

Ecclesiastical Characteristics

OR, THE

ARCANA of CHURCH POLICY.

1507/1513
BEING AN

HUMBLE ATTEMPT

TO OPEN UP THE

MYSTERY of MODERATION,

WHEREIN IS SHOWN

A plain and easy way of attaining to the character
of a moderate man, as at present in repute in
the church of Scotland.

G L A S G O W

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[Price Sixpence.]



TO THE
DEPARTED GHOST,
OR
SURVIVING SPIRIT,

OF the late Reverend

Mr. ———, Minister in ———

WORTHY SIR,

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

Being satisfied therefore of the justness of this obser-

vation, and being also somewhat confident (as his lordship seems to have been) of the intrinsic worth of my performance, I intended to come forth in this masterly manner.

But, upon a more mature deliberation, I discovered that the only objections against dedications were, the self-diffidence just now mentioned, and the suspicion of flattery for selfish ends, which is so contrary to disinterested benevolence; so that if I could frame a dedication, which should be quite beyond the imputation of any of these two purposes, I should then wholly escape his lordship's censure. This aim, I think, I have fallen nothing short of, when I have dedicated this book to you, most illustrious SHADE; as my most malignant enemies cannot but grant, that I could have no expectation of your encouraging me, either by buying my book, recommending it to others, or giving it away to the poor; nay, or even so much as voting for my transportation to a better benefice in Assembly or Commission.

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

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

solemnity, to Prince (or rather I believe to King) Reason. If therefore one of these authors might dedicate a book to a faculty of the human mind, and the other to an abstract idea, I hope it is no great presumption in me to dedicate mine to you, though *in statu mortuorum*; especially as there is not a living man who hath so good a claim to the complement of a treatise upon my subject.

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

It is therefore my purpose to go to Edinburgh in May next, when the Assembly meets, of which I am a member, and there to lay before you my performance, hoping it will prove most delicious and favourable to all your senses, to the names of which, and the manner of their present operation, I am wholly a stranger.

It is probable you have not been accustomed these two or three years by-past, to hear your own praises

celebrated, and therefore I shall no farther launch out into them than to say, that there is not one branch of the character recommended in the following pages, in which you were not eminent; and that there never was one stone by you left unturned, for promoting the good cause.—That you may still sit upon the throne, and, by your powerful, though invisible, influence, make the interest of moderation prevail, is the ardent wish, and the pious prayer of,



S I R,

Your most obedient,

and admiring servant,

ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

INTRODUCTION.

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

This hath inspired me with the ambition and expectation of being helpful in training up as many as are desirous of it, in this most useful of all sciences: for however perfectly it is known, and however steddily practised by many who are adepts; and notwithstanding there are some young men, of pregnant parts, who make a sudden and surprizing proficiency, with much assistance; yet I have often observed, that there are several persons, who err, in many instances, from the right path, bogle at sundry particular steps of their leaders, and take a long time before they are thoroughly confirmed in their principles and practice. The same persons also, by an unstable conduct, or by an imprudent, or unreasonable discovery of their designs, have brought a reproach

upon their party, and been an obstruction to whatever work they had then in hand.

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

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

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

I shall now proceed to the principal part of the work, after I have informed the reader of the plan of it, which is briefly this, to enumerate distinctly, and in their proper order and connection, all the several Maxims upon which moderate men conduct themselves: and forasmuch as the justice of many of them, being refined pieces of policy, is not very evident at first sight, I shall subjoin to each an illustration and confirmation of it from reason, or experience, or both. *N. B.* I shall make but very little use of scripture,

because that is contrary to some of the maxims themselves, as will be seen in the sequel.

M A X I M I.

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

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

As to the justice of this maxim, many solid reasons may be given for it.— Compassion itself, which is one of the finest and most benevolent feelings of the human heart, moves them to the relief of their distressed brother.— Another very plain reason may be given for it; moderate men are, by their very name and constitution, the reverse, in all respects, of bigotted zealots. Now, it is well known, that many of this last sort, both clergy and common people, when they hear of a man suspected of heresy, conceive an aversion at him, even before they know any thing of the case; nor after he is acquitted (as they are all of them commonly in our church courts) can they ever come to entertain a favourable opinion of him. The reverse of this then is to be as early and as vigorous in his defence, as they are in his prosecution, and as implicate in our belief of his orthodoxy, as they are in their belief of his error.

I remember, when I was discoursing once to this purpose, a certain raw unexperienced person said, he had always thought, that not moderation, but lukewarmness and indifference to truth, was the reverse of excessive zeal, and that moderation was situated in the middle betwixt the two. To whom I answered, Young man, you do not reflect, that no fiery man can be resisted but by one as fierce, nor overcome but by one fiercer than himself: if, therefore, no-body would oppose the zealots, but such calm midsmen as you mention, in every such instance the balance of power must lean to their side, and the poor heretic must fall a sacrifice, to the no small detriment of the cause of moderation; which, by the by, is commonly supported by the heretics in their stations, and therefore they deserve a grateful return.

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

I may add to these another argument for the great character of heretics, as asserted in the maxim, which I picked up from the preaching of a seceding minister. He told his hearers, that when the devil looks out for an instrument to propagate error, he never makes choice of a weak silly man, but one able and learned; as well knowing, I suppose, that though God can support his cause by any instrument whatever, yet he needs always the best, and most sufficient he can get. Now, though I hope no man will reckon me of this fanatic's principles, so far as to think the devil the source of error, yet this citation serves my purpose, as it shews that he himself was convinced of the ability and learning of heretics; and all the world knows, that the testimony of an enemy is the strongest of all evidences upon a man's side.

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

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

M A X I M II.

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

The reason upon which this maxim is founded, may be taken from the reasons of the former, *mutatis mutandis*, there being scarcely any of them that does not hold equally

in both cases : a Libertine is a kind of practical heretic, and is to be treated as such. Dr. Tillotson observes, in one of his sermons, that the worst of all heresies is a bad life : now, if instead of *worst*, which is an uncomely expression, you would read *greatest* in that passage, then a Libertine is the greatest of all heretics, and to be honoured in proportion. Even the apostle Paul (who is very seldom of any use to us in our reasonings) seems to suppose, that they are men of most knowledge, who are most free and bold in their practice ; and that they are only weak brethren who are filled with scruples. The weak man is restrained and confined by his narrow conscience, but the strong man believeth that he may eat, and, by parity of reason, drink all things.

Let it also be observed, that *good-humoured vices* are certainly *social pleasures*, such as flow from, and show benevolence ; and this is an affection for which our whole fraternity have the highest regard, insomuch that the very word has become the Shibboleth of our party.

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

the one or the other, but left them to have their own natural weight in fame, rumour, and conversation.

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

M A X I M III.

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

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

But besides these general reasons, there is one very strong particular reason why moderate men cannot love the Confession of Faith : moderation evidently implies a large share of charity, and consequently a good and favourable opinion of those that differ from our church ; but a rigid adherence to the Confession of Faith, and high esteem of it, nearly borders upon, or gives great suspicion of harsh opinions of those that dif-

fer from us; and does not experience rise up and ratify this observation? Who are the narrow-minded, bigotted, uncharitable persons among us? who are the severe censurers of those that differ in judgment? who are the damners of the adorable heathens, Socrates, Plato, Marcus Antoninus, etc.? In fine, who are persecutors of the inimitable heretics among ourselves? who but the admirers of this antiquated composition, who pin their faith to other men's sleeves, and will not endure one jot less or different belief from what their fathers had before them! It is therefore plain, that the moderate man, who desires to inclose all intelligent beings in one benevolent embrace, must have an utter abhorrence, at that vile hedge of distinction, the Confession of Faith.

I shall briefly mention a trifling objection to this part of our character, that by our subscription we sacrifice *sincerity*, the queen of virtues, to private gain and advantage. To which I answer, in the first place, That the objection proves too much, and therefore must be false, and can prove nothing: for, allowing the justice of the objection, it would follow, that a vast number, perhaps a majority, of the clergy of the church of England are villains; their printed sermons being, many of them, diametrically opposite to the Articles which they subscribe. Now; as this supposition can never be admitted, by any charitable man, the objection from whence it flows, as a necessary consequence, must fall to the ground:

But further, what is there more insincere in our subscriptions, than in these expressions of compliment and civility, which all acknowledge lawful, although they rarely express the meaning of the heart! The design is sufficiently understood in both cases; and our subscriptions have this advantage above forms of compliment, in point of honesty, that we are at a great deal of pains, usually to persuade the world that we do not believe what we sign, whereas the complaisant gentleman is very seldom at any pains about the matter. I could offer a great deal more upon this subject, but what is said may suffice in so clear a case.

M A X I M . IV.

A good preacher must not only have all the above and subsequent principles of moderation in him, as the source of every thing that is good, but must, over and above, have the following special marks and signs of a talent for preaching. 1. His subjects must be confined to social duties. 2. He must recommend them only from rational considerations, viz, the beauty and comely proportions of virtue, and its advantages in the present life, without any regard to a future state of more extended self-interest. 3. His authority must be drawn from heathen writers, NONE, or as few as possible, from scripture. 4. He must be very unacceptable to the common people.

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

As to the first of these rules, that a preacher's subjects must be confined to *social duties*, it is quite necessary in a moderate man, because his moderation teaches him to avoid all the high flights of evangelic enthusiasm, and the mysteries of grace, which the common people are so fond of. It may be observed, nay, it is observed, that all of our stamp avoid the word *grace* as much as possible, and have agreed to substitute the *moral virtues* in the room of the *graces of the Spirit*, which is the orthodox expression. And indeed it is not in this only, but in all other cases that we endeavour to improve the phraseology, and show, that besides sentiment, even in language itself, we are far superior to, and wiser than our fathers before us. I could show this by a great many examples, but that it would be too tedious, and therefore only add to the one mentioned above, that where an antient orthodox man, or even an old-fashioned

modern, that thinks religion can never be mended, either in matter or manner, would have said *a great degree of sanctification*, a man of moderation and politeness will say, *a high pitch of virtue*. Now, as this is the case, it is plain, a moderate preacher must confine his subjects to social duties chiefly, and not insist on such passages of scripture as will, by the very repetition of them, contaminate his style, and may perhaps diffuse a rank smell of orthodoxy through the whole of his discourse.

After all, I cannot refuse, that it is still a more excellent way, for those who have talents equal to the undertaking, to seize an orthodox text, explain it quite away from its ordinary sense, and constrain it to speak the main parts of our own scheme. Thus a noble champion of ours chose once for his subject, Rom. viii. 2. *For the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death*: which he explained in this manner; *the law of the spirit of life*, that is, the moral sense—; *in Christ Jesus*,—— which is the sum of the Christian religion, *etc.* The advantage of this way is, that it is tearing the weapons out of the hands of the orthodox, and turning them against themselves. And it may perhaps, in time, have the effect to make our hearers affix our sense to their beloved scriptures; or, at least, which is the next thing, prevent them from being able to find any other.—However, I must acknowledge, that this way of doing is not for every man's management; and therefore I continue my advice to the generality, still to adhere to the rule as first delivered.

The *second* rule will be easily confirmed, that duties are to be recommended only from *rational considerations*. What can be imagined more foolish than to contradict this? if there be any thing in a sermon different from rational considerations, it must be irrational, that is to say, absurd. It is in this part of our scheme that we, moderate men, obtain a glorious triumph over our adversaries and despisers. Who but must smile, when they hear the contemptible vulgar, ignorant, hot-headed country elders, or silly women, led cap-

ive by them at their will, saying, they do not love this rational way of going to heaven!

But to explain this method a little further, the rational way of preaching is sometimes set in opposition to the pathetic way of raising the passions. This last is what we greatly disapprove of: there is something immoderate in the very idea of raising the passions, and therefore it is contrary to our character: nor was it ever known, that a truly moderate man raised or moved any affection in his hearers, unless perhaps the affection of anger against himself. We leave that to your vehement bawlers, or your whining lamenters, that are continually telling, they will spend and be spent, for the salvation of their hearers, which lord Shaftsbury elegantly derides, by calling it the heroic passion of saving souls. And let any unprejudiced person judge, if there is not something vastly great, something like a heroic fortitude in that man, that can talk of future judgment, heaven and hell, with as much coolness and indifference as if it were a common matter. To say the truth, indeed, we do not often meddle with these alarming themes. However, as I observed upon the first mark of a good preacher, that it is glorious to rob the orthodox of a text, and make it bend to our plan; so it is also an uncommon excellence, to treat these subjects with calmness; and to prove that we ought to do so. Thus a great proficient in our way, lately preaching upon Acts xxiv. 25. where Paul made Felix to tremble by his discourse, proved from it, that ministers ought not to raise the passions of their hearers. An ignorant observer would have thought that the passion of terror was raised in Felix to a great degree, and that he was little better than a Cambuslang convict. But mark the lucky expression our hero got hold of, *as he reasoned of righteousness*, etc.; *as he reasoned*, that is, *argued*, and *proved by rational consideration*.

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

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

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

The *third* rule, viz. recommending *virtue* from the authority and examples of the *heathens*, is not only highly proper, because they were very virtuous, but hath this manifest advantage attending it, that it is a proper way of reasoning to two quite opposite kinds of persons. One is, such as are real Christians, who will be shamed by the superior excellence of mere heathens, as they call them, and whom they do much despise. The other is, our present living heathens, who pay no regard to the Christian religion at all, and therefore will only be moved by the authority of the persons they esteem. It is well known, there are multitudes in our island, who reckon Socrates and Plato to have been much greater

men than any of the apostles, although (as the moderate preacher I mentioned lately told his hearers) the apostle Paul had an university education, and was instructed in Logic by professor Gamaliel. Therefore let religion be constantly and uniformly called *virtue*, and let the *heathen philosophers* be set up as the great patterns and promoters of it. Upon this head, I must particularly recommend M. Antoninus by name, because an eminent person, of the moderate character, says, his meditations is the BEST book that ever was written for forming the heart.

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

Humano capiti cervicem pictor, equinam

Jungere si velit —————

Which my learned reader cannot fail both to remember and understand, and which I desire him to apply to this subject we are now upon. If it be said, that sermons are not poems, and therefore not to be composed by the rules of poetry: I an-

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

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

I have only another advice to give upon this head, and that is, that when our young preachers think proper to borrow from modern printed poems, they would be pleased to transprose them a little, so to speak, that they may not be too easily discerned by young gentlemen who read the Magazines. However, I am in great hopes we shall shortly be quite above the necessity of borrowing from any body, in order to make our sermons poetry: there are some persons of genius among us, that can make very good poetry of their own, of which I could produce some recent instances, but I do not think it at present expedient.

The fourth and last rule for a preacher, is, that he must be *very unacceptable to the people*. The Spectator, I remember, somewhere says, that most of the critics in Great Britain seem to act as if the first rule of dramatic writing were, *not to please*. Now, what they make the first rule of writing plays, I make the last rule for composing sermons; not as being the least, but the most important. It is indeed the grand criterion, the most indispensable rule of all. Tho'

One should pretend to adhere to all the former rules, and be wanting in this alone, he would be no more than a *sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal*; pardon the expression, the importance of the matter requireth it. I shall put a case; Suppose a man should have the approbation of the very best judges, *viz.* those whose taste we ourselves allow to be good, if at the same time he happens to be acceptable to the common people, it is a sign that he must have some subtle refined fault, which has escaped the observation of the good judges aforesaid; for, there is no man, even of our own fraternity, so perfect and uniform in judging right, as the common people are in judging wrong.

I hope there is little need of assigning reasons for this great characteristic of the art of preaching; I suppose it will be allowed to be, if not altogether, at least next to self-evident: all the several reasons that have been given for the particular maxims of moderation, concur in establishing this; for the people are all declared enemies of moderation, in its principles and practice; and therefore, if moderation be right, they must be wrong. There is a known story of a heathen orator, who, when the common people gave a shout of a applause, during his pronouncing an oration, immediately turned about to a friend, and asked him, what mistake he had committed. Now, if an audience of vulgar heathens was allowed to be so infallibly wrong in their judgment, the same thing must hold, *a fortiori*, in an audience of vulgar Christians.

From this it evidently follows, that a popular preacher essentially signifies, a bad preacher; and it is always so understood by us, whenever we use the expression. If we but hear it reported of any one, that he is very popular among the lower sort, we are under no difficulty of giving his character, without having heard him preach ourselves. In this case, fame is a certain guide to truth, by being inverted; for we detest and despise him, precisely in the same proportion that the people admire him. On the other hand, the truly moderate man is not only above the applause of the

multitude, but he glories in their hatred, and rejoices in himself, in proportion as he has been so happy as to provoke and disoblige them. Of this I could give several notable examples, were it not that it must certainly offend their modesty, not only to praise them in print, but even to publish their highest virtues.

But now, upon the whole, as a great critic observes, that there is sometimes more beauty shown in a composition, by receding from the rules of art, when an important point is to be gained, than by strictly adhering to them; so all these rules notwithstanding, it shall be allowable for any moderate man, upon an extraordinary emergency, to break them for a good end: as for instance, he may speak even in Whitefield's stile, when his settlement has the misfortune to depend upon the people; which I have known done with good success. We are also well satisfied, that Mr. T——r of Norwich, and such like first-rate writers, should make pompous collections of scripture-texts, as their truly laudable intention is, by altering Christianity, to reconcile it to moderation and common sense; and to find out a meaning to words, which the writers of them, as living in the infancy of the church, had not discernment enough to intend.

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

state of a bad man, first, he *sickened*; secondly, he *died*; thirdly, he *stank*. This I take to have been an accuracy in point of method, to which it will not be easy to find a parallel.

M A X I M V.

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

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

How is it possible that a minister can understand wickedness, unless he either practises it himself, (but much of that will not yet pass in the world), or allowst he wicked to be bold

in his presence? To do otherwise, would be to do in practice what I have known narrow-minded bigotted students do as to speculation, viz. avoid reading their adversaries books because they were erroneous; whereas it is evident no error can be refuted till it be understood.

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

I shall have done with this maxim, when I have given my advice as to the method of attaining to it, which is, that students, probationers, and young clergymen, while their bodies and minds are yet flexible, should converse, and keep company, as much as may be, with officers of the army, under five and twenty, of whom there are no small number in the nation, and with young gentlemen of fortune, particularly such as, by the early and happy death of their parents, have come to their estates before they arrived at the years of majority; scarcely one of these but is a noble pattern to form upon, for they have had the opportunity of following nature, which is the all-comprehensive rule of the ancients, and of acquiring a free manner of thinking, speaking, and acting, without either the pedantry of learning, or the stiffness contracted by a strict adherence to the maxims of worldly prudence.

After all, I believe I might have spared myself the trouble,

of inserting this maxim, the present rising generation being of themselves, sufficiently disposed to observe it; this I reckon they have, either constitutionally, or perhaps have learned it from the inimitable lord Shaftsbury, who, in so lively a manner, sets forth the evil of universities, and recommends conversation with the polite peripatetics, as the only way of arriving at true knowledge.

M A X I M VI.

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

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

This scheme excels in brevity, for it may be understood in a very short time; which, I suppose, prompted a certain clergyman to say, that any student might get as much divinity as he would ever have occasion for in six weeks. It is also quite agreeable to the improvements that have been made in arts and sciences of late years; for every thing is now more compendiously taught, and more superficially understood, than formerly, and yet as well, and better to all the purposes of life. In the very mechanic arts, laborious diligence gives way

to elegance and ease ; as the lumpish, strong, old Gothic buildings, to more genteel, though slighter, modern ones. There have been schemes published for teaching children to read by way of diversion. Every year gives us a shorter method of learning some branch of knowledge. In short, in these last days the quintessence of every thing has been extracted, and is presented us, as it were, in little phials ; so that we may come to all learning by one act of intuition. Agreeably to all this, have we not seen in fact, many students of divinity brought up in hot-beds, who have become speakers in general assemblies, and strenuous supporters of a falling church, before their beards were grown, to the perfect astonishment of an observing world !

I must also observe, that there is a providential fitness of that scheme, in another respect, for the present age and time. When the fees of colleges, and expence of boarding is raised ; when the rate of living is quite altered, and when a spiteful landed-interest, and a heedless parliament, have refused to grant any augmentation to our stipends, there is no other way remains for us, but to cheapen our education, by taking less time to it, and arriving at the point designed, by a nearer cut. Then there will be no need at all for the critical study of the scriptures, for reading large bodies of divinity, for an acquaintance with church history, or the writings of these poor creatures, the Christian fathers, but all is absorbed into the good of the *whole* : of which I may say, seriously and soberly, what Dr. Tillotson says ironically of transubstantiation, that it is not only true, but it is all truth, and will not suffer any thing to be true but itself.

We find that moderate men have mostly, by constitution, too much spirit to submit to the drudgery of the kinds of learning above-mentioned, and despise all who do so. There is no controversy now about Arian, Arminian, Pelagian, or Socinian tenets, but only whether this good of the whole scheme holds. This shews, by the by, the injustice and malignity of these poor beings, the Seceders, who cry out of erroneous doctrines in the church, and assert, that Arminianism is publicly taught by many. It is known, that they

mean by the moderate men, when they speak so, and yet I will venture to affirm, that there are not a few young men of that character, who, if they were asked, could not tell what the five Arminian articles are, so little do they regard Arminianism. I myself, the reader will perceive, know the number of them, but whether I know any more about them or not, I shall preserve as a secret in my own mind.

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

I shall now subjoin a short catalogue of the most necessary and useful books, the thorough understanding of which will make a truly learned moderate man: *Leibnitz's Theodicee, and his Letters, Shaftsbury's Characteristics, Collins' Enquiry into Human Liberty, all Mr. H——n's Pieces, Christianity as Old as the Creation, D——n's best Scheme, and H——n's Moral Essays*; the two last are Scots authors, and it is with pleasure I can assure my countrymen they are by far the most perfect of them all, carrying the consequences of the

cheme to the most ravishing height. As to poetry, it will be sufficient to read *the Pleasures of the Imagination*, and *the Tragedy of Agis*, if it be published, because in it dramatic poetry is carried to the summit of perfection; and it is believed, by the author's friends, that there never will be a tragedy published after it, unless by some body that is delicious. But whether the knowledge of this effect, and the compassion thence arising to future authors, may not, in a person of so much humility and self-denial, and of so consummate and disinterested benevolence, as that theatrical divine, wholly prevent the publication, I cannot tell; and therefore must leave it to be brought forth by the midwife Occasion, from the womb of Time.

M A X I M VII.

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

I fully intended, upon this part of my subject, to have been at some pains in shewing the great indecency of a grave and *apparently* serious carriage, or of introducing any religious subject of conversation into promiscuous company: but when I consider how successfully all *visible* religion was attacked, both by wits and preachers; immediately after the restoration of king Charles II. how constantly any disposition of this sort hath been born down by all men of taste ever since that time, which is now near a whole century, as also how seldom any religious discourse is to be met with at this day, either among clergy or laity, I shall only rejoice in myself, and congratulate my reader upon the purity of the times, and proceed to the other part of the maxim.

Now, as to the public exercises of religious worship, although a certain measure of them is reasonable enough, and although the office by which we have our bread, obliges us to

be often engaged in them, yet a truly moderate man, without renouncing his calling, has it in his power to pare off a great many superfluities with which the orthodox clergy are apt to overload religion, and render it unpalatable to the polite world.

Being members of church judicatories, and we hope the majority in most of them, the moderate party can discourage and stifle all motions for extraordinary fasts or thanksgivings, which experience has taught us serve only to promote idleness, and discourage industry. Upon the day that Henry V. fought at Agincourt, a solemn fast was kept in England for his success; and some historians are pleased to say, that the prayers of the nation had some share in procuring the victory; but later histories have disproved this; and now it can be demonstrated upon paper, that a fast day in Scotland loses 50,000 pounds to the nation, while no-body can make any calculation what it wins. For this reason, it was very refreshing to hear, as we did lately, that even in the most distant and northerly corners of this country, there is a set of clergy of a heroic spirit, who are resolved to reform their people, and beat them out of that unpolite and barbarous inclination, which many of them still retain, of hearing sermons.

With a view to the same good end, we can curtail our business at home, both as to the number and length of our pulpit-performances. In our own families, though it would not perhaps yet be convenient to imitate the *beau monde* so very quickly, in discarding the worship of God altogether, yet we may, by degrees, sometimes omit it through throng of business, at other times be dropping, now and then at least, some parts of it: and in gentlemen's families, take care to give discreet intimations that we do not incline to put them out of their ordinary way, or occasion the least interruption to the mirth of the company.

Sometimes, indeed, it may happen, by a concurrence of circumstances, that one of us may, at bed-time, be unequally yoked with an orthodox brother, who may propose a little unseasonable devotion between ourselves, before we

ly down to sleep : but there are twenty ways of throwing cold water upon such a motion ; or, if it should be insisted upon, I could recommend a moderate way of complying with it, from the example of one of our friends, who, on a like occasion, yielded so far, that he stood up at the back of a chair, and said, *O Lord, we thank thee for M. Bayle's Dictionary. Amen.* This was so far from spoiling good company, that it contributed wonderfully to promote social mirth, and sweetned the young men, in a most agreeable manner, for their rest.

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

I confess there has been sometimes an ugly objection thrown up against this part of my argument, *viz.* that this desertion of public worship, by those in high life, seems in fact to be co-temporary with, and to encrease, in a pretty exact proportion, to the attempts that have been, and are made to suit it to their taste. It is alleged, that they are led to such a conduct, not by the dictates of their reason, but by the depravation of their hearts, and therefore make use of the behaviour of the clergy as an excuse, and justification of their conduct. In answer to this objection, I shall not pretend to say what use gentlemen may sometimes make of our conduct, for I have known them often very preposterous in their judgment, condemning others for what they freely indulge in themselves, and no less unthankful, rendering evil for good. But still I say, there remains no strength in the objection to a man of moderate principles ; for it plainly comes much to

to the same thing at last, whether the mountain comes to the mouse, or the mouse to the mountain. If I should meet my friend half-way, that had gone at a distance from me, though he should not move a foot, I am sure we would be nearer one another, than if I had kept my place as well as he.

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

M A X I M VIII.

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

That this maxim is invariably observed, by all moderate men, is certain, and may be attested by all that ever were present at a General Assembly of this national church. The case is not now as formerly, when presentations were held a grievance; for a presentation is all in all to a moderate man: and when there is no presentation, the greatness and nobility of the heritors upon one side. I was witness once

to a cause (which indeed unhappily miscarried) but there was a noble stand made for it by the moderate party, because there was a *lord* upon the side of the *minority*, although he had really *no interest* at all in the parish, but a small bit of ground which he had got from a neighbour, in order to run a dike straight. This appearance greatly rejoiced me, as being a token to what perfection the spirit of moderation was arrived.

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

But to return; the natural respect we owe to those in great and high stations, claims from us the testimony of it, required in the maxim. There is an original and essential difference between gentry and common people, which ought to be particularly kept up here. For this, we have the authority of a certain worthy laird in the country, who always maintained, upon his mind, a sense of his dignity, not as a man, but as a gentleman. Of this disposition he gave the

following laudable instance : Being a member of a kirk-session in his parish, the excise-officer happened to come before them for fornication ; and besides the ecclesiastical censure, it was thought proper to apply to the civil magistrate to get him fined according to law : but as the law appoints different fines for men in different stations, when some proposed he should be fined at the rate of a gentleman, the worshipful member above-mentioned, though known to be very zealous against vice, strenuously opposed his having so much honour, and gave the following excellent reason for it ; “ Since God almighty
 “ has been pleased to make a distinction between gentlemen
 “ and other men, why should not we keep up this distinction
 “ on in all cases ? ” and so he was fined only as a commoner.

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

The reader will easily perceive, that I have here given much better reasons for this conduct than those commonly assigned, *viz.* the law, in the case of patrons ; and the payment of the stipend, in the case of heritors. For, as to the first of these, it is quite from the purpose, for the law maintains its own ground, as far as it goes, and is irresistible ; the only question is, how we shall act as to what is left to us to determine : if the law hindered us to determine on any side we pleased, such causes never would be pleaded before us. As to the other, about the heritors paying the stipend, it is not

just, for the whole nation pays it: the heritor gets his lands with that burden upon them at first; and when one buys land from another, he never pays for the stipend: so that really an heritor is never a penny the poorer of the stipend, except that happening commonly to see the money first, he may perhaps be sorry that any body should get it but himself. However, though these reasons be not sufficient at bottom, I deny not but it may be very proper to assign them to such as are ignorant enough to yield to them, or who have so squeamish stomachs as not to be able to digest the solid reasons upon which I have grounded my maxim. It is with the mind as with the body, it must be fed with such things as it is able to bear, and as will best agree with its frame and constitution.

M A X I M IX.

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

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

man an extraordinary and high character. It necessarily imprints a kind of veneration of him on the minds of his judges; and hath this peculiar advantage, that there is no parrying of it; for whatever some few, of different principles, may think, they dare not plainly contradict it. Every man has it in his power to speak well of another, but no-body must take the liberty to speak ill of a man in a public court, unless he can also venture to give him a libel. Many a time have I heard young men highly extolled in church-courts, when their settlement was in dependence, who, in strict truth, were but middling kind of men, and some of them very heavy, who afterwards proved no small incumbrance upon the moderate body.

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

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

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

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

M A X I M X.

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

They do not deserve a victory who know not how to push it, or to improve the advantage they have gained. A sentence of the General Assembly, even as of any other court,

signifies nothing if it be not executed. To rest satisfied with the victory we have gained, by the bare decision, would indeed be yielding it back again, and losing, in fact, what we gained in appearance. This is self-evident; but the next point is, who shall be employed in executing it, those who appointed it, or those who pretend a scruple of conscience at doing what appears to their disordered intellects to be what they call *sinful*? Now, as to this, allow me only to ask a few plain questions. Is not every society divided into the governing and the governed, the masters and the servants? What is the subject of any debate in the Assembly, that ends in a vote, but to determine who is the one, and who is the other? When once a vote has made us masters, does not the same vote make the minority servants? And do I need to ask further, if there is any piece of drudgery to be performed, who it belongs to, the masters or the servants? Apply this then to the case in hand; who would hazard his own life in fording a river if he had a servant, to try the depth of it before him? Who would choose to go to a pulpit under a shower of stones, from an enraged populace, if he had others under his authority, whom he could send upon the same ungracious errand?

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

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

eminent men, that were members of the last General Assembly.

In the *first* place, it is certain, that the command of a proper authority is sufficient to make any action not only innocent and lawful, but perfectly right, and strictly obligatory; insomuch, that if an executioner should be commanded to hang his father or son, for praying to God, or reading his bible; nay, if one of Jesus Christ's disciples had happened to have been a Roman soldier, and should have been commanded to crucify his master, he would have betrayed the most egregious ignorance of the Christian religion, had he made the least difficulty in executing such orders.

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

hot from the furnace, can easily be beaten into what shape we please. And here I must say, I think it some pity that so fine a genius as Grotius did not flourish somewhat later, or that the moral sense was not started a little earlier, and so that great man preserved from falling into so gross a blunder as the maintaining, that "even military authority may be resisted, and that a case can be given, when a soldier ought to disobey orders:" for now it is a settled point, that even ecclesiastical authority (which, if there were any difference, I allow ought rather to be the milder of the two) is sufficient to bear down before it, what were once called the *eternal, no less, and immutable laws of morality*; and, by divine authority, is *paramount to divine authority itself*.

I shall only observe two very plain and clear advantages in this principle, whereby it will appear, how happy it is that the church hath fallen so intirely in with it, and proceeds so uniformly upon it. The *first* is, that in case of necessity, an action which no-body would choose perhaps to take the weight of upon them, may yet be done without the least hazard of any body's being called to account for it in the other world. If the doer of an action were to be the judge of its lawfulness, he might be damned perhaps for doing it, in case it were found to be wrong; but upon this principle of implicit obedience to his superiors, there is no repelling his defence; it was not his province to judge whether it was lawful or unlawful; and the Assembly or Commission who gave the order, being bodies politic, are, by that time, all dissolved, and appear only in the capacity of individuals. The other advantage is this, that if the supreme court, of any kind, were allowed to be the only proper judge of the lawfulness of its own appointments, it would be impossible, in the nature of things, that ever there could be a separation in the church, or a rebellion in the state. The justness of this consequence is so evident, that I shall not spend any time in illustrating it, but heartily wish the principle, from which it flows, were universally embraced.

In the *second* place, the disobedient brethren have but one

pretence for their conduct, which is groundless, *viz.* a *scruple of conscience*: as to which, hear Dr. Goodman, a noble English writer; “ a tender conscience is nothing else but an ignorant and uninstructed mind; or a sickly, melancholy, and superstitious understanding.” I could easily shew, that there is no such thing as a real scruple of conscience: the lawyers in the General Assembly, who are men of as great penetration as any in the land, have, most of them, plainly declared, that they do not conceive it possible. A certain learned gentleman, of this court, hath assured us, that taking away ministers stipends would enlighten their conscience. The renowned author of *Hudibras* is known to be of the same opinion: from which two authorities, I will endeavour to amend Dr. Goodman’s definition, for a *tender conscience* is not an *ignorant mind*, but a *full stomach*: this accounts for appearances better, and particularly for the epithet of *tender* commonly given to it, as all physicians are agreed, that a wound upon a full stomach is very dangerous. Having thus rooted up the very foundation of this pretence, it is needless to go through the several particulars insisted upon by the disobedient as straitning to them; and therefore I shall, but in a word, mention one of them: they pretend it is a profane farce to confer, in a solemn manner, the care of the souls of a certain people, when nothing is really conferred but a legal title to a benefice: as also that the candidate cannot conscientiously answer several of the questions commonly put on these occasions. But is it not extremely strange, that any body can be so dull as not to regard these questions in their only true and proper light as a necessary piece of formality, without which a charge of horning for the stipends could not be raised? And as to the other part of the objection, whether it be not much more a mock ceremony, to ordain a man to a congregation, when a title to the benefice cannot be conferred, I shall leave the reader to determine, as if the case were his own.

The *third* principle, upon which our conduct is founded,

is of such undoubted verity, that the bare mentioning of it is sufficient to convince all the world, how little it stands in need of any proof; accordingly no moderate man views it in any other light than as a maxim, or self-evident truth, namely, that if any excuse for disobedience were once admitted, or any indulgence granted to these tender-conscienced inferiors, there would be an end of all government in an instant; neither commands nor obedience could proceed one step further, but every individual instrument of power, in that fatal society, astonished at the monstrous phenomenon, would stare at one another; all the wheels of the political machine would stop at once; nay, would split into ten thousand pieces: every relation and connection of their parts would be instantly dissolved, and the beautiful Whole would rush into a wild chaos of anarchy and confusion. The reader will easily believe I am too wise to offer a proof of an axiom or self-evident truth; however, I think it but fair to inform him, that such is the nature of paper and ink, that they have not the power of doing it all the justice even in narration, of which it is capable elsewhere. Whoever has heard the demonstrative tone, the infallible air, the gesture of certainty, with which it has been asserted by an Assembly orator, would be ashamed that he ever stood in need to be put in mind of it; for my own part, I am so entirely influenced by it, that if the most faithful, diligent, and useful servant should, in the humblest manner, represent to me, that he had a scruple about executing any of my orders, and beg to be excused, suppose from shaving me on Sunday morning and I should unfortunately be so far off my guard, as for once to indulge him, I would immediately dissolve my whole family, and never more think of lodging with a living soul under the same unhappy roof.

Against this principle however some have presumed to object particular instances in scripture-history of such excuses being actually admitted, without any apparent dissolution of the constitution; such as Gideon's passing from his order to his sword to kill the two princes of Midian, and slaying them himself

and that of Saul, who, when his guards refused to fall upon the priests, committed that affair to another, without any farther noise. Now, not to mention the difficulty of arguing from facts of an antient date, cited only by one author, and that very curtly, I humbly conceive these instances produced, make directly against the objection; for, it appears to me very evident, that the kingdom was taken from Saul, and given to David for this very reason, he being unfit to govern, by thus allowing his authority to be trampled upon: nor will it be easy to assign any different reason, why none of the posterity of Gideon were ever permitted to rule Israel. There are some later instances of that sort, nearer home, thrown up by shallow politicians; as that of the hangman at Ayr, who refused to execute the whigs in king Charles II's time; and that which happened a few years ago among ourselves, when the civil government overlooked the disobedience of a set of refractory clergymen, who refused to read the act of parliament anent captain Porteous. In the first of these cases, the judges acted in a laudable manner, for they deprived the man of his benefice; and for the crime of his disobedience, I am persuaded he died childless, for I have never heard of any of his posterity in that part of the country. In the other case, I confess the government was much to be blamed; and have long been of opinion, that their detestable lenity at that time, was the cause of the late rebellion, which followed so soon after it. It is to be hoped they will take warning for the time to come; for I am persuaded an other instance of the same kind would effectually seat the Pretender upon the throne of Britain.

The last principle which I shall mention, and which, with the rest, I am sure is abundantly sufficient, to support the maxim laid down for our conduct, is, that the best method of conviction, and, of all others, the most proper for a church-court, is that of authority, supported in its highest vigour by censures, which may be felt by men of the dullest capacities, as deposition and suspension from benefices, as well as offices. If the goodness of an argument, or the ex-

cellency of a method, is to be measured by the frequency of recourse that is had to it, I think none can dispute precedence with this: it must be allowed to be, of all others, the most Christian method; it reigned over the whole church, without a rival, for many ages: and though Protestants, for a while, pretended to find fault with it, in the hands of their enemies, yet which of them all, when they became able to make use of it, has not tried it in their turn? And whether we consider the majority, by whose hands this weapon is to be wielded, or the minority, upon whom the weight of it must fall, it will plainly appear to be admirably suited to the present times. As to the beasts of burden, who fall to be driven by this method, they are known to be such dull and lifeless animals (as they are most of them past the vigour of youth) that no other argument can make any impression upon them. However a horse might be managed, who is a generous creature, no-body could think of another method to make an ass move, but constantly to belabour its sides. There cannot be a clearer evidence of the dulness and stupidity of these obstinate beings we have to do with, than the expence of rhetoric that has been thrown away upon them, to persuade them of a thing as clear as the sun, *viz.* that if they had any conscience they would depose themselves, and yield their place to more pliable successors: they even pretend conscience here again, and tell us, they are placed in a station which they dare not desert, unless they be thrust out of it. Now, let the reader judge how incapable of persuasion one must be, to find difficulty in so plain a case, and therefore how necessary it is, that a more effectual method should be tried.

On the other hand, the majority in Assemblies and Commissions, seems, at present, to be peculiarly adapted to such a method of conviction as I have mentioned. One part of our strength lies in the laity who attend our judicatories these, as they possess no benefice in the church, they are out of the reach of this sort of censure, and therefore are not capable of inflicting; but not of suffering it; and then,

they are not much accustomed to solving cases of conscience, what other method can occur to them, when things of this nature are thrown in their way, but the more gentleman-like method, for which Alexander the Great is so justly celebrated, *viz.* cutting the troublesome knot, which they would find tedious and difficult to untie? The rest of our side consists in clergy of the younger sort, who, as they are imitators of the manners of gentlemen, may be supposed to act with the same spirit in public judgment. Though they can give flourishes of rhetoric enough; nay, though of one of them in particular, I may literally say,

————— *He cannot open
His mouth, but out there flies a trope :*

Yet as for logic, it is well known this part of education is fallen into great contempt, and it is not to be expected, that such brisk and lively spirits, who always hated every thing that looked scholastic-like, can bear to be laid down to the strict methods of argumentation; but though we were greater masters in this method of conviction, yet our blood may easily be supposed too warm for any thing that is so slow, and at best so uncertain in its success. No; we are now the majority, and our power, as a late acquisition, is the more agreeable for being new, we must taste the sweets of authority, which can only be by compelling our inferiors to obey us. If our sentences are executed, it is the same thing to the new incumbent, the same thing to the church in general, and the same thing to us, whether the executors are willing or unwilling: for as to that whole matter of conscience, about which so much noise is made, I have already related our sentiments; from whence it is evident, that such nonsense, as laying a violent temptation in mens way, to act against the light of their own mind, is nothing but words without a meaning: and as to the expression of the apostle Paul, about church power, which he uses over and over again, that it is *for edification, and not for destruction*, it is no secret, that there is a various read-

ing, and if once we had *for destruction and not for edification* established as the true reading, which, if we were dealers in criticism, might perhaps be easily done, we should not only get rid of this troublesome text, but make an acquisition of it on our side of the question, to the confusion of our greatest enemies.

M A X I M XI.

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

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

them in their freedom, they often-times, most ungenerously, despise us but the more: nay, many of them have first taught us live at a high rate, and then refuse to give us any thing to keep it up. Now, as we men of reason could not but foresee this, it is plain, nothing but the most disinterested virtue could lead us to act as we have done. Whereas, on the other hand, the orthodox have gained, and do possess the esteem of the common people; and so it is plain, they could have no other view in their conduct but to attain it. However, to shew our charity, we allow there are some on their side, who are indifferently honest, but these are men of very weak intellectuals, as is evident from their not thinking as we do.

The other part of the maxim is abundantly reasonable, but not so easily put in practice, *viz.* representing the same individual person sometimes as a *knave*, and sometimes as a *fool*. This affair is sometimes unluckily managed, when it is uncautiously attempted. In order to its being done successfully, therefore, let the two following rules be observed.

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

The 2^d rule is, that, if possible, there should be different persons employed in spreading these different calumnies of the same man; by this apparent consistency, in every one's opinion with itself, they will be the more easily maintained, and be the less liable to discovery: and so as the several wheels of a watch, by opposite motions, promote the same end, so the several members of the moderate body, by seemingly different and opposite means, conspire in promoting the good of the whole. The principle upon which these two rules are founded, is, that probability ought to be stu-

died in every falshood we would have believed; which principle is laid down, and finely illustrated in the *Art of Political Lying*, said to be wrote by one Dr. Arbuthnot.

M A X I M XII.

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

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

This our conduct a certain young man, of the orthodox side, reflected very severely upon, as he thought, in a sermon, which he afterwards printed, in words to this purpose: " They can indeed talk very fluently of universal benevolence, and a charitable candid disposition,—but their charity is confined to these who favour their opinions, and perhaps are indifferent about religion altogether, while the least appearance of serious devotion, or fervent zeal for

God, is enough to forfeit it. Indeed this charity is as mysterious as the faith of the most bigotted catholic; it is equally full of contradictions, and seems resolved to found itself, not upon evidence, but upon the want of it. Where every thing has the worst appearance, there they will believe well; but where the outward conduct is blameless, they candidly suspect that nothing but hypocrisy lies at the bottom." But, with the leave of this smart youth, what he says of us is very true, and we maintain it to be right; for, the very meaning of charity is to believe without evidence; it is no charity at all to believe good of a man when we see it, but when we do not see it. It is with charity in sentiment, as with charity in supplying the necessities of men, we do not give alms to the rich but to the poor. In like manner, when there are all outward appearances of goodness, it requires no charity to believe well of the persons: but when there are none at all, or perhaps very many to the contrary, then I will maintain it is charity, and charity in its perfection, to believe well of them. Some object to this; Well, since it is your will, have charity for them, but have charity also for such as are apparently good. Oh! the stupid world! and slow of heart to conceive! is it not evident to a demonstration, that if the appearance of wickedness be the foundation of charity, the appearance of goodness, which is its opposite, must be the foundation of a quite contrary judgment, viz. suspecting or rather believing ill of them. If any still insist, that if not charity, yet justice should incline us to believe well of them, as I have seemingly confessed: I answer, that we have no occasion for justice, if we have charity; for charity is more than justice, even as the whole is more than a part: but though I have opposed, *argumentandi gratia*, that justice requires this, yet it is not my sentiment; for the persons meant being usually great enemies to us, are thereby cut off from any claim of justice to our good opinion; and being also, as has been proved, improper objects of charity, it remains that we should use them with perfect hatred, as in fact we do.

Thus I have laid down, and illustrated, these excellent maxims; and, I think, carried them so far as to make a complete system for the education and accomplishment of a moderate clergyman, for his guidance in public judgment, and his direction as to private practice. And now, courteous reader, let us stand still and rejoice over the happy state of our mother-church of Scotland, in which moderation so greatly prevails; and let us rejoice in hope of what improvements she may yet arrive at, by adhering to these maxims, now digested into such admirable form and order. O what noble, sublime, and impenetrable sermons shall now be preached! what victories and triumphs shall be obtained over the stupid populace, by forced settlements, which never have such a beautiful and orderly form, as when finished by soldiers, marching in comely array, with shining arms, a perfect image of the church militant! and what perfectly virtuous and sinless lives shall be led by these clergy, who, with steady eye, regard the good of this vast *whole*, which never yet went wrong! There is nothing indeed that any way tarnishes the beauty of this prospect, but the miscarriage of the augmentation scheme, over which I could now lament, in elegiac strains, but that my hope is not yet quite extinct; for, who can tell whether, when we shall have brought moderation to perfection, when we shall have driven away the whole common people to the Seceders, who alone are fit for them, and captivated the hearts of the gentry to a love of our solitary temples, they may not be pleased to allow us more stipends, because we shall have nothing to do but to spend them?

I would now propose, that the next ensuing General Assembly would appoint (what indeed I might not without reason expect, whether they appoint it or not) that all the professors of divinity in the nation shall lecture one day, every week, upon this system of moderation, that our youth may be trained up, from their infancy, in a taste for it. This, I am sure, will be much more profitable than any of the an-

tiquated systems of divinity, as Pictet or Turretine : nay, I am persuaded, it is more exactly calculated for the present times, than even the more modern authors, Epictetus and Marcus Antoninus, which last, in Mr. Foulis's translation, hath, by many young divines, in their first year, been mistaken for *Marckii Medulla Theologiae*.

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

I shall now shut up this work, by acquainting the reader with a secret, which perhaps he would otherwise not advert to, *viz.* that I enjoy the pleasure of having done a thing

seemingly quite impracticable; I have given the moderate, and those who desire to be instructed in that science, a complete view of the maxims and principles of moderation, without, at the same time, prostituting or giving them up to the possession of every common reader. Perhaps some will ask, how I imagine I have effected this? I answer, that I have so framed the whole of my book, that it is really intelligible only to persons duly qualified; and to every such person, it is transparent as the spring water. I have given only moderate reasons for moderate principles, so that however strongly they may convince some, *viz.* those of our own kidney, others they will be so far from convincing, that they will be thought to operate a quite contrary way. I have managed this so carefully, that I could venture to lay a wager, of all that I am worth, that this treatise shall be taken, by very many, to be the work of an orthodox pen, and to be intended as a banter upon moderate men, and their way. They will be tempted to laugh at us, whom they will imagine to be exposed by this revelation of our mysteries; but behold, instead of that, every properly prejudiced mind is furnished with a complete system upon which to form his sentiments and regulate his conduct.

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