (for I know not well which to call it) that out-powers all the Argument and Reason of Goodness, a Weight or Impediment in his Will that stops the wheels of Vertuous Action, so that there can be no Motion, let the springs of Religion bear never so hard upon them. That 'tis true they always do, but there is a counter-spring that over-rules them, so that tho' they strive and contend much, they can effect but little. Sometimes indeed she strives so hard, works so strongly, and pushes on with such might and vigour, that she wants but little of gaining her Point; but even that little it seems is too much, she is out-weigh'd, and the Scale, tho' hopefully inclining on her side, unhappily turns against her. Like a Bowl that is thrown up against a steep Bank, which it briskly and nimbly climbs, 'till it seems in a manner just about to lodge and settle in the top; but wanting some degrees of Force to overcome the Resistance, cannot reach the highest Point, and so rowls back again.

25. *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God, Mark 12. 34.* was just such another Cast as this. And yet lackest thou one thing, *Luke 18. 22.* was such

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such another. These Mens Religion had carried them a good way, and they were well onwards in their journey to Heaven, but it tired and grew fainty in the latter stages of the Road, which was found either too *narrow*, or too *long*, and so they were fain to stop short, and make an Eternal Halt, when a little more Strength and Resolution would have carried them through. This is true in respect of the Degrees and Integral Parts of Christian Vertue, as well as in respect of final Perseverance in it, and 'tis a Character that belongs to abundance of People that profess themselves Christians, and it may be are thought good ones. As there are half witted and half sens'd Men, so there are half good and half vertuous Men. Men that have a good liking to Religion, and a savoury relish of its Joys and Pleasures, that have a natural Impression of Piety and Devotion upon their Spirits, and a great Inclination to be good, and have had this natural Inclination well cultivated by a Religious Education, the Bias of which still holds strong upon them. Nor are they only inclined to Religion, but do also partly practice it, and make some progress in it; they *do* a great many things, and conscienciously *forbear* a great many things, and all goes on hopefully towards a real and thorough Conversion. They are already past it may be the most painful and difficult part of it, and are now upon the critical point, so that a grain or two more would turn the Scale, insomuch that there begins to be *Joy in Heaven*, and the

the Angels are tuning their Harps upon the near expectation of the happy Event, and yet it will not do, tho' it be as it were already done, there wants a little more weight on the side of Religion, for want of which the counter-weight prevails against it, and the single Bias of Passion outways that of Reason, Religion, and Divine Grace together; so that after all these hopeful Effays, Beginnings and Tendencies towards a Conversion, yea some Progresses in it, the Men at last are not actually and effectually converted, their Will stands at *half Bent*, and they are only *Almost perswaded* to be *Christians*. They have indeed the workings of Religion upon them, and feel several Pangs of the new Birth, but after all they want Strength to bring forth.

26. But the distinct account of this matter is briefly this: Human Nature in its present State stands strongly inclined to the Good of Sense, or the Pleasure of the Animal Life. And tho' it retain still, as was said before, a natural Inclination to Moral and Spiritual Good, that Law of the Mind the Apostle speaks of, yet it is more inclined to Sensible than it is to Moral Good. And though that Natural Propension it has to Vertue be enough to determin for the effectual Choice of it, if there be nothing without to hinder it (even as the least weight will weigh down if there be nothing to *counter-balance* it) yet considering that the Propension to Pleasure is the stronger Propension of the two, if it once comes to this competition, you must either not

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be Vertuous, or you must want the Enjoyment of such a Pleasure, rather than not have the Pleasure the Man will chuse (without the particular Assistance of the Grace of God to lend Weight to the *yielding* Scale) to be without the Vertue. Not but that he likes and loves it still, even while he transgresses against it, but he likes and loves Pleasure better, and so kills his Duty more from without, or for the sake of Pleasure, than he wills it from within, or for the sake of it self. Or to express this in the Language of the Apostle, tho' he delights in the Law of God after the inward Man, yet there is another Law in his Members, that wars against the Law of his Mind. And that so successfullly too, as to bring him into Captivity to the Law of Sin. And now he may justly go on as the Apostle does, *O wretched Man that I am*—— Which opens an entrance upon the third and last part of this Account, which is to make some Reflections upon this lame and imperfect State of Goodness, the State of the *Almost Christians*, or Half Religious, and to shew how it falls under the Censure and Condemnation of Christian Prudence.

27. Now it does so first as *Insufficient*. Such a Half Religion or Imperfect Disposition to Goodness can never hold Weight in the Ballance of the Sanctuary, will never stand the Test of the Divine Judgment, or suffice to make them that have it either Good here or Happy hereafter. In short, it will never bring a Man to his
End.

End. Such Men 'tis true are almost good ; but to be almost good is not quite to be so. And so they shall be almost *Happy* ; but he that does almost hit the Mark, does really miss it. For pure and undefiled Religion before God consists in a prevailing Love of him, and an effectual Will and Resolution to obey him. I say effectual. For the difference between a good Man and a bad Man does not lye here, that the former loves what is good, and the latter does not, (for they both love it, and therefore what is common to both can be the Distinction of neither) but in this, that the one loves it only in some respect or degree, with an incompleat Love, or *Velleity* as 'tis call'd, whereas the other loves it with an absolute, effectual, and prevailing Love. 'Tis this latter Affection to Goodness that denominates a Man good, when Religion is the predominant Weight, and commanding Bias of his Soul. Besides that a Half Religion can never satisfy the Intention, or answer the End and Purpose of Religion in general, which is to make us not only *well wishers* to Goodness, but really, thoroughly, and effectively good ; so good as to be fit for Happiness. There is a certain Frame of Mind and Temper of Spirit naturally requisite to make us capable of the Heavenly Felicity, and the great Design and Business of Religion is to work that Beatific Temper in us. And if it does this only *Almost*, and by Halves, as it can never bring us to Heaven, so neither if it could, would it be able to make us Happy there,

28. But this languid and imperfect state of Piety is further condemn'd by Christian Prudence, as *very Absurd*. 'Tis indeed an absurd and unreasonable thing to be Religious by Halves, to be *Almost perswaded* to be Christians. Not that it is absurd to proceed so far, no, every degree of Goodness is highly valuable, and every step we make in the progress of Religion deserves Commendation and Incouragement, but the Absurdity lies in going no further, for if we did not intend to go thorough, why did we set out, and if we did, why do we stop? If we think there is no Truth nor Reason in Religion, why do we do any thing, but if we think there is, why don't we do enough? Either we should do nothing, or we should do more. Those that do nothing at all in order to their Salvation (if any such there be) may have this to say for their total neglect, that they see no reason why they should do any thing, as looking upon Religion to be no better than a mere Cheat and Imposture, the contrivance of Knaves and the belief of Fools, but we that do something towards it, shew by our doing so that we think Religion to be more than a Fancy or an Invention, and are in good measure perswaded of the great Truths of it, and why then we should stand at a *Half-Christianity*, and go no further than a Partial Conversion is what we can never account for to our selves. And yet what more common than this? Most People do *something* towards their great End, not being able to obtain leave of themselves to be wholly and utterly

terly unconcern'd about it, and yet there are but few that do *enough*. But for the same reason that they do so much, why don't they do more? For either Religion is a Truth or not. If not, why do they take so much labour *needlessly*, but if it be, why do they take so much labour in *vain*? If it be not true, why do they do so much, and if it be, how can they content themselves with so little? 'Tis I own, a strange piece of Sottishness, and even Brutal Indifference to take *no* thought for, and to do *nothing* in order to our Eternal Happiness, and yet methinks to do a part only has something in it more absurd and ridiculously extravagant than the other. He that does nothing, whatever he loses besides, has yet no *Labour* to lose. Means he has used none, and therefore fails only of the End. But to labour by halves, is to lose the same good, and all that we do in order to it. 'Tis to speed no better, and to travel more, to lose both the Reward and the Labour too. So that a total neglect seems more consistent with Prudence, than a half diligence. The *Atheist* and *Libertin* have something to pretend, but the *Half Religious* has no Plea or Excuse, since even that very Religion which he has will condemn him, as an inconsistent, unprincipled Fool.

29. But the last censure of Prudence upon this *Half way* state of Piety is that 'tis very *unhappy*. I mean in relation to a Man's present enjoyment of himself in this World. The Half Religious or *Almost* Christian, is that *double-minded* man St.

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James speaks of (*James* 1. 8.) who has a good inclination to Religion, but a more prevailing one against it, nulling it more from without, from the love he has to sensible Good, than he wills it from within, or for it self. And so has as it were two Wills, one for God, and another for the World, between which he doubts and fluctuates with great variety, tho' for the most part the latter be most prevalent with him. Now of such a one who is thus divided between God and his Lusts, the Apostle says, that he is *unstable in all his ways*, that is, he is a mixt, doubtful, unsettled, wavering, uncertain, self-inconsistent Creature, never out of Perplexities and Intanglements, always disconformable to himself, doing what he would not, and not doing what he would and should, and never long pleas'd or satisfy'd with himself. He has indeed a kindness for Religion, and would fain be good, but he wants a Heart to go thorough with it, having (as well as he loves Religion) a kindness also for somewhat else which he likes better. So that his Religion does but just serve to *incommode* and disturb him in the enjoyment of his Lusts, and they on the other hand deprive him of the comfort of his Religion. And so in effect he enjoys *neither*. And how unhappy a state this must be that you may the better conceive, take an account of it from

*La Vie de St.
Therese. Page
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the experience of one that was once under it. *It was in my Opinion* (says the Devout *Therese*) *one of the most painful states that I could imagin to my self, because*

I neither tasted the joy of serving God faithfully, nor yet the Pleasure which might be had from the contentments of the World. When I was engaged in the latter, the remembrance of what I owed to God troubled me, and when I was with God in my Devotion, the Affections of the world made me uneasy. They are excellent words. For the truth is, a Man can never be at peace with himself, but by being either thoroughly Wicked, or thoroughly Good, I mean so Wicked as to cast off all Religion, and to have no Sense of it, or so good as to live up to its Principles. He must come to be of a *single* Mind one way or other to be at rest. A total insensibility of Religion, or a sincere conformity to its Rules and Measures are the only supposable states wherein a Man may be at ease or find satisfaction in himself and in his Conduct, but this middle state of *half Religion*, this *double mindedness*, does but rob a Man of the Pleasures of Sin, without affording him the Contentments and Satisfaction of Piety, and lays a foundation for perpetual Restlessness and Discontent. And yet (which is a strange as well as sad thing to consider) this is the state that the generality of Men chuse to live and dye in, *Almost persuaded to be Christians*, having Religion enough to disturb them in their Sins, but not enough to engage them effectually to part with them.

30. And now methinks while I represent these things I imagin some secretly saying within themselves in the language of *Agrippa*, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* But alas, why
cannot

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cannot we persuade you quite? Is it that we are wanting in our Oratory, do not touch upon the right spring of your Souls, and understand not the true way and art of Address? That indeed may sometimes be (tho' perhaps the present Age has no great reason for any such complaint) but sure the *Cause* we are engaged in wants no weight nor strength, but has moment enough to bear out it self, and such as may abundantly supply for any defects of *our* Management. For is there not Truth, Reason, and Beauty enough in Religion to gain intirely upon you, or can any Argument be stronger than that of everlasting Life or Death? Are not the Joys of Heaven and the Torments of Hell sufficient to persuade you? Or do you question whether God be able to reward the intire Love of your Hearts, and the complete Obedience of your Lives, that you serve him thus by halves? Or do you disbelieve the *Being* of God, and the Reality of a Future State? If so, why are you so Religious as you are, why do you not rather throw up all Religion, and declare for down-right Libertinism, and make the most of the Pleasures of Sin, that so you may be sure to enjoy something? But if you are persuaded of the grounds of Religion, if you believe that God is, and that he is a Rewarder, as even your indifferent way of serving him seems to suppose, then you must needs think it your Wisdom to lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble Knees, to be heartily and thoroughly Religious, and not to be guilty
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of so inconsistent a Folly as to take some thought and pains all your lives long for *Heaven*, and yet at last go to *Hell*.

31. And now considering how much a Half Religion is condemn'd by Christian Prudence upon the account of the *Insufficiency*, *Absurdity*, and *Unhappiness* of it, what remains further upon this part, but that we be all prevail'd upon to fill up the $\tau\acute{\alpha}$ *ὕστερα*, the things that are behind or that are wanting to the measure of our Righteousness, and that not contenting our selves with being *Almost* Christians, we endeavour to bring our selves under the full Power and Government of Religion, and let it have its perfect work upon our Hearts and Lives, that so we may be perfect, intire, and wanting nothing. Always imploring the Holy Spirit of God by the *Victorious sweetness* of his Divine Grace (that *Delectatio Victorix* St. *Austin* speaks of) to outcharm all the Pleasures and Relishes of this sensible world, to counterway our Concupiscence, by the more powerful weight of Divine and Heavenly Love, and to give the last Finishings to that Holy Birth that he is forming in us, that it may come to a perfect Man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That so according to the Apostle's wish, we may be both *Almost*, and *Altogether* Christians, compleatly *Wise and Good*.

32. But now to make this Consideration of the *Manner* of our Obedience to the Divine Law a little more distinct, I have further to observe that there is a twofold *Manner* of keeping God's
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Commandments, either in the way of *Innocence* and Sinless Obedience, or in the way of *Repentance*. The way of Innocence, tho' the more excellent way of the two, is to us the Corrupt Posterity of *Adam*, an impassable Road. It was practicable in Paradise, and will again be in the state of Heaven, when the Spirits of Just Men shall be made perfect, and when all that is imperfect shall be abolish'd, and vanish like the Twilight into a full and perfect Day. But at present it is impracticable, being not proportion'd to a nature labouring under so many Infirmities and Disadvantages as ours does. And therefore Christian Prudence whose Object is neither necessary things, nor impossible things, but only such things as are in our power to order and dispose of, *Epictetus's* τὰ ἐν ἡμῖν, cannot be concern'd in this perfect way of keeping God's Commandments any further than heartily to desire it with an *O that my ways were made so direct, that I might keep thy statutes*, diligently to aim at it, and labour and endeavour to come as near it as we can, according to the tenour of the foregoing Discourse, and for the Reasons there given. *St. Paul* has excellently well explain'd what I mean in this whole matter in those remarkable words of his, *Not as though I had already attain'd, or were already perfect. But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Phil. 3. 12.* * Who caught hold of him when he fled from him, and converted him to the Faith.

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* See Dr. *Whitby* on the place.

Again, says he, *Brethren I count not my self to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the Mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Thus St. Paul like a diligent Racer contended, endeavour'd, and was all upon the stretch after Perfection. And if he who had already attain'd so far was not satisfy'd without endeavouring to attain yet farther, much less should we.

33. But that wherein Christian Prudence is concern'd, not only as to the endeavour, but as to the actuality and real event of the thing, is *Repentance*. And this to be sure St. Paul had already attain'd to, and so must we, and if we are truly Wise and Prudent Christians, we certainly shall think our selves concern'd to do so. Now by *Repentance* I understand in short such a change in a Man's Mind as effectually turns him from Sin to Righteousness. I do not offer this as a particular account of Repentance (which would be too much out of my way to insist upon) but only as a general Notion of it. To which I shall only add, that Repentance may be consider'd either as looking *backward*, or *forward*. As looking backward it implies an unfeigned sorrow for Sin, and not only so but an utter dislike of it, and an absolute unwilling it, a retraction of our former choice. As looking forward, it implies a hearty and sincere Endeavour to keep God's Commandments, especially in those Instances where-
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in we have offended. For Repentance is an Act of Self-correction, whereby a Man by second Thoughts corrects the Errours of his first, thinks again and thinks better, and so rectifies what was amiss. For which reason it is an Affection incident to *Man*, as being a Recovery from a Disease. *God* whose Thoughts and Ways are always right, and who is Perfectly and Immutably Wise and Good, is not capable of Repentance.

34. Now that Repentance is a Christian Duty I need not spend time to shew, since not only the *Conditional* Part of the Gospel requires it from us, as that without which there is neither Pardon nor Salvation, but even the *Preceptive* Part, or *Rule* of the Gospel, obliges us to it. For besides that the same Law or Rule of Life which obliges us not to sin, does also virtually and by consequence oblige us to repent (continuance in Impenitence being a persisting in our Disobedience and Rebellion against God) there are also express Commands for Repentance in the Gospel. Whereupon *St. Paul* says, *Acts* 17. 30. that God *commands* all Men every where to repent. But that which more properly belongs to our present Consideration, is to inquire how far Christian Prudence is concern'd in it. Now as to this the Answer is, that as 'tis the Duty of every Sinner to repent, so 'tis the best and wisest thing that he can do. Indeed it would be better if he could not sin at all, or if when he has committed any Sin he could undo the very Fact; but since he can

can do neither of these, he must do as well as he can; and the best and wisest thing he can now do is to *Repent*: Which indeed is to undo what he has done in a Moral Sense, that is, as to the Effects and Consequence of it. And indeed this very Consideration is enough to shew that it must be our greatest Wisdom. For when a Sinner has so far forgot his Duty and his Interest too, as to rebel against his Maker, despise his Authority, revolt from his Government, and transgress his Laws, and thereby render'd himself liable to the Penalties of them, what better or wiser thing can he do (since he cannot contend with him whom he has offended) than to lay down his Arms, acknowledge his Fault, humble himself for his Folly, and return to his Loyalty and Obedience, that so he may again be received into Favour, and avoid the Effects of his Disobedience; that Wrath which he has so justly incurr'd, and which to dispute or contend against would be like the *Egyptians* contending against the Waters of the returning Sea. Repentance therefore is our greatest Wisdom. And accordingly it is said by the Angel to be the *Wisdom of the Just*, Luk. 1. 17.

35. But to consider this matter a little more distinctly, there are two Reasons upon the Account of which 'tis the Wisdom of every Christian to Repent. First, Because it is a necessary Means to our End. Secondly, Because of the Folly of Sin. First, Because it is a necessary Means to our End. For whatever is so, falls under

under the Concern and Direction of Prudence, whose business it is to order and dispose of those things which serve to its End, and to chuse and use, such Means as are proper to attain it. But now that Repentance is such, is plain from the whole Tenour of the Gospel, which makes it the necessary Condition of Pardon and Salvation. And therefore I need only further observe upon this Part, that since Repentance is the Grace and Priviledge of the Gospel, and a Priviledge which was obtain'd at no less a Price than the Death of the Son of God, who by the Sacrifice of his Death, and the Satisfaction thereby made to Divine Justice, has obtain'd this Grant and Favour for us that we may now be pardon'd upon Repentance, which without that Satisfaction would have been in vain; I say, since things now stand in this posture by the Mercy of God, and the Gracious Undertaking of our Redeemer, that we are now restored to a Capacity of obtaining our End, and that at so vast an Expence, it would be the very height of Folly and Imprudence, as well as Ingratitude, for any Christian to fall short of it, for want of performing so reasonable a Condition. If the Angels that fell from their End had such an Opportunity of recovering it, they would no doubt think themselves concern'd to accept and improve it to the best Advantage. And why we who have it should think otherwise, there is no reasonable account to be given. And therefore it must be the greatest Wisdom of every Christi-
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an to Repent, that so he may not neglect *so great Salvation.*

36. But there is another Reason that makes it our Wisdom to Repent, and that is secondly, the *Folly of Sin.* For all Sin is from Ignorance in him that commits it, Ignorance of one sort or other. And accordingly the Apostle calls it *a work of Darkness,* Eph. 5. 11. and they that commit it are in Scripture represented under no better Character than that of *Fools.* Nor is Morality more complaisant to them, but represents them all as so many *Ignorants.* *Omnis Peccans Ignorat.* Indeed we commonly make a Distinction in their Favour, that I mean of *Fools* and *Knaves,* whereby we presume that there is a difference between them. And so indeed there is with respect to the Concerns of this Life, and the ordering of them. But absolutely speaking, and in God's account, every Knavè or Dishonest Man is also a Fool. And he is therefore so in God's account, because he is so absolutely and upon the whole. For Mens Characters are not to be taken from partial Considerations, nor are they to be measured by what they are in this or that respect, (for so a Sinner may be a *Wit,* or a *Vertuoso*) but by what they are in the main and all things consider'd, or in things of the greatest Moment and Impottance. Now that by these Measures every Sinner is a Foolish and Ignorant Person, according to that Confession of the Psalmist, *So Foolish was I and Ignorant,* will distinctly appear from these two Considerations.

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First, From his chusing wrong Means to his End. Secondly, From the Errour and wrong Judgment which passes in his Understanding before he makes this absurd and unadvised Choice. In these two things consists the whole Folly of Sin, and of them that commit it, that great Folly which in Holy Scripture, and in all sound Morality, is charged upon them, and which they will one day charge upon *themselves*. *We Fools thought his Life madness*, as it is in the Book of *Wisdom*.

37. And first, the Sinner chuses wrong Means to his End, I mean to his general End, that is, to Happiness. Happy were it for him if he would take God for his Guide, and chuse those Means to his Happiness which he, who best knows what are the fittest for that purpose, has already

* See *Chap. 4*
sect. 11.

chosen for him, according to the * fore-mention'd Rule of Christian Prudence. But (which is the first step of his Folly) he would rather chuse for himself, presuming upon his own better Skill and Conduct. And so whereas God would have him pursue his Happiness in the way of his Commandments, in the streight paths of Vertue and Goodness, within the lines of Sobriety, Righteousness and Piety, according to the Apostolic Scheme of the Duty of Man, he *wise* Man, chuses rather to follow the crooked ways of his own devising, and accordingly seeks his Happiness in the ways of sensible Pleasure, Worldly Interest, and secular Grandeur, or as St. *Jahn* expresses it,

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in the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, imagining these to be better Means to Happiness, than those which God has prescribed. And for the sake of these, that is, rather than want this Pleasure, or this Profit, or this Vanity, he chuses to offend and disobey him, and to transgress his Commandments. Not that he takes any pleasure in *Disobedience* as such, or sins for Sin's sake. No, he would be very willing to obey God if he could do it in his own way, and follow the Devices and Desires of his own Heart at the same time. But finding a competition between them, and that he can do but one of them, he chuses of the two rather to disobey God than renounce his own will and his own ways, as thinking them best, and expecting to find Happiness in the pursuit of them. And indeed if he could do that, all would be well still. For a Man has no more to do but to obtain his *End*. But alas here is the great Blunder and Disappointment. These Means are all false Means, wrong tho' never so much beaten ways, that will never bring him that travels in them to Happiness, but to a quite contrary end. And so all the Sins which he commits in the pursuit of these ways, yield no Profit or real Advantage to him with respect to that Happiness which he designs and projects to himself by them, but are as the Apostle calls them, *unfruitful works of Darkness*. And so the Sinner is out in his *whole Train*. He sins and transgresses his Duty for the sake of Pleasure, Profit, or Vanity, and these he

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chuses as means to his Happiness, which he likes the better because they are of his own chusing. But these Means are all wrong. Some little Ends he compasses by them, but not that of Happiness, the End intended, and so his whole Project falls. And this is the first Instance and Evidence of his Folly, the chusing wrong Means to his End.

38. The next is the Error and wrong Judgment which passes in his Understanding before he makes this absurd and unadvised Choice. Now that there must be some such precedent Error is plain, not only from the Absurdity of the Choice it self, which a Man in a right state of Mind could never make, but also from the *manner* of his proceeding in the making of it. For since a Man cannot will Evil as Evil, 'tis plain that whatever he wills he must at that time think Good. And consequently, when he sins he must at that time think it good so to do. I don't mean that he thinks Sin a *Moral* Good, or so much as lawful to be done, for that would be a Contradiction : No, nor a natural Good in it self absolutely speaking, but only comparatively and as the Case stands, that is, that he thinks it a *lesser Evil*, and so in the present juncture to be eligible, rather than want or undergo some natural Good or Evil that is absolutely such. Whoever commits Sin must in this sense think it to be a Good. He need not think so long before he commits it, nor he need not think so afterwards, but he must think so then, or else he must chuse Evil as Evil, which is impossible.

But

But now that Sin is in any case good or eligible is a false Proposition. And therefore the Sinner that thinks it is, admits a false Proposition to pass upon his Mind, that is, he errs and makes a wrong Judgment, as not being conformable to the Truth of the thing. For Sin is the greatest Evil, and the greatest Evil can never be eligible. A lesser Evil may, to avoid a greater, but the greatest cannot; there being no Evil greater than that for the avoiding of which it should be chosen. And accordingly Sin is an Evil that is not to be done in any Case, or for any End, and that according to the express Doctrine of *St. Paul, Rom. 3. 8.* who will not allow us to do Evil that Good may come. Not the least Evil for the sake of the greatest Good; for he makes no exception. Wherein he plainly proceeds upon the supposition of Sin's being the greatest Evil. For were it a lesser Evil, there might be some Good so great, for the sake of which it were worth while to sin, rather than want that Good. But if it be the greatest, 'tis plain that there cannot be any such Good; and since we are not to sin for the sake of any Good whatever, this shews that there is no Good so great but that we were better want it than commit a Sin, and consequently that Sin is the greatest Evil. To think therefore that it is in any case good or eligible, is a false and erroneous Thought. And since this is the present Thought of the Sinner, 'tis plain that he is deceiv'd, and in an Error, and that he is guilty of gross Ignorance and

Folly. Which in short appears these two ways, partly by his chusing wrong Means to his End, and partly by his thinking those wrong Means to be right.

39. 'Tis not for nothing therefore that the Scripture so often calls him *Fool*. For it clearly appears that he is so. But however, to make this Account more full and perfect, there are two things further to be consider'd. One is, what sort of Ignorance it is that the Sinner is guilty of. The other is how or by what means he comes to be thus ignorant. As to the first I answer that it is not, or at least need not be an *Habitual*, but an *Actual* Ignorance. For he that commits Sin may know his Duty and the whole reason of it full as well, and perhaps much better than he who conscientiously discharges it. But he does not actually attend to it, or consider it at that Instant, and so acts as foolishly as if he were ignorant of what he does, as indeed he is in great measure for that time. 'Tis *Actual* Ignorance that is the Character both of a Fool and of a Sinner, and accordingly our Saviour distinguishes the Foolish Virgins from the Wise by their having no Oyl in their Lamps. Nor is this at all inconsistent with our ordinary distinction of Sins of *Ignorance*, and Sins against *Knowledge*, the whole difficulty of this seeming Opposition amounting to no more than this, that that Sin which is against Knowledge as to the Habit, should yet be from Ignorance as to the Act, which is no more than that a Man should at the same time

time be knowing and ignorant in different respects, Actually ignorant of what he habitually knows, in which there is no difficulty at all.

46. The greatest Difficulty is how the Sinner comes to be thus Ignorant. For indeed it seems not a little strange that he who knows his Duty perfectly well in the full compass of it, and perhaps is a Man of Parts and Learning, a thinking and reflecting Man, that well understands the Nature and Ill Consequences of Sin, and how in respect of both it is the greatest Evil, and who is capable of giving a rational account of his Duty as to the Moral Grounds and Reasons of it as well as from the letter of the Command which requires it, and of advising others even in that very thing wherein he acts so unadvisedly himself, who as St. Paul expresses it, *knows the will of God, and approves the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the Law.* Rom. 2. 18. And not only so but it may be, is a guide to the Blind, and a light to them which are in darkness. *An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, and of Men too, and who has the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the Law.* A Scheme or Systeme of Notions, such as Professors of Arts and Sciences instruct their Scholars by, or a compendious draught or model of that Knowledge which is scatter'd up and down the Law, and of those Truths that are there delivered. I say it seems not a little strange that a Man thus qualify'd, and that understood all this but just before, should all upon a sudden, perhaps within a few

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minutes,

minutes, be so much in the dark, and act so foolishly, as if he knew not what he did. But that this Difficulty may not appear greater than it is, I must here caution, that I don't mean by this his Ignorance that he is totally ignorant of all that he knew before, or that he is so ignorant as absolutely not to know what he does, like a Man perfectly *Mad* or *Drunk*, but only that he is in a distemper or disorder of Mind so as not to have the free use of his Reason, or to know what he does in the full import of it; and that some of those things which he knew before he has not now in his view, or at least has not so clear a Perception and so lively a Sense of them as he before had. For if he had 'tis impossible he should Sin. For 'tis the recovery of this View and Sense of things which makes him *Repent*. And 'tis impossible that a Man should Sin and Repent with the very same Thoughts and Notices about him, any more than a Ballance can with the same weight move two contrary ways.

41. But still the Question will be askt, how the Sinner comes to be thus ignorant, and from so much Light to fall into so much Darknes; To which I answer in general, and at once, that 'tis all for want of *Consideration*, or an actual Application of his Mind to those things whereof he has a general and habitual Knowledge. For if he did actually attend or apply his Mind to them he would have the actual view of them, as he has of any visible Object upon which he intends his Eye. But not applying his Mind to them
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he loses their actual Sight, tho' not his own Habit or Power of seeing, as much as if he had no such Power, even as a Man that either shuts his Eyes, or diverts them another way, loses the sight of the Object, for that time, as much as if he were *Blind*. If it be further askt, how the Sinner comes not to consider or apply his Mind to what he knows, I answer, because of the violence of the Temptation, the vehemency of his Passion, the fury of his inflamed Lusts, and the greatness of the Pleasure or Profit which he promises himself in the indulgence of them. For these things do so fill and divide the capacity of his Mind, and so weaken and distract his Attention, that he cannot apply his Thoughts so fully and intirely to the consideration of such Moral Truths as he knows, but that he loses the present view of some of them, or sees them but confusely, and so as he *sums* up his Reasonings for Action, he leaves some *Item* or other out of the Account, which if put in, would have turn'd the Argument for Practice the other way; but being left out, makes it appear reasonable and eligible for him to do as he does, that is, to *Sin*. Thus the Sinners Light suffers an Eclipse, and thus he stumbles and falls for want of it. He Sins in a *Chain of Darknes*. Being otherwise engaged and diverted he attends not to what he knows, not attending to it he is actually ignorant of it, his Actual Ignorance of what he has an Habitual Knowledge of makes him think Sin eligible, his thinking Sin to be eligible is an Error founded upon

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upon that his Ignorance, and his actual Sinning is a Practice founded upon that Error. And so like Men in the Dark, he blunders on from one false step to another, and as the Wise Man expresses it, *in the greatness of his folly he goes astray.* Prov. 5. 23.

42: Upon this ground we may well lay the Reason why the Scripture which is always just in its Comparisons, should so often compare Sin to Sleep, and Repentance to *awaking* out of Sleep. For so it is said, *It is high time to awake out of sleep, &c.* Rom. 13. And again, *Awake to righteousness and Sin not.* 1 Cor. 15. Again, *Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* Eph. 5. And so again, *Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober:* 1 Thes. 5. With other Expressions relating to the same purpose. Now the Scripture must have some reason for speaking after this manner, which Reason must be the Agreement and Proportion that is between Sleep and Sin, that which Sleep is to the Body Sin being to the Soul, so that Sin is a kind of *Spiritual Sleep*. In natural Sleep the senses of the Body are bound up, so that there is a suspense of *Sensation*. And so in *Spiritual Sleep* are those of the Soul, where there is in great measure the like suspense of *Thought*. But to bring the matter a little nearer to the Principles of the foregoing Account. Sleep is a state of Darkness, Ignorance, and Unthoughtfulness as to the Mind, as well as a state of Insensibility as to the Body. But in neither is it a
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Privation of the natural *Habit* or *Power* of either Sense or Thought. It is only an *Intermission* of the *Act*, which we lose while we Sleep, but recover again when we awake. Nor is it a total *Privation* or *Interruption* of that neither. Not certainly upon the *Cartesian* Notion of the Soul's always thinking. But however that be, yet we find by frequent Experience that we *do* think in our sleep, tho' not so clearly and distinctly as at other times, as appears by our *Dreams*, which are only more confused, and less consistent Thoughts. Our waking Thoughts are more distinct, and by that we know that we are awake, but in Sleep we think too, tho' we have not then the power to think of what we please (our Thoughts following the Mechanical course of the Spirits in the traces of the Brain) nor to think of any thing so clearly and fully as to have a just Notion of it. Now it is much after this manner with us in our *Spiritual* Sleep, the Sleep of Sin. This is a state of Darkness and Ignorance as well as the other. Not as to the *Habit*, but as to the *Act*. Nor as to that *wholly* and *intirely* but only in some part, and to a certain degree. For the Sinner has some Thoughts about him even when he Sins, he knows what he does, and in part why he should not do it. But he is in a Confusion and a Disorder, and either is not full in his Accounts, or clear to himself in his Apprehensions of things. Either some Motive or Argument of Religion at that time escapes him, or at least is not perfectly well consider'd and com-

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comprehended by him, and so upon the whole he most erroneously concludes it best to do as he does, and in this *Darkness* he *stumbles* and *falls*.

43. By this it may now appear how little to the purpose and how like to Dreaming, that Objection is, of seeing and approving better things, and following worse. 'Tis granted that the Sinner has an Habitual Knowledge of better things, and so may be said to see them. Nay he may be said to see them *Actually*, as having some imperfect sight of them. But at the same time 'tis also true that he is actually ignorant, either as not seeing all that he should see, or at least not with that clearness and distinctness as is necessary to ballance or over-rule the Arguments on the other side, that of the Temptation to Sin. So that upon the whole his sight fails him, and he is for that time in the Dark. So that in this respect he does not see better things and follow worse, but for that time his Sight is as bad as his Conduct.

44. But then if Sin be thus a work of Darkness, and has its Birth in Folly and Ignorance and wrong Reasoning, then this will supply us with another Argument, and which of it self is sufficient to shew that 'tis our greatest Wisdom, and one very necessary part of *Christian Prudence* to *Repent*. For till we do that, we continue in the first Act of Sin, and why should a Wise Man continue in a foolish and ill consider'd Act? On the contrary, 'tis Wisdom to come off from a Folly, and the greatest Wisdom next to the *not* doing

doing a foolish Act, is to undo it again as far as that can be, which is by unwilling a foolish Will, and retracting a foolish and mistaken choice, or in one word by *Repenting*. This is the Wisdom of the Just, as well as the remedy of the Unjust, and what every wise Christian ought to think himself concern'd, in *Prudence* as well as *Christian Duty*, to do. And in this Consideration Nations and Communities are concern'd, as well as private Christians, ours especially at this time: And indeed if we would now shew our Christian Prudence, as we have done our Folly, and give Proof at length that we have learnt to be a Wise and Understanding People, we cannot do it better than by a *National Repentance*, not only for the common and open Lewdness and Prophaneness of Mens Lives and Practices that reigns in this Age, but for the many corrupt Principles that have been taken up, and industriously spread amongst us, and for our having so shamefully gone off from our former and antient good ones, and for those Notorious and Infamous Backslidings, Defections, and Revoltings from the common Principles of Christianity, as well as from the express Doctrine of our Church, and that by those very Men who at the same time profess themselves of her Communion. These things call for a very publick and solemn Repentance, to repair the Injury that has been done to the Honour of God, and the Interest of his Church and true Religion, and the just scandal that has been thereby given to all good *Christians*, and
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the Obstruction that has been thereby laid in the way of *Jews* and *Heathens* to hinder them from ever being so. And accordingly we cannot do better upon this Occasion, than to pray to Almighty God in the devout words of his Church, that he would *please to give us true Repentance, and to forgive us all our Sins, Negligences and Ignorances, and to endue us with the Grace of his Holy Spirit, to amend our Lives according to his holy Word,* and the Principles of true Christian Wisdom.

45. But I must here further observe, that Repentance is not greater Wisdom, than the *Delay* of it is Folly and Imprudence. This might be shewn from the Impiety of it, the Injustice of it, and the great Danger we expose our selves to by it of never Repenting, and consequently of for ever perishing, and in the mean time from our making it the more difficult for us to Repent, if ever we do. All which is against the measures of Prudence. But I shall consider the Imprudence of it only as it follows from the foregoing Principle. For if Sin be a Folly, then as not to Repent at all is ever to continue in that Folly, which is highly against Wisdom to do, so the longer we delay our Repentance the longer we continue in that foolish state, and no wise Man acting as such can continue in a state of Folly, especially when convinced that it is so, as every *Delayer* of Repentance must be supposed to be. For he that delays his Repentance, thinks of Repenting, tho' not yet. But if he is
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not convinced of his being in a state of Folly, what need he think of Repenting at all; and if he be, the same reason obliges him to Repent immediately.

C H A P. VI.

Of the subordinate Means that serve to assist us in the keeping the Commandments of God, as they fall under the Consideration, Use, and Application of Christian Prudence.

1. **B**Efore we make any further progress in this Treatise, it may not be inconvenient either for the Writer, or for the Reader, to cast our Eye back upon the foregoing Stages, that so by seeing what we have already done, we may the better consider what we have yet further to do. I have already shewn (what I thought required the first place in our Consideration) the *Importance* of Prudence, and that both in respect of its *Necessity*, and in respect of its *Power* and *Sufficiency*, in order to a Vertuous and Christian Life. After the Consideration of its *Importance*, which shews what we are seeking to be worth our Inquiry, I thought it proper in the next place to proceed to the Inquiry it self, by declaring the *nature* of Prudence, that so we might
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rightly understand that which appeared to be so important. When we understand what Prudence is, the next thing we are concern'd to know is what it *requires*; and accordingly, after an Account given of its Nature, my next step was to consider the *Acts* or *Offices* of Prudence, beginning first with its *general Offices*, and that with respect both to the *End* and the *Means*. Thence I proceeded to the *particular Acts* and *Offices* of Prudence, with respect both to End and Means. Which Means I shew'd to be God's *Commandments*, and consequently that 'twas our Wisdom to keep them. And since there is an order and a manner in the best Things, and particularly in our Obedience as well as in the rest, and 'tis the part of a wise Man to proportion his regard to the worth and moment of those things which deserve it, after the Consideration of keeping God's Commandments, I went next to consider how far Christian Prudence was concern'd in the *order* and *manner* of keeping them. And since *Repentance* is one of the ways of keeping them, and the only way wherein we can now hope to keep them, I thought fit under this Head to subjoin a Consideration concerning the *Wisdom of Repentance*. And having proceeded thus far, and left our Prudent Christian in the way of God's Commandments, as being the direct Means to his End, I think the next thing now in order will be to consider the *Means* to these Means, or in other words, to discourse of those things which serve to assist us in our Duty, and to help

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us forward in our way to Heaven. Which is the Design and Subject of our present Chapter. After which having in a manner brought the Christian to his End, I shall need do no more than to make an Application of the foregoing Principles in some Practical Observations upon the *Conduct* of a wise Man in the Government of *himself*. And to *perswade* to the Study of true Christian Wisdom, with some *Prudential Advices* relating to the Practice of Christian Life. Which will be the Subjects of the two Chapters that follow. And in this the Reader has a summary Draught of my whole Design in this Work.

2. But to step back again into our way. That which we have at present in hand is to consider the *subordinate* Means which serve to assist us in the keeping of God's Commandments, as they come under the Consideration and Use of Christian Prudence. I say the *subordinate* Means; for the principal and immediate Means to our End are the Commandments themselves, as we have already discours'd. But what we are here concern'd with is the Means to those Means; which tho' immediate as to the Divine Commandments, their next End, yet as to the ultimate End of all, or Happiness, they serve but in a mediate, secondary, or subordinate way. For I must here take notice, that 'tis well observ'd by the Author of the *Christian Life*, that there are two sorts of Means that are

Christian Life. Part 1.
Chap. 2. Page 30.

necessary to our obtaining of Heaven. The first is the Practice of those Vertues, in the Perfection whereof consists the state of Heaven. The second is the Practice of such Instrumental Duties, which are necessary to our acquiring those Heavenly Vertues. The first of these he calls proximate Means, as directly and immediately respecting the great and ultimate End. The second he calls remote Means, as immediately respecting (not the End, but) those Means which immediately respect the End. Now this Account of our worthy Author I take to be right as far as it goes. Only to make it a little more perfect, as well as more applicable to our present purpose, I think fit further to add, that the Means to the keeping God's Commandments may be consider'd under a double Capacity, being either such as are Means and Moral Vertues too; or else such as are *only* Means. And then again these which are only Means to the performance of Moral Duties, may be consider'd either as such as are appointed and commanded by God, or as such as are recommendable by Human Prudence considering what is fit and adviseable to be done from the nature of the thing it self, tho' without any Warrant from Divine Authority.

3. I begin with those Means which at the same time are Moral, or if you will, Christian Vertues too. And in the head of these I place *Faith*; which to any one that will reflect upon its Nature and Use will easily appear to be capable of this mixt Consideration. As to the
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Nature of it, 'tis plain that it is a Moral Vertue, as being that natural Homage which the Understanding or Will (for I need not here dispute which) pays to God, in receiving and assenting to what he reveals, upon his bare Word or Authority. It is an Humiliation of our selves, and a Glorification of God. An Humiliation of our selves, as it implies a submission of our own Reason and Understanding to the Divine, and a Glorification of God as 'tis a Confession and Acknowledgment of his Truth and Veracity. For Faith gives testimony to the Truth of God, according to that of St. *John*, *He that hath receiv'd his Testimony, has set to his Seal that God is true*, Joh. 3. 33. As on the contrary, Unbelief dishonours and reproaches him as one that is false and deceitful, and not fit to be trusted, according to what is said elsewhere, *He that believeth not God, hath made him a lyar*, 1 Joh. 5. 10. This is the proper Immorality of Infidelity, and was the Sin of *Adam* before he broke the Positive Command of God in eating of the forbidden Fruit. And in the other consists the Morality of Faith, which tho' as to the exercise of it or explicit Act, it supposes a Revelation; yet it has its ground and foundation in *Natural Religion*, as being as much a Natural Duty which we owe to God, as to love him, or to fear him, or any thing else. And as 'tis a Moral, so 'tis also a Christian Vertue, as being a Duty commanded in the Gospel, and an Act of Christian Humility, submitting our Wills, denying our

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Inclinations and Interests, yea, and if need be, even our *Reason* and *Understanding* too, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ. For indeed Faith is an Act of *Christian Obedience*, and as much a *Work* of the Gospel as any thing else is. And accordingly the Apostle tells us of the *Obedience of Faith*, Rom. 16. 26. and our Saviour Christ himself calls it the Work of God. *This is the Work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*, Joh. 6. 29.

4. But now that Faith is also a Means or an Instrument serving to help and assist us in the performance of our Moral and Christian Duty, as well as it self a part of that Duty, is I think most certain, and will be as apparent to him that shall consider the *use* of it in Christian Life. For Faith is the Principle of Obedience, the Fountain of all good Living, and the Foundation upon which the whole Frame of Practical Religion is to be erected. For 'tis our Belief of the Terms and Conditions of the Gospel, and of those glorious Rewards that are promised to them that fulfil them, and of those severe Punishments that are threaten'd to the Disobedient and Impenitent, that must excite, engage, and persuade us to yield Obedience to its Precepts. For tho' the Motives and Arguments of Religion are the greatest that can be in themselves, yet 'tis our *Belief* of them that must make them effectual as to us, upon whom they operate no further than as they are *believ'd*. And accordingly

ingly the Apostle tells us, that *without Faith 'tis impossible to please God.* For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. 11. 6. 'Tis true indeed that Faith here seems to be taken in a large sense for a Man's Perswasion in general of the Power, Justice, Goodness and Bounty of God, as well as of his Existence, and the words seem also to relate chiefly to the state of Natural Religion, but they are as applicable to Faith properly taken, and to the state of Gospel-Revelation. For tho' a Christian has greater Motives and Arguments to serve God than a Pagan, yet if he does not *believe* them, where will be his Advantage? So that without Faith 'twill be as impossible for a Christian as for a Heathen to *please God.* For as excellent as the Christian Religion is in its Rules, and as great as its Provision is to enforce them, yet neither the one nor the other work upon us like a *Charms*, but we must first believe, before we can obey the Gospel.

5. And if we do, we as certainly *shall.* The reason is, because the Truths of Religion, those Motives and Arguments which God has laid before us to ingage our Obedience to his Laws, are of such weight and moment, that they need only to be *believ'd* to render them effectual. If they should need any thing more than that, it would reflect upon God's Wisdom, in his not using such Means as are sufficient for his End, which if it be a fault in Human Prudence, much

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more is it in the Divine. So that whether we consider the proper Importance of the Motives used, or the Infallibility of God's Wisdom in using them, we must conclude that if they were but *believ'd*, they would not fail to have their due and intended effect upon the Lives of Men in conforming them to their Duty. Whence by the way we may as well argue backward, that where they have not this effect, there they are not believ'd. And accordingly Faith is commended to us as the principal part of our *Spiritual Armour*, and compared to a *Shield*, *Eph. 6. 16.* as defending the whole Man, and inabling us to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Whom we are bid also to resist *steadfast in the Faith*, *1 Pet. 5. 9.* which it would be to no purpose to do, if by so resisting we should not be able to overcome. And if the Devil with all his fiery Darts, whether Temptations of the Flesh or Persecutions, must yield to our Faith, no doubt but that the *World* must too, as much a Legion of Temptation as it is, and as much empire as it has over our Hearts. I confess it is a great thing to overcome the World *with all its Terrors, and all its Errors, and all its Loves*, as *St. Austin* speaks, and some have thought it so great a Difficulty, that they have chosen rather to fly out of it to the Sanctuary of *Solitude*, not daring to trust their Vertue in a scene of so much Danger and Temptation. And yet as dangerous a place as this World is to live in (and certainly never

*Lib. de Corrupti-
one & Gratia.
Cap. 12.*

never more dangerous than now in this Corrupt Age) yet Christian Faith will carry us through it, secure us in it; and give us an intire Victory over it. And accordingly St. *John* tells us, that *this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith, 1 John 5. 4* Other Conquerors Conquer but some little parts of the World, and in the mean time are slaves at home, to their own Lusts, while their Arms prevail abroad, but the faithful Christians Conquest is universal, over himself first, and then over the whole World. *This is the victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.*

6. Not that this is to be understood of or expected from a Faith that is only in general Power or Habit, or from any languid and feeble act or state of it, but of a Faith that is strong, lively, vigorous and active, such as the Author to the *Hebrews* describes, that is *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, Heb. II. 1.* that realizes things invisible, and makes future things present. For the good things of this World as vain and as light as they are in themselves, will yet by the advantage of their being sensible, present, and certain, outweigh the vastly greater goods of the other World if but faintly and imperfectly believ'd. But if once we come to be so confirm'd and establish'd in our Belief; that we are as well assured of the Invisible things of the other World, as we are of the Visible things of this, and can oppose Evidence to Evidence, the Evidence of Faith

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to the Evidence of Sense ; in one word, if the good things of the other World are equally believ'd with those of the present, their own infinitely greater weight must needs give them the Preference and the Advantage. And then for certain this will be the Victory that overcomes the World even our Faith. In which some talk of another sort of *Instrumentality*, whereby we apprehend, and lay hold upon Christ, and apply him and his Righteousness to our selves for Justification. But this is a sort of Instrumentality which I confess I do not well understand, nor see any ground for in Scripture, not knowing any other way of receiving Christ, than by so believing his Gospel, as to submit to his Authority, and yield Obedience to his Laws. Which he that believes it as he should, will certainly do.

7. And for this reason among others I conceive it is that there is so much stress laid upon *Faith*, that Christianity is express'd by it, and in a manner resolv'd into it, as if it did all consist in it, that Christians are call'd *Believers*, that Justification is ascribed to Faith, and that the promise of everlasting Life is made to it as the sole condition of it, *that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life, John 3. 16.* In a word, that Faith has such a Character, and makes such a figure in the New Testament as it does. 'Tis not that Faith absolutely consider'd, is in it self the greatest Christian Vertue ; for St. Paul tells us expressly, that *Charity* is greater, *1 Cor. 13. 13.* Much less is it that all Christianity

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(as some seem to imagine) consists in Faith, that the whole Duty of a Christianity is absolv'd, or the whole Condition of the Gospel fulfil'd in it (for 'tis plain that other things are required, and in particular *Repentance*) but the reason, or at least one great reason of all this is, because Faith is the radical and mother Vertue, wherein all the rest is contain'd as in its Principle. And therefore all is express'd by *Faith*, because Faith is Vertually and Fundamentally all. And tho' a Man may build upon a Foundation something more precious than the Foundation it self, as when *Charity* suppose is Built upon *Faith*, yet the Foundation will still have an excellency which the Superstructure has nor, in that the Building was first rais'd upon it, and still depends upon it for its stay and support. Which is the very Case of Faith with reference to Christian Life, the Vertues and Works of which must give place to Faith as their Principle, tho' as to their intrinsic worth they may exceed it, as Children often do their Parents.

8. And thus we see that Faith is both a Means or an Instrument in order to our keeping the Commandments of God, and also a Moral Vertue at the same time. Now so far as Faith is it self a Moral Vertue, and part of our Christian Duty, it comes under the Consideration of the two last Chapters, and ought thither to be refer'd. But as it is a *Means* serving to help and assist us in our Christian Duty, and to inable us to perform it, so it more properly belongs to this, which

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which is the reason why I defer'd the Consideration of it till now. And now what is further to be consider'd of it under this Capacity is this, that since Faith is both a necessary and sufficient Means to our keeping God's Commandments, which themselves are the immediate Means to Happiness, and so consequently is a mediate or remote Means to the same Happiness; and since Prudence is concern'd in the mediate and remote as well as the immediate and proximate Means that lead to its End, especially if they are such as have a necessary tho' a further removed connexion with it (which is the Case of Faith as *now* consider'd) it will hence plainly follow that as Christian Prudence is concern'd in Faith consider'd as a *Moral Vertue* or Christian Duty, and as being as such an *Immediate* Means to Happiness; according to the tenour of the Fourth Chapter, so also it will be concern'd in it consider'd purely in the capacity of a *Means* or *Instrument*, serving immediately and directly to the keeping of God's Commandments, and mediately, or by that, to Happiness. Upon the whole therefore Faith is a Prudential Expedient, as well as a Christian Vertue, and accordingly a Wise and Prudent Christian who is for using all Means that lead to his End; that so if by *any* he may attain it, as the Apostle speaks, *Phil. 3. 11.* will think himself concern'd and oblig'd not only in *Conscience*, but in *Prudence* and *Discretion* to apply himself to the Use and Practice of it. He therefore will make no difficulty to believe what-

whatever God reveals, even tho' it be above the comprehension of his Reason; nor will he think that a just reason why God should not reveal it, as well knowing that his narrow understanding is not the measure of Truth, and consequently, that many things may be true and reveal'd by God, which he does not, and cannot fully understand. And therefore while the Men of Wit, and pretenders to Reason, are confidently arguing and disputing against the Articles of the Christian Faith, and expunging them out of their Creed, and that for no better Reason, than because with *Nicodemus* they understand not *how these things can be*, our Prudent Christian with more Modesty and Humility, yea and Judgment too, submitting his understanding to Divine Authority, as thinking that sufficient to supply for want of Evidence in the thing, stands ready to receive whatever God has reveal'd, tho' above the reach of his Comprehension. Only using his Reason so far as to examine by its proper Arguments whether such a thing be indeed reveal'd by God, that so he may not be imposed upon by every Pretence or Appearance of *Divine Inspiration*, and in the very Discussion of the Revelation (the only place he finds for a *Rational Debate*) always remembering that the Incomprehensibility of the Article is no concluding Argument against its being reveal'd, any more than it is against its being to be believ'd when reveal'd. And therefore if he finds he has otherwise good reason to think that it is (wherein our Prudent
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Christian will be a strict inquirer, as being as far removed from *Fanaticism* and *Enthusiasm* on the one hand, as he is from *Libertinism* on the other) the mere Darkness and Ignorance of the Article will not stick with him, as having now no more to dispute, but only Humbly and Submissively to Believe. And in all this he thinks he *walks humbly with God*, and at the same time no less warily and cautiously as to himself, which is the Character of a Wise and Good Man.

9. But this Deference he thinks not fit to pay to any Authority less than Divine, tho' it be the greatest upon Earth, that of the Church. And as he does not thus resign his Faith to the Authority of the Church, so neither does he take the Authority of the Church as a Rule of what he is to believe, or of what is reveal'd, because this requires and supposes *Infallibility*, and he knows no sufficient ground for ascribing any such *Infallible* Authority to her. So that he cannot take the Authority of the Church for the Rule of his Faith. But what he shall resolve for here seems not so easie to him, as what to reject, because of a seeming Confusion in this matter. Sometimes he is told that the *Scripture* is the *Rule of Faith* in opposition to the Authority of the Church. And then again when the Question is which is the way to know what we are to believe, the way of *Authority*, or the way of *Rational Discussion* and Examination, (otherwise call'd Judgment of *Discretion*) we are commended to the latter as the true and most proper Method. Whereby

Whereby not Scripture, but Reason seems to be set up as the Rule of Faith. And indeed both of them pretend a fair title to it. 'Tis certain in the general that the Scripture must be the Rule of Faith, as containing all things that are necessarily to be believ'd. And yet on the other hand 'tis as certain that we must use our Reason to discern that the Scripture is the Word of God, that such Books of it are Canonical, that such Doctrines are contain'd in them, and that they are to be understood in such a Sense, &c. These are plainly things of a Rational Discussion, and so our Faith seems to have Reason as well as Scripture for its Rule. For the clearing of this we might distinguish perhaps between an Immediate and a Mediate, or an Internal and an External Rule. But I think it would be better to distinguish between the things that are reveal'd, and the Truth of the Revelation. As to the things that are reveal'd, and that consequently are to be believ'd, these the Rule of Faith is undoubtedly *Scripture*, as containing all such things. But as to the Truth of the Revelation it self, that this Scripture is the Word of God, &c. that cannot be known by Scripture (which does not prove it self) but must be concluded (as far as a thing of that nature can be concluded) by Rational Arguments, as a thing that is not to be believ'd, but proved. For the last Principle of Faith is Reason, tho' its immediate one be Authority, as is plain in this Syllogism, which expresses the whole Progress of it. What-
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ever God reveals is true, or to be believ'd. This God has reveal'd, therefore this is true, or to be believ'd. The Act of Faith, as well as the thing believ'd is in the Conclusion. The two former Propositions express the reason of Believing, and are both Rational Propositions. The first, that whatever God reveals is true, is a Proposition of pure Reason, Metaphysically certain. The other, that this is reveal'd, is to be discern'd partly by Scripture, and partly by Reason; by Scripture as containing the thing supposed to be reveal'd; and by Reason, as proving that Revelation to be from God. So that still Reason is at the bottom, and the last Resolution of Faith is into Evidence, that of the Principle, or Motive, which must always have a Rational Evidence, tho' the matter may be otherwise Inevident. For what I believe I must have a Reason for, which Reason tho' it be immediately Authority, yet before I can believe with Reason I must take two steps further. I must have sufficient Reason to Credit that Authority, and I must also have sufficient Reason to Convince me that the thing proposed is reveal'd by it. In short then by this we may see, in what Sense Scripture, and in what Sense Reason is the Rule of our Faith. Scripture is not concern'd as to the Truth of the Revelation, but only as to the things themselves that are reveal'd. But as to the Truth of the Revelation, whether it be from God or no, there we must be govern'd and regulated by our Reason, *trying the spirits, proving all things,* and taking the best Directions
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for our selves that we can. Now this will serve to give a clear and easy Solution (and perhaps the only one that is to be given) to that famous Objection of the *Romanists* against the Scripture being the Rule of Faith, because the Canonical Books cannot be proved by it. Or that the Scripture does not contain all Articles of Faith, because it does not tell us what Books are Canonical. For indeed what is so gravely supposed here, and taken for granted in this Argument is not true, *viz.* that the Canon or Divine Authority of Scripture is an Article of Faith. 'Tis indeed a *Principle* or Foundation of Faith, but not an *Article*. For 'tis not properly the thing that is to be believ'd, but only the reason of believing, which is to be proved not by Scripture, but by other Arguments. For the Scripture meddles not with the reason of believing, but only with the things that are to be believ'd. And therefore the Canon or Divine Authority of Scripture being not a thing to be believ'd, or an Article of Faith, but what Faith supposes as proved by Reason, the Scripture's not defining what Books are Canonical makes nothing against its being the Rule of Faith. For indeed it does not follow that the Scripture is not a Rule of what is to be believ'd, because something that is not a thing to be believ'd, but rationally proved, is not contain'd in it. 'Tis sufficient that it contains all the things that are to be believ'd (tho' it meddles not with the Reasons or Principles of Believing) to make it a Rule of Faith. And accordingly

cordingly our Prudent Christian will humbly receive it as such notwithstanding this, or any other such Sophistical Argument to the contrary.

10. Another Means to the keeping God's Commandments, that is also a Moral Duty too as well as a Means, is *Prayer*. That Prayer is a thing of this mixt nature, partly Moral, and partly only Instrumental and Ministerial to that which is so, seems very plain. As to the *Morality* of it, as being in it self a Religious Act, and a Natural Part of God's Worship and Service, whereby we acknowledge his Greatness and

Goodness, and our own dependency upon him, this I have * already given an Account of. To which I shall only

* See Chap. 5.
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further add that one part of Prayer, *viz. Praise*, is the Service and Employment of Heaven, where Angels and glorify'd Saints mingle their Joy and Gratitude for the Happiness they are possessed of in continued Allelujahs to the great Author of it. And if the other Part of Prayer, that which we call *Petition*, be not continued in Heaven too, 'tis not for want of Moral Goodness in the Action, which well becomes a Creature towards his Creator, but because the Circumstances of our Heavenly Condition where in there are no more wants to be supplied, may be supposed to take away the occasion for the further *exercise* of it; even as at present in this state of Indigence and Infirmity, there is no need to pray for a Blessing or a Deliverance which we have already *receiv'd*. Or as it is in the case of

of *Alms-giving*, which also has no place in Heaven, there being no Poor to be reliev'd, nor any Bodily Wants to be supplied there, and yet I presume no body will deny but that *Alms-giving* is a Moral Duty, as being an Instance of *Charity*, tho' an Instance which in that State there will be no occasion for. But this is only *Accidental*, and not from the nature of the thing, which is still Moral as to the inward Habit and Disposition, tho' the outward Act and Exercise of it, as depending upon Circumstances and Occasions, may be superseded. And the Case is the same as to *Prayer*, whose ceasing in Heaven is no Argument against its being a Moral Duty upon Earth, that arising only from the want of Occasion for its exercise. And we may as well say that *Temperance* or *Chastity* are no Moral Vertues, because there is no Occasion for them in Heaven, however naturally perfective of our Natures upon Earth, as to say that *Prayer* is not, which yet I presume no body that understands what Morality is, will adventure to say.

II. Now that besides this Moral, there is also an Instrumental Capacity of *Prayer*, I suppose will not be denied. Some are so full of this, that they can hardly think of any thing else in *Prayer*, but only of its being a *Means*. But that it is in truth so, must I think be allow'd. For 'tis plain, that it is a means to withdraw our Thoughts and Affections from sensible Objects, and to fix them upon God and Heavenly Things, to stir up in us a sense of our Wants and Infirmities,

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mities, and to quicken our Desires unto those good things we pray for, to maintain a Religious Warmth in our Minds, and to keep up there a Spirit of Piety and Devotion, the Flame of which would soon be extinct without the *Breathings* of Prayer to fan it and give it motion. To nourish our Communion with God, and put us continually in mind of our dependance upon *him*, in whom we live, move, and have our Being. Besides that Prayer is also a Key to open the Store-houses of God's Treasures to us, being a Means to have our Wants supplied, and particularly whereby we may obtain Grace to help us in the time of need, to enable us to resist Temptations, and to assist us in the Practice of all Christian Duties, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with Reverence and Godly Fear, as the Author to the *Hebrews* speaks, *Heb. 12. 28.* And therefore since Prayer does all this, and is a necessary means to all this, and in particular serves to procure for us the Aids and Assistances of God's Holy Spirit, it may I think with a peculiar Emphasis be call'd, a *Means of Grace.* And if it be a Means to *Grace*, it must be a Means to *Goodness*, because by the Grace of God we do what is Good, and without it can do nothing that is so.

12. Our Prudent Christian therefore, who has always his End in his view, and the Means whereby he may obtain it; will have frequent recourse to God in Prayer, not only for the Pleasure and high Priviledge of the Duty, but also because

because of the great Usefulness and Profitableness of it in order to the Purposes of a Holy and Christian Life. Whereof it is also it self a part, and for that reason also he will conscientiously observe and practice it. But this properly belongs to the Consideration of the two foregoing Chapters, and is thither to be reduced, that which we are concern'd in at present is to observe that Christian Prudence will advise and direct him that has it, to the use and practice of Prayer as it is a *Means of Grace*, serving to help and forward him in his way to Heaven, I mean the way of God's Commandments, to which it immediately serves as a Means, and by that to Happiness. And therefore as a *Racer* will not only *run*, which is the next and immediate Means of obtaining the Prize, but will likewise use and practice all such Methods as will fit and dispose him for running, as Diet, Exercise, Breathing himself, &c. so in like manner a Prudent Christian (to whom also that Character belongs) will not only apply himself directly to the keeping of God's Commandments, the immediate Means to Happiness, but also to all such Means and Helps as will assist him in the keeping of them, and dispose him to keep them, and particularly to *Prayer*, which is that *Breathing* that is to inable him for his Spiritual Race, that he may run and not faint, and withal *so run as to obtain*.

13. He will therefore *Pray* often. For *Temporal* Things, and such as are only lawful to ask (for 'tis supposed he will not pray for any thing

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unlawful) modestly, conditionally, and with a prudent Reserve, as not knowing whether or how far those things may be for his good, or serve as Means to his End, as not seeing to the end of them. And therefore all such things he either leaves to God to bestow upon him or withhold from him as he thinks fit ; or else if he prays for any of them, 'tis always with submission to God's Will, who best knows what is best for him, and with a Resolution to acquiesce in the Determination of it, whatsoever it be. But as for *Spiritual Things*, such as Pardon of Sin, Grace to repent of it and amend our Lives, &c. these as he will pray for with greater Earnestness and Importunity, as Blessings of a greater Concernment, so (if I mistake not) he will pray for them Absolutely and without any Condition, because he knows and is well assured that these are sure and certain Means to his End, and such as (if he be not wanting to himself) will infallibly bring him to it. And as for the End itself, that he also knows is well-pleasing to God, *who will have all Men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the Truth*, 1 Tim. 2. 4. So that here he is secure every way, and can have no reasonable Doubt but that his Prayers are according to the Will of God, and therefore acceptable to him. Besides, these Things he is absolutely *bound* to pray for ; and what a Man is bound to do he need not qualify with the Condition of its being pleasing to God ; for if it were not, he could not be *bound* to it.

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14. As for his *Manner* in Praying, I think I may presume that our Prudent Christian will at least generally, and especially in Public, prefer a consider'd and well digested Prayer before an extemporary Effusion. And therefore, unless in some extraordinary Cases and Circumstances for which a Form is not provided, or to which it cannot be so well adapted, he will chuse to address himself to God in a set form of words. Therein following the Example and the Prescription of him who is the Wisdom of God, who both used, and prescribed a form of Prayer, and also acting in Pursuance of the Advice given by the Wise Preacher, *Be not rash with thy Mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, Eccles. 5. 2.* Moreover considering that a Christian's Business in Prayer is not to *inform* God (who as our Saviour tells us, knows what things we have need of before we ask him) *Mat. 6. 8.* Nor yet to *move* and perswade him as Men are perswaded, by Rhetoric or Importunity working upon their Minds, and Affections, and altering their Wills, but only to put himself in the order of God's Grace, and to render himself a meet Partaker of his Bounty, by doing what he has appointed as the Means and Condition of receiving it, I say upon this Consideration, neither is he for great lengths in Prayer by Multiplication of Words, Idle Tautologies, and Impertinent Repetitions, after the manner of the Heathen (not to say *some Christians*) who expected to be heard for their much speaking, but endeavours to

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deliver his Petitions with all convenient Brevity, as becomes a Modest and Humble Supplicant on Earth to the great Majesty of Heaven, therein also following both the Example and the prescription of our Saviour Christ; nor forgetting the other part of the Wise Man's Advice, *Therefore let thy words be few.*

15. And indeed to what purpose should they be *many*? Not surely upon *God's* Account, who both knows our Wants and our Desires to have them supplied, as being One to whom all Hearts are open, all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid, as our Church speaks. Or if he were to take his Information from *us*, yet no Man can have any reason to question, but that **God** Almighty is able to understand him without such a multitude of words. Nor does God measure or value our Prayers by the length of them, but by the Fervour and Heartiness of our Devotion. Otherwise our Saviour Christ (whose Example in this Case is of as much Authority as in any thing else) would never have prescribed so short a Form of Prayer for the constant use of his Church. Then as to *our selves* there is as little reason upon that account too for using a multitude of words in our Prayers, which serve only to tire our Spirits, to distract our Attention, and make us wander and forget what we are about, and to flat and deaden our Devotion, without ministring any real advantage, or serving any reasonable End or Purpose. And therefore as I do not see with what Prudence they who unhappily

pily exclude themselves from the Benefit of our Communion affect such a tedious length in their Prayers, so neither can I wholly excuse the Practice of some among our selves, who after so full and ample a Provision as is made for all the ordinary needs of Christian Life in the Public Prayers of the Church (tho' with as much Brevity as can well be considering the Occasion, the variety of its Offices, and the number of the things pray'd for) will yet come in with a long Prayer of their own before their Sermons. What Occasion there is for this Practice, to what good Use or End it serves, or where the Christian Prudence of it lies, seems not so easy to apprehend, as that they would do better to spare their Pains, and do as in that Case the *Canon* directs.

16. Another thing that is at once a Means to the keeping of God's Commandments, and also a Moral Vertue too, is *the Love of God*. That it is a Moral Vertue is plain, being the first and great Commandment of the Law, and founded upon immutable and indispensible Reasons; *viz.* the natural necessity of it to our Happiness. And that 'tis also a Means to the Performance of our other Moral Duties, can as little be doubted. Love is a Principle of Obedience to God's Commands, and of Conformity to his Will. And therefore our Saviour Christ calls upon his Disciples to Evidence that love to him which they fondly express'd by doating upon his Bodily presence, in the better and more convincing way, of keeping his Commandments. *If ye love me keep my com-*

mandments, John 14. 15. And this he also more expressly assures them would be the certain effect of their Love to him. *If a man love me, he will keep my words, ver. 23.* But this being a common Topic, I need not insist much upon it. And therefore shall only further commend to my Reader's Observation, that the Connection between the Love of God and the keeping his Commandments is intimated to us by God himself in the close of the Second Commandment, *and shew mercy unto thousands in them that love me, and keep my commandments.* As if the loving God and the keeping his Commandments were in effect but one and the same thing. And therefore again our Prudent Christian will with all diligence apply himself to the Practice and Exercise of *Divine Love*, and by all the steps and degrees of Pious Meditation, endeavour to ascend to those heights of it which will place him above the Region of worldly Temptations, and make his Duty easy, delightful, and secure. He will endeavour to affect and inflame his heart with the love of God, not only because 'tis in it self a Moral Vertue, and that of the most transcendent excellence, and nearest importance to his Happiness, but also because 'tis a Means to help him to perform all the rest of his Duty, as also to make it the more acceptable when done. For Love is the Sacrifice of the Heart and of the Will, and the more there is of that in any good Action, the more valuable and acceptable it must needs be.

17. I shall mention one thing more which is both a means to the keeping God's Commandments, and a Moral Duty too, and that is *inward Purity*, or Purity of Heart as 'tis call'd in the Gospel. By which I mean the due Order of our Minds, the Government of our Thoughts and Affections, and their Subjection and Conformity to right Reason, and to the Will and Law of God. When a Man so governs himself, and lays such a restraint upon his Powers and Faculties, as not only to forbear the *overt* Act or outward commission of Sin, but even all consenting to it with his Heart, or affording it any kind or friendly Entertainment there. Now that this is a *Moral Duty* is of it self plain enough. I shall therefore only add, that 'tis also the most reverential Acknowledgment of God's Authority, the clearest Confession of his Wisdom and Knowledge, and the most Conscientious Regard we can pay to his Laws, when we conform to them in *that* part which is liable only to his inspection, and whither no Human Reason or Temporal Inducement can reach. Fear, Shame, Decency, Worldly Interest, and other such Considerations may procure an outward conformity; but when a Man keeps his Heart and Mind pure and clean, 'tis a clear case then that he acts upon a Principle of Conscience, and that he is a sincere Christian, an *Israelite* indeed in whom there is no Guile. But this inward Purity is a *Means* too in order to the keeping God's Commandments, and the securing the whole order of our Conversation.

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It is that little leaven that leavens the whole lump. This I learn from those words of our Saviour Christ to the Pharisee, *Cleanse first that which is within the Cup and Platter, that the outside of them may be clean also*, Mat. 23. 26. The Pharisees Method was contrary to this. They began at the outside, and there they generally ended too, not regarding the state of their Minds, those inward Parts where, as the Psalmist tells us, God requires Truth, so they did but maintain an outward Regularity, and make a fair Appearance in the Eye of the World. In opposition to which Hypocritical Practice, our Saviour does two things. First, he admonishes them of the Vanity of outward Purity without inward Sanctity, by denouncing a Wo against them notwithstanding the former for want of the latter. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites. For ye make clean the outside of the Cup, and of the Platter, but within they are full of Extortion and Excess.* Then he proceeds to direct them to a better Method, and to mind them of the necessity of making the Heart clean in order to the Regulation of the Life, calling the Pharisee *blind* because he did not perceive it. *Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within, &c.* And truly he must be blind indeed that does not see the influence that inward Purity has over the whole course of Life, and how compendiously it serves to set all right. If the Fountain be foul, 'tis to no purpose to go to cleanse the Streams, for the impurity of the Fountain will foul them again presently.

presently. But if the Fountain be once made thorough clean, the Streams will be clean of course. 'Tis not so on the other side. A Man may be outwardly pure, and yet have a foul inside, which was the case of the *Pharisees*, but he that is pure inwardly, and has a well order'd state of Mind, will be sure to lead a pure and vertuous Life. And therefore our Prudent Christian will be sure to study inward Purity, not only for the sake of its own Moral Goodness, but also as it is a means to reduce his exterior to a due order and conformity, to moralize and sanctify the whole Man. He will therefore according to the Method of Self-purification advised by our Saviour, *Cleanse first the inside of the Cup and of the Platter, that the outside may be clean also.*

18. And thus far of the Means that are of a *mixed* nature, being Means and Moral Vertues too. There are also *pure* Means, or Means that are Means and no more, or only Means, as having no Moral Goodness in them, and whose Goodness is only the usefulness that they have to serve the End and Interest of true Religion and Vertue, that Moral and Practical Part of Christianity, wherein pure and undefiled Religion consists, and which is our immediate qualification for Happiness. Now these *pure* Means again are either such as are appointed by God, or such as are only adviseable from the nature of the thing. Which latter will fall as conveniently under the Consideration of the last Chapter, and therefore that

that I may not make this too long, I shall adjourn them thither. At present I shall briefly touch upon the former, those pure Means that are of Divine Institution. These

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are what *Calvin* calls *externa Media vel Adminicula*, outward Means or Helps, and such as he says our Rudeness and Dullness needs. They are *outward* Means in opposition to the Grace of God, which is a Means too, but such as works *inwardly* in our Hearts. And they are *Means* in opposition to those Moral Vertues and Duties to which they serve as to an End. And accordingly we ordinarily call them by the name of *Means of Grace*; by Grace I suppose meaning, not only the Grace of God or the assisting Operations of his Spirit, but also that Holiness or Goodness which is the *effect* of that Grace, and which these Means also by the help and under the direction of that Grace serve to work in us.

19. Now as to these *pure* Means, not to go so far back as Divine Revelation at large, or the Christian Institution in particular, or the forming that Spiritual Society or Body which we call the *Church*, (because these tho' Means and excellent Means too for the advantage of true Religion, yet they are such as do not properly come under the Application of Christian Prudence; as being *God's* Means rather than *ours*, and of his *Use* rather than of his *Appointment*) I say, not to go so far back as these things, there are four of these sort of Means which I shall here take notice

notice of, *viz.* The reading of the Scriptures, the hearing the Word preach'd, the use of the Sacraments, and the living in the Communion of the Church. First, The *reading of the Scriptures*, which is both our Duty and our Advantage. Our Duty, as being required by God, who as he gave us the Holy Scripture for our Direction and Edification, so he requires us to make use of it. And therefore says our Saviour Christ, *Search the Scriptures, &c. John 5. 39.* with many other places to the like purpose. And 'tis also our Advantage as well as Duty, as being a most excellent Means both for the Illumination and Information of our Understandings in all useful and most important Truths, and also for the composure of our Minds into the most Pious and Religious Frame and Temper. And therefore St. Paul tells us that *all Scripture is Profitable* (the very word that expresses the importance of a Means) *for Doctrin, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness; that the Man of God may be Perfect, throughly furnish'd unto all good Works, 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.* And therefore our Prudent Christian will according to the Apostolical Injunction to *Timothy*, give all attendance to reading the Holy Scriptures, *1 Tim. 4. 13.* which he will study not out of Curiosity, or for Accomplishment, or Speculation only, (as many I fear do, reading the Scripture as they read other Books, for their Diversion, or Improvement in Learning) but with a Practical Design, consulting these lively Oracles that he may learn his
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Duty from them, and thereby become *wise unto Salvation*. And accordingly he will not lay them aside when he thinks he understands them, as being then no further concern'd with them, but will renew and continue his perusal of them for his constant and greater Edification. His delight will be in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law will he meditate day and night; in this resembling a Tree planted by the Rivers of Water as well as in bringing forth his Fruit in his Season. And all this he thinks he owes to the Authority of God, to the intrinsic Worth and Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, and to his own necessary Edification. Upon which occasion we may justly reflect with Approbation upon the Wisdom of the Church of *England*, in allowing the Scriptures so great a room in her Public Service, as also with some wonder what those Christians mean, who either disuse, or but sparingly use them in their Religious Assemblies.

20. The next pure Means to the reading of the Scriptures is the *bearing* of the Word *preach'd*. This is most certainly no more than a *Means*, and to make it any *more* would perhaps be as unserviceable to Religion as not to allow it to be so *much*. But however, because it is a Means, and that of Divine Order and Appointment, a standing Provision which God has made for the constant Edification of his Church, to instruct Men in their Christian Duty, to awaken them to a sense of it, and to perswade them to practice it, our Prudent Christian who never thinks him-
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self too wise to learn, or too good to be made better, will be careful to pay it his due Attendance, being willing to omit no means that may further him in the prosecution of his End, and humbly waiting for the Grace and Blessing of God in the use of his own Ordinance. Which he will not think himself excused from through the meanness or unworthiness of the *Instrument*, and therefore tho' the *Preacher*, who by the order of God's Providence is *set over him*, (tis according to the Scripture Expression, *1 Thess. 5. 12. Heb. 13. 7, 17.*) should happen not to be a Man of great Parts, or great Learning, perhaps as to both inferior to himself, (which may very well be, considering the much greater Abilities some Lay-men have to furnish themselves with *Books*, and how much more their *Time* is at their own disposal) nay, which is a greater Objection, tho' his Life and Conversation should not be so blameless, and he should forget to practice himself those good things which he preaches to others, yet however he will by no means think this a warrant to despise or forsake his Ministry. For he considers, that as the Grace of God is able to do great Things by the hands of a weak Instrument, so he has more reason to expect it when he waits upon him in his own way and order, than when he transgresses it, tho' it be upon the pretence of greater *Edification*. And as for extraordinary Parts and Learning, they are indeed great Helps and Advantages, and by all means to be encouraged, but not of such absolute necessity

necessity to the Ministerial Function, but that it may be exercised to very good purpose without them, or else what shall we say to the early times of the Church, when the Pastors, perhaps some of the *Fathers* of it, had not so much Learning as the Clergy generally have now, tho' as to Piety and Goodness they might have as much the *Advantage*. Then as to the Personal Miscarriages of the Minister, our Prudent Christian will not for these disesteem his Office or Ministry, as well knowing how to make a difference between the *Treasure* and the *Earthen Vessel*, *2 Cor.* 4. 7. as also to distinguish between the Chair of *Moses*, and the Works of them that sit in it, *Mat.* 23. 2. so as not to follow the latter, at the same time that he pays a just deference to the former, according to our Saviour's Direction. And in the last place as to the supposed Inferiority of the Minister to *himself*, our Prudent Christian in the first place (whom I suppose to be an *humble* Man) will not be over ready to presume this. But supposing he does, and also that it be so as he presumes, yet is it such a new thing for a Man to be made Wiser or Better by one that is neither so Wise, nor so Good as himself? Or must a Man refuse all good Counsel or Advice that comes from an inferiour hand? Did not our Saviour Christ accept of the Ministry of an Angel, when sent to strengthen him in his Agony? Besides after all a Prudent Christian will consider, that the great End of Preaching is not so much to instruct Men in what they do

do not know, as to awaken them to a sense and consideration of what they do, according to that of St. Peter, *Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, tho' ye know them, and be establish'd in the present Truth,* 2 Pet. 1. 12. But now as the most knowing Christian may want to be stir'd up, and put in remembrance of that Duty which he knows, (inasmuch that no Man can pretend to outgrow Counsel and Exhortation, or to be *above Ordinances* as they call it) so nothing hinders but that this may be done by a Person otherwise inferiour to himself, who may either suggest new thoughts to him, or awaken such of his own as would otherwise have lain dormant in him, without any actual Benefit or Advantage to him. Such a Remembrancer and Monitor had King *David* in the Prophet *Nathan*, and he accepted of his kind and well managed Admonition. Thereby leaving a standing Example for Persons of the greatest Eminency, either of Sense or Quality, not to disdain to receive Spiritual Assistance from an Inferiour Hand, especially from one who is Authoriz'd and Commission'd by God for the Performance of that Charitable Office.

21. Then as to the use of the *Sacraments*, these tho' not belonging to the Moral, but to the Positive, and as I may say *Ritual* part of Christianity, will yet by no means be undervalued or neglected by our Prudent Christian, who never thinks himself too wise or too good for

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the Institutions of God. Particularly as to the *Lord's Supper*, because this comes more properly under his Consideration, as being more in his Choice and Disposal, to this he will not fail to pay his due observance, considering it tho' as a *Ceremony*, yet not as a pure Ceremony, such as is only a *Modification* of a Religious Act, as Kneeling suppose to Prayer, but as such a Ceremony as is also a distinct Act of Religion too, and, taking in the Prayers and Praises that attend it, that makes a considerable, if not the principal part of our *Evangelic Worship*. Besides he considers the excellent Ends to which it serves, and its great usefulness to serve them, that it serves as a sensible Image of the Death of Christ, of Jesus and of him Crucified, and of our Spiritual Manducation of him, and Communion with him, as a Memorial also to renew and preserve the Remembrance of his Bloody Passion, and as a means to apply the Benefits of it to us, and to excite our Thankfulness for it. In short, that it serves as a *Channel* or Conduit to convey God's Graces and Favours to us, and as a Pledge to assure us of them. And in all this he admires the great Wisdom and Goodness of God our Saviour, in making this kind and merciful Provision for his Church, who considering our Frame, and how large a share *sense* has in our Human Composition, was pleased in condescension to our Infirmary to address himself to us by that weaker side of our Nature, and left in such a croud of sensible Objects as we daily converse
with,

with, we should (as we are too apt) be tempted to forget him, was pleas'd by those very *sensible* Objects to bring us to himself, by making use of some of them as his *Remembrancers*, and as steps whereby we might ascend to the Contemplation of the most Spiritual and Heavenly Mysteries. But above all he honours and reverences the plain *Institution* of Christ in this Sacrament (as well as in the other) which to him is instead of a thousand Reasons, nothing doubting but that Christ had great and wise Reasons for leaving two such Ordinances in his Church, which Ordinances he thinks it does not so much become him to *dispute* as to *obey*. And to this one would think all Christians should agree, unless we have two sorts of *Christians* also as well as Churchmen, *High Christians*, and *Low Christians*, a Distinction which I confess I find not in the *Gospel*.

22. Then in the last place as to *Church Communion*, this is an excellent means for the Glory of God, by those joint Supplications and Praises that are offer'd to him in Christian Assemblies, and also for the mutual Edification of those Christians who worship him together in common, and withal an Expedient for the better Preservation of the Christian Faith and Doctrine, as well as Incouragement to Christian Practice. And since for these and such like Reasons, God by his Son Jesus Christ has erected and constituted that Spiritual Society which we call a *Church*, (as he did among the *Jews* before) wheteof the same Jesus Christ is the Head, as that is his Body, according

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According to the exprefs Doctrin of the Apostle, Christian Prudence will oblige every Man not to look upon himself only as a Private, or Independent Christian, that is at liberty to serve God as he pleases in his own solitary way, but as a Member of this Church whereof Christ is the Head, and so consequently under an obligation to hold Communion with it. Which therefore our *Prudent Christian* will be sure to do, and think it a great Happiness and Priviledge that he can have the comfort of such a Help to assist and further him towards his End, that he can enjoy the Communion of Saints, and worship God in the Assemblies of his People. From which he will by no means *excommunicate* himself, but as in Heart and Desire he stands united to the whole Christian Church, so he will actually communicate with that particular Part of it whereof he is a Member, thereby expressing his good disposition to the whole, in which he will be careful to make no Schism or Division, lest by dividing from that Church whereof Christ is the Head, he be divided also from Christ, his *End* as well as his *Way*.

23. As for *Occasional Communion*, he knows not well what that means, at least as now practiced. He considers himself as a Member of the whole Christian Church, and so in a disposition of mind to communicate with the whole, or with all the sound Parts of it. But he can actually communicate only with one part at a time, *viz.* that particular part of the Christian Church
where

where he is *present*. Now his Presence is either constant or occasional. Where he is constantly present, as suppose in *England*, there he will communicate constantly, namely, with the Church of *England*. And where he is occasionally present, as suppose in some other Protestant Country, there upon that occasion he will from a Principle of Catholic Unity communicate with *them*. And this is all that can be allow'd in Occasional Communion, or that the first and purer Ages of the Church understood by it. But as for Occasional Communion where he is constantly present, as suppose communicating only occasionally with the Church of *England* to a Man who lives in *England*, this is a very inconsistent and *Schismatical* Practice, and so far from being according to the Principles of Catholic Communion, that nothing can be more contrary. For such Occasional Communicants as *these* declare that they allow the Terms of our Communion. If they do not, then how can they communicate with us so much as Occasionally? But if they do, as by this Practice they declare they do, then they stand bound to *more*, even to no less than a constant Communion with us. Their denial of which is their Schism, which their Occasional Communion rather aggravates than defends.

C H A P. VII.

Some Practical Observations upon the Conduct of a Prudent Christian in the Government of himself.

1. **W**E have been hitherto conducting our Prudent Christian to his End, by the chiefest of the Ways and Means that lead to it, *viz.* by the direct and *immediate* Means of Happiness first, the Moral Duties of the Divine Law. Then by the Means to those Means; first those that are Means and Moral Vertues too, and then such *pure* Means as are of Divine Appointment. And herein we have laid the main Grounds and Principles of Practical Wisdom. For the Application and further Improvement of which, it may now be convenient to draw a little nearer, and consider the Conduct which a Prudent Christian uses in the Government of himself. For tho' what we have hitherto discours'd may be said truly and properly to belong to the Self-government of a Christian, as relating to the disposal of his great Affair, and containing the Measures whereby he is to transact it, yet however there is another and a nearer sense wherein a Prudent Christian may be said to govern *himself*; namely, as that means the right ordering and management of his *Personal Self*, his *Body* and

and his Soul, and the Powers and Faculties of each; the Consideration of which is the Subject of this Chapter, which we shall endeavour to lay open in the following Particulars.

S E C T. I.

How a Prudent Christian orders himself in the Government of his Senses.

I. *Sense* is a considerable part of Human Nature, resulting from the *composition* of it, from the Union of Soul and Body, and such as by reason of the confuseness and obscurity of its Perceptions needs very much the government of a superiour Faculty that has a better Light than it self. But before we consider the government of it, we must first a little explain what it is. *Sense* is a word that every Body uses, but so confusely, that 'tis not very easy to understand what they precisely mean, or what it is that we are precisely to mean by it. Indeed we want a good clear Philosophical Treatise upon *Sense*, to shew what it is, and how it differs from *Understanding*. But for the present I think that in *Sense* we may distinguish two things in general, the *Organical Part*, and the *Perceptive Part*. Which Perceptive Part again may be understood either of the very Formal Act of Perception it self, or of the Power of having such a Perception. The very Act of Perception it self we sometimes call *Sense*, as when we say,

the Sense of Pleasure, or the Sense of Pain, tho' I think we speak more properly when we call it *Sensation*. We use also the word Sense for the *Power* of having such a Perception, as when we speak of the Senses, and say that there are Five of them. For 'tis plain that we do not mean this of the bare Organs of Sense, those Parts of the Body which serve as Instruments to Sensation. Nor do we mean this of the very Act of Perception or Sensation it self. But we mean it as to the Power, that we have so many different ways or powers of being sensibly affected, or of having that Perception which we call Sense or Sensation, whatever it be. Which is the next thing to be consider'd, what that Perception is.

2. Now as to this I say in the general, that by Sense we are to understand that Perception which the Soul has by the mediation of the Body, or more particularly by the occasion of certain Impressions made upon the Brain. I say upon the *Brain*, because tho' these Motions or Impressions are first made upon the external parts of the Body, those which we call the Organs of Sense, yet 'tis the communication of them to the Brain by the help of the Nerves, upon which all Sensation immediately depends, as its next Occasion, as is well known in *Philosophy*. I design not, nor is it my business at present to give a full and accurate Account of this matter, and therefore shall go no further in it, than only to observe, that the Account which *St. Austin* gives of it, tho' as I conceive not so exactly right as it

it should be, yet so far as it is right, accords with and confirms the present. Sense then, according to St. *Austin*, is the Soul's not being ignorant what the Body suffers. *Sensum puto esse, non latere Animam quod patitur Corpus.* And so again to the same purpose, *Sensus est omnis Passio Corporis non latens Animam.* Sense is every Passion of the Body that the Soul is not ignorant of. Now that this Account of Sense is not exactly right, I think must be own'd. For in the first place, 'tis neither true nor necessary that in Sensation the Soul should know what is done to the Body. As to the feeling of Heat suppose, 'tis not necessary my Soul should know how the Particles of Fire act upon my Hand, nor what my Hand suffers by their operation, since then none but Philosophers would feel Heat, if *they*. Then in the second place, suppose the Soul did know what pass'd in the Body, yet 'tis plain that this would not be Sense, but *Knowledge*, and Philosophic Theory. By which it appears, that it cannot be a right Notion of Sense to say, that 'tis the Soul's knowing what is done in the Body; and yet it is so far true in the general, in that it supposes Sense to be something of a mixt nature, resulting from the Union of Body and Soul, and of what passes in each. And what can that be, but *Perception* in the one, and *Passion* in the other. And so far St. *Austin* is right, and falls in with the Account here given. But then 'tis not,

De Quant Anima.
Cap. 23.

Ibid. Cap. 25.

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not, as he puts it, a Perception in the Soul of a Passion in the Body, but a Perception in the Soul arising from, or occasion'd by a Bodily Passion or Impression. Between which two there is as much difference as between the Soul's perceiving what the Body suffers, and its having a Perception upon that occasion. Which are plainly two things.

3. This being briefly premised concerning *Sense*, that we may not talk quite in the dark when we make Christian Prudence concern'd in the government of it, let us now consider how far or in what respect it is so concern'd. To which if we will answer distinctly I think we must say, that it is not concern'd about the *Power* of the Perception, partly as being a Natural Faculty that is already right in it self, and needs no government, and partly as being a thing unalterable by us, and consequently that falls not under the government of Human Prudence. That therefore wherein Prudence is concern'd as to the government of Sense, must be in the two remaining things, *viz.* the Perception or Sensation it self, and the Organical part, those Organs or Instruments whereby this Perception or Sensation is made. For these are things that do in some measure come under our power and rational disposal, and withal are not so unliable to Disorder and Abuse as not to need to be govern'd and directed by the Care and Consideration of a Wise and Good Man, who can think nothing beneath his Government that is not above his Power,

Power, and whereby he may be drawn aside from the prosecution and attainment of his End, especially if it be any thing belonging to his own natural self, whereof every Man has the most immediate care and charge.

4. First then a Prudent Christian will govern his Senses as to the Perception or *Sensation* part; that is, I mean he will not *indulge* himself in the use of such things as excite very strong Sensations of Pleasure; or as we commonly express it, study the pleasing of his Senses, as in Eating or Drinking, &c. This indeed is what a great many make the great end and business of their Lives, which are almost wholly devoted to the pursuit, and spent in the various entertainments of *sensible Pleasure*, as if they thought (and I don't know but that some of them do) that their supreme Felicity did consist in it. But now this is what a Prudent Christian will not do. For he considers that we are already but too much inclined to the love of sensible Pleasure, which is at once the weight and the disease of our Nature, and therefore he will not inflame a Passion which is already but too violent, by any immoderate Indulgencies of his own. For that he finds to be the case, that as the more we abstain from the Pleasures of Sense, the more cold and indifferent we grow to them, so by Indulgence our Appetite acquires a new edge, and becomes more sharp and keen. He that drinks of this water, will not only thirst *again*, but thirst the *more*. And the more he drinks of it, still the
more

more he will thirst after it. And therefore our Prudent Christian will not study to *please* his Senses as they call it, or indulge himself in the enjoyment of sensible Pleasure, that so he may not inflame the desire of it, add more weight to the *scale of Concupiscence*, inflave himself to a Passion that provokes him to Evil, and so make that which needs abundance of government, still more troublesome and difficult to be govern'd. Besides he considers how intirely different the Pleasures of Sense are from the refined Intellectual Felicity of Heaven, and how much the love of them is apt to unfit and indispose us for that Divine Happiness, and in this sense to *alienate us from the Life of God*, and therefore again for this reason he will not indulge them. But on the contrary, will be so far from feasting his Senses (as the manner of the World is) by all the variety of studied Entertainments, that he will endeavour by all manner of ways to mortify them, and instead of setting up for a soft and voluptuous Life, will rather, according to St. Paul's Advice to *Timothy*, inure himself to *hardness, as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ*, 2 Tim. 2. 3. not by such rigid Austerities as shall destroy his Health, or make Life uncomfortable (for that's an extream on the other hand, and so no part of *Christian Prudence*) but by such a sparing use of the Creatures, and such a well-govern'd abstemiousness even from lawful Pleasures, as may deaden his Love to them, and make him more indifferent to the enjoyment of them. And this

I take to be true *Christian Mortification*, and a very proper exercise to discipline us for the pure Joys of Heaven, and which therefore every Prudent Christian who has that for his End, will think himself concern'd to practice, and the rather, because by thus abating his love of sensible Pleasure, he does not only lessen the weight of that *Concupiscence* which carries us to all Evil, but also favours the Operations of God's *Grace*, and renders it the more effectual to turn the balance of his Will, as having less weight in the other scale to contend with. By which means a less degree of Grace will be equivalent to a greater, it being all one in effect whether Grace be increas'd, or that *Concupiscence* which opposes it be diminish'd.

5. Then in the next place as to the *Organical* part, our Prudent Christian in his government of the Senses will not be unmindful to take in that also, but will keep a strict guard upon the several Organs and Instruments of Sense, as knowing that they are the inlets of Temptation, the landing Ports of our Spiritual Enemies, and the feeble parts of our Nature, which expose us to continual Danger : Particularly the *Eye* and the *Ear*. 'Twas an unhappy View that betray'd the Vertue of King *David*, and drew him into Adultery and Murther. And our Mother *Eve* might have remain'd innocent, notwithstanding the Suggestions of the Serpent, if her own Eyes had not treacherously conspired against her, if she had not seen that the Tree was good for Food,

Food, and that it was pleasant to the Eyes, &c. *Gen.* 3. 6. And accordingly *Job*, in the Protestation that he makes of his Integrity, tells us of a Covenant which he had made with his Eyes. *Job* 31. And King *David* prays that God would turn away his Eyes from beholding Vanity, *Psal.* 119. perhaps in remembrance of his having been once so miserably betray'd by them. And as to the *Ear*, who can express the Danger we are continually expos'd to by it, even in ordinary Conversation, from that Evil Communication which corrupts good Manners, and makes bad worse. And to put *Eye* and *Ear* together, what can be more dangerous than an unguarded un-govern'd Eye or Ear, especially in such a vicious and profligate Age as this, when there is so much to be seen, and so much to be heard, to provoke to Wickedness, and so little of either to encourage Goodness and Vertue. When we may say of those few *Lets* we have in our *Sodom*, that their Righteous Souls are vex'd in seeing and hearing from day to day the evil Deeds that are committed among us. 'Tis even painful as well as dangerous now to have *Eyes* and *Ears*: Now there are so many Blasphemous, Irreligious, Atheistical, Antichristian Books set about the World, and so much Atheistical, as well as Lewd Discourse, an unguarded Eye, or an un-govern'd Ear may soon betray a Man into great Danger. And therefore 'tis Christian Prudence to place a guard over our Senses, as we do in our *Port Towns*, to prevent Invasion and Surprize, especially over these

these two, our Eyes and our Ears, and because our Sight is the most dangerous of the two, as being concern'd with most Objects, here our Prudent Christian will double his guards, and exercise a more strict government, praying also to God (without whose keeping of the City the Watch-man waketh but in vain) that he would *turn away his Eyes from beholding Vanity*, and quicken him in his way, that nothing he sees or hears in this his Pilgrimage, may either turn him out of it, or *hinder* him in it. For indeed the latter part of this Prayer depends upon the former; and if God will *quicken us in his way*, and make us run it with a chearful expedition, 'tis convenient he should first turn away our Eyes from beholding those Vanities which will let and hinder us. And 'twill be *our Prudence* also, lest the view of an insnaring Object should inflame us, to turn away our Eye from it. Our Saviour tells us, that if our Eye offend us, we should *pluck it out*, and so indeed we must, in a Spiritual Sense, when 'tis come to that; but 'tis much easier to *turn it away*, to prevent a Lust, than it is to mortify it.

S E C T.

S E C T. II.

How a Prudent Christian orders himself in the government of his Understanding.

1. **U**nderstanding is a more noble Faculty than *Sense*, and so may seem not to need so much to be govern'd. And besides if it be, it must be govern'd by its own Light, and so must govern it self; and so the same thing must be both Agent and Patient at once. But as to the first, the best Things in the World need Order and Government, that so they may not be abused to ill Purposes, no Corruption being so bad as that of the best Things. Even the *Will* of God himself, according to our manner of conceiving it, is govern'd by his Wisdom and Understanding, and so is his *Power* too, and happy is it for us poor helpless Creatures that it is so, that two such vast Perfections (if indeed they are *two*) are not without Government, and that the World is in the hands not of an Arbitrary Being, but of him who disposes all things sweetly, and after the *Counsel* of his own Will. *Eph* I. II. As to the other difficulty, that if the Understanding be govern'd it must be govern'd by its self, it is granted, and that without any real inconvenience in the Consequence, it being not at all absurd that the same thing may be both Active and Passive at once in different respects. One Act of Understanding may govern

govern another, tho' the same Numerical Act cannot be well conceiv'd to govern it self. The Understanding as Practical may govern it self as Speculative, or else how shall a Man be so wise as to govern his Thoughts, or how will the Thoughts of a Wise Man be better govern'd than the Thoughts of a Fool? And the Reflex Acts of the Understanding, those which the Understanding passes upon it self, and its own Intellectual Workings or Thoughts, may serve to prescribe Rules of Order and Government to the *direct* ones. So that the Understanding may be very well conceiv'd capable of being govern'd, and that too by it self.

2. Our Prudent Christian therefore in the first place, considering what an excellent Faculty, and great Indowment Understanding is, and for what great Ends and Purposes it was given us by God, will think himself concern'd not to let it lye *idle*, but according to the Opportunities he has, to imploy and improve it. He will not therefore live after an idle, sottish, careless, or unthinking manner, as if he had no higher Principle than Sense, and were made only for the Indulgences of a Sensual Life, to Eat, Drink and Sleep; but finding himself in the rank of Rational Creatures, will act according to the Principles of his Rational Nature, as in other things, so particularly in the exercise and improvement of that Reason and Understanding whereby he is a Man. And this he will the rather do, because he considers his Understanding not only

as a Natural Perfection, but also as a *Talent* committed to him by God, of the due use and improvement of which an Account will be hereafter required, as well as of any other Gifts or Talents. But suppose there were no such future Account to be expected, yet however he further considers himself as a *Traveller* in his way to his End, and his Understanding as a *Torch* or *Lamp* that is to light him on in that way, and therefore he thinks it but necessary Prudence to take care of his *light*, and that not only so as to preserve it from going out, but to feed and nourish it with such supplies of *Oyl*, that it may shine the more brightly and clearly for his better Conduct and Direction.

3. But yet as much as our *Prudent Christian* is for imploying and improving his Understanding, he is not however for affecting *universal Knowledge*, as well knowing both the impossibility of such an attempt; and the vanity of pretending to it by one whose *Capacity* is no greater, and whose *Life* here is no longer. Neither is he for filling his Head with *little things*, no, nor yet with such *great things* as are of no Importance or Concernment to him in his way to his End, and whose impertinency to his Business renders them as much *Trifles* as the other. Nor will he apply himself to the study of vain and unprofitable Sciences, that have no real Ground or Foundation in Reason or Nature, Sciences falsely so call'd, such as *Judiciary Astrology*, &c. Nor yet to the study of such Theories

as

as exceed the proportion of his Understanding, but as he is contented to be ignorant of a great many things (because he knows he *must*) so he will not so much as endeavour to know such things as by all the study in the World are not to be comprehended. Indeed if such things are reveal'd by *God*, he will not think their being above his Understanding a sufficient reason why they should not be believ'd, but will rather submit his Understanding to the Obedience of Faith. But tho' he may think it reasonable to believe things that are above his Reason, yet why he should engage his Thoughts, or imploy his Time in the search and *study* of such things, only to lose himself in unfathomable Depths, to the neglect of other matters which he is better able to comprehend; and perhaps more concern'd to know, for this he cannot see any reason at all. And upon the like general Consideration he declines all curious prying into the hidden Scenes of Providence, those *secret things* which belong to God, which tho' they are not of themselves absolutely of a Nature not to be comprehended by us, yet being lock'd up in the Womb of Futurity, they are by that Wall of Partition, as inaccessible to us as the other. And therefore our Prudent Christian will not endeavour to come at them, contenting himself to make the best use of the Present, and thinking it better Wisdom to *prepare* for Future Events, than over-curiously to *pry* into them.

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4. The same Christian Wisdom will also advise him not to imploy his Studies in things of an extraordinary *Difficulty*, and that require a great deal of Thought, and a great expence of Time to master them, or attain to a considerable Perfection in them, unless there be also a *Profitableness* in them, and a Use to be made of them, that may bring in an Advantage to him answerable to the *Time* and *Pains* which he bestows in them. For as considering that he has but a little Time, and a great Interest depending, he cannot think it consistent with a just Frugality to throw away much of it, so not undertaking his Studies upon a Principle of *Vain-glory*, (the great Fault of those who addict themselves to a studious Life) but for the real Improvement of his Mind, he has no reason to prosecute them any further than as they will turn to an advantageous Account. Upon the same ground he will not regard so much what is *Popular*, and in Reputation, and in the Vogue of the World passes for Learning, as what is true and real Knowledge, that perfects the Mind of Man, and improves his Intellectual Light. And even here also he thinks it not safe to discharge his Mind of all government, but preserves a Temper, not suffering himself to be transported by an *immoderate* Thirst, or over inquisitive Search even of *real* Knowledge; but as his Inquiries into Truth are modest, so is he as discreet and select in making them, not applying himself indifferently to *all* Truths, but to such as are most useful, and
of

of the greatest Importance to be known, that is, that are most serviceable to his Moral Conduct, and that will help as Lights to guide and assist him in his way to his End. And among these he forgets not to apply himself chiefly, and in a very particular manner, to the Knowledge of *God*, and of *himself*, wherein is contain'd the Sum and Substance of Human Wisdom, in all the course of his Intellectual Conduct taking care to avoid the two great Disorders incident to Men of a Studious and Contemplative Life; *viz. Curiosity* and *Vain-glory*. Curiosity whereby Men are put upon unnecessary and unconcerning Inquiries only to please *themselves*, and gratify an itch of Knowledge, and Vain-glory whereby Men affect a great many dry and insipid Studies, and learned Amusements, that have a false shew of Science, only to please *others*, and procure from them a blind Admiration. Which while other less reflecting, tho' perhaps more busy Minds, are amused with, his concern is rather truly to know than to be thought knowing. Nor does he make an end of his Knowledge, but refers it to the great Ends of Vertue and Happiness, desiring more Light that he may the better see his way, in all his Intellectual Applications making this his great care to study to love God; and to be loved by him.

5. It may be thought perhaps a proper Question, upon this occasion, to ask what share *Human Learning* has in the Allowance of Christian Prudence, and the rather because it is in so little

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Favour and Credit among some People. To which I Answer, That Learning and Knowledge, such as properly deserves that name, is not only consistent with Christian Prudence, but very much in esteem with it, and that as Learning may need Prudence (and oftentimes does) to govern and manage it, so Prudence may make a good use and advantage of Learning, as being a Means very serviceable to its End. For 'tis plain as to Moral and Christian Knowledge that the better a Man knows his Duty, and the Grounds, Reasons, and Motives of it, the more Advantage he has for the Practice of it; and tho' other sorts of Knowledge which in opposition to this we may call *Natural*, have not so direct and perpendicular an Influence upon Religion, yet however by clearing our Thoughts, opening and enlarging our Minds, and abstracting them from the Pleasures of Sense, and the endearments of sensible Objects, and raising our Notions of God, and depressing those of our selves, they may tend very much to serve and befriend it. Even the Study and Knowledge of *Nature*, notwithstanding the peculiar Prejudices that lye against it, will be found to be a Friend to Religion, as rather assisting than indisposing a Man to be a good Christian, as Mr. *Boil* has shewn at large in his *Christian Virtuoso*. Nor is St. *Paul's* Caution to his Christian Converts, that they should beware of being spoiled through *Philosophy and vain Deceit*, Col. 2: 8. any contradiction to this. For the *Philosophy* which the

the Apostle here cautions against as a *Spoiler* or *Rabber*, is not Philosophy as such, or true sound Philosophy, which improves our Reason and instructs us in the nature of things, and brings us to the Knowledge of God and our selves, and is no way disserviceable, but very assistant to Religion, but it was that which the fabulous *Greeks* obtruded for Philosophy, and which the *Heretics* of that Age applied to Christianity, and wherewith they dress up and corrupted the Doctrines of the Christian Faith, to the great hazard and danger of seducing Men from that Faith, and *spoiling* and *robbing* them of their Christian Knowledge. The Apostle therefore was no enemy to Philosophy or good Learning (as neither was that to *him*) nor can any Prudent and well advised Christian be, who understands what it is, and to what it serves. And yet I confess there is a great deal of that which is *call'd Learning* among us which a Prudent Christian who considers the two things last mention'd, can have no extraordinary Zeal or Value for, as being not at all for *his* purpose, nor for any other good or reasonable End, relating either to this Life or to a better. Particularly (if I understand his Mind rightly) he is no great Admirer of *Bookish Learning*, by which I mean not that Learning which is acquired by the reading of Books, but that which is made to consist in the having read them, or in the mere Historical Knowledge of them. For he considers that Learning is only *acquired Knowledge*, the acquired Knowledge

ledge of *Things*, to which the Reading of Books is only a *Means* or Instrumental Help And so far he allows the use of Books, as being (if well chosen and judiciously read) great Helps to Learning and Knowledge. But if once Learning shall come to be placed in the reading of so many Books, and he shall be counted the most Learned Man, not who has the clearest Notions of things, and the most improved understanding, but who has read most Books, and is the greatest *Pore* tho' he has confounded his Head and perplex'd his Notions by doing so; this he does not understand, and thinks it as great an Abuse in *Learning*, as turning the Means into the End is in *Religion*.

6. But there is also a Moral, as well as an Intellectual Government of the Understanding, that which we commonly call the Government of the *Thoughts*. Of the latter I have spoken hitherto, and should now proceed to treat of the other,

but that I am in great Measure prevented by what I have already said of this matter under the Head of *Inward*

Purity. To which therefore I shall only add here a Remark or two further. The first whereof is this, that a Prudent Christian will endeavour to lay in a stock of *good Principles*, that may serve as a Foundation whereon to erect the structure of a Religious and truly Christian Life. For tho' 'tis possible to hold even the most Fundamental Truths in *Unrighteousness*, and there are some Men that will be Wicked upon *any Principles*, yet

See Chap. 6.
Sect. 16.

yet however it cannot be denied, but that the having good Principles of Faith and Knowledge, and the being well grounded in them, is a great Advantage to the practice of Christian Piety and Vertue. For such Principles are the natural Seeds of Vertue, and will with the dew of God's Blessing and Grace upon them, spring up into Vertuous Actions, and unless a Man takes a great deal of Pains to Debauch them, beget a conformable Practice. And therefore our Prudent Christian will make it his first and great care to furnish his mind with good honest Principles, such as are not only *True* (for so far a Philosopher will go) but of a wholsom tendency to good living, and that have that Character which *St. Paul* gives of Christianity, that they are *Doctrines according to godliness*, *1 Tim. 6. 3.* And this the rather, because there are now so many bad, impious, and unchristian Principles abroad in the World, whereby Men assume a License to do Wickedly, and transgress with Authority, and corrupt others as well as themselves. Which makes it the more necessary for Men to have good Principles, not only for their *Light and Direction*, but even for their *Defence*.

7. The next thing that a Prudent Christian will observe in the *Moral Government* of his Understanding, is to endeavour what he can to reduce his Knowledge to *Act*. Indeed as to the Arts and Sciences, and all such things as are of a Notional and Speculative Nature, there he will content himself with an Habitual Knowledge, it being
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being sufficient that he has the Knowledge of such things in his Power whenever he pleases to attend to them. But as to those Truths which are of a Practical concernment, and upon which the order of his Life and Actions immediately depends, as suppose that Sin is the greatest Evil, the vanity of all those Pleasures and Profits which tempt to the Commission of it, the certainty of a future Judgment, the wisdom of being prepared for it, and what an inestimable Happiness it is in the mean time to have a good Conscience, and the like; these things he will not think it sufficient to know habitually, and in general. but will endeavour by the frequent exercise of consideration, to preserve and keep up an actual sense of in his Mind. Because he well knows, and is assured by all the Observations he has made both upon himself and others, that 'tis the *Actual* sense of things, and not the Habitual Knowledge of them, upon which Life and Practice immediately depends. And therefore his careful endeavour is, after he has stock'd himself with good Principles, 'to bring himself to a recollected state of Mind, and to have Thoughts about him, lest while his Understanding labours under an *Eclipse*, his Will should make some wrong step or other for want of its *present Light*.

8. Upon this Occasion it may be proper further to observe, that when our Prudent Christian has laid in a stock of good Principles, and reduced the Knowledge of them as much as may be to *Act* for the better Government of his Life, he

he will think it his Duty, and make it his Care to stick and adhere to them, and not at any time to depart from them, or act against them, to comply with any Turn or Revolution of the Times, or to humour the Wickedness of a Corrupt Age, much less will he renounce them to justify or colour over any Practices of his own, which he will rather conform to his Principles, than bend his Principles to his Practices. What a Man does upon a real Conviction of Judgment, and a sincere alteration of his Mind, is another thing. Every Man has leave to grow Wiser. But for Men to remove Old Landmarks, to renounce or give up old plain and Christian Doctrines, and such as themselves have profess'd, to serve the times, and strike in with a growing Faction, this tho' it may it pass for cunning and good State-Policy, I am sure is ill Christianity, and what a Prudent Christian will not do, as thinking Sincerity better Wisdom than Hypocrisy. For indeed it is no less, and a scandalous Instance of it too, to see Men shift and change their Principles with the Times, starting aside like so many broken Bows, because they have something else for their *Mark*, besides their true *End*. What a Scandal do such Men bring upon Christianity, enough to offend not only *weak* Brethren, but the *strong* ones too. They indeed that shall hence gather that there is nothing in Religion, conclude too fast, but should they hence conclude that such Men do not really believe it, I know not well whether they may be said to offend against either *Logic* or *Charity*.

S E C T.

S E C T. III.

How a Prudent Christian orders himself in the government of his Will and Affections, or Passions.

1. **A**fter the Regulation of his Understanding, his next work, and now the less difficult one, is to bring his *Will* and *Affections* under the like Order and Government. For of themselves they are in a great Disorder, occasion'd by the general Corruption of Human Nature, whereby we have a false Bias upon our Minds, being strongly inclined, I cannot properly say to *Evil* (for that is not the *Natural* Object of the Will) but to *sensible good*, which rather than forgo, we are put upon the *chusing* of Evil, as willing that sensible good in undue and disorderly Circumstances; which as to Practice is all one as if we were naturally inclined to Evil, and makes it equally necessary that our Wills should be under Government. For indeed if they are not they will soon fall into the greatest Disorders, if not by their own natural Bent, yet by the strong Propension which we have to sensible good, which will make us *chuse* that Moral Evil which we do not naturally love, for the sake of that sensible Good which we do. Besides it is a Man's Will, and the inward state and settled temper of a Man's Mind wherein his Moral Goodness or Badness, and his Fitness or Unfitness

fitness for Future Happiness does consist. Vertue may dwell with a mean Understanding, and so may Happiness, but he that has a bad Will, can neither be Good here, nor Happy hereafter.

2. So then the Prudent Christian sees a plain necessity of governing his *Will*. And the first step of doing it is to teach it not to follow Natural *Inclination*, but *Reason*, that is, not to do what the Natural Propension to sensible Good moves her to do for the obtaining that Good, but to do what Reason dictates and advises as fit to be done. Indeed when Reason and Inclination lead the same way (which whenever it happens, as it does in some *Measure* in that Natural Inclination we have to Moral Good, is a great Happiness) then Inclination is to be follow'd as well as Reason, tho' even then it is not to be follow'd but only *Materially*, that is not as Inclination, but as falling in with Reason, or as inclining to the same thing to which Reason directs. But when Reason shall direct one way, and Inclination shall lead another way, then Reason and not Inclination is intirely to be follow'd. For the better securing of which, a Prudent Christian will think it the safest way in all things to take Reason for his Guide; and tho' he does some things according to his Inclination, because 'tis according to his Reason too at the same time, yet to do nothing merely because he has an Inclination to do it, but because he has good Reason for it. For 'tis the following our Inclination that ruins us, not the Inclination we have to

Evil (for I know of no such Natural Inclination) but the Inclination we have to *sensible good*, which for the gratification of it, draws us into Evil. But when once the Will is made subject to Reason, and is taught to follow the Dictates of it, we cannot then well do amiss, because for so doing there is no *good Reason* to be given.

3. But when I speak of the Prudent Christian's governing his Will so as to make it follow the Dictates of his Reason, I don't mean the *Actual* Dictates of it, (for there is a necessity of following *them*, and we can't possibly do otherwise, unless we could will that which at that time appears Evil to us, which is impossible) but its *Habitual* Dictates. That is I mean that we should in the course of our Actions accustom our Will to follow those general and standing Dictates which our Reason when cool and sober, and not disturb'd or clouded with Passion (as its *Actual* Dictates but too often are) prescribes to us. For then it is that Reason is best capable of judging, and so most likely to judge aright, and therefore our Prudent Christian sets up this as a standing Law to himself, always to follow the General and Habitual Dictates of his Reason, so as to do what his Reason most approves of in the *generality* and in *ordinary*, and not only at the instant of Action, when being bribed and corrupted by Passion, it is not like to give so Just and Impartial a Sentence. And accordingly when he is about to Act, he considers with himself what his Thoughts and Judgment used to be of that *matter*

ter at other times, when he had no Bias to pervert it, but gave his Opinion like an unprejudiced and disinterest'd *Casuis*t, and that very Judgment and Dictate of his Reason he endeavours to follow then. In which Practice he is secured, if not always from *Error*, yet at least from *Blame*, as following the best Light that he has.

4. I speak of an *Immediate* and *Internal* Light. But there is also an *External* one for our better Direction, the Will and Word of God, or the Will of God as declared and revealed to us in his Word. This is the more perfect Light of the two, being as St. Peter calls it, a *more sure word of Prophecy*, 2 Pet. 1. 19. but such as we are not capable of following till we have first brought our Wills to this general Resolution and Practice in all things to follow our Reason, and not our Inclination, and then indeed we are in a fit temper to hear *what the Lord God will say to us*, who commands us nothing that is against our Reason, but many things that are against our *Inclination*. But what then? The Will and Command of God sways more with a Prudent Christian than any Inclination of his own, which he is ready at all Times and in all Cases to sacrifice to his Duty. Accordingly in the government of his Will, his great care is to subject and conform it to the Will and Word of God (the next rule in order, tho' the first in Dignity) as well knowing that God wishes him as well as he can with himself, only being infinitely Wise as well as Good, he knows what is good for him much better than
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he is capable of knowing what is good for himself, and so can command him nothing but what upon the whole Account is best for him to do. Most willingly and chearfully therefore he deposes his own Will from the Throne, and sets up the Will of God, to which he pays all Homage and Obedience. And since the Will of God is his *Sanctification*, 1 Thes. 4. 3. to this he diligently applies himself, as that which is most pleasing to God, as well as most beneficial to himself, endeavouring to be Holy as he is Holy, Perfect as he is Perfect, in all things studying to conform himself to the Will of God both in Heart and Life. By whose word also he takes care to regulate his Will, that *Word* of his where-with the *Psalmist* advises the Young Man, *Psal.* 119. (One in the heat and strength of his Lusts, and a lover of Pleasure and Liberty) to *cleanse his way*, and which our Saviour tells us is the Truth, even *sanctifying Truth*, *John* 17. 17. By this therefore he governs and regulates his Will, not by the loose Measures or Maxims of the World, or any fashionable Divinity of the Times, or corrupt Morals of the Age, whose bad Practices want as bad Principles for their support, but by the exprefs Word of God, knowing that all Worldly Measures may deceive him, but that the *Truth* cannot.

5. But there is another thing which the Prudent Christian thinks himself concern'd to take care of in the government of his Will, and that is to submit it to the *Providential*, as well as to the

the *Preceptive Will* of God, so as to receive all Events and Conditions of Life tho' never so grievous and afflictive, with Patience and Contentment, considering in whose wise disposal they are, and by whose hand they are brought upon him. And for this he thinks he has the very same reason as for the other, *viz.* that God wishes him as well as he does himself, and is able to chuse for him much *better*. And therefore not adhering to any private Fancies, Opinions, or Wishes of his own, he refers and resigns himself to God's Gracious and All-wise Disposal, lodges his Concerns in his hands, and is willing he should chuse for him, and when he does so, he humbly and thankfully accepts his Choice, and acquiesces in the Wisdom of his Providence, concluding it best that things should be as the Wise Governour of the World would have them. And accordingly instead of Murmuring and Complaining, or using any Language of Discontent, he is in all things ready to say with the Disciples, *the will of the Lord be done*, Acts 21. 14. And with his Lord and Master, the most perfect Pattern and Example of Submission to God's Will, as of all other Vertues, *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*, Matt. 26. 39. Lord, thy Will was an innocent Will, and yet thou didst resign it, how much more should we resign our perverse and corrupt Wills!

6. Our Prudent Christian therefore bears *Afflictions* the best of any Man in the World, considering the *End* of them, and the *Use* and Advantage

vantage that may be made of them, and that that which is against our *Will* is not always against our *Interest*. And indeed I don't know any one that can bear an Affliction well, but a *Prudent Christian*. A Man of a cold Phlegmatic, or of a brisk sanguin Constitution, and whose temper either way is to be indifferent and unaffected at whatever happens, may *bear* it, but neither of them bears it *well*, as not acting upon a principle of Reason or Religion, but each of them following their Natural Constitution, which is no more a Vertue, than for a stone to fall downwards, tho' perhaps by doing so it may happen to fall where one would have it be. And so these Mens Temper does that which Reason should do, and which in a *Prudent Christian* it actually does, who only therefore is to be commended for it. And truly I don't know any one thing hardly wherein the Prudence of a Christian is to be seen more than in bearing an Affliction well. To repine at it, and be impatient under it, as it does no good, but rather increases the Natural Evil, besides the adding a Moral one to it, so it shews a Man to have but short Views, and a very slight, shallow, and superficial Consideration of things. Whereas to keep a Temper in Adversity, and possess our Souls in Patience, and carry a calm and composed Mind through a rough and troubled Sea, as it alleviates the Calamity, so it shews him that so bears it to have great presence of Mind, and well recollected Thoughts, and indeed to be that Man of Understanding

standing which *Solomon* speaks of, and who, he says, is of an *excellent Spirit*, Prov. 17. 27. of a calm, sedate, and dispassionate Temper, not such as arises from a coldness of Constitution, but from a prudent and reasonable Government of a Man's self.

7. Then as to his *Passions*, his most troublesome and ungovernable part, and which in the lesser world are what *Winds* and *Storms* are in the greater, these he pretends not either to be without, as if they did not belong to his Nature, or to extirpate from it, (as being sensible both of their Innocence, and of their Use) but to govern and to keep in order, within the bounds of Reason and Religion. Which he does with the less difficulty after having attain'd to so much government of himself in the other Instances, and particularly as to his *Will*, from which the *Passions* seem to have but a kind of *Modal* or *Circumstantial* difference, as being only so many more vehement or impetuous sorts of *Willings* or *Nillings*. For by the *Passions* I think we are to understand certain Motions of the Mind depending upon and accompanied with an Agitation of the Spirits. So that the very same motion of the Mind which without that ferment of the Blood and Spirits would be call'd a pure simple *Willing* or *Nilling*, *with* it becomes what we call a *Passion*, which is an Affection resulting from the Union of Soul and Body, and so proper only to Man, and whose difference from the *Will* seems in some manner, *viz.* as to dependence

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dence upon the Body, to resemble that of Sense and *Understanding*. Now these Passions are to be govern'd and regulated by the same Rules and Laws that the Will is, as being only so many sorts of *Wills* as I said before, arising from or attended with a *Bodily Commotion*. But then because for that reason they are the more fierce and violent, they are to be observ'd and managed with the greater Care. Which the Prudent Christian will not neglect to use in the government of them, both for his own sake, and for the sake of others, considering how much the *Tranquility* of his own Mind, and the peace of Society, and the Happiness of Human life depend upon it. And withal, how many Follies, Disorders, and Extravagancies Men have been transported into by their mad and ungovern'd Passions, so as to do such things as they would never have done in cool Blood, and which they condemn and repent of as soon as they return to themselves. Our Prudent Christian therefore carries a very strict hand over his *Passions*, and watches them with a very jealous Eye, placing a stronger guard over this weaker side of his Nature. He knows that nothing is done well where *they* are either the *Judges* or the *Executioners*, and therefore he takes a more than ordinary Care to keep his Mind in good Temper, and will no more be drunk with *Passion* than any other way, that so having the free and full use and command of his Reason, he may think, act, and *speak* according to the pure Dictates of it.

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8. This last Expression puts me in mind of another thing which every Prudent Christian must needs look upon as a considerable part of his *Self-government*, and that without which all the rest is vain and ineffectual, and that is the *Government of the Tongue*. For so says St. James, *If any man among you seem to be Religious, and bridletb not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this mans Religion is vain*, Jam. I. 26. This therefore I should here consider as a distinct part of that government which a Prudent Christian exercises over himself, but it having been already discours'd at large in a particular Treatise upon that Subject, well known and in good esteem among us, I chuse rather to refer my Reader thither, while I go on to the consideration of the following Section.

S E C T. IV.

How a Prudent Christian governs himself with respect to his Conscience.

1. **C**onscience I take to be a kind of *Practical Judgment*, not that Practical Judgment so much spoken of in the Schools, which immediately precedes Action, orders the doing of it, and which the Will always necessarily follows, but that Practical Judgment whereby a Man either directly judges of the Lawfulness of his doing such an Action, or reflects upon it and censures it when done, either in the way of Allowance

or Disallowance, according as the nature of the Action is found to be with relation to the Law of God. By which it appears, that tho' the Law of God be the Principal and Ultimate, yet Conscience is the *Immediate* Rule of our Actions, and that which is the next Guide and Director of Life, being like that *Eye* which our Saviour speaks of, *Mat. 6. 22.* if not the same with it, which if it be single, the whole Body shall be full of Light, but if it be evil, it will be as full of Darkness, all Confusion and Disuniformity. And therefore whoever is a Wise and Prudent Christian will think himself under a particular Obligation and Concern to take care of his *Conscience*, as a Traveller does of the Light whereby he is to walk, or as an Artist does of the Rule whereby he is to frame, shape and order his work. And this care of his Conscience he will express,

2. First, By taking due Care to *inform* and *instruct* his Conscience well in all the parts and points of his Duty, and that not only in general, but as far as he has opportunity, in particular *Junctures* and *Circumstances*, what we commonly call the *Cases of Conscience*. For considering that Conscience is the *Immediate Rule* of his Actions, and that even the Law of God himself cannot affect or influence him any otherwise than by the Mediation and Application of his Conscience, he thinks it of the highest Necessity and Importance that this his Rule should it self be right, so as not to need a further regulation, since

since if it be wrong, all that he acts by that Rule will be wrong too. And then as our Saviour says, if the Light that is in thee be Darkness, how great is that Darkness! How great indeed, since it causes Error, Disorder, and Confusion in the whole Body. For tho' a Man be bound to follow a Mistaken or Erring Conscience, and cannot (while so perswaded) innocently act against it, nay, and may do it *sincerely* too, provided he was not wanting in his Endeavours to inform it right, yet however 'tis also certain that in such a Case he goes out of the right way to his End, transgresses his Duty (which is to be measured by the Law of God, and not by his perswasion) and does that which is materially and in it self Sinful, and which will be so also formally and to him too, if 'twas through his Fault or Negligence that his Conscience was no better inform'd. And therefore the Prudent Christian will be sure to give all diligence to inform his Conscience aright in the full extent of his Christian Duty, that so he may neither act wrong, nor be accountable for not knowing what was right. Those who unhappily separate from our Communion, and pretend *Conscience* for their doing so, would do well to consider this, whether laying aside all Interest, Passion, and Prejudice, and examining nothing but the Merits of the Cause they have taken a due Care to inform their Consciences aright (since a Man may sin by following his Conscience as well as by acting against it, and that too imputably, if it was mistaken for want

of Care to inform it better) or whether without so much as setting themselves to inquire into the matter, but only following the Impressions of their Education, or other Prejudices, or not inquiring so fully and impartially as they ought, they have taken up a *Fancy* or a *Humour* to divide from us, and break the Peace and Unity of the Church. If they manage themselves according to the *first way*, then they act sincerely, and are truly *Conscientious Dissenters*, whose Case I acknowledge deserves our Pity rather than our Censure. But if according to the other way, I cannot think them either such Prudent Christians, or such Honest Men as I could wish them, nor such *Conscientious Dissenters* as they profess themselves.

3. After due Means and Endeavours used for the necessary Information and Instruction of his Conscience in all parts of Christian Duty, the next Instance of his Care of it will be to live and act up to it, and according to its Dictates, and not in any thing to go against the *Light of his Mind*. This indeed is a Duty which a Man always owes to his Conscience, even to a mistaken one, never to act contrary to it, by doing that which he thinks ought not to be done when he does it, tho' he is misperswaded in so thinking. And to act otherwise is not to act sincerely. But yet as a Man is bound to follow his Conscience, so he is as much bound to take care it be well inform'd, that so he may act sincerely, not only with regard to his present perswasion, but upon the *whole*; and do that which by the Law
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of God ought to be done. And when his Conscience is well inform'd, he may then more safely and more securely follow it, as being satisfy'd that he shall not be misled by it, or put out of the right way to his End. Here then the Prudent Christian sets up his Rest, here he fixes and intrenches himself, this is his Fortification, or as the Poet nobly expresses it, his *Brazen Wall*, never to act any thing against his Conscience, but faithfully and uprightly to resign up himself to its Guidance and Direction, and in every step he makes to follow its Light, after he has first taken due care that it be a guide fit to lead. But that Care we suppose to be over, that which he has now upon him, is honestly and carefully to follow the direction of his Conscience, and not in the least thing to act otherwise than he is verily persuaded in his Judgment. And thus as St. Paul expresses it, he *lives in all good conscience before God*, Acts 23. 1. in the sense of his seeing him, whom he knows to be a searcher of Hearts. And accordingly herein also he *exercises himself*, makes it his Care, Business, and serious Practice, to have *always a Conscience void of offence towards God and towards Man*, Acts 24. 16. And he thinks it infinitely worth his while to be at some pains to perfect himself in this Pious Exercise, as well knowing what an inestimable Treasure a *good Conscience* is. And therefore he will suffer any thing rather than lose it, being that upon which the peace of his Mind, and the comfort of his Life depends, and which is worth infinitely more than

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than any thing that the World can give him, or take from him. He will therefore make it his diligent Care to keep a good Conscience, that he may enjoy the Comfort and Satisfaction of it, and the rather because this is the only Satisfaction which he has in his Power, being liable to Crosses and Disappointments in all things else. And because he is so, he will be the more careful of his Conscience, that so when the whole World runs against him, he may have this *Domestic* Comforter to support him against all the Evils of it.

4. But then in order to his keeping a good Conscience and enjoying the quiet and satisfaction of it, there are two things which our Prudent Christian will think himself further concern'd to observe. The first is, not to be rash or inconsiderate in his Actions, but to examine them well before he does them, to *take heed to his ways* as the *Psalmist* expresses it, or as *St. Paul*, to *walk circumspectly*, and to be always upon the Watch and the Guard, that so he may neither do any thing against his present Conscience, or which his better inform'd or more awaken'd Conscience will hereafter Condemn. The Second is, to examine his Actions well after he has done them, to cite them before him, and sit in Judgment upon them in the Court of the Breast, and to call such a Court of Private Judicature pretty often, within such reasonable distances that his Actions may not through length of time be forgotten, or be too numerous to be distinctly and fully

fully examin'd. This practice of *Self-examination* is of excellent use for many good Ends and Purposes, and particularly to assist us in the knowledge of our selves; and let us see what progress we make in Goodness; but that which I here commend it for is as a means to help us to maintain a good Conscience, and to enjoy the Tranquillity and Repose of it. For the obtaining of which the Prudent Christian will frequently call himself, *not others*, to an Account, and examine his own, not their Actions, unless it be where necessary *Discipline* or *Charity* obliges him. And this he will do by comparing his Actions with their Rule, both the Rule of God's Word, and the Rule of his own Conscience, that so if he finds himself Right, he may enjoy the satisfaction of it; but if Wrong, and that he has broken the peace of his Conscience, he may apply a Plaster to the Wound while 'tis fresh, and restore it again by *Repentance*.

5. It may be expected that I should charge our Prudent Christian with one thing more in the government of his Conscience, and that is, that he should take care how he Debauches or Corrupts it, and that either in respect of its *Light*, or in respect of its *Tenderness* and *Sensibility*. The Light of Conscience is one thing, and its Tenderness is another. The Light is that whereby it *directs*, its Tenderness is that whereby it *resents* what is troublesome and offensive to it, and endeavours to put it away from it. Of both which we have an Instance in the *Eye*, to
which

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which therefore Conscience is well compared. Now as to the Light of Conscience, tho' we talk of extinguishing it, I can hardly think it possible that it should be wholly and utterly extinguish'd in us, since as long as we are Rational Creatures we must needs retain some Knowledge of Good and Evil, and be capable of making some Judgment of what we do. But tho' the *Light* of Conscience cannot be wholly lost, yet I don't know but that the *Tenderness* and *Sensibility* of it may. And accordingly the Apostle tells us of some, *viz.* Vicious and Debauch'd *Heathens*, that were *past feeling*, Eph. 4. 19. And of others, *viz.* Profligate and Apostate *Christians*, whose Conscience was fear'd with a hot Iron, 1 *Tim.* 4. 2. But however, tho' the Light of Conscience is not utterly extinguishable, yet it may be very much obscured, and made shine very dim, so as to give but a very faint and *shady* Direction. Now the light of Conscience is thus obscured by Vicious Practices in general, by committing many and gross Sins, as we say of some Men, that by long and much sinning they have debauch'd their very *Principles*. But as to the *Sensibility* of Conscience, tho' it receives Injury by all Sin, yet it is more especially corrupted by such Sins as are committed against the checks of Conscience, and its Remonstrances to the contrary. The Sinning after this manner as it carries with it a peculiar Aggravation of Guilt, so it is attended with this further ill consequence, that it takes away the natural tenderness

ness of the Conscience, and deadens its Sense, till by degrees it grows hard and insensible, as if *scar'd with a hot Iron*, as the Apostle speaks. A most sad and deplorable state and temper of Soul. And indeed so they are both, and therefore there is no doubt but that our Prudent Christian will take all possible care how he falls into either of them, and that he will endeavour to preserve both the *Light* and the *Sense* of his Conscience, that so he may neither want a Guide to direct him in his way to his End, nor a Monitor to reprove him when he leaves it, and make him *uneasy* till he returns again into it.

S E C T. V.

How a Prudent Christian Conducts himself in the Choice of his Religion.

1. **I**N the first and purest state of Christianity there was no great occasion for this Question, nor much difficulty about it. Whether a Man should be a *Jew*, *Heathen*, or *Christian* was then all the Competition, and the Case was too clear as to the last, from the Excellency of the Christian Doctrine and the Miracles that confirm'd it, to admit of much Dispute. And when once a Man had given up his name to *Christianity*, he had no more to consider of, but only how to frame his Mind and Life to the Rules of his holy Calling, that his Conversation might be such as became the Gospel of Christ. All being then of
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one Mind and Way, as before the Division of Tongues, was as 'tis said, the whole Earth was of one Language, and of one Speech, *Gen. 11.* So it was then as to *Religion.* But this Happiness lasted not long, and the Case is now come to be so far otherwise, that instead of that Unity of Religion which was among the first Christians, and whereby they were link'd together no less than by their *Charity*, we have now a mere *Babel* of Confusion. Religion is now so Multiplied (not *Increas'd*) that it confounds by its variety, like a dazzling Light; so that after a Man has inquired into the grounds of Christianity, and is convinced of its Truth in the general, his greatest and most difficult work is behind, which is to determine what particular way of Religion in so numerous a variety he shall embrace, and to what Sect or Society of Christians (so many are they) he shall joyn himself. Here therefore is great need of Christian Prudence, and he that has the largest share of it may here find sufficient exercise and employment for it.

2. However, our Prudent Christian has already said in a very good Provision in order to the directing himself aright in this matter, by the well ordering of his *Conscience.* For indeed a well order'd Conscience is an excellent Qualification to fit a Man to make a right choice in his Religion, their being no better Disposition for the finding of Truth, and the submitting to its Evidence, than an honest Mind, and a pure re-sistiv'd frame of Heart. *I have liv'd in all good conscience*

conscience before God; until this day, Acts 23. 1. said St. Paul in defence of himself, and the new Religion which he had embraced. And indeed he was sily disposed to make choice of the *Christian* Religion, who had walk'd uprightly, and according to the light of his Conscience in the *Jewish*. For as Honesty is an excellent Bottom for Religion, so is it no less serviceable to assist and direct a Man to make a right choice in it, than which there is hardly any thing of greater moment, or that will be more taken care of by a Wise and Prudent Man. And yet however it comes to pass, there is hardly any thing that Men take less *true* care of, notwithstanding all the Noise and Bustle that they make about it.

3. Their general way here is for Men not to consult their Reason, or inquire into the grounds of Religion, but to take it up by chance, or upon trust, depending upon the Authority of others for it, and that after a more implicit way in some respect than is practiced even in the Church of *Rome*. To believe as the Church believes (barring only the not knowing what that is) is not so great a resignation to Authority, as the being of this or that Religion because it was the Religion of ones Father, or Grandfather, or the standing Principle of the Family. And yet many I doubt would be hard put to't, to assign a better account of their Religion. Or if they chuse for themselves, as some may dare to do, then they follow their particular Inclination, or Fancy, or Imagination, or their Prejudices and
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preconceiv'd Opinions, or the Impressions of their Education, or the fashion of the Times, or their *Interest*, taking up such a Perswasion or joyning with such a Church because it will advance their Trade, and bring Custom to their Shops; or because of some dependency which they have upon some rich Relations, or other great Men, whose Principles and Favour go together, so that they must espouse the former to enjoy the latter. These and such like either *Partial* or *Sordid* Considerations, go a great way with most Men in the choice of their Religion, and yet you shall have them as obstinately fix'd in it, and as zealous and fierce for it, as if it were taken up with the greatest Consideration, and grounded upon the clearest Convictions and strongest Reason in the World.

4. But our Prudent Christian will not act after this manner in any thing, much less in so weighty a Concern as that of Religion, but here laying aside all sorts of Prejudice, and considering nothing but the pure Merits of the Cause, what is in it self True, Just, and Right, and having Pray'd to God for his Blessing and Direction, he consults and makes use of his *Reason* in the best manner that he can, which he directs by *Scripture*, the great Rule of it in all matters of *Faith*. For as the *Being* of God is the Foundation of all Religion, since *he that comes to God must believe that he is*, as the Apostle speaks, so the *Word* of God is the Rule of it. But it is such a Rule as supposes another, and improves upon it, I mean
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the Light, or, if you will, the Law of Nature. And therefore having in the first place taken care that there be nothing in the Religion which he chuses contrary to the Principles of Natural Religion, he proceeds to chuse such a Religion as for Faith, Doctrine, Worship, and Rules of Living is most agreeable to the Holy Scriptures. Which we suppose our Prudent Christian for this very purpose to have taken all due care to understand. The next thing that recommends a Religion to his choice, is its agreeableness to *Antiquity*. And accordingly he chuses that which is most agreeable to the Sense and Practice of the Primitive Church in its Purest Ages, *presuming* that the streams run clearest nearest the Fountain, and *considering* that there is this difference between Philosophical Theories and matters of Faith and Religion, that in the former the modern Opinions may be prefer'd, because of new Improvements upon further Thought and Experience; whereas the latter depending on Divine Revelation, those that are nearest the time when that Revelation was made, may be supposed in the main to understand it best. But because every Christian that has *Prudence*, may yet not have *Learning* enough to judge for himself in this matter, he then will have recourse to those who are acquainted with the state of those times, and from their account of them take the best Light that he can for his Information. However, to supply what Defects may be on this part, a Prudent Christian will further consider with himself

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the *Design of Christianity*, and so embrace that particular way of Religion which is most agreeable to, and best answers that general Design. Assuring himself that that Religion which so represents or explains the particular Doctrines of Christianity, as to contradict the general Scope and Design of it cannot possibly be true. As in the Instance of *Antinomianism*. And therefore as a consequence of this, his Prudence will direct him to chuse that Religion whose Principles have the greatest tendency to promote Holiness of Life (that being plainly the great Design of Christianity) and which will furnish him with the best Means and Helps for the attaining his End, not forgetting to implore the Blessing and Assistance of God to bring him thither by the proper Ways and Means that lead to it. For we have great reason to hope that God who has prepared for us, so excellent an End as Happiness, will not be wanting to direct us in the right way to it, if we are seriously willing to walk in it, and desire his Direction.

S E C T. VI.

How a Prudent Christian governs himself with respect to the World.

I. **T**HE World being one of those Enemies which we renounce in our Baptism, and whose Friendship the Scripture declares to be Enmity with God, our Prudent Christian cannot but

but think himself particularly concern'd to be-ware of it, and to guard against it. The World is an infinite Amassment of Evil, enough to load, overlay, and distract a Man's Thoughts. But he considers it under a Two-fold Notion, as a place wherein he is a stranger, and as a place of great Danger and Peril. First, As a place wherein he is a *Stranger*. He considers as well as knows that this is not his *Home*. Neither the place design'd for him, nor the place where he is to abide, nor the place that can give him Rest and Satisfaction. Not the place design'd for him. God never *intended* that we should take up our final Abode in this World (tho' many 'tis to be presumed would not only be *content*, but *glad* to do so) but made us for something greater than is to be found here, in this Region of Death and Misery, this Circle of Sin and Vanity. That he made us for something greater than is to be found here is plain, because he has made us greater than any thing that is here, having given us a Nature that is Superiour to all the Enjoyments of this World. And as this World is not the place design'd for him, so he knows that it is not the place where he is always to abide. He knows that he has here *no continuing City* but must remove hence to a better or a worse place, and that in a very little time. When the Sun has made a few more turns over his head, he must retire to the land of Forgetfulness, make his Bed in the Grave, and leave all behind him, carrying only the inordinate Desires of what he

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loved too well, with him. But that which chiefly makes this World a strange place to him, and not his proper Home, is that it cannot give him any true Rest and Satisfaction, and that because there is no proportion between those Capacities which God has given us, and those thin empty Goods which this present world entertains us with, which like the *Sacrifices* of the Law, are rather *Shadows of good things to come*, than the Substance, or so much as the *Image* of those things. And 'tis chiefly upon this Consideration that our Prudent Christian looks upon this World not as his Home, because he cannot have his End here, that chief Good which he proposes, and that Happiness which is to be found in the enjoyment of it. And therefore considering the World (upon all these accounts) as a place wherein he is a stranger, and not his true Home, he takes care how he contracts any Fondness or Affection for any of its transient Vanities; how he plunges himself into either its Cares or Pleasures, but endeavours to live *Sans Attachement*, free and loose, and without Ingagement, as becomes a Traveller, that is here to day, and gone to morrow. Particularly he follows that advice of *St. Peter*, wherein he considers all Christians as so many Travellers, and exhorts them as *Strangers and Pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the Soul.*

2. But then in the next place he considers the World not only as a place that is strange and foreign to him, but also as a place of great *Peril* and
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and *Danger*, where he walks among Snares and treads upon Traps and Gins. He apprehends a great deal of *Danger* from *Sensible Objects*, which inflame our Passions, engage our Affections, and divert our Minds from those greater and better Goods which are more worthy of them, and only can satisfy them. He apprehends a great deal of danger from the Ill Customs, Corrupt Examples, False Maxims, and Wicked Principles of the World, whereby Men study to palliate and excuse their own Wicked Practices, and to recommend them to others. As also from the Pleasures, Honours, and Profits of the World, as being so many Temptations to Sensuality, Pride, and Covetousness. He apprehends *Danger* in all States and Conditions of Life, in Poverty as well as in Wealth, in Adversity as well as in Prosperity, in Solitude as well as in Conversation. But chiefly in the latter, considering not only how Vain and Trifling, but also how Corrupt, Profane, and Irreligious the Conversation of the World for the most part is. Upon all which Considerations our Prudent Christian is very jealous of the World; and tho' he does not think it Necessary or Expedient to go out of it, or to forsake and abandon all Human Society, yet he is careful how he converses in it, and will be as little concern'd and engaged with it as he can, walking through it as through an *Infected Place*, with his Religious Antidotes and Preservatives about him. In short he passes the time of his sojourning here with fear, and his great and

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constant Care is so to use the World as not to abuse it, and that he may so pass through things Temporal, as finally not to lose the things Eternal.

3. As to his choice of his Worldly Condition, were he permitted to make it, his Wish no doubt would be *Agur's* Mediocrity, a convenient Provision between the Extremes of *Poverty* and *Abundance*. But every Man cannot be so Happy as to have his Wish in this World, tho' God be thanked, he may in the other. And therefore when we cannot be as we would be here, then is the Time and Opportunity of governing our selves. A little of the World will content a Wise Man; but if he should happen to have a great deal, he will then think himself concern'd to take care of two things. First, not to grow Vain and Proud of his Wealth, which of all sorts of Pride is the most Ridiculous and Ill grounded. And in the Second place not to be Covetous and Worldly-Minded; another Vice very incident to Rich Men, tho' in none so unreasonable and inexcusable as in them. And indeed it is more unreasonable in them than the other, there being some Pretence for their Pride, but none at all for their Covetousness. And therefore when Riches increase, he will not set his Heart upon them, but will rather consider where to bestow, and how to dispose of his Goods to the best advantage, not that of private Interest, but Public Beneficence, by doing what Good with them he can. And that not only in
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the way of necessary relief to those that are in down-right Want, but where he sees a good and a worthy Person labouring against the Tide of a hard World in strait Circumstances, there to open his hand, and endeavour to make his Condition Easy and Comfortable. And in this he Acts Wisely as well as Generously, by making himself a Friend of an Enemy, the *Mammon of Unrighteousness*, by sending his Wealth before him into another World; and since he cannot always keep it here, by so parting with it, that it may be his own for ever. But if his Condition be low and strait in the World (which is many a Wise and Good Man's Lot) then he studies the divine Art of Christian Contentment, and practices Resignation to the Will and Wise Providence of God (who only knows what is truly and upon the whole for every Man's good) and endeavours to contract not only his Expences, but his Desires too within the narrow compass of his Fortune, well knowing that Poverty and Riches depend more upon a Man's inward than his outward State, and that the contraction of his *Desires* is the true enlargement of his *Mind*. And that he values more than Riches, and by that he lives above the World whatever his Condition be in it, being neither Sollicitous for the future, nor Uneasy at the present, but in all things referring himself to God's gracious disposal, and possessing his Soul in Patience and Thankfulness. He knows that *the time is short*, and that it does not signify much what a Man's

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Condition is here, if it be Happy hereafter. And that being his main Concern he is not very difficult about the states of Life; as a Traveller whose thoughts are upon the end of his Journey, is not much concern'd about the Accommodations of the *Way*. That Traveller he takes himself to be, and so is pleas'd and contented upon very reasonable terms, a tolerable Condition in the World, and a comfortable Passage *out* of it, being all that he desires.

4. And thus I have gone through the several (at least principal) parts of *Self-government*, of all Governments the most difficult, and shewn how the Prudent Christian orders and acquits himself in them all. He considers himself as a little *Principality*, and the several Powers and Faculties of his Soul and Body as the several Subjects of it, whom he appoints all to their proper places, and contains within their just Bounds and Limits, and sees that every one discharges his respective Office. He finds he has great need of Government, having a disorder'd Nature, and living in a World where there are so many Temptations to provoke it, and therefore while others with a restless Ambition aspire after State and Grandeur, and the Distinctions of Quality, and think it the greatest Happiness to have Rule and

De Republicâ.
Lib. 9. *Ad finem Dialogi.*

Dominion over their fellow Creatures, our Prudent Christian aims at nothing greater in this World than to be able to govern the little *Commonwealth* within himself, τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ πολιτείαν, as *Plato* speaks, where

where over a lesser Charge he exercises a far greater and more noble Government.

5. And indeed how Happy would it be for the World if all those who have the Priviledge shall I say, or the Burden to govern others, would first learn thus to govern themselves. They would then have no exorbitant Passions to gratifie, or unreasonable Wills to indulge, or private Interests to serve, and so would be at perfect liberty to attend their charge, and under no Temptation to design or prosecute any thing but what was for the real good and advantage of it. And so on the other side, how Happy would it be if all those who have the more safe as well as easy part of being under Government, would also learn the same Lesson. For *Moral Duty* is the best Foundation for *Political Duty*, and the government of themselves would be the best Instructor to teach them to obey their Superiours, especially the *Civil Magistrate*, as being the Minister of God, and having his Power and Authority from God, the only Fountain of it, to whom they would then be subject not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake, as having their own Passions under due Order and Government, which are the Seeds of all Disloyalty and Rebellion. In short, he that governs himself well is fittest to Rule, and the same is also fittest to Obey; and thus while the govern'd and the governing part of the World did their Duty, the whole would be Order and Harmony, and they would be both of them Happy in themselves, and in one another.

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C H A P. VIII.

Containing a Perswasive to the Study of true Christian Wisdom, with some Prudential Advices relating to the Practice of Christian Life.

I. **H**AVING thus laid the Principles of Christian Wisdom, and shewn some of the good effects of it in the government of Human Life, one would think there should be no great need of a set Address to perswade Men to the Study of it, that seeming much the same thing as to perswade them to be *Well* or *Happy*. And yet since Wisdom her self complains of her Contempt and great Neglect in a very passionate Expostulation; *How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? And the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Prov. 1. 22.* As much as to say, how long will ye be imposed upon by the Deceits of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and not understand your own Interests, nor care to be made Wiser? And since common Observation and Experience shews this complaint to be but too just, considering the many Occasions Men continually give for it, by the Infinite Follies and Indiscretions which they daily commit, and the Wicked and Sinful Courses which they obstinately persist in, as Wisdom
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again complains, that they *set at naught all her counsel, and would none of her reproof*, ver. 25. And again, *that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord*, ver. 29. I say, upon these Considerations, a Perswasive to the study of Christian Wisdom is so far from being needless, that I do not know any thing, except it be the *Practice* of it, that is more necessary.

2. Now the first Consideration that I shall offer to recommend the study of this Wisdom, is, that it is an *attainable Wisdom*. There are a great many things which curious and inquisitive Men out of an immoderate Thirst after Knowledge, or the Reputation of it, imploy their search and study about, which after all, they can never hope to Master, but must sit down, if not with a contented, yet with an unavoidable ignorance of. Which indeed is a great fault in those that are guilty of it, however, the partial Favour which the World shews to any thing that looks like Learning, may hinder it from being censured as it deserves. But now this is not the Case as to the present Concern. *Christian Wisdom* is an attainable thing, and whose Acquisition depends not so much upon great Parts, as a willing and well temper'd Mind. Speculation indeed is infinite, and the *Well of Truth* has no Bottom, and as the Well is deep, so a great many have nothing to draw with, as the Woman of *Samaria* told her Divine Suppliant, *John 4. 11.* but 'tis not so as to Practical Wisdom, which is more like a *Fountain* than a *Well*, lying open and within common reach.

reach. Here every one that truly thirsts may draw, and he that will draw may drink ; for 'tis but for a Man to apply his Mind to the actual Consideration of what he Habitually knows, and the work is done. No extraordinary parts are here required, but some Care, and some Pains, and some Diligence there is, and with that it is to be attain'd ; an easie Price for so precious a *Treasure*. And 'tis at this very Price that Wisdom offers her self. *My Son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee : so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding : yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding : if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures : then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God,* Prov. 2. 1. Again, Wisdom expresses her self as if she were willing to be found, and even wanted to be sought after. *I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me,* Prov. 8. 17. Now this is a very encouraging Motive to perswade us to the study of Christian Wisdom that 'tis a thing attainable by our study, and that if we do in good earnest apply our selves to the search and study of it we shall not take labour in vain, as we too often do in the search of other things, but shall certainly reap the fruits of it. Men may seek for Silver, and not find it, and search for hid Treasures without being able to break in upon their dark Retirements, which is a great Damp and Discouragement

ment to all such Inquiries, and yet Men are not discouraged, but will search notwithstanding. How much more then should we search after Wisdom, when we are sure not to be disappointed in our *search*.

3. But may we not be so in our *finding*? That indeed is the Question, and upon this all turns. There are a great many things that are attainable by our labour, which are not worth our labour to attain; and which when we have them we find our selves disappointed *in* them. Now indeed if this be the Case here, I must own there is nothing whereon to ground our Perswasive to the study of Wisdom, but rather a great deal of Reason to dissuade *from* it, as well as from any other unprofitable study. And indeed one would think that Wisdom *were* so by the little esteem that is had of it in the World, and the far less Application that is made to the study of it, even among those that are studiously inclined, and whose Profession and Business is *Study*. All other Arts and Sciences are studied, and no labour is thought too much to make us even indifferently qualify'd in them; they have their Professors, and they have their Learners, and who is there almost that is not one or the other of them, but the School of Wisdom is but little frequented, and has but few Scholars, and that tho' she her self be the Professor that teaches there. So true is it what she complains, *They would none of my Counsel, they despised all my Reproof*, Prov. i. 30.

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4. By this one would think that Wisdom were not worth studying. But so far the contrary, that nothing more. For what is there that is worth studying, if *Wisdom* be not? Wisdom that shews a Man his true End, and directs him how and by what Means to attain it. That is of absolute necessity to a Good and Vertuous Life, and which alone (with the Grace of God) is sufficient to carry us through all the weary Stages of it, as being effectually serviceable to fortify and secure our Vertue against all Temptations. Wisdom that keeps the World in Order, and makes living in it a Blessing, that is the Parent of Laws, and the Foundation of Government, and the great Upholder and Sweetner of all Society. Wisdom that teaches a Man how to Obey, and how to Govern, even that ungovernable Creature *Himself*, to moderate his Passions, to dispose of his Affairs, to compose his Manners, to manage himself well in all States, Relations, and Circumstances of Life, and to regulate the whole course of it. In a word, Wisdom that teaches a Man to know *God* and *Himself*, and by the bright and shining Paths of Vertue leads him to Everlasting Glory and Happiness. Now what is there, or what can there be more excellent than this? *Vertue* must not be brought into competition with it, for that and Wisdom are both of a side. *Learning* cannot compare with it, since a Man may be Happy without that, and Miserable with it, neither of which can be said of Wisdom. *Riches* and *Honour* notwithstanding
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the regard that is paid to them, and to them that have the fortune to have them, are but pitiful things, that deserve not so much as to come into the Ballance with *Wisdom*. But if any one shall pretend to weigh them against it, let him hear how a wiser Man than himself states the Comparison as to one of them, and the same answer will serve for both. *Wisdom is a defence, and Money is a defence. But the excellency of Knowledge is, that Wisdom giveth life to them that have it, Eccles. 7. 12.* This it seems is the Advantage that comes by *Wisdom*, that we are conducted by it to our true End, and possess'd of Eternal Happiness. Which one single Consideration is enough to set *Wisdom* above all other things, let their Excellencies or Advantages be what they will as to this World. The whole of which as we learn from our Saviour cannot weigh with the worth of a Soul, nor consequently with that *Wisdom* whereby its Happiness is secured. And accordingly *Solomon* compares *Wisdom* to the great *Paradisiacal Elixir*, telling us that she is a *Tree of Life* to them that lay hold upon her, and thence pronounces him *Happy* that retains her, which is more than can be said of the whole World besides.

5. For this Reason it is that *Solomon* enlarges so much upon the Excellency of *Wisdom*, both *Absolutely* and *Comparatively*; and exhorts with a most Passionate Earnestness to the study of it. Telling us among other things already mention'd, that the Merchandize of it is better than
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the Merchandize of Silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold, and that all the things we can desire are not to be compared unto her, and in one word that it is the *principal* thing. And therefore says he, *get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding.* With all thy getting, as much as to say, whatever thou gettest, or with the expence of all that thou hast gotten, get Wisdom, as being of infinite more value than it all. In like manner as our Saviour says of the Treasure hid in the Field, *Mat. 13.* of the one pearl of great price which the Merchant bought with the price of all that he had. And indeed he is a wise Merchant that purchases Wisdom at any rate, tho' it be with the expence of all he has besides, as being assured that it can never be bought too dear. Gold may, as 'tis in the Proverb, and so may Land, and so may Honour and Greatness, and if we will believe our Saviour, so may the whole world, if the Price of it be a Man's Soul, but Wisdom can never be overbought, and 'tis a Contradiction for him that has it ever to repent his Bargain, for if he does 'tis plain that he has it not, since if he had it, he would understand the value of it better. Therefore again get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get Understanding. If we get Wisdom 'tis no matter what else we lose; and if we lose Wisdom it matters as little what else we get, and indeed it matters not much what we get or lose, if we get that which directs us in the way of Vertue, and brings us to Happiness, which gives us *Life*, and teaches us how to *Live.* 6. Espe-

6. Especially in such an Evil and Dangerous World as this is. The world is at all times a *dangerous Sea*, and he had need be a skilful Mariner that shall steer his course through the troublesome and threatening waves of it. But the present Age affords peculiar Difficulties and Temptations for Christian Vertue to contend with, and such as require a more than ordinary measure of Christian Wisdom and Prudence to qualify a Man to ingage with them, and *some* even to *speak* of them. However, this I hope we may have leave to say, that 'tis a very bad World, and a very hazardous Age even for a good honest Man to live in, and that whatever else is out of Danger, yet that Goodness and Honesty, Christian Vertue and Practice, yea and *Faith* too, were never in more. 'Twas both the Character and the Complaint of our former bad Times that Men did not live up to their Principles, but while they believ'd, or at least *profess'd* well, they acted ill, and were loose and lewd in their Practices. But now the great fault is that Men live too much according to their Principles, being as corrupt in *them* as they are in the *other*, having added bad Principles to their bad Practices for the Maintenance and Support of them. Nor are they content to enjoy these bad Principles to themselves as a Private *Fund* of Wickedness, but lest a due improvement of them should not be made to serve the Cause of Libertinism; take care to disperse and communicate them for Public Edification, that they may

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build themselves and others up, not in their *Holy Faith*, but in their *Prophane Infidelity*. We private Christians can only lament and complain of these things, and wish that they who *can* do more, *would*; but in the mean time what need have we of a good Light to guide and direct our steps in such bad and difficult ways, and accordingly to apply our selves to the study of Wisdom, not that *Worldly Wisdom* which is Foolishness with God, I mean the little Politic Cunning of *Time-serving*, of avoiding Trouble and Persecution by receding from our Principles (according to the Maxims of the *Gnostic Policy*) or of getting or keeping Preferments by unworthy Compliances, but of that true *Christian Wisdom* which will direct us at all times to refuse the Evil and chuse the Good, and teach us to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, those inordinate Desires of worldly things which tempt Men to prostitute their Consciences to their Advantage, and to live so Soberly, Righteously and Godly in this present world, that we may live for ever Happily in the world to come.

7. This is the *great Lesson* that Wisdom teaches, and 'tis infinitely worth our while to go to her School that we may learn it of her. For we can learn it no where else, and learn it we needs must, unless we will professedly set up for Self-Hatred, and neglect our selves in the most important Interest and Concernment that we have. Let us therefore take Wisdom for our Mistress, and submit our selves to her Discipline; and be
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as willing to learn of her as she is to teach. She invites us to come into her *Discipleship*. *Unto you O Men, I call, and my Voice is to the Sons of Men. O ye simple understand Wisdom, and ye fools be ye of an understanding heart. Receive my Instruction and not Silver, and Knowledge rather than choice Gold,* Prov. 8. 4, 5, 10. Again, *Hearken unto me O ye Children, for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear Instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not,* ver. 32, 33. And as she invites us to learn of her, so she tells us how happy they are who do. *Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my Gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord,* ver. 34, 35. But if neither of these will move us, neither her inviting us to learn, nor the Happiness of receiving her Instructions, yet at least let us be perswaded by the Calamity which she *threatens* to those that scornfully or carelessly refuse them. For thus Wisdom threatens her *Despisers*. *Because I have call'd, and ye refused, I have stretch'd out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof. I also will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh, &c.* Prov. 1. 24, 25, 26. And she further lets them know that since they would not take her directions, but prefer'd their own ways before hers, they should now have enough of them. *Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be fill'd with their own Devices,* ver. 31. And when Men have had their fill

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of their own ways, and have experienc'd the miserable Fruits of them, they will then wish they had follow'd the Counsel, and walk'd in the ways of Wisdom.

8. Which supplies us with this further Consideration to perswade us to the serious study of it, that if we do not now apply our selves to it, we shall hereafter most earnestly wish that we had. I know no other study hardly, the neglect of which we shall *finally* repent of. He that has not study'd *Mathematics* suppose, tho' he must look upon himself as the less accomplish'd, and may perhaps for some time while he lives, reflect upon himself with some blame for the neglect of so noble a Science; yet when he comes towards the concluding *Scene* of his Life, and that of Eternity begins to open, I presume he will not then think this a neglect worth his repenting of. And so as to other Studies. But he that has not applied himself to the study of *Wisdom*, will then most certainly wish that he had, repent of his Neglect, and condemn himself for it, and think it the greatest Happiness in the world if he could exchange all the Sciences he is Master of, be they never so many; for this one only, the great *Science of Life*. That which *Socrates* so devoted himself to, and for the intire regard he had to it, dismissing all others, and applying himself only to this, was pronounced by the Oracle to be the wisest Man upon Earth. A Judgment worthy of the God of *Wisdom*. For indeed this is the Science that will stand by us,
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and receive our last and best Approbation, when other things that are more in the vogue of the world, and make a greater shew and noise, and which we our selves perhaps once liked better when we knew less, will not find so great a share in our esteem. We shall not always relish *Notions*, new *Systemes* and *Hypotheses* will not always please us, the days will come when we shall say, *we have no pleasure in them*; but as for true Wisdom, that Wisdom which is from above, and will if duly study'd and practiced, translate us thither; this will please and relish with us to the very last, and more at last than ever. When other things leave us, Wisdom will stay behind with us, and more than supply their Loss; and when we have outlived the Pleasures of the World, or are too wise to relish them, then will Wisdom be in the greatest Esteem with us, and have most of our Love and Delight, as being the only thing of all our Acquirements whose Possession and Enjoyment too is Immortal.

5. When the Gaieties and Pleasures, the Vanities and Follies of Youth are over (for Folly will not always *please*) and even the more grave and serious Studies and Entertainments of Manhood appear to us but as more *solemn Trifles*, when Ambition and Politics shall grow out of date with us, and we shall not think our selves so much concern'd with the World as to be further engaged in any of its Plots or Intrigues, when even *Covetousness* it self, the last Folly that forsakes us, because it begins so late, and that often

settles upon the Dregs and Lees of Life, as upon a firm and immoveable ground, when yet even *this* cleaving Folly shall uncling and drop from us, when the World it self shall be a Burthen to us, and even we shall be a Burthen to our selves; then shall the remembrance of Wisdom be sweet to us, and we shall delight in her Conversation, and every step which we have taken in her ways will refresh us with a particular Pleasure, and afford us more true Comfort and Satisfaction than all the little things in the world besides. They that have been strangers to Wisdom before, and never had any regard to her Counsels, will be ready to claim acquaintance with her then, and to say unto Wisdom thou art my Sister, and to call Understanding their Kinswoman, Prov. 7. 4. when perhaps she will not be so forward to own them, as they are to pretend Familiarity with her. And therefore Happy is he that has contracted a Friendship with her in the days of his Health and Strength, that he may not then be disown'd. by her when he wants her Favour, nor then have it for his Business to make court to her when he should enjoy her love, nor then be concern'd to study and learn Wisdom, when he should be actually *Wise*, and have the Benefit and Comfort of her *Light*, to guide him through the valley of the shadow of Death. In order to which, we should do well always to carry about us that excellent Advice of St. Bernard which I take to be a great Rule of Christian Prudence. *Inde latari in*

*In the beginning of
of his 2d Epistle.*

Adoles-

Adolescentiâ unde in Senectute non pœniteat. To rejoyce and take Pleasure in those things when we are Young, which we shall not repent of in our Old Age.

10. Happy then is he that seeks Wisdom, and Happier yet is he that finds it. Happy is he that finds it early, that the main course of his Life may have the advantage of it ; and Happy is he (tho' not *so* Happy) that finds it late, who is *so* fortunate as even in his Old Age to grow wise, and have a just Sense and right No-

Plato *de leg.*
Lib. 2. In in-
gressu Dialo. i.

sophy, *φείνηται δὲ καὶ ἀληθεῖς δόξαι βαβαῦν, εὐτυχές ἔστω καὶ πρὸς τὴ γῆρας παρεγγύετο.* For indeed *so* excellent a Treasure is Wisdom, and *so* many other excellent things are contain'd in it, and *so* few there are that are ever possess'd of it, that at any time of our Day to find it, tho' it be in the Evening of it, must needs be accounted a great Happiness. But tho' he is a *Happy* Man that finds it then, Happier than he that finds a *Kingdom*, yet he is not a *Wise* Man that defers seeking for it till then, since that is not only to lose the benefit of it for the greatest part of his Life, but to run the hazard whether it shall ever be found. 'Tis one degree of Wisdom therefore to apply our selves *betimes* to the study and search of it, and he that does so has a double advantage, one in that he is like to have the longer use of it, and another in that he is also more likely to find it. The Season, the length of Time, the Diligence that is used, all naturally concur to make our early inquiries more success-

ful, besides the favourable influence of Heaven upon our Endeavours, Wisdom having left a particular Blessing upon the Head of all such diligent Inquirers, *They that seek me early shall find me*, Prov. 8 17. But alas Divine Wisdom, who accepts thy Invitation? Our early searches are for Pleasures, Wealth, Worldly Greatness, and Human Learning, and if we seek thee, 'tis in the Evening of Life, when we have hardly Light enough to find thee. When we have done living, then we are for knowing how to live. This is our Foolishness, and what a Foolishness is it, to study so late, what we are concern'd to know so soon.

II. I shall now conclude all with a few *Prudential Advices* relating to the Practice of Christian Life. Many Considerations of this kind have been touch'd upon already, and may be further gather'd from the several parts of the foregoing Discourse, and therefore the fewer will suffice here. Of which the first shall be that Caution of the Apostle, *to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise*, Eph. 5. 15. With Care, Caution, and Exactness, Warily and Heedfully, not with that Wariness which some speak of when they say, *if not Chastly, yet at least Cautiously*, that's a Maxim of worldly Prudence, used by those who would turn Religion into Politics, but with such a true conscientious Wariness as may serve to make us indeed Chaste and Pure, and every thing else that's good. And this the Apostle makes a part of Christian Prudence, intima-
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ting to us that circumspect walking is wise walking, *not as fools but as wise*, such walking as the Wisdom of God recommends to us as the Fence and Guard of our Innocence and Vertue, and such also as bespeaks us to be truly wise and considerate Men, duly apprehensive of our Condition, and of the Danger we are in. Which indeed must be allow'd to be very great, considering that besides the inordinate disposition of our own Corrupt Nature, and the wickedness of the world we live in, we have also the Apostate Angel, the Prince of Darknes for our Profest Enemy, even our Adversary the Deyil, *who as a roaring Lyon, walketh about seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. 5. 8. He does not stay till the Prey comes in his way, but seeks after it, and that not in one place, but walks *about*, seeking who is fit to be made a Prey of, whose Idleness or want of Employment, or whose Business, Trade, or Profession, or whose Temper or Constitution, or whose Age, or whose Carelesnes or Presumption may give him any advantage against him. He begins with us very *early*, laying his siege against us in our very Infancy. Then he tempts us with *sensible Objects*, by infusing the love of them into our Minds, for which purpose he has then a particular Advantage. For Reason is then in a dead Sleep, and Sense is altogether as much awake, being then in its greatest Perfection, by reason of the fineness of the Blood and Spirits, and the tenderness of the Parts, which yielding then very easily to the impressions of sensible
Objects

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Objects by degrees indear them to us, and lay the Foundation of that *Friendship with the world which is enmity with God*, Jam. 4. 4. Well, this Thoughtless Age passes, and is succeeded by Childhood and Youth. And then indeed Reason begins to awake, but (so fast was our sleep) we awake but slowly, and in all that time are not perfectly awake, but as it were between sleeping and waking, yawning and stretching, and rubbing our Eyes, like a Man waking out of a deep sleep, and which still hangs as a weight upon his Temples. But all this while our Passions are very strong, much too strong for our weak Reason then to govern, which accordingly the Devil makes his advantage of, and then tempts us with the baits of *Sensuality*, those Youthful Lusts St. *Paul* speaks of, 2 *Tim.* 2. 22. This Boisterous Season also blows over, and is follow'd by Manhood and the maturer Age. And now indeed Reason is stronger and our Passions grow cooler, and so the Devil changes his Temptations of *Fleshly Lusts*, for the more Manly Sins of *Pride* and *Ambition*, his own proper Vice, whereby he was betray'd himself, and wherewith he assaulted even the Son of God. And now he takes us up into an exceeding high Mountain, that of our own vain towering Imagination, and shews us the Grandeur and Glory of the World, and would fain perswade us what a Happiness it would be if we could but make a part in that glittering Scene of Vanity. Well, but neither this Season, nor this Temptation will last always. Our Sun
after.

after some stay in this *Solstice* begins to decline, *Old Age* comes on, the Winter of our Year, or rather the Evening of our short day. And now our Reason begins to grow heavy and sleepy again, as people use to do towards the *Evening*, and our Passions also flag with it, and begin to hang their wings, and like wearied Birds to make their flight nearer the Earth, as not being able to bear up in the Higher Regions. We are now no longer fit for the entertainments of Lust, or the aspirings of Ambition, and having lived a great while in the World, and seen what little dependance there is upon Kindness or Friendship, having lost some of our Friends, and proved the insincerity of the rest, this Experience of the World's Falshood, together with the natural sinking of our own Spirits, makes us grow Timorous and Jealous, Distrustful and Cunning, and Solicitous to make provision for our selves in this forlorn and forsaken state, and so now we stand fairly disposed for the Temptation of *Covetousness*. And accordingly the Devil now takes us by this Handle, the only one almost that we have left to be taken hold of by, and draws us into the snare of that sottish and poor-spirited Vice, the Vice of Covetousness, which now reigns the more absolutely over us, as having us almost intirely to it self, without much competition from other Vices. And thus our Adversary the Devil is always intent upon our ruin, meeting us at every turn of our Lives, and suiting his Temptations to the several States and Conditions of them.

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them. If we have any side weaker than other, he presently discovers it, and plants his Batteries against it. And therefore since we have such an Enemy lying in wait for us, and are on all sides surrounded with so many Dangers, it cannot but be a very advisable part of Christian Prudence to take heed to our selves, and to our ways, and as the Apostle says to walk *Circumspectly*, not as *Fools*, as those who understand not themselves, nor their Duty, nor their Danger, but as *Wise Men*, who know the worth of their Souls, and the infinite Hazards to which they are continually exposed, and from which (next to the Grace of God) nothing but an extraordinary Caution and Circumspection can secure them.

12. And because these Dangers are chiefly from *sensible Objects*, which supply the Devil with Materials for his Temptations, the next Prudential Advice for the advantage of Christian Life shall be another Apostolical Rule, *to walk by faith, and not by sight*, 2 Cor. 5. 7. To live and order our Conversation not by what we see of this World, but by what we believe and expect of the next. Indeed *Sense* is the general Measure of Life, and tho' some few may *think* and *reason* above it, yet most Men *live* by it, as much almost as those Creatures do which have no higher Principle. What Sense tells them, that they believe, and what Sense represents to them as Good that they chuse and embrace, and what Sense represents to them as Evil, that they refuse, and what neither pleases nor displeases Sense, that is as

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nothing to them. But this is not the way to live like *Men*, much less like *Christians*. For there are a great many things that are good and agreeable to Sense which are contrary to Reason and Religion. Not that Pleasure of Sense is in it self absolutely Evil as such; no, neither Religion nor Philosophy will allow that. But it becomes Evil in Inordinate Circumstances, on when it unfits us for, or deprives us of a greater Good. But even then when it does so, it is still as agreeable to *Sense* as when it does not. So that if we should follow Sense, and make that our Measure, chusing what Sense represents as Good, and refusing what Sense represents as Evil, we should quickly run into all the Disorder and Confusion imaginable. Even with respect to our *Bodies*, which would oftentimes take Poison as agreeable, and reject wholesome Physic as ungrateful, much more with respect to our *Souls*. There is a necessity therefore of renouncing this measure of Living, and of walking by another Rule, if we will walk in that strait way that leads to our End. We must not walk by *Sense*, no nor altogether by our *Reason* neither, so as to make that the measure of Truth, and to believe only what that can comprehend, but by *Faith*, by what God has reveal'd to us of the other World, and by what as Christians we believe of it. We should not *look at the things that are seen* (for there is nothing to be seen here but *Vanity, Sin, and Misery*) but *at the things that are not seen*, 2 Cor. 4. 18. Because the things that

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that are seen are Temporal, and so do not affect our Final State; but the things which are not seen are Eternal, and so the proper Objects of an Happiness that is never to expire. In short, we should not walk by *present appearances*, but have our Eye upon the other World, and reckon that only Good which serves to make us Happy *there*, and that Evil which serves to make us Miserable *there*, and by this means we shall pursue our true Good, and avoid our true Evil, which is the Sum of all that Christian Prudence is concern'd to do.

13. To further and assist us in which discreet Practice it may be a very proper and serviceable Resolution, *not to walk by Example, but by Rule.* For this is the right way to sever and divide Good from Evil, so as to avoid that which is truly Evil, and embrace what is truly Good. For in *Example* these things are often confounded, that being many times avoided as Evil which is truly Good, and that embraced as Good which is truly Evil. Which is also as applicable to the common Maxims, Notions, and Measures of the World, which is often Guilty of that Perverse and Corrupt Practice of calling Evil Good, and Good Evil, and of putting Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness. But in the *Rule* this Confusion is never committed, but Good and Evil are faithfully described to us according to their true and real Differences, and by plain and very distinguishable Colours. The *Rule* can never deceive us, *Examples* may. And therefore if we will walk right, and go directly on to our
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End, we should walk by Rule, the Rule of God's Word, and not by Example. Not that Example is not to be follow'd, for there are a great many good Examples, and which both deserve and require our Imitation, but that it is not to be follow'd *Absolutely*, unless we could find an Example as perfect as the Rule, which is not now to be expected. Indeed one such Example the World once had, and we have the greater Lines of it still in the Evangelical Records, and such an Example might be follow'd *Absolutely*, and therefore says he that gave us that Example, *He that followeth me, shall not walk in Darknes*, John 8. 12. But there is no such Example besides that may be follow'd *Absolutely*, nor ever was. And if no particular Example merely Human is *absolutely* to be follow'd, much less is Example in general, especially in this degenerate Age and corrupt state of the Church. Indeed in the Primitive times when Men generally endeavour'd to live as they believ'd, and to walk by their Rule, in so much that as *Origen* tells *Celsus*, even the worst Christians were far better than other People, 'twas much safer following Example than it is now. And yet even then, Example could not be set up as the Measure and Standard of Christian Life. But 'tis so far from that now, that one of the readiest ways of becoming a Good and Vertuous Man is to live *contrary* to the Example of the World, so very Wicked and Corrupt is it both in its Principles and Practices. And therefore tho' where-
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Lib. 3. Contra Celsum.

ever we see a good Example, we should do well to follow it, yet we should by no means set up Example as the Measure of Life, nor consider so much what Men generally do, as what by our Christian Rule is just and right and fit to be done, not minding the Road that is most beaten, but which is the rightest way to our End: Indeed in common Travelling, the most beaten ways are most likely to be right, because 'tis not to be supposed that so many Travellers should without Temptation take a wrong way to a Place. But in the Road of Life 'tis far otherwise. Here the more beaten any way is, the more reason we have to presume it false, that it is not that way which leads to Life, which our Saviour describes by its own narrowness, and by the fewness of those that find it.

14. But tho' we should not live by *Example*, yet we should do well to endeavour to live *Exemplary* Lives, and to do our Duty in the best manner that we can. This I have already consider'd as it is a Means to increase our *Future Happiness*, because Goodness being the natural Qualification for Happiness, the better we are the Happier we shall be; but I here consider it as 'tis a Means to the doing of our *Duty*, and the making us lead good Christian Lives. He that would hit the Mark, especially if he be at a great distance from it, commonly takes his aim above it, allowing for the sinking of his Arrow. Now this is our Case. We may be said to be at a great distance from our Duty, considering how natu-

naturally indisposed we are for the doing of it. And therefore the more our Moral Indisposition is, we should take our aim the higher. He that would Live *well*, should intend and endeavour to Live *very well*, and he that would be Good, should aim and endeavour to be *Excellent*, to excel not only others, but *Himself*. And there is this further Advantage in taking a high Aim, in designing Excellence and Perfection, because we shall then be the more sensible of our Defects, and more humbled for our coming so short of what we intended; and so what we want in the other degrees of Goodness, we shall in great measure supply and make up by our greater *Humility*, a very compensating and attoning Vertue, and which like *Charity* may be said to cover a *multitude of Sins*.

15. But that we may have the fewer to cover, and our Lives may be the more Christian, it would I am perswaded be another very adviseable Practice, *always to walk in view of our End*. By which you may understand, if you please, in the first place, what we commonly call our Latter End, meaning the Conclusion of this Mortal Life. For that also is a very good Practice, and by *Moses* made a particular part of Human Wisdom, to have this our End much in our Consideration. *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter End*, Deut. 32. 29. And as 'tis good to consider our own End, so is it also to consider the End of what we do, the final issue of our Actions. And there-

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fore says the Wise Son of *Sirach*, *Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss*, Ecclus. 7. 36. Which Rule has a particular Force and Use in remembering the End of a Wicked Life, and would supply us with an excellent and indeed unanswerable Argument against leading such a Life. But however that which I chiefly mean here by our End, is neither the End of Action, nor the End of Life, but that End for the sake of which we both live and act, I mean our *chief good* or Sovereign Happiness. That we should walk in view of this our End, and have it before us as near as we can in every deliberate step of our Christian Progress. Once in general to have proposed it to our selves, and once in general to have refer'd our Actions to it, seems not to satisfy the *Prudence*, however it may be thought to do the *Duty* of a Christian. This indeed is what every Prudent Christian is supposed to have done, *viz.* to have proposed the chief Good as his End, but the same Christian Prudence will also direct him to renew and repeat the proposal of this End as often as conveniently he can. For tho' the first general Act whereby he has made this Proposal, stands good till it be revoked by a contrary Act; so that a Man is not absolutely bound to have his End actually *always* before him, nor to have an Actual regard to it in every step of his Life, since an *Habitual Reference* of his Actions to their End, (as of Eating and Drinking suppose to the Glory of God) may as we say, be thought sufficient, yet

yet I should think it must needs be a very *adviseable* Practice, and very much for the advantage of Christian Life, very frequently to set our End before us, even under the formal Consideration of an *End*, and to direct and refer our Actions to it. For the having our End before us and in our View, that far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory, that Incorruptible Crown that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us, must needs quicken our Devotion, and inflame our Zeal, and inspirit us with new Life and Vigour in the running our Christian Course, and help us to despise, and with ease to overcome all those *vain* Impediments which the World, the Flesh, or the Devil, shall throw in our way to let and hinder us. For what shall separate us from our End, or turn us out of the right way to it, if we thus keep it in our View? Shall the Lust of the Flesh, or the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life? Or shall *Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword*? No, I could go near to say with the Apostle, *I am perswaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth*, Rom. 8. 38. That neither the Hope of Life, nor the Fear of Death, nor Angels, nor the Good, because they will never attempt it, nor the Bad as not able to effect it, nor yet the great ones of the Earth giving us Trouble and Distress, and endeavouring to oppress us in a Righteous and Religious Cause, neither the things which we

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enjoy or endure at present, or may hereafter be concern'd with, neither the height of Honour, or Preferment, nor the depth of Ignominy or worldly Disgrace, nor any other Creature (all Sin being from the love of some *Created* good, and a turning to the Creature from God) shall be able to separate us from our End, or disappoint us of its Enjoyment, if we keep our Eye intent upon it, and have it in our view all the way of our *Christian walk*. For indeed the Excellence of it is so transcendent, and so infinitely outshining all Created Greatness or Glory, that nothing of this World can stand together with it, or shine in its Light, any more than a feeble Star can shine in the presence of the Mid-day Sun. The greater Light Eclipses and Swallows up the lesser, and so it is here, so that we must lose the greater Light before we can be dazzled with the lesser, intermit the view of our chief good before any Creature can appear considerable enough to tempt us, as all those do who Sin. Which agrees very well with that Notion of the Schools, of Sins being an Aversion from God, and a Conversion

In Primam Secundam.
Tom. 1. Diff. 5.

to the Creature, or as *Vasquez* will have it (at least in all Mortal Sin) the *placing our End in the Creature*. But we have a strong Preservative against this while we actually attend to our chief Good, and walk in the view of it. 'Tis this which is to render us Impeccable hereafter, and will in great measure do so here while we attend and have actual regard to it. And accordingly

ingly *Moses's* refusing the *Egyptian Crown*, and preferring the Reproach of *Christ* before it, is resolv'd into this, that he had *respect* to the Recompence of Reward, *Heb. 11. 24.* And our Saviour *Christ* himself is said to have endured the Cross, and despised the Shame for the Joy that was set before him, *Heb. 12. 2.* 'Twas this that carried him through his Sufferings, and made him more than Conqueror in them all. Let us set the same *Joy* before us, place our *Crown* in our View, keep our Eyes fix'd and steady upon its Glories, and then what shall we not Despise, what shall we not Endure? Many things may divert us from the Contemplation of our End, but nothing will be able to separate us from it, or make us act against it, while we have it in our view.

16. Well but we should consider the *Sorrow* that is set before us as well as the *Joy*, that Indignation and Wrath, that Tribulation and Anguish that shall be upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil, *Rom. 2. 8, 9.* God has set both these before us, and they are the Motives of the Gospel, and of all Motives the strongest. For tho' the Laws of God need nothing but their own internal Excellency and Reasonableness to indear them to the love, and recommend them to the practice of Reasonable Creatures, yet lest we should not consider this, or not consider it enough, and knowing that we are made up of *Passion* as well as *Reason*, the better to insure our love, and secure our Obedience to his Laws, God has added

to them the encouragement of the greatest *Rewards*, and lest they also should fail, he has thought it further necessary to guard and fence them with *Punishments*, to keep us from transgressing those Rules which is so much our Interest to keep. And all because he would have us Happy in the keeping of them. For which he has taken the most effectual course that can be imagin'd. All other Arguments and Motives may be got over, if our Reason cannot fairly answer them, our Passion will break through them. But there is no answering the Argument of *Everlasting Life and Death*. Nor can the Devil make any manner of reply to it, when we seriously oppose it to any of his Temptations. All that he can possibly do to any purpose is to tempt and perswade us not to believe it, as he did our first Parents, *Ye shall not surely dye*, Gen. 3. 4. or at least to divert our Consideration from it. But while these things are firmly believ'd, and actually consider'd, 'tis impossible that any thing should prevail against them. Let us therefore seriously *consider* them, particularly the Motives of the second kind, for the first I have spoken of already. Let us consider what it is to fall off from our *End*, to lose our Supream good, and what it is to be everlastingly Miserable. That indeed of it self, the mere privation of so sovereign a good, is enough to make us so, not to mention those other positive Punishments whereby the Scripture expresses the future Misery of the Wicked, and what in Opposition to the
other

other we call the *Pain of Sense*. It is true indeed that this is but a more servile Argument, but since it is an Argument that God has thought fit to make use of, and which is in it self fit to work upon such Minds as will not be wrought upon by more Ingenuous Motives, as also to strengthen and confirm those that will, we should do well and wisely to set it before us in the brightest Light, and the most lively Colours. And therefore says the Apostle, *Knowing the Terror of the Lord, we perswade Men*, 2 Cor. 5. 11. That is, we endeavour to perswade Men by it. And if he thought this a fit Argument whereby to perswade others to the Practice of their Christian Duty, it must needs be as fit an Argument for every Man to perswade himself by, that by true Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ he may *fly from the wrath to come*.

17. Some instead of flying from the wrath to come, use Arts and Ways to make that fly from *them*, putting off the thoughts of the Evil Day by Business, Company, Drinking, and all the Diversions of a loose and voluptuous Life. And others again that are more thoughtful, are apt to intrench and fortify themselves against the expectation of future Punishment, especially such as is everlasting, by the consideration of the *Infinite goodness of God*. It is true indeed that God is Infinitely Good, and we can never think or speak too highly of his Goodness. But however, the fault of those that plead it as an Argument

against the Eternity of future Punishments seems to be this. They consider the Goodness of God apart by it self, and as it is simply and absolutely in it self, and not as it stands in Conjunction with his other Attributes, and is to make a Comfort and a *Harmony* with them, which would very much alter the face and state of the matter. For tho' the goodness of God be in it self Infinite, absolutely consider'd, and so nothing can be said too great concerning it; yet when it is consider'd as in the Society of his other Perfections, and *Harmonizing* with them, such as his Wisdom, Holiness, Justice and Truth, it must needs receive such Restrictions and Limitations from them as are necessary to make it comport with them. Or if you will, these Men do not sufficiently distinguish between the *Goodness* of God and the *Emanations* or *Actings* of his Goodness. For though the Goodness of God be Infinite, yet the actual Exercises and Emanations of his Goodness may and must needs be limited, not only by the capacity of the Creature, which being Finite can admit of nothing but what is so, but also by the very Divine Perfections themselves. For if God should exert and display his Goodness infinitely and without any Limits; there would be no room for the exercise of his Wisdom, or of his Justice, or of his Truth, &c. And there would be a perpetual Discord and Clashing between the Divine Perfections. And therefore 'tis necessary, that tho' the Goodness of God be Infinite in it self, yet that he should exercise and display this Goodness

ness no further than is consistent with his other Perfections, which are as Infinite as that, *viz.* his Wisdom, Holiness, Justice, and Truth; and consequently that the Emanations of his Goodness should be limited and stated according to certain Rules and Measures, tho' the Principle be in it self Infinite. An Illustration of which matter we have in the Redemption of the World by the Death of Jesus Christ. 'Twas the Infinite Love and Goodness of God that moved him to send his only Begotten and dearly Beloved Son to Dye for our Sins, and the Merit of Christ's Death and Passion is also Infinite, and yet in the actual Application both of the one and of the other, regard is had to certain Conditions and Qualifications upon which the Benefits of each are dispens'd and confer'd. And so in like manner, tho' the Goodness of God be Infinite and knows no Bounds, yet 'tis fit he should have regard to his other Perfections in the actual exercise of it, which therefore may be limited, tho' the other be not. And therefore upon the whole there is no Consequence in the Argument that is drawn from the Goodness of God either against his punishing of Sin, or the Eternity of those Punishments which are threatned to it. And accordingly a Prudent Christian will not venture so great a concern as the everlasting welfare of his Soul upon so frail and dangerous a Bottom, but will think the Goodness of God a much better Argument to *lead him to Repentance*, than to encourage him to presume upon any Favour or Indulgence to the *Impenitent*. 18. And

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18. And as we should thus walk in view of our *End*, and of the great Danger and Misery of falling from it, so I think it may be no less adviseable to walk in the view of our *way*, by way here not meaning the way which we *should* walk in, for that belongs properly to the Head of *Circumspection*, but the way which we actually *do* walk in, be it right or wrong, good or bad. That we should keep this our way in our view, have our Eyes intent upon it, and frequently consider what manner of Life it is that we lead. For I am perswaded that one great Reason why Men live no better Lives than they do, notwithstanding all they know, and all that they are continually put in Mind of, and all the good Resolutions which they from time to time take up, is because they do not enough consider what kind of Life it is that they live, but walk on like Men in their Sleep, without minding where they are, or whither they are going. For if they did duly observe their Practices, and consider the courses wherein they are engaged, they would find them to be so different from those they *should* take, so contrary to their End, and the Consequences of them to be so intolerable, that they would not be able to satisfy themselves to go on with them as they do. We should therefore be much in observing the Lives that we lead, and are actually leading ; and like wary Travellers often make a stand, and consider the way that we are in, and as often ask our selves this Question, whither will this way lead me ? Will it lead

lead me to my End or no? What do I think of my self, and the Life that I lead? Will this way of living ever bring me to Heaven? If I think it will, let me ask my self again whether it be not Fondness and Partiality to my self that makes me think so? Or (which is the best way to discover whether it be or no) whether I should think the same of another Man, whom I knew to lead such a sort of Life as I do. If I think I should, then indeed I have the more reason to depend upon the truth of the same Judgment with reference to my self, and yet however, lest I should here judge too favourably, I ought still to think my self concern'd to endeavour to grow as much better as I can. But if upon the whole I think that the present Life which I live will *not* bring me to Heaven, since I am to be supposed to be truly willing to go thither, and cannot possibly put off the natural Desire of Happiness, then I must needs think my self under the most pressing Necessity and Concern to change and reform my Life. To which therefore the Consideration of our ways, and the minding what manner of Lives we lead, is, if not an absolutely effectual Means, yet at least a very serviceable Expedient. Being indeed the very same with that of the *Psalmist*, *I thought on my ways, and turn'd my feet unto thy Testimonies*, Psal. 119. 59.

19. And now we are got into the good and right way, I do not know any one more effectual Means to fix and preserve us there, than to keep our walk towards the *midst* of it, pretty far in
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within the lines, so as not to tread upon the *Edges*. My meaning is, that we should not go to the outside of what is lawful, but rather set our selves in all our Actions at the greatest Distance from Sin, and abstain from all the Appearances, Occasions, and Beginnings of it. But chiefly from the *Beginnings*. The full Accomplishings, and final Consummations of Wickedness we have all a natural Horror of, and when that is the thing proposed to us (as whether we shall commit Murther, or Adultery, &c.) we easily reject the Temptation, and can hardly suppose it possible that we should be guilty of such heinous Offences. But we have not the same dread upon us of the first Beginnings, and of the things that have a Tendency to those grosser Crimes. So then we are easily perswaded to *begin*. And when we have once made an entrance, the progress is easy, and grows easier and easier. For the next degree, being but a degree beyond it, carries as little Horror in it as the first, and so the next to that being but a degree further carries the like Appearance, and so the rest that follow, we measuring every degree not as we should do by all the preceding ones which it presupposes and contains, but only by the last which it immediately exceeds, considering it only as a degree further than that, and so as a small thing till by degrees we slide unawares into the Commission of those Sins, which look'd frightful, and would have *choak'd* us in the lump, but being thus minutely *chew'd*, and taken by piece-meal, are easily *swallow'd*.

20. But

20. But there is another thing to be consider'd in the account of this Matter, and that is, that the first Liberties which we take, the first Beginnings which we indulge, and the first Approaches which we make to any Sin (especially those wherein the Lusts of the Flesh are concern'd) do very much *inflame* our Passions, raise our Appetites, which before lay quiet, and increase our Desires of the forbidden Object, so that it now becomes harder to abstain than it was at first, and we might with much more ease have forborn the whole, beginning and all, than forbear making a further Progress after we have once begun. And then since Prudence directs us to chuse the lesser Evil rather than incur a greater, 'tis plain that wherever we must abstain, the same Prudence advises to abstain throughout, even from the very first Beginnings, that being the least Trouble. For there is no Reason why we should make our Duty more difficult or painful to us than it is. But however if *Pain* were all, it were another matter, we might be at liberty to deal with our selves as we please. But there are two things more to be consider'd, one is, that those first Beginnings are in their degree also *Criminal*, and so by not abstaining from them we become the less Innocent, some guilt of the Crime being contracted even by *them*. The other is, that the greater Pain makes a greater *Danger*, I mean the danger of Compliance, which increases according as the Pain does which we avoid by it. And consequently where the forbearance is more painful
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and uneasy, as it is from going further after we have once begun, there we are in greater danger of complying with the Temptation, and of being betray'd into Sin, as thousands actually are by yielding to the first degrees of it, who otherwise would have triumph'd over it with ease, at least would have maintain'd their Innocence. Therefore the wisest and the safest way is *not to begin*, that being true of all Sin which *Solomon* observes of *Strife*, when he says, *The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water*, Prov. 17. 14. which is easily stop'd, or rather prevented from running at first, but being once let out, the Passage grows more open, and the Stream more difficult to command. Therefore says he, *leave off Contention, before it be meddled with*. That is, do not meddle with it at all, but abstain intirely from it, and have nothing to do with it, it being much easier to do so, than to govern your self, or keep a temper in it. So true is that good Old Rule, *Principiis Obsta, withstand the Beginnings*, which tho' the saying of a Heathen, is what I would also commend for good *Christian Advice*. And indeed I do not know a more wholesome and useful Rule in all Morality than this is, and which if it were duly observ'd and follow'd, would contribute more to the Regulation of Human Life, that would either better, preserve, or restore its Innocence. But the Unhappiness is that it is not follow'd. Men inconsiderately rush on upon the *first Liberties*, thinking at that time perhaps to go no further, but their Passions being

ing warm'd by this Treacherous Approach, they find they have now more mind to go further than they had at first to begin. And so they are by degrees transported to do what at first they never design'd, and then complain that the *Grace of God* did not preserve them from falling, when they placed their own feet upon *slippery* ground.

21. But for the full and perfect Observation of this great Prudential Rule of abstaining from the *first Beginnings*. We must carry it beyond our outward Actions, and extend it to our *Thoughts*, and the due Care and Government of them. For *there* are the first Beginnings of Evil, and there it is that Lust conceives and brings forth Sin, that Sin which afterwards appears and has its last finishings in our outward Actions. And therefore if we will stop the first Beginnings, we must begin there where all Sin begins, where the original Springs of all Evil rise. We must in plain words *govern our Thoughts*, keep a strict guard over them, and not entertain any that are either directly Sinful, or of a Sinful Consequence and Tendency. We must cleanse the inside of our Vessel, and keep our Hearts with all diligence, because out of it are the Issues of Life and Death, all that tends to the one or the other. And if the Springs and Wheels are once set right, the outward Motions that depend upon them will be right of course. And for this Reason our Saviour extends the Morality of his Gospel even to our *Thoughts*, forbidding even to look upon a Woman in a Lustful way; and this he does not
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only with a design to reach the *inner* Man, and subject it to the law of God (in opposition to the Pharisees who confined the Obligation of it to *Overt Acts*) but also to secure the *Outward*. According to that other Admonition of his, that we should cleanse the inside of the Cup and Platter, that the outside may be clean also. It is therefore a very Necessary and Fundamental Rule of Christian Prudence, and the best Specification of that general one of *Abstaining* from the *Beginnings*, to keep our Thoughts in due order. Nor ought we to look upon this as a further Burthen or Imposition upon us, or complain of it as a hard Saying, but rather chearfully and gladly accept it as a Means to facilitate and secure our Duty, which without a restraint upon these first Liberties, would be much more difficult to Practice. And therefore with regard to this Difficulty, and our own Infirmary, and the Danger ensuing from both, of proceeding further to the fulfilling of Sin when once consented to in the first Beginnings, the Gospel has taken care to *lay the Ax to the root of the Tree*, and so if we will act wisely, should we too. We should kill Sin in its Root, that is in the Heart. For tho' the Occasions of Sin are *without*, yet the original source of it is *within*, and there it is that every Wise and Prudent Christian will employ his chief Care, well knowing that a little Care employ'd in purging the Heart signifies more than the strictest Methods for ordering the exterior Life.

22. I am now upon the larger and more topical part of my Subject, and it would be an infinite Task to say all that might be said upon it, and perhaps not a very little one to lay out what I have further to say distinctly and at full, as in the foregoing Periods I have done. And therefore what Considerations I think proper to add, I shall throw together in a *Summary way*, leaving the enlargement upon them to the private consideration of those who have a serious Concern for their present Goodness, and future Happiness, and are willing to receive such Helps as may further and assist them in the prosecution of two such great and worthy Ends.

23. It is without doubt an invaluable Happiness to have had at first a good *Education*. They who by the Grace and good Providence of God have had it, ought to think themselves concern'd in Prudence to improve that early Culture, to cherish and nourish the Seeds of Goodness which were then sown in their Hearts, and to practice upon the Principles which they then receiv'd. And as for them who have not had that Blessing, they are the more concern'd to supply that Defect by their own greater Application, and with a more particular Care and Diligence to *exercise themselves unto godliness*. And both the one and the other would do well to make Religion the great Business and Concern of their Lives, and not as most do a *By-work*, or at best a more solemn Formality. For the making Religion our

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Study and Business is the way to thrive and to arrive at Perfection in it, as appears in the Arts and Sciences, wherein Men owe their Proficiency to the Pains that they take in them. 'Twould be the same in the *Science of Living*, if that were as much studied. For our further improvement in which we should do well to have a care of contracting *ill Habits*, and be as careful to nourish and strengthen our good ones, till Religion comes to be a *Pleasure* to us, so that 'tis our Meat and Drink to do the Will of God. For nothing fixes and detains us so much in any thing, be it Good or Evil, as the *Pleasure* that we find in it. And when once we come to find that Pleasure in doing Good, which we used to do in doing otherwise, we need not then Sin for the sake of *Pleasure*, but when we are tempted to it, may oppose Pleasure to Pleasure, a greater to a less, which is a sufficient answer to any Temptation of that kind. And yet to strengthen it we may further consider that there is another Pleasure in Religion besides that which arises from Habit, namely, a Natural and Intrinsic Pleasure, a Pleasure that derives from the nature of the thing, from the Agreeableness it has to the Rational part of our Nature, and its conformity to the Mind, which never feels her self so well, or so much at ease as when in the way and order of Religion, which is the natural state of the Soul. But pleasure can affect only those that feel it, and to those that do not, will be but a dry

dry insipid Argument. But however, we are all Rational Creatures, and those who have not this experimental *Sense*, have yet *Reason* to convince and persuade them. And let them then consider the great *Reasonableness*, and *Profitableness* of Religion; Godliness as the Apostle says being *profitable unto all things, as having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, 1 Tim. 4. 8.* One great part of which Profitableness is the Testimony and Satisfaction of a *good Conscience*, that excellent fruit of a good Life. For however doubtful some may be as to the Pleasure which directly and immediately accompanies the Acts of Religion, yet no reasonable Man can doubt but that Pleasant or not Pleasant in it self, it must needs be a great satisfaction to a Man upon the *After-view* to think that he has done his Duty, and acted according to the Principles of right Reason and the truest Wisdom. But if neither the Pleasure, nor the Reasonableness, nor the Profitableness of Religion will prevail with us, then let us consider the great Evil of *Sin*. How Evil it is in it self, and how Evil in its Consequences, and how much hated by God, the best Judge both of Good and Evil. So hated, that God found it not consistent with his Holiness and Justice absolutely to pardon it, or to let it go wholly unpunish'd, but that he might honourably pardon it to the Sinner, thought fit first to punish it in his own Son. He did not think fit to pardon it without a satisfaction, such

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a valuable Consideration as might repair the Injury done to his Majesty, Authority, Law, and Government, and be an equivalent to the Punishment of the Sinner that had offended against them. And this satisfaction must be a satisfaction of Infinite Value, even the Death and Sacrifice of his own Son. Nor will this do neither, without the *Repentance* of the Sinner, as the condition to qualify him to receive benefit by it. So great is the Evil of Sin. But if we are not sufficiently sensible of its Evil from the *Satisfaction* required for it, we may further consider the *Punishment* which in case of Impenitency is yet *threatned* to it, which is no less than Everlasting Misery. And here stop a while and think what a great Evil that must be which has everlasting Misery for its Punishment, and that by the order and appointment of God, who is infinitely Good, and has shewn himself to be so by sending his Son to Dye for us, and who is so far from delighting in the *Death* of a Sinner, that he bestow'd upon him that very Son of his that he might *Live*. But to make this Consideration of the great Evil of Sin weigh the more with us, we should do well to lighten as much as we can the other Scale of the Ballance, by considering the vanity, the emptiness, the shortness, the uncertainty, the unprofitableness, the utter nullity of all those Pleasures and Profits which are pleaded as Inducements to the Commission of it. Upon which account it is call'd by the Apostle, an *unfruitful work*, Eph.

5. 11. as turning to no real Benefit or Advantage. And again says he, *what fruit had ye, &c.* Rom. 6. 21. As much as to say what were ye the better for it, you are many ways infinitely the worse, but shew me one way wherein you are the better. What can you shew? The Pleasure is gone already, and the Profit will go shortly, but the guilt remains, which will turn all the Pleasure of Sin to Bitterness, and all the profit of it to Loss. All the Pleasure of Sin perishes in the Enjoyment, and all the gain of it will be loss in the End, whereas the Practice of Religion is both Pleasant and Profitable in the way, and in the End too. Or if there be any Pain or Suffering attending the Practice of Religion (as through our own Lusts or the Malice and enmity of others sometimes there is) yet we should consider that the Pains and Sufferings to which Religion exposes a Man, soon expire, and when they are over, the Pleasure and the Happiness of it remains for ever. Whereas in Sin and Wick- edness 'tis quite otherwise, where that which passes away is the *Pleasure* and the *Profit*, and that which remains is the *Guilt* and the *Misery*. In which respects as well as many others, we must needs acknowledge that to be exceeding true which the Wise Preacher says, that *Wisdom excells Folly, as far as Light excells Darknes*, Eccles. 2. 13. And since the Disproportion is so vastly great, how can it be any Question with us whether we shall chuse Wisdom and Vertue,

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Life and Happiness, before Folly and Vice, Death and Misery. Here we should consider that the latter of these, *Death* and *Misery*, is no way eligible in it self. And one would think it should be as little eligible for the sake of any thing else. For what Sense is there in chusing everlasting Misery as a *Means* to an *End*? And yet that Men do in some sense chuse it, is the Ground and Supposition of God's Expostulation by the Prophet, *Why will ye dye?* Ezek. 33. 11. This supposes that they *will* Death, as indeed in some sense they do, as chusing those Ways and Courses to which they know Death is annex'd, and chusing to run the hazard of everlasting Death rather than not take, or leave those Courses. Which indeed constructively is to will and chuse Death, tho' not for it self, yet for the sake of those Courses, or rather the pleasure which they find in them. But then consider that this is so absurd and extravagant a Choice, that God himself who knows all things stands amazed at it, and demands a Reason for it, in that passionate Expostulation, *Why will ye dye,* as well knowing that no good Reason can be given for a choice so desperate and void of Reason. Then as to *Folly* and *Sin* the way and means to Death and Misery, consider again that this is no more eligible for it self than Misery is, nor does any Man chuse it for its own sake, but for the sake of that Pleasure or Profit which attends it. If therefore you are either tempted or prevail'd upon to
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commit Sin, this must be your Motive. But then consider again whether it be adviseable for you acting as a reasonable Creature, to do a thing wherein there is so much Evil, and which intails so much Evil upon you, for a little transient Pleasure or Profit, especially considering that both the Pleasure and the Profit on the other side are so infinitely greater. But the Pleasure and Profit of Sin are present, whereas, &c. And is it then such a mighty advantage to be *present*, that you should sell an invaluable Reversion of Happiness for a *Triste* only because *present*? Do you do so in the things of this World, or would you not be accounted a Mad Man if you did? Most certainly. But yet however, if the *presence* of a thing be of so much weight with you, do but by a vigorous and active Faith, that Faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, render the future Pleasures and Advantages of Religion (for a great many of *them* are present too) present to your Mind, and your Objection is answer'd in its own way. But to draw towards a Conclusion; if we would live and act like Christians, and be truly Wise and Good, we should set the Gospel of Jesus Christ before us, with the great Example of its Author, study the imitation of it, and form our Manners and our Minds too upon it, and endeavour to be as Wise in *our* Generation, as the Men of the World are in *theirs*, be as diligent in prosecuting our true and great End,

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as they are in the pursuance of their false and little ones, shew an equal Wisdom in an infinitely more concerning Interest, And as they are intent upon the *present*, and solicitous to provide for the *short future* of an uncertain Life, so should we be as intent upon the World to come, and as much concern'd to provide for that future, which will in a little time be present, and never past. For this purpose we should retire as much as conveniently we can from the World, and have as little to do with it, lay aside every weight, and every incumbrance, and not be troubled about the *many things*, that we may the more quietly and intirely attend upon the *One thing necessary*. Not that I am now pleading for a state of *Hermitical* Solitude, not understanding the Agreement of such a state to Human Nature, nor what Authority Men have so to bury themselves alive, and to excommunicate themselves from Human Society, as not to do or receive any good from it; only I think that so much of Solitude and Retreat as serves to disingage a Man from the Affairs and Incumbrances of the World; and places him out of the Noise, Hurry, and Bustle of it, and out of the way of its Temptations, must needs be a great advantage to a Religious and truly Christian Life, as well as to other Improvements. Solitude is the proper *School* of Wisdom, and there it is that she delights to teach. Tho' sometimes because Men will not go to *her*, she is fain to come to *them*, and to find them out where

where they are, and then for Invitations sake it is that she cries without, and utters her voice in the streets, in the chief places of concourse, in the openings of the gates, *Prov.* 1. 20, 21. But 'tis in Retirement that she loves to teach, because there her Instructions can be better heard and attended to. *I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her,* *Hos.* 2. 14. Conversation, and being much abroad may teach us to know the World, and something of that is necessary, but 'tis Solitude and Retreat that must bring us acquainted with our selves. For to know our selves we must converse much with our selves. Therefore let us *retire*, and when we are alone, let us think and remember that we are *not* alone, but that God is with us, and sees us, in whom we live, move, and have our Being. And therefore let us think and act as before him, and in his All-being and All-seeing Presence, to whom all Hearts are open, all Desires known, and from whom no Secret is hid. By which means our Solitude will have all the safety and security of Company, without the Snares, Temptations, and Interruptions. And here let us think much of *Eternity*, and the little Distance we are from it, of the Future Judgment, and the Two Final Sentences of the last Day, of the Glorious things that are spoken of the City of God, and of the unspeakable Misery of being for ever Banish'd from his Beatific Presence, and of the Wisdom of preparing for the former, and taking all possible

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able care to avoid and prevent the latter, and finally of the Thoughts which we shall have of all these things when we come to *Dye*. Every Man is Wise then, and has a right and just sense of things. Let us endeavour to have the same now, and to live as we shall then wish we had, which indeed is the sum of all Christian Prudence.

24. These Considerations concern Christians in general. But now to those of our own Communion I have Three things to offer. First, That they value their high *Privilege*, and neither forget nor neglect to *Praise* and Magnify the goodness of God to them for so great a Happiness, for their being Members of a Church whose Frame and Constitution is every way so excellent, which is so Sound and Orthodox in her Faith and Doctrine, so Primitive in her Discipline and Government, and whose Service and Worship is so full of Decency, Gravity, and the most serious and solemn Devotion. Wherein may be enjoy'd all the Advantages of Christian Edification, both as to Knowledge and Goodness, and wherein every Christian is not only sufficiently, but abundantly furnish'd with the Means that lead to his End; so that it must be his own inexcusable Fault if ever he misses it, I might say perhaps, if he be not as *Wise* and as *Good* a Man as any in the World. And therefore as on the one hand I can see no reason why any Wise and Prudent Christian should separate from us upon the pretence of
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of greater Edification, so on the other I should think it a strange Stupidity and Ingratitude for any to joyne with us, and not be sensible of the Blessings of our Communion, so as to thank God that his *Lot is cast in so fair a ground*, and that he is thereby put in so advantagious a way of obtaining so *goodly an Inheritance*.

25. The next thing is to be *stedfast* in her *Communion*, and truly *Zealous* for it. And that notwithstanding the Odious Character which we may bring upon our selves by it, of being *High-Church-Men*. What that Distinction, or the Faction which is Built upon it means, I profess I do not well understand, nor shall I here trouble my self to inquire. All that I think fit to say to it at present is this, that if by *High-Church-Men* they mean any thing else than heartily and sincerely well affected to the Constitution of the Church of *ENGLAND*, as by Law Establish'd, we disown the Title. But if they mean *that*, we not only own that we are in that sense *High-Church-Men*, but glory in it, tho' at the same time we think it a very Improper as well as Odious Name, because such a *High-Church-Man* is really no more than a *Church-Man*, since every true Church-Man ought to be so affected. And I further add, that if they who give us this Title are not so affected, then they are not Church-Men; and if they are, then they are as much *High-Church-Men* as we. Tho' I think *neither* ought to be call'd by that Name, nor do I understand

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stand any good ground for this Amusing Distinction, nor what End it can serve but to Weaken and Divide that Church within it self, which is found too strong for the Assaults of its open and profess'd Enemies. But we are no further concern'd in this Division, than only to lament and condemn it. We are the same as we were formerly when no such Knavish Distinction was known; their calling us by a new Name does not make us other Men, and what Division is made from us, the Faction that is set up against us being a Party detach'd from our own Body. We stand our ground, and if for this they will call us High-Church-Men, they may as well call us *High-Christians*. For we think it our Christian Duty to be Sincere and Cordial in what we Profess, and to contend Earnestly for our Faith and Worship, and to be Zealously affected always in a good thing, as *St. Paul* teaches us, *Gal. 4. 18.* If our Cause be bad, let that, and that only be charged. But if our Cause be indeed good, you ought not to Condemn our *Zeal*, which has *St. Paul's* Authority for its Warrant in that Case, as well as all the Reason in the World.

26. The Third and Last Thing is to make a good Use and Improvement of the many Excellent Means and Advantages which we enjoy in the Communion of this Church, and to Live up to its *Rules*. Not to content our selves with being of her Communion, and calling her *Mother*, unless we also do the things that she says.
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Not to confide in our Priviledges, as the *Jews* did, saying, *the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are we*, Jer. 7. 4. Nor in the Profession which we make of being Church-Men, nor in the Zeal which we justly have for the Holy Church whereof we have the Happiness to be Members, nor in our Readiness to express that Zeal in Talking, or even Writing in its Defence, but to take care to joyn to all this a Conformity of *Life and Manners*. For this is to be Church-Men indeed, to be so in Practice as well as in Principle and Profession. Not that if we are not so, this ought to be improved (as commonly it is) into a Reflection upon the Church, any more than 'tis a just Reflection upon *Christianity* that the Lives of Christians are not always answerable to their Holy Religion. On the contrary, the Badness and Disconformity of Mens Practices justifies the Rule, and supposes it to be right, since otherwise they could not be blamed for not living according to it. But however, tho' this does not justly reflect upon the Church, which is not to answer for the faults of them who will hold her Truths in Unrighteousness, yet it falls very heavily upon those who profess themselves of her Communion, and yet whose Lives are unworthy of their Profession, and of the Honourable Name whereby they are call'd. But this the Church cannot help, and therefore is not accountable for it. But the *Men* are with a Witness; And as the Church is no Friend to such Men, so neither can

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can *they* justly or with any Modesty pretend with all their shew of Zeal, to be Friends to the Church, since they do such things as they know will (tho' unjustly) by the Ignorance of some, and by the Malice of more, be so much improved to her Prejudice and Disadvantage. The best way therefore of expressing our *Zeal* for our Church that so much deserves it, is by Living up to her Rules and Holy Institutions. Other ways of expressing it may be resolv'd into Party, or Interest, or the Prejudice of Education, &c. But when I see a Man that Professes himself to be of the Church of *ENGLAND*, to Live and Behave himself like one too, I have then all the reason in the World to believe such a Man sincerely to be what he Professes himself, and that his Zeal is according to *Conscience*, as well as according to *Knowledge*. I pray God send us more such Church-Men. In which Prayer I am the more hearty, because I verily believe that there will not be a Wiser or Better Christian in the whole World, than a Church of *ENGLAND* Man Acting according to his Principles.

27. To Close up all. We all Naturally desire Happiness, and God has shewn us the right way to it, by him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. But whatever Christian (the Best not excepted) shall sit down, and take account of himself, and review his past Life, he will find that he has made abundance of false steps out of this way, and which were he to Live over his Life again, he would willingly untread. *That*
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we cannot do, but are then the more concern'd to take the greater Care of that *uncertain little* which remains of it, that that be more wisely and discreetly order'd, and for this purpose to make the best use of our Time, and in our *Evening* to do something that may in some Measure redeem the Miscarriages of the *Day*. This is St.

Bernard's Vespertina Correctio, and the Counsel that he gives to one In his 28th Epistle.

who had not so well acquitted himself in the former part of his Life, that he would make it up by his after Conduct. *Præcinque sicut vir lumbos tuos, bonas facito deinceps, vias tuas & studia tua, quatenus novissima tua antiqua sopiant, & delicta juventutis tue deleat vespertina correctio.*

They are excellent words, and we should do well to Meditate and Practice upon them. This *Evening, Correction* is a very good *Salvo* for those that want it, as all do more or less, not to be depended upon as a Reserve for Wickedness, but to be used as a Remedy for past Miscarriages. And as such let us carefully use it, considering that the only way we have to make amends for the former Follies of our Life, is to manage the last stake of it as Wisely as we can. Our latter Follies are always the *greatest*, and therefore let us take care that they be also the *fewest*, and that we employ the latter part of our Lives more especially, to the true Use and End of *Living*, always Praying to God that he would teach us so to number our Days, that we may indeed apply our Hearts unto *Wisdom*.

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FAther of Lights, from whom every good and perfect Gift comes, who hast invited them that lack Wisdom to ask it of thee, and who givest to all Men liberally; I thy unworthy Servant do upon this Incouragement humbly Address my self to thee for a supply of that most excellent Gift, the Gift of Wisdom, even that Wisdom which is from above.

Give me Wisdom that sitteth by thy Throne, and reject me not from among thy Children. That Wisdom which was with thee from the beginning, which knoweth all thy

A Prayer.

thy works, and was present when thou madest the World, and knew what was acceptable in thy sight, and right in thy Commandments. O send her out of thy holy Heavens, and from the Throne of thy Glory, that being present she may labour with me, and help me so to steer my Course through the Waves of this Troublesome and Dangerous World, that finally I may come to the Land of Everlasting Life.

Lighten my Darknes, I beseech thee, O Lord, and so shine upon my Mind with thy Heavenly Light, that I may see my true Good, and the way that leads to it. That I may place my Happiness in that which will make me Happy, and apply my self to such Courses as will put me in the possession of so excellent a Good. Point out to me I pray thee my true End, possess my Soul with a serious and diligent Concern for it, direct me in the Pursuance, and bring me to the attainment of it.

O learn me true Understanding and Knowledge that I may see and chuse thee my true End, and the way that leads to thee my Sovereign Good, and order my Steps in that

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Excellent Way. Withdraw my Expectations of Happiness from all the works of thy Hands, and fix them there only where there is no Disappointment or Delusion, even in thy self, the true Centre of all Desire. And O make me to understand the way of thy Commandments, the true way of Happiness, and to run it with Cheerfulness and Inlargement of Heart. O send out thy Light and thy Truth that they may lead me, and bring me to thy holy Hill, and to thy Dwelling.

Lord I am apt to Slumber and Sleep, and so to lose that little Light which I have. But O grant me Understanding and I shall live. Awaken me from my Sleep to a present and actual sense of my Duty, and the whole reason of it. Let my Loins be always girt, and my Light always burning, that I may not be deceived through the deceitfulness of Sin, nor seek Death in the Error of my Life.

*O Inlighten my Mind with a true Knowledge of my self and thee, and with a true sense of my Good and of my Evil, and keep that Sense always awake and alive in me, that I may be as Wise in my Generation as
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A Prayer.

the Children of the World are in theirs, and may do as much for Heaven as they do for a little Earth. Grant me that Wisdom which is unto Salvation, and whatever Follies and Indiscretions I am guilty of as to this World, make me so Wise and Prudent as not to mismanage my Grand Affair, my One Thing necessary. Consider and hear me O Lord my God, Lighten my Eyes that I sleep not in Death, and so order and direct my Steps in thy way, that by thy Merciful Guidance I may obtain Eternal Life, through Jesus Christ, Amen.

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