DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE LOVE OF GOD VIA DAMARIS MASHAM

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Discourse Concerning the Love of God via Damaris Masham
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This paper examines Damaris Cudworth Masham’s, also known as Lady Masham, first work, *A Discourse Concerning the Love of God*. Included is a transcription of Masham’s original piece with annotations and an introduction. The introduction provides a detailed background of Masham’s life from a child to an adult woman. The relationships Masham held throughout her life are reflective in her works. The *Discourse*, Masham’s first work, is a relentless attack on the occasionalist movement lead by Nicholas Malebranche and further developed by John Norris. Norris, with whom Masham had a correspondence, advocated the occasionalist movement and deemed that man should love God with desire rather than benevolence. Masham, with the influence of John Locke, disagreed with Norris’s view, deeming this to be absurd in accordance with God’s infinite knowledge. More so, the *Discourse* is a way of Masham’s expressing her deeply rooted empiricist perspective and her view against enthusiasm.

Masham is one of the many women philosophers who continues to go unnoticed and discussed despite her obvious ability to discuss and contribute to philosophy. This thesis is an expression of the importance of women philosophers as a whole and represents a hope that one day the injustice of neglect towards women philosophers will come to an end.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Buried in the cathedral church of Bath lies Damaris Cudworth Masham; a nearby monument is inscribed with the following:

Near this Place lies Dame Damaris Masham, Daughter of Ralph Cudworth, D.D. and second Wife to Sir Francis Masham, of Oates in the County of Essex, Bart. Who to the Softness and Elegance of her own Sex added several of the Noblest Accomplishments and Qualities of the other. She possesst these Advantages in a Degree unusual to either, and temper’d them with an Exactness Peculiar to herself. Her Learning, Judgment, Sagacity, and Penetration, together, with her Candor and Love of Truth, were very observable to all that conversed with her, or were acquainted with those small Treatises she Publish’d in her Lifetime, tho’ she industriously concealed her Name. Being Mother of an only Son, she applied all her Natural and acquired Endowments to the Care of his Education. She was a strict observer of all the Virtues belonging to every station of her Life, and only wanted Opportunities to make those Talents shine in the World, which were the Admiration of her Friends. She was born on the 18th of January, 1658. And Died on the 20th of April, 1708.¹

Damaris Cudworth Masham, also known as Lady Masham, was born in 1658 and died April 20, 1708.² She died as a result of illness. She was the daughter of the Cambridge Platonist, Ralph Cudworth, second wife of Sir Francis Masham of Oates in Essex, England, and close friend to the well-known philosopher, John Locke. After her marriage with Sir Francis Masham in 1685, she gave birth to one child, a son, by the name of Francis Cudworth Masham in 1686.³ Masham’s complete literary works include The Discourse Concerning the Love of God (1696), Occasional Thoughts in Reference to a Vertuous or Christian Life

¹ George Ballard and Ruth Perry, Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain: Who have been Celebrated for Their Writings or Skill in the Learned Languages, Arts, and Sciences (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), 337.

² The date of her birth does not hold to be consistent among the numerous writing about Masham. The year of her birth varies between 1658 and 1659. Margaret Atherton, Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period (Indianapolis: Hacket Pub. Co, 1994), 77.

(1705), an extensive collection of correspondence letters with philosophers, poems, and a biographical sketch of Locke. The Discourse and Occasional Thoughts were published anonymously, and were both credited to John Locke as their author. The Discourse was an uncompromising, relentless critique of the works of John Norris and Nicholas Malebranche, while the Occasional Thoughts discussed practical morality and is believed to be a response to Mary Astell’s Christian Religion as Professed by a Daughter of the Church, which in turn was a response to the Discourse, but under the suspicion that it was the work of Locke and not Masham. Along with Masham’s books, she had numerous correspondences with philosophers of the time. Masham corresponded with many well-known enlightened minds such as John Norris, Jean Le Clerc, Philip van Limborch (Third Earl of Shaftesbury), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and John Locke prior to his becoming her guest/resident in her home. Despite this and the emerging feminist movement, Masham was still victim to the era

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4 Occasional Thoughts was actually written two years prior to its publication, before Locke’s death, as Masham states in the preface, “The following discourse was written some years since, not without the thought that, possibly, it might be of farther use than for the entertainment of the Writer: Yet so little express Intention was there of Publishing the Product of those leisure Hours it emply’d, that these Papers lay by for above two Years unread, and almost forgotten” Damaris Masham, Occasional Thoughts in Reference to a Vertuous or Christian Life (London: 1705), 4.

5 Masham’s biography of Locke is titled Memoir of Locke (Unfortunately this is extremely difficult to find). It gave rise to Jean Le Clerc’s “Eloge de feu Mr. Locke”. Masham’s poetry can be found in P. Long, A Summary Catalogue of the Lovelace collection of the papers of John Locke in the Bodleian Library (Oxford: Oxford University, 1959), 4.

6 “Masham’s two books were published anonymously. That, and the similarity of some of the propositions articulated in them to Locke’s positions – and for all we know, contemporary gossip – led to some misattributions of her books to Locke […]. Both John Norris in his reply to her A Discourse (1698), and Mary Astell in her A Serious Proposal Part II (1697) and The Christian Religion (1705) at least affect to believe that that was Locke’s work.” James G. Buickerood, “What is it with Damaris, Lady Masham? The Historiography of One Early Modern Woman Philosophy,” Locke Studies: An Annual Journal of Locke Research 5 (2005): 204.

7 Though it was never republished after 1696, Buickerood did create a compilation of both of Masham’s works, but unfortunately it was only a photocopy of the originals with the addition of his extremely informative and detailed introduction.

8 This correspondence is comprised of over forty letters the contents of which contained “philosophy and theology, rationality and emotion.” Whyman, 286.

9 John Norris, a defender and furthering developer of Malebranche’s principles; Jean Le Clerc, “Eloge de feu Mr. Locke,” Bibliotheque choisie 6 (1705): 342-411; Philip Van Limborch with three letters of correspondence, which can be found at the Amsterdam University Library (MS M31c). The Masham-Leibniz correspondence is preserved in G. W Leibniz and C. J. Gerhardt, Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Vol. 3 (Hildesheim: Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1960). For a readily accessible English translation of some of the more philosophically oriented letters, see Atherton, 80-95. Numerous letters of
of a dominant male perspective. This was a time when women were prohibited by men from acquiring any education.\textsuperscript{10} During this time, a woman’s published works were rarely considered to be legitimate. Most of society was under the belief that women were incapable of possessing the necessary skills and mental capacity to construct a piece of literature in such an organized manner as a result of women not being permitted access to higher educational institutions.\textsuperscript{11} John Norris, a philosopher of the time, who corresponded with multiple women philosophers, somewhat exhibits this societal outlook on women. His take can be found in the introduction of his \textit{Letters Concerning the Love of God}. Norris writes,

\begin{quote}
For as her Person, as her Modesty will not suffer me to say much of her, so the present Productions of her Pen make it utterly needless to say anything, unless it be by way of Prevention to obviate a Diffidence in some who from the surprising Excellency of these Writings may be tempted to question whether my Correspondent be really a Women or no.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

This claim was in regards to his female correspondent, Mary Astell, an opponent of Masham.\textsuperscript{13} Both Astell and Norris were published contributors of philosophy and religion, but regardless Norris suggests that it is only in faith that he believes Astell, a woman, wrote the letters that later became published with his. Kathryn J. Ready in her article, “Damaris Cudworth Masham, Catharine Trotter Cockburn and the Feminist Legacy of Locke’s Theory of Personal Identity,” goes on to claim:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

__correspondence between Masham and Locke can be found in John Locke, \textit{The Correspondence of John Locke} (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1976).


\textsuperscript{11} See Karen Warren, \textit{An Unconventional History of Western Philosophy: Conversations between Men and Women Philosophers} (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 224.

\textsuperscript{12} Mary Astell and John Norris, \textit{Letters Concerning the Love of God}, eds. Derek E. Taylor and Malvyn New (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 56. I don’t want to completely downplay Norris in this sense. He did correspond with Masham prior to the Letters and his correspondence with Astell, she addressed him as, “the more Equitable and Ingenious Mr. Norris, who is not so narrow-Soul’d as to confine Learning to his own Sex, or to envy it in ours,” (Astell et al., 69). In addition, he was a “ladies’ man,” for he corresponded with numerous women, including Lady Mary Chudleigh, author of \textit{The Ladies Defense}, and Elizabeth Thomas, author of who published a volume of poems, and others; Ruth Perry, “Radical Doubt and the Liberation of Women” \textit{Eighteenth-Century Studies} 18, no. 4 (1985):487.

Traditionally, women had been defined in terms of their bodies, with that definition sanctioning their subordination on several grounds. The female body remained the focus of arguments regarding women’s “natural” inferiority. Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715) went as far as to deduce women’s intellectual inferiority from the supposedly more sensitive nerve fibres in the female brain. The definition of women in terms of their bodies also encouraged men to treat them as objects whose sexuality it was necessary to regulate. Eighteenth-century conduct manuals continued to define women primarily in relation to their bodies, focusing on how women might transform themselves into objects of male desire.\textsuperscript{14}

Some would agree when I suggest that the career of Masham is one of a woman philosopher who demonstrated examples of comparatively brilliant philosophical thought to men, yet she continues to remain overlooked by the philosophical community. It is unfortunate that at the time of her published pieces, both published anonymously, credit was given to her dear friend, Locke.\textsuperscript{15}

What developed between Masham and Locke was a very close relationship. Soon after meeting, Masham and Locke took up a more romantic relationship as found in the earliest of their letters to each other, referring to one another under the \textit{noms de plume} “Philoclea” and “Philander.” Eventually the nature of this relationship shifted towards one more intellectually sustaining. Locke cherished Masham for her astonishing intellect despite its occurring at a time when women were regularly ridiculed. It was Locke’s view that the mind was not gendered at birth, which allotted him the ability to disregard the societal gender connotations of the time. In a letter to Limborch, Locke writes of Masham,

\begin{quote}
The lady herself is so well versed in theological and philosophical studies and of such an original mind, that you will not find many men to whom she is not superior in wealth of knowledge and ability to profit by it. Her judgment is excellent, and I know few who can bring such clearness of thought to bear upon the most abstruse subjects, or such capacity for searching through and solving the difficult questions beyond the range, I do not say of most women, but even of most learned men. From reading, to which she once devoted herself with much\end{quote}


assiduity, she is not to a great extent debarr'd by the weakness of her eyes, but this defect is abundantly supplied by the keenness of her intellect.  

It is uncertain why Masham married Sir Francis and not Locke. It is possible that in the absence of a proposal, marrying Sir Francis was the only means by which Masham could still be with Locke.

Locke was very influential not only to Masham personally, but also from a historical perspective. Locke is known for his authorship of a series of important political, religious, and educational works. Locke, though an empiricist, also taught that we should use reason to obtain truth. He opposes those that acknowledge and abide by that which is claimed as the truth from an authoritative figure or from superstition.

Locke and Masham met in London sometime about 1681. Masham, a woman in her early twenties, and Locke, “past the middle age of Man,” began a friendship that would last until his death. As mentioned, we find in the letters written to each other that what began as a correspondence quickly developed into an intimate relationship. But upon Locke’s self-imposed exile to Holland, Damaris Cudworth married Sir Frances Masham and left Cambridge to live in the Masham estate of Oates in Essex, England. After Locke’s return to England, he became the welcomed guest, resident, and teacher to Masham’s only son Francis, bringing with him his writing desk, a particularly constructed chair, a telescope,

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17 Whymany, 288.

18 His works include: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, *Two Treatises of Government*, *Letters Concerning Toleration*, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.

19 Perry suggests that they could have known each other as early as 1671, which would put Masham at the age of 13, but I am not entirely sure of this. Maybe the confusion lies between knowing of Masham and actually knowing Masham. Perry suggests, “There is evidence to suggest that Locke partially worked out the materialist epistemology of the *Essays Concerning Human Understanding* in reaction to the Platonist arguments of Damaris Cudworth, whom he knew as early as 1671” (Perry, “Radical Doubt”, 483).

botanical specimens, a porous stone for filtering water, and his four thousand books.\textsuperscript{21} Locke remained a resident of the Masham household until 1704, which included the last 13 years of his life. Upon Locke’s death, most of his possessions went to Masham and her son, Francis. Locke willed his “legacy in money” and part of his library to Masham’s son.\textsuperscript{22} The entirety of Masham and Locke’s relationship spanned over 20 years, six of which were while Locke was in Holland. It is likely a result due to the nature of Masham and Locke’s relationship that Masham would eventually acquire some Lockean tendencies and a Lockean philosophical stance. Whereas we find her movement towards a more Lockean perspective, she never fully disregards her Platonist upbringing, “That I have no Ill Opinion of the Platonists I confess, nor ought you to wonder at That seeing I have spent the Most of my Life amongst Philosophers of that Sect in whom I have always found the most Vertue and Friendship.”\textsuperscript{23} Masham’s treatises supply evidence of her clearly being a disciple of Locke. The letters show her passion for philosophy, both Cambridge Platonism and Cartesianism, prior to their relationship.\textsuperscript{24}

Masham’s defense towards naturalism, her empiricism, and her attack on the enthusiasm movement in religion are suggestive of the influence Locke might have had on her. With a little detective work, one can find that Masham studied many of Locke’s works prior to their living situation from 1691-1704. Many would agree that Locke had an obvious and profound influence on Masham’s philosophical perspective, but at the same time it is very possible that her relationship with Locke came as a result of similar interests. Locke’s library, though diverse, was limited in some of the areas in which Masham had become educated. In Masham’s first publication, \textit{A Discourse Concerning the Love of God}, Masham references many books that are not found in Locke’s library, such as John Norris’ \textit{Theory and Regulation of Love} and his \textit{Treatises Upon Several Subjects} and some of Nicolas Malebranche’s works.\textsuperscript{25} Masham’s referencing suggests that her experience in the ideas of

\textsuperscript{21} Whymany, 280.
\textsuperscript{22} Atherton, 90.
\textsuperscript{23} Astell et al., 690.
\textsuperscript{24} Hutton, 31.
\textsuperscript{25} For some of Malebranche’s works refer to: Doney, Willis. \textit{Dialogues on Metaphysics}. Rev. Ed.
Occasionalism were well developed and supported. Her approach towards occasionalism is similar to Locke’s, as one might imagine.

Masham’s physical appearance remains a mystery. The only known portrait painted of her, by Sir Geoffrey Kneller in 1704 at the expense of Locke, was lost. The difficulty with Masham is that we must come to know her through alternative media. Not only must we examine what Masham wrote to understand what she thought and believed, but other forms of influence should be taken into consideration such as her environment, her personal library, her upbringing, and her exposure to other philosophers.

Masham’s exposure to certain ideas as a youth played a key role in her educational development. Her father, a famous and well-recognized Cambridge Platonist, Master of Christ’s College, and author of *The Intellectual System*, would have believed that an education is of the utmost value for an individual. Her father’s and his colleagues’ contributing to the environment of Masham’s upbringing provides evidence that even though she may not have personally held a reputable collection of books, she had the opportunity to experience and practice a wide range of learning as a youth. Buickerood states, “Nearly all of her extant correspondence, all of her surviving poetry, and both of her published books show her to have been a voracious and wide ranging reader, a habit that rarely takes its rise from late tuition and even more rarely is quashed by admonition to do otherwise […]. On the basis of references, allusions and quotations in the body of her surviving writings, we can draw up a very conservative list of the books she read.” This exposure and ability to participate intellectually is what could have supplied Masham with the confidence to engage

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26 Occasionalism was the philosophical theory that approached the problem between mind and matter. The apparent interaction that took place between mind and matter, on the occasion of the mind’s thinking to move the body, in fact, was God’s intervention that moved the body in accordance to the mind’s thought. Likewise, God, on the occasion of some body seeming to cause a sensuous experience, would grant that experience to the mind.

27 Buickerood, vii.

28 For more information on Masham’s father, Ralph Cudworth, c.f Maria. *Platonism and Cartesianism in the Philosophy of Ralph Cudworth* (Bern: H. Lang, 1962), 196.

29 “Yet in a letter to Le Clerc, Masham writes that she did not possess any of her father’s collection and at her father’s death, the collection was willed to her brother” (Buickerood, viii).

30 Buickerood, viii.
with the many philosophical minds of the community. Her confidence is easily discovered in her writings. Buickerood describes Masham, in his introduction of the reprinting of Masham’s works, as, “lively, very bright, intellectually disposed and accomplished, fun loving and capable of taking amusement in her youthful predilection to be vividly at odds with herself, others and the world at large.”  

In a correspondence between Locke and Anna Grigg, we find this characteristic of Masham referenced. Buickerood also cites Anna Grigg describing Masham as, “a fair and intolerably Witty Lady.”  

Despite her father’s position, we cannot suggest that he educated Masham directly, though many who have written on Masham believe it to be the case. Masham obviously distinguished herself from the crowds as one of intellectual worth. As a pious and passionate woman, Masham enjoyed and desired intellectual debates. The truth of the matter, though, is that how Masham exactly acquired her education while as a youth is still unknown. It could be the case that Masham’s father had either a direct or an indirect contribution (via a tutor) to Masham’s intellectual development. Buickerood comments on this, “It is due to Ballard’s speculative proclivities that we have been treated so often to the confident assertion that Ralph Cudworth educated his daughter Damaris. The fact is that we know nothing of the details of Damaris’s education; while her father may indeed have taught her himself or supervised her education, it is at least equally if not more plausible that her mother, a tutor, or a governess was directly responsible for any tuition she received,” he follows with, “The contention that Ralph Cudworth educated his daughter may well be true, but we have no evidence of it. Moreover, there is the oddity that, on the supposition that he, eminent classicist and Professor of Hebrew, Cambridge University, did educate her, young Damaris acquired no classical or biblical languages.”  

Evidence of this can be found in the

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31 Buickerood, vii.  
32 Astell et. al., 820.  
33 Buickerood goes further to reference a claim that E.S. de Beer makes in *The Correspondence of John Locke*, “Nothing is known about […] Damaris’s early life and education except that, as her letters show, she grew up in her father’s circle, the Cambridge Platonists” (Buickerood, 178). Regardless of how she acquired her education, we can make deductions based on the environment she was in while becoming a learned women.  
34 Buickerood, 184. Buickerood continues to attack Ballard for making so many inaccurate claims about Masham and being a major contributor to the many inaccuracies that follow from other authors who sought to discover and write about her. The odds are stacked in Buickerood’s favor of being correct about the educational
correspondence between Locke and Limborch, where Locke states that Masham and
Limborch do not share a language common to the both of them.\textsuperscript{35} It was not until later that
Masham learned Latin in order to teach it to her son, Francis. In doing so, she used the
method described in Locke’s \textit{Thoughts on Education}.\textsuperscript{36}

Unfortunately, Masham was not always fortunate enough to be in an ideal
environment for developing her intellect. In her letters to Locke, she expresses a sense of
agony in regards to her current condition of lacking the access and freedom she once had to
philosophy:

> that there is in the Leaned Dulness of this Place Yet more Societie then in the
> Countrie And that amidst the Impertinent Wrang’lings of the schools one may
> sometimes Heare something more Edifying (at least more Diverting) then in the
> Repeated Entertainments of the Price of Corn, and the Best Management of a
> Dairie.\textsuperscript{37}

Also, she complains,

> I cannot but Acknowledge that as to some Things Matrimonie and Familie Cares
> have Alter’d me very much. Though I was Always Dull, I find that I am now a
> Thousand times more so then formerly; and the little Knowledge that I once had,
> is now exchange for Absolute Ignorance; I am taken off of All that I once did
> Know and Understand; and Have nothing at All in lieu of it; Tis vain that you bid
> me Preserve my Poetry; Household Affaires are the Opium of the Soul.\textsuperscript{38}

Luckily during the winter months, Masham’s duties around the household were somewhat
put on hold, which afforded her the time to get back to her readings.

Upon examining the works of Masham, her personal collection of books, and the
books she might have had access to while Locke was a guest in her home, we can come to a
more accurate depiction of Masham’s character as a philosopher. This collection of books
helped to influence Masham’s ideas on the human understanding of God and the acquisition
of true knowledge through reason. Masham’s library could have contained some of the

\textsuperscript{35} Astell et al., 1398.

\textsuperscript{36} Hutton, 32.

\textsuperscript{37} Astell et al., 830.

\textsuperscript{38} Astell et al., 837.
works by philosophers such as Nicolas Malebranche, John Norris, and Gottfried Leibniz. It is already noted in one of her letters to Locke that in her closet sat the accounts of Marcus Arellius, Descartes, and Dr. More.\textsuperscript{39} One could imagine that upon her father’s death, Masham would have acquired her father’s library, but it is exactly the opposite. In a letter to Jean Le Clerc, Masham informs him that in fact her father’s collection was willed to her brother and she was not in possession of any of it.\textsuperscript{40} Though much is still left unknown about Masham, through extensive detail to the collection of her works helps to further our understanding of the meaning and intention behind her two published treatises.

Fortunately for Masham, she was privileged to live during an era of immense intellectual advancement. The 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries are known for their advancements in thought. Some of the most well-known influential minds came from this early modern era of history, minds such as René Descartes, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, John Locke, and Thomas Hobbes, among many others. Despite the lucrative academic accomplishments of the time, there were many challenges that were arising. During the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, Henry VIII struggled with the Roman Catholic Church. Finally he “divorces” himself from the Roman Catholic Church creating the Church of England, making himself its new appointed ruler. Henry VIII’s intervention in the church leads to a shift in authority, leaving the Pope no longer the sole ruling power over the church. This new acquisition of power by the ruler of England was accompanied with numerous negative repercussions. This new position of power over the church granted its holder the power to alter the rules of the church. The dismembering of the Catholic Church paved the way for new religions to sprout like over-invasive weeds. With each new sect came new rules, and these new rules aided in the accelerated procreation of new religions. Each new religion proposed different truths and attempted to convert and acquire as many followers as possible. This fueled the fire of the enthusiasm movement. England’s so-called academic community became a hotbed for overdeveloped, irrational methods of thought and practice. One in particular, which Masham sought to expose and dismantle, was that of the occasionalist movement made popular by

\textsuperscript{39} Astell et al., 837.
\textsuperscript{40} Buickerood, viii.
Nicolas Malebranche and later advanced by John Norris. Occasionalism came as a response to Descartes’ separation of the mind and body. Malebranche suggested that mind and matter were unable to interact and the apparent interaction that took place was not a result of the mind’s influence upon the body but rather it was God’s act of moving the body in accordance with the thoughts of the mind. But God’s hand did not stop there. Even our sensuous experiences were influenced by the involvement of God. God was the sole cause of all mental and physical movements.

Masham’s *Discourse* is a demonstration of the debate waged between rationalism and empiricism. It is “the first public evidence of Lady Masham’s lifelong interest in ‘useful knowledge’ inasmuch as it examines the nature of the love that men and women are required to give God, and the practical manifestations and implications of this love.” In the *Discourse*, Masham seeks to arouse doubt in those of the occasionalist perspective. By doing so, she hopes to rid the world of a class of enthusiasts, which both she and Locke despised. A major philosophical problem that existed at this time dealt with the relationship people were expected to have with God and/or their role in life. With the Henry VIII’s division of the church, religious practice was in disorder with various interpretations and beliefs as to what constituted true Christian belief and practice. This was a concern for both Masham and Locke. They worried that those who, for whatever reasons good or bad, did not adhere to the “true faith” (meaning here the Church of England) would lead malicious lives: “In regard of their own Church (which perhaps allows them no other Way of being Religious, than that which leads them into these Mistakes) they yet are certainly very injurious to Christianity in the Representations they make of it.” Behavior, practice, and the justification of such become a focal point of Masham’s analysis. In her *Discourse*, she exploits the problem of the occasionalist stance of John Norris and Nicolas Malebranche. Some argue that Masham’s

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41 Buickerood, xv.

42 “Whoever goes beyond this measure of Assent, 'tis plain receives not Truth in the Love of it; loves not Truth for Truth's sake, but for some other bye end. For the evidence that any Proposition is true (except such as are self-evident) lying only in the Proofs a Man has of it, whatsoever degrees of Assent he afford it beyond the degrees of that Evidence, 'tis plain all that surpluse of assurance is owing to some other Affection, and not to the Love of Truth” (Locke, *Essay*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch, 4.19.670).

Discourse is a response to the Letters published between John Norris and Mary Astell (another female philosopher of the time and also an occasionalist). Others suggest the Discourse is a response to Norris’ Treatises Upon Several Subjects. I believe that the Discourse is much more than a simple response to a single work by Norris or Malebranche. In full, I believe, the Discourse is a response to the occasionalism of Norris with a small reference also to Malebranche. One must understand that the views between Norris and Malebranche are very similar, but at the same time have some differences. This is why it is stated that the Discourse does not make as significant of a reference to Malebranche as to Norris. The emphasis of the Discourse is against the further developed occasionalism as per Norris, but Masham does not dismiss the foundation paved by Malebranche. In refuting Norris’s development of Malebranche’s occasionalism, Masham is refuting the ideas it proclaims: that we ought to love only God because He is the only true source of our pleasure.

It is most clear and certain, that God only is to be loved, if God be the only proper Object of our Love; and ’tis as clear, that he is the only proper Object of our Love, if he only be our Good; and ’tis as clear that he only is our Good, if he only does us Good, if he only perfects and betters our Beings; and ’tis as clear that he only does so, if he be the only true Cause of all our Pleasure, of all those grateful Sensations whereof we are Conscious, and wherewith we are affected.44

In the Letters with Astell, Norris explains that since God is love, it is only through loving him and contemplating our love for him that we can become aware of what God is. It is due to a lack of study of God in this aspect, Norris concludes, that no scholar has come close to discovering Him.45 Norris goes to great lengths to emphasize the importance of meditation as a means to knowing God. “That there needs no apology than the theme we treat of to excuse the defectiveness of our meditations upon it.”46

To suggest an attack upon this line of thinking only falls short of the true intent of Masham’s work. The Discourse was an endeavor to extract the many facetious epistemological and moral claims set forth by Norris’s Malebranchian doctrine in hope to dethrone yet another enthusiast movement. Malebranche, Norris, and Astell, all representing

44 Norris, John, Practical Discourses Upon Several Divine Subjects (London: S. Manship, 1693), 19.
45 Astell et al., 56.
46 Astell et al., 57.
rationalism, sought to establish truth’s foundation upon the comprehension in the mind. Masham and Locke, on the other hand, defended the case that truth can only be acquired through sense experience.

It seems common of authors who have published on Masham to suggest that the Discourse is merely a response to two of Norris’s books, Practical Discourses upon Several Divine Subjects and The Letters Concerning the Love of God, many placing greater emphasis on the Letters.⁴⁷ Though the Letters are referenced more than once in Masham’s Discourse,⁴⁸ Masham only refers to Norris’s letters and never Astell’s.⁴⁹ It also must be noted:

In the main body of the letters Astell accepts occasionalism, but in one letter added to the end just before publication, as an Appendix, she doubts it, suggesting that it renders God’s workmanship redundant, and wondering if it might be better to adopt an account of perception more like that of “your Friend Dr. More”, which allows some sort of “Sensible Congruity” or connection between bodies and sensations.⁵⁰

But I believe that these depictions of Masham’s intent are understated representations of what Masham was after in the Discourse.⁵¹ Masham sought to provide a remedy to a reoccurring problem of the time, that being “How God should be loved by people.” Masham’s disposition included not only Norris’s two works but others by Norris and also directly attacked some of the claims made by Malebranche. Buickerood notes that Masham “quotes, alludes, or refers to Norris’s sermon at least twenty-six times in the course of her criticism; she deliberately quotes, alludes, or refers to Malebranche’s work ten times; and she explicitly quotes, alludes, or refers to the Norris-Astell Letters a total of three times.”⁵²

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⁴⁷“A careful study of the text reveals the possibility of a far broader and far more interesting context of the composition and publication of the book than her [Masham] relations with John Norris,” (Buickerood, xvi).

⁴⁸Buickerood cites Masham’s references as follows, “Practical Discourses quoted, etc.: sig. A3’, 8(twice), 9, 11, 12, 19-20, 35, 36, 37, 37-8, 38, 81-2, 84-5, 87, 89, 90, 92, 94, 114, 115, 116, and 119; Malebranche quoted, etc.: 71, 72-3, 74, 74-5, 75-6, 130-4, 107, 108, 120-1, 122, and 125; Letters quoted, etc.: 15, 20, and 121” (207).

⁴⁹Buickerood, 208.


⁵¹“In the Discourse, Masham specifically takes on Malebranche, assailing the physiological arguments he had advanced to justify women’s subordination” (Ready, 571).

⁵²Buickerood, 207.
The *Discourse* is saturated with numerous examples of Masham’s empiricist and naturalist tendencies provided in a common sense form.\(^{53}\) For Masham, our sense experiences are the most definitive source of all our concepts and knowledge. As a result, this rules out the belief of possessing innate ideas. It is natural for an empiricist and rationalist to dispute the idea of how knowledge is obtained as these views are of opposing extremes. Masham’s metaphysical stance is one that places great significance upon the body. This stance is expected from an empiricist, and as, such Masham believes that our sense experiences are the most definitive source of all our concepts and knowledge. As a naturalist, Masham resorts to scientific method as the means to come to understand all facets of reality, including God. “For as by the Existence of the Creatures, we come to know there is a Creator; so by their Loveliness it is that we come to know That of their Author, and to Love him.”\(^{54}\) We must first experience and come to know the things on earth before we can come to know and/or love God. Masham places emphasis on both the importance of experience and scientific knowledge of the creature prior to our ability to understand the idea of God. This reflects the fact that experience is needed for the attainment of knowledge. Our ability to know God must come from our ability to experience His creations that exist here. We simply cannot begin with our understanding or a rational idea of God and deduce God’s existence from such. It is here that we see how heavily Masham’s general theory of knowledge is rooted in empiricism. Experience is not only critical to general knowledge, but it is absolutely necessary to our ability to know God and to know the “Duties of a good Life”\(^{55}\).

John Norris, a 17th century philosopher, founded his early views upon Platonic traditions.\(^{56}\) He was a follower of Descartes (1595-1650), and later in his life became a

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\(^{53}\) This common sense attitude is drawn upon the philosophy of Edward Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester, of which Masham came to know through a correspondence and through Locke. In the Discourse, Masham makes reference to a work of Edward Stillingfleet, *A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practised in the Church of Rome*, 2nd ed. (London, 1671), 291.

\(^{54}\) Masham, *Discourse*, 74.

\(^{55}\) Masham, *Discourse*, 35-38.

\(^{56}\) “God made not only Man, but the whole World, in a larger sense, after his own Image: and as Art imitates Nature, so Nature imitates God […] the whole Creation is but as ‘were one great Mirrour or Glass of the Divinity.” John Norris, “Reason and Religion, or the Grounds and Measures of Devotion,” In *Treatises*
devout follower of the French philosopher, Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715). Malebranche, as a rationalist, claimed that sensory experience was not the only means through which knowledge could be acquired. There are, in fact, alternatives to gaining knowledge independent of sensory experience. Like Norris, Malebranche, too, was a follower of the Cartesian movement. It was Descartes’s separation of the mind and body that inspired him to write regarding the causal interaction between the two. Norris was known as the “English Malebranche,” but prior to his involvement in Malebranche’s philosophy, Norris wrote on many topics such as politics, religion, philosophy, and the Christian life. It was through Malebranche that Norris became familiar with the principles of occasionalism. Norris, however, saw much unfinished though and sought to finish what he believed Malebranche left out of his philosophy: proof of the existence of the intelligible world, also known as the mind of God. In 1688, Norris published his Theory and Regulation of Love: A Moral Essay. Five years later, in 1693, Norris published the third volume of his Practical Discourses Upon several Divine Subjects, in which his essay, A Discourse concerning the Measure of Divine Love, with the Natural and Moral Grounds upon which it Stands, can be found. And then in 1695, just a year before Masham’s Discourse was published, the publishing of the Letters Concerning the Love of God, a correspondence between Norris and Mary Astell, was released. All three of these works discuss the relationship of man’s love towards God, and it was in response to the theory that was advocated by these three works that Masham sought to write the Discourse.

A dilemma Masham finds in Norris’s philosophy stems from an extreme interpretation of a passage found in the Bible: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and will all thy Mind.” Masham, in referencing this passage, states,

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57 See Mander, 11. This similarity could be why Masham does not make as many references to Malebranche as Norris.

58 Norris’s works include Miscellanies, The Root of Liberty, Reason and Religion, or the Grounds and Measures of Devotion, and Reflection upon the Conduct of Human Life.

59 Matthew 22:37 (King James Version).

60 “That God is to be the prime and principal Object of our Love and Delight; That we are to love him in a
Wherein the Author pretends to show that all our Love is to be entirely center’d upon God, that not any part of it is allow’d to the Creatures. But least the inlarging this first Commandment to such a Magnitude, should make it seem to swallow up the second; He prevents that Objection by shewing, that these Two Commandments clash not at all: The Love of God, and of our Neighbour, (as he says) being different Loves: *For we love God with Love of Desire; and love, or should love, our Neighbor, only with Love of Benevolence.* 61

The repercussions of such a view, Masham deems as an impractical moral theory. This theory describes the separation of love into two categories by which God is the only true object of our love and desire all the while everything else is only due our benevolence. The implausibility of such a stance, advocated by Norris and Malebranche, is the primary goal of Masham’s refutation. The assertion of God alone being the efficient cause of all pleasures and pains grants that every sensuous experience is neither caused by the object or the creature. Accordingly, as God is the efficient cause of all pleasures, no object or creature is worthy of our love. Only God is allowed to receive our love, for He is the true cause of all our happiness. Therefore we must love God with desire and the creatures with benevolence. To understand better the repercussions of the occasionalist movement, we must delve into its meaning of “love.” Norris goes to great lengths to establish the meaning and order of love in his *Theory and Regulation of Love.*

For what is the grand Intendment and final Upshot of Morality but to teach a Man to *Love regularly?* As a Man *Loves* so is he. Love is not only the *Fullfilling,* but also the transgressing of the Law, and Vertue and Vice is nothing else but the Various Application and Modification of Love. By this a Good Man is distinguish’d from a Bad, and an Angel of Light from an Angel of Darkness.62

We can also find Norris making another attempt at defining love in *Practical Discourse upon Several Divine Subjects,*

First, I consider that God is the only Author or Cause of our Love. By Love here I understand that original Weight, Bent or Endeavour whereby the Soul of Man stands inclined and is moved forwards to Good in general or *Happiness.*63

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61 Masham, *Discourse,* 41.


Love, as defined by the occasionalists, is the movement of the soul towards good, or God.\textsuperscript{64} For Masham, love is a disposition or act of the mind as a reaction to anything in which we find pleasure\textsuperscript{65}. When we love the creature, we are then wishing something good for it, that it be improved or endure; this love is referred to as benevolence/charity. This love cannot apply to God because we cannot wish upon God anything more since He is absolute. Thus according to the occasionalists, our love for creatures is the love of benevolence (since we wish them well), but this is not equivalent to what we might call real love, these are only acts of charity. Therefore, we must love God with the love of desire. For our love for God brings no additional goodness to God but benefits only us; to love creatures would be sinful. Love of desire is a complete love, while benevolence is only partial love. We cannot love something fully if it is not completely loveable. Norris makes a reference to St. James’s account when describing the sinful nature of sharing our love with something other than God, and Masham sums up his view as such, “Our Heart is so much God’s Property and Peculiar, and ought so entirely to be devoted to him, that ’tis a kind of Spiritual Adultery to admit any Creature into a Partnership with him in our Love”\textsuperscript{66}. It is in loving something partially that is completely loveable that we are depriving it of our love and committing ourselves to sin.

Masham accuses Norris of begging the question, arguing from ignorance, and making only assertions\textsuperscript{67}:

But in Reference to the first, he does no more to this Purpose, but prove what (plainly express’d) cannot be contested; \textit{viz.} That we receive the Power which we have of Desiring, from God: And then asks himself several Questions, as, \textit{Can God act for a Creature? Does not God make all things himself?} \&c. Which amount only to thus much, that they signifie it is his Opinions, that God (who doubtless made all things for himself) because his own Glory was his primary End in creating all things, had not therefore Secondary, and intermediate Ends for

\textsuperscript{64} “The Motion of Love is in a Circle. First, Good moves and acts upon the Soul, and then the Soul moves and exerts it self towards Good, that so there may be the End whence was the Rise of its Motion” (Norris, \textit{Theory and Regulation}, 9). “for we love Particular Goods only as they carry some Impress of the universal; or to speak more properly, we love the universal Good in the Particulars” (Norris, \textit{Theory and Regulation}, 10-11).

\textsuperscript{65} Jacqueline Broad, Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 120.

\textsuperscript{66} Masham, \textit{Discourse}, 100.

\textsuperscript{67} Buickerood, xviii.
which he made the Creatures to operate one upon another: Which is but in a tacit: Way to beg the Question.68

Masham does not withhold from acknowledging these inconsistencies. Norris’s assertions, based on interpretations of scripture, lack a logical consistency. Masham places the emphasis upon the discrepancies in Norris’s ‘logic and grammar’ when interpreting the scriptures and not the scriptures themselves.

In the Discourse, Masham refers to a flower when considering the occasionalist position and its refutation 69. When encountering the beauty of a flower, one reflects and can come to a realization of something more and more beautiful and then something absolutely beautiful. This correlates to the necessity of experience for the acquisition of knowledge and that to know God we must first experience the things that exist here. We simply cannot begin with our understanding or rational idea of “God” and deduce God’s existence. Here we find how heavily Masham’s general theory of knowledge is rooted in empiricism.

The occasionalists proposed that God alone is the cause of our sensations and not the flower itself. On the occasion of coming into the presence of the flower, God produces in us the sensation and ideas of the flower’s beauty or perfume, its pleasing colors, and its soft texture. Masham’s take on this is that, “The Creatures they say are occasional Causes of our pleasing Sensations. Then, however, they are Causes of them. They deny not also, That they are such Causes as are always accompanied with the Effect, and without which the Effect is not produced” 70. If it was the case that occasionalism were true, an occasionalist cannot deny the fact that the presence of an object is still necessary or why else would the senses be needed? “For if God immediately exhibits to me all my Idea’s, and that I do not truly see with my Eyes, and hear with my Ears; then all that wonderful Exactness and curious

68 Masham, Discourse, 38. Buickerood also recognizes other pages of the Discourse where Masham accuses Norris of the inconsistencies in his arguments. “Unless that Mr. N. will say, that the Words necessarily imply so much; which is to beg the thing he contests for, and not to prove it” (Masham, Discourse, 43). “There are the Texts brought by Mr N. to support an Opinion grounded on an Hypothesis, perhaps Demonstrably false, That has evidently no proof, but the poor one from our Ignorance, that yet is not at all help’d by this Hypothesis[.] Which is (therefore) as well as for the Ends of Morality, plainly useless[.]” (Masham, Discourse, 102).

69 Masham, Discourse, 53.

70 Masham, Discourse, 53.
Workmanship, in framing the Organs of Sense, seems superfluous and vain.” 71. We must not overlook the importance of the claim being made here by Masham. If occasionalism were true, then there would be no reason at all for God to have created our sense organs or any real flowers to begin with. God could easily produce in us the ideas and sensations of flowers with or without there being actual flowers. Likewise, God would have worked in vain in creating our sense organs since these would have nothing to contribute in our experience of the world. Here Masham is accusing the occasionalist of rendering God’s creations unnecessary. Even if we were to take into account what Norris says about this using the example of fire, “Thus Fire is supposed to be endued with the quality of Heat in itself, and then to impart this quality to us; to be first Hot in its own Nature, and then to make us so.” 72, what would be the point of making the fire hot in itself if our experience of it is never a true result of its own characteristic?

The difficulty Masham finds with this line of reasoning is that while we must acknowledge God as the efficient cause of all our sensations, it follows that God is also the cause of all unpleasant sensations. Masham then suggest as a result that we must hate God for causing the unpleasant sensations. 73. Astell in the first letter to Norris considers a similar version of this claim. 74 Moreover, Norris’s further claim that it is sinful for us to direct our love (with desire) towards anything other than God would make a mother’s love for her own child sinful 75, or yet worse for Norris, it would seem to undermine the entire message of the Scriptures, especially those that command that we love our neighbor as we love ourselves or as we love God. 76

71 Masham, Discourse, 54.
72 Norris, Practical Discourses, 21.
73 Masham, Discourse, 93.
74 “For if we must Love nothing but what is Lovely, and nothing is Lovely but what is our Good, and nothing is our Good but what does us Good, and nothing does us Good but what causes Pleasure in us; may we not by the same way of arguing say, That that which Causes Pain in us does not do us Good, (for nothing you say does us Good but what Causes Pleasure) and therefore can’t be our Good, and if not our Good then not Lovely, and consequently not the proper, much less the only Object of our Love” (Astell et al., 70).
75 Masham, Discourse, 62.
76 See, for example, Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22:40 (cited by Masham, Discourse, 41-42). “Love thy neighbor as thyself” implies that individuals must love themselves and their neighbor the same. Masham believes that it is in our character to love that which we want. God is perfect and we desire His perfection. We
A further repercussion of occasionalism results in rendering people of lower intelligence helpless in regards to salvation since only those who could comprehend the rather unobvious theory of occasionalism could ever understand that God is the sole cause of our pleasures. Only the educated would be able to love God properly. “I fear all Mankind (before this present Age) lived and died Idolaters, and the greatest part for the future will do so; Since I guess not One of a Thousand will be found capable of apprehending, and being convinced of this new Hypothesis of seeing all things in God”\(^{77}\). Masham believes that salvation is accessible to all and for this to be the case, the scriptures must likewise be accessible for all. The purpose of Christian doctrine is to enable its followers the opportunity for a good life entailing the need for good actions. What Norris advocates is inaccessible to the majority. At the same time, Norris stresses seclusion for social interaction. Masham says, “by supporting, as they do, the Perfection of a Christian State to consist in Contemplation; And the Duties of social Life (for which ’tis plain Mankind were intended) to be low Matters, fit only to exercise the young Christian, not yet advanced into the spiritual State.”\(^{78}\) By withdrawing oneself from society and into contemplation, the social nature of man and his ability to perform good works become insignificant, unimportant, and irrelevant. How can we then uphold the requirement of performing good works found in the scriptures? Masham deems as unacceptable any interpretation that disallows humans their ability to understand the scriptures. The moral ramifications of such a position taken up by Norris, reverberate throughout Masham’s Discourse. Norris’s doctrine makes moral standards to be too severe and rigorous thus condemning the masses to hell.

Advocating that the Bible was made for everyone to understand and practice, including the poor and uneducated, caused Masham to disregard any unintelligible or impracticable religious doctrine or philosophical hypothesis \(^{79}\) and explains her earlier cited words: “But however excusable these may be, in regard of their own Church (which perhaps

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77 Masham, Discourse, 74.
78 Masham, Discourse, 36.
79 Buickerood, xxiv.
allows them no other Way of being Religious, than that which leads them into these
Mistakes) they yet are certainly very injurious to Christianity in the Representations they
make of it; by supporting, as they do, the Perfection of a Christian State to consist in
Contemplation” 80.

Furthermore, if occasionalism were true, it would mean that God contributes to the
wickedness of humans. If God is the cause of all our pleasures on the occasion of various
objects and given that humans naturally love what they believe causes them pleasure, then as
a result, God causes us to sin by causing us to love something other than himself.

But the Author of his Hypothesis tells us, That this is that indeed which makes Sin
to be so exceeding sinful, viz.[.] That we oblige God in Virtue of that first
immutable Law, or Order, which he has establish’d (that is, of exciting
Sentiments of Pleasure in us upon some operation of Bodies upon us) to Reward
our Transgressions against him with Pleasure, and Delight[,] It is strange that we
cannot seem sinful enough, without having a Power of forcing God to be a Partner
in our Wickedness! 81

Occasionalism not only results in God’s involvement in human wickedness, but it also asserts
God to be unwise, irrational, and/or unreasonable. “They who advance this Notion, do only
fetch a Circuit, and then return where they were before, without gaining any advantage, by
Derogating (as they do) from the Wisdom of God, in framing his Creatures like the Idols of
the Heathen, that have Eyes, and see not; Ears, and hear not”82. To claim that God ought to
be the sole object of our love is impractical. By suggesting such, it degrades God’s character
and renounces the ability for moral action among the masses. As a result, occasionalism
throws Christian doctrine to the way side, secluding itself from the majority while labeling
the majority as unworthy of God’s blessings.

The present work is a transcription of a photocopy of the 1696 publication of
Masham’s Discourse, which has not been republished except for Buickerood’s edition in
2004, but that is also a photocopy of this 1696 text. For this transcription, I had access to a
photocopy of the original text through the following link:

80 Masham, Discourse, 36.
81 Masham, Discourse, 93.
82 Masham, Discourse, 52.
The advantage of my transcription is that it presents a clearer and more readable version of the *Discourse*. The photocopied text is often smudged or distorted. Another advantage of the current transcription is that while Buickerood does provide a generous and insightful introduction, which was invaluable in the preparation of this manuscript, I supply annotations and cross-references, which are lacking in his text. The annotations result from my review of the pertinent works of Locke, Norris, and Astell, and from some detective-like work following clues left in Buickerood’s introduction as well as in other secondary sources. This version of Masham’s *Discourse* will not only help to make Masham’s work more accessible to future students but will also provide a clearer version with the proper citations.

After all the hard work, research, reading and rereading of articles and works, tracking down of sources in search of legitimacy, and the surmounting discouraging dead ends lies an inescapable question that at last must be answered: Is it worth it? Is Damaris Cudworth Masham of any real philosophical importance? Are Masham’s contributions to the field of philosophy so relevant and important that they must be discussed and shared to help further other philosophical endeavors? Is it a must for students of philosophy to read and acknowledge Masham for her intellectual accomplishments? Should Masham be considered as a topic of study or discussion over other women philosophers of the past?

Before we can answer any of these questions, I think it is more important to discuss also why it is essential for women philosophers to be studied and sought after in the philosophical community in general. In a society where women of the past were not given much, if any access, to the intellectual facets of society, what credit do women philosophers of the past really deserve? Even if women philosophers do exist, how could they possibly contribute to philosophy a caliber anywhere close to what male philosophers had at their disposal? With limited resources and outlets to interact with the philosophical community, what avenues did women have to acquire and avail their contributions? Despite the emerging feminist movement when Masham wrote, women were still subject to the traditional societal expectations of the women’s role. At this time, a woman’s primary role was to tend to the family and focus on domestic jobs in the home. The oppressed role that women of this era endured refuted any expectation to learn, write, or become educated. Therefore, women
were not allowed the freedom to focus on cultivating themselves mentally as men did. With the odds stacked against them, it is no wonder why more students of philosophy do not venture into the history of women philosophers.

Previously, women were subordinates as a result of being defined in terms of the body. It was the body that persisted in arguments in regards to the women’s inferiority. It was the defining of a women in relation to their bodies that resulted in a focus on how females “transform themselves into objects of male desire,”83 Eileen O’Neill also brings up the “the purification of philosophy” as being another factor of proportionate influence to women philosophers’ lack of popularity. With the evolution and progression of philosophy, women philosophers were unable to keep up. Most of the topics discussed, being religion or women’s nature and role, were viewed as unimportant at the turn of the 19th century.84

It is apparent that the history of philosophy is heavily biased. The philosophical impact of the women philosopher is little to unknown by the masses including even those in philosophical study. Not even the many conversations women philosophers had with male philosophers are discussed or reference in the least of ways. It is the male philosopher that has taken precedence in every era of philosophy. Though women philosophers did exist and did contribute to philosophy, their works and contributions were not acknowledged or sought after like those of the men. One can find references and previous investigations into the limited works of women philosophers, but it seems that a complete endeavor into a single woman philosopher’s philosophy is lacking or rare. I believe Mary Ellen Waite describes it best:

> Accounts of two millennia history of our discipline are astonishingly incomplete and incorrect. Those accounts typically omit any mention of contributions made to philosophy by women. The histories I am referring to include those multi-volume series created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as the standard English-language anthologies and introductory texts which are the

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83 Ready, 565.
84 “‘Feminine’ philosophy was not referred to as such because it was the philosophy of women but rather that it was a ‘degenerate philosophy of both men and women on its way out’” Eileen O’Neill, “Early Modern Women Philosophers and the History of Philosophy,” Hypatia 20, no. 3 (2005): 186.
mainstays of philosophy libraries and curricula. Through them, philosophy is effectively, but not explicitly, portrayed as an essentially male enterprise.\textsuperscript{85} We want to believe that it was never anyone’s intention to disregard women philosophers’ contributions, but nevertheless the inadvertent disregard and lack of acknowledgement “effectively” secured the men’s role as the suggested true and only real valued contribution to the field of philosophy. It was very rare for value to be sought after in a woman’s publishing with regard to philosophy; so little value was prescribed to these works that they were rarely ever republished. Despite this, women philosophers continued to emerge from the constraints of society both intellectually and socially.

Masham was not only an active participant in the intellectual community of her time. She was also a respected colleague of some of the more well-known philosophers. Her collection of works consisted of moral philosophy; challenging the problem of “how virtuous ideals can be translated into practice”\textsuperscript{86}. Locke regarded her as, “a remarkably gifted woman […] Her judgment is singularly keen, and I know few men capable of discussing with such insight the most abstruse subjects, such as are beyond the grasp, I do not say of women, but even of most educated men”\textsuperscript{87}

If we look specifically at the early modern era, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we find that this time period is abundant with philosophical thought and growth. Many women philosophers of this period are found interacting with some of the greatest minds that this era is known for.\textsuperscript{88} But these interactions were so unexpected, that many responses included a remark about the gender of the writer\textsuperscript{89}. In one case in particular, a male philosopher’s response also included doubt whether the other person was even really a


\textsuperscript{86} Hutton, 34.

\textsuperscript{87} Locke, \textit{Correspondence}, 820.

\textsuperscript{88} Examples such as Plato and Diotima, Descartes and Elisabeth, Hobbes and Macaulay, Leibniz and Conway, Heidegger and Arendt. See Karen Warren’s, \textit{An Unconventional History of Western Philosophy: Conversations Between Men and Women Philosophers} for more examples and details of the conversations that took place between these male and female philosophers along with others.

\textsuperscript{89} Atherton, 2.
woman. Nevertheless, the philosophical activity prevalent to this era was not limited to the male mind exclusively.

Questioning the intellectual prowess that women philosophers of the past may have possessed only suggests that one lacks a fair understanding of history. It has been shown that women have contributed to the field of philosophy since at least the time of Theano I,\(^{90}\) and with the exception of the Dark Ages, “there is an unbroken history of women philosophers from ancient times until present day.”\(^{91}\) This suggests that not all women were chained to the homestead and not all women devoted their lives giving birth to many children. Some women philosophers acquired their education in a legitimate manner, just like many male philosophers of the past. Some came into their education as a result of their social class, being that of royalty. As mentioned earlier, Masham was the daughter of a famous Cambridge Platonist. Her father, Ralph Cudworth, was a prominent Neo-Platonist and liberal Protestant\(^{92}\). Taking into account Masham’s father’s stature, we can easily assume that Masham was raised in an environment where education was highly valued. Though it is unknown how she exactly acquired her education – via her father or a tutor – it is said that she demonstrated lines of her father’s reasoning on multiple occasions in conversation.

If one was to make a shallow effort at reading the works of Masham, one would probably agree that nothing new or profound can be attributed to the field of philosophy. Masham’s works merely address the current issues of her time. These issues were being discussed by the majority of the community, therefore, there are numerous other resources more readily available and that have already been shared. So why make such an effort to examine Masham’s works when her topics are already being taught and discussed through her male contemporaries? After reading the works of Masham, some may discover hints or clues, though they may not be explicit or even intentional, to emerging thoughts of later times. In some sense, Masham can be viewed to represent a character fashioned from two clashing perspectives, her father’s and those of Locke. Masham presents thoughts as genuine

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\(^{90}\) Either wife or student of Pythagoras.

\(^{91}\) Waite, 133.

\(^{92}\) Buickerood, vi.
as those with whom she corresponded with, like Norris, Locke, Leibniz, etc. Her position as an empiricist and naturalist and her refutation of occasionalism are as justified as anything Norris defended. Masham’s *Discourse* espouses the deep rooted problems found in occasionalism. Later, in her *Occasional Thoughts*, Masham sets to defend morality and religion against the deists. By taking a more in-depth look into the works of Masham, we find perspective that bridges two boundaries of thought. Siding with Locke and his empiricist views, she also defends her father’s philosophy, that of the Cambridge Platonists.

The real point I am attempting to drive at is not whether Masham delivers anything original to philosophy but rather the true value of Masham is found as demonstrating evidence that true genuine philosophical thought, discussion, and involvement among women did in fact exist. We as students, sponsors, professors and/or just distant learners of philosophy are obliged to continue this research to discover, translate, and promote the many other women philosophers who have gone disregarded and unnoticed. If our reconstruction of history fails to include the numerous accounts of women philosophers’ contributions, we are learning and teaching a history incomplete and corrupted. O’Neill suggests that “contemporary feminist philosophers were beginning to produce rational reconstructions of the early modern women philosophers’ arguments. Rational reconstructions interpret the positions and arguments of past philosophers in light of our current views. They underline the extent to which we share, with past philosophers, a tradition of both problems and argumentational strategies for solving the problems.”93

The initial outset of this project was not a feminist campaign, which sought to exploit the philosophical value of all women philosophers in hope that a reader will be inspired to drive to further depths in search of philosophic value in other women philosophers (that I hope the reader has already), but rather to take one woman philosopher in particular, whom other scholars and writers have written about and to further develop and to discern the philosophy she proposed during her time with regard to a single one of her publications. The end to which this was written is to treat Masham, a woman philosopher, like any other philosopher who is of importance rather than just recognizing her because she is a woman of

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philosophy. We must read and assess Masham for the philosophical value she brings and not merely for the fact that she is a woman philosopher. This is the same approach I believe should be taken with all women philosophers. Of course, some may be more valuable than others. A few may not even be worth reading about. It is only in treating all philosophers of the past, men and women alike, that we can do justice for the field of philosophy.

A DISCOURSE Concerning the LOVE OF GOD

PREFACE.

The Prejudice that Piety and Religion receive by being removed from their true Foundations, is of so ill Consequence; in disturbing, or misleading, the best meaning and most serious part of Mankind; that any Design which tends to prevent Mistakes about them, will, I hope, at least merit Pardon. The ensuing Discourse is Publish’d with this View: It being intended to show the unserviceableness of an Hypothesis lately recommended to the World for a Ground of Christianity, and Morality; As likewise, the farther injuriousness of that Hypothesis to True Religion, and Piety: Which, I think, I may securely affirm, neither ever, have suffer’d or ever can suffer so much from the Arguments of any Opposers, as from theirs, who induced by Weakness, Vanity, or any other Motive, have undertaken or pretended to Support them, upon false Grounds, and wrong Reasonings. I am, indeed, inclin’d to Believe (as well as Hope) that the Notion which this Discourse is level’d against, is in no great danger of being a very general, or prevailing Opinion: It being too Visionary to be likely to be received by many Intelligent Persons; And too abstruse to be easily entertain’d by those who are altogether unconversant with Scholastick Speculations. Yet there are so many to whom Novelty alone has sufficient Charms to recommend anything, that I cannot but think (if what I have writ answers the Intention it was writ with) the Subject of the following Papers very well merited those few Hours that were bestow’d upon’em. And I am confirm’d in this Opinion, by that of one of the Highest order in our Church; Who (since the Writing of them) I was glad to hear say, That it would be well done of any one who had leisure for it, to show the weakness, and extravagance of such of Mr. N’s late Practical Discourses as are built upon the Principles of Pere Malebranche. This Incouragement, added to

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94 The title is written exactly as Masham had it printed on the first page prior to the preface. I follow Masham’s spelling, punctuation (which was not consistent; i.e. Mr. N. or Mr N.), italicization, use of upper case, etc. throughout this transcription.

95 Masham straightaway begins her attack on Norris. Norris’s hypothesis is “that as in Geometry some plain and obvious Propositions are laid down not so much for the sake of their own Discovery, as in order to further Theory, which, as a Superstructure is to be rais’d upon those Foundations; so in Morality and Divinity some practical Propositions or Precepts, tho in themselves never so clear and evident, must yet be set down, if ’twere only for the sake of Method and Order, and to lay a Bottom for what is to be further built upon those Principles” (Practical Discourse, 3).

96 Masham is especially targeting Norris’s Practical Discourse Vol. IV A DISCOURSE Concerning The
the like from some other Persons, has occasion’d the Printing of a Discourse which was not writ with such an intention.

A DISCOURSE Concerning the Love of God.

Whatever Reproaches have been made by the Romanists on the one hand, of the Want of books of Devotion in the Church of England; or by the Dissenters on the other, of a dead and lifeless Way of Preaching; I think it may be affirm’d, That there cannot, any where, be found so good a Collection of Discourses upon Moral Subjects, as might be made of English Sermons; and other Treatises of that Nature, written by the Divines of our Church: Which [2] Books are certainly, in themselves, of the greatest and most general Use of any; and do most conduce to that which, is the chief Aim of Christianity, a good Life: For whatsoever else its Professors, divided into Parties, may contend about; This they must all agree in, That we ought to be People zealous of good Works.

Yet tho’ no body can deny this; And all are forced to allow, that the Duties of a good Life ought to be practis’d; It is certain, that this which is so essential to Religion, is so far degraded by some, as not to pass for a part of it. They accordingly distinguish a Religious, from a Moral Man; and carry their Zeal so far, that they seem to lay little Stress on the Performance of those Vertues recommended by our Saviour Christ, as the Way to Eternal Life; Which Vertues,

Measure of Divine Love, with the Natural and Moral Grounds upon which it stands. Jacqueline Broad, however, states in her Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century that Masham’s target is chiefly both Mary Astell and John Norris in their Letters Philosophical and Divine (presently known as Letters Concerning the Love of God, between the Author of the Proposal to the Ladies and Mr. John Norris: Wherein his late Discourse, shewing That it ought to be the intire and exclusive of all other Loves, is further cleared and justified). Broad also claims that Masham is attacking Astell’s A Serious Proposal to the Ladies and Norris’s Discourse Concerning the Measure of Divine Love (Broad, Women Philosophers, 114).

97 Masham here shows her disapproval of the Roman Catholic Church, whose members were often referred to, in a derogatory way, as Romanists or Papists. Norris also seeks to refute Catholic practices and beliefs and references them in his Practical Discourse in the same fashion.

98 Dissenters, on the other hand, refer to non-Church of England Protestants (e.g., Quakers), whose services were less staid than those of the Church of England so that oftentimes they were also referred to as Enthusiasts.

99 Numerals appearing in brackets refer to the page numbers in Masham’s 1696 publication of the Discourse.

100 This point was pivotal among the newly formed Protestant churches with their quarrels with Rome, viz., whether through faith alone could one achieve salvation or were good works also needed.

101 Here is an insight into Masham’s position that our good works/acts are necessary for salvation.

102 Here is the first mention regarding morality without an explanation. How exactly is a moral man different from a religious man? Is the performance of the virtues recommended by Christ the only differentiating factor between a religious man and a moral man? James Buickerood states in his introduction to the photocopied 2004 edition of the Discourse that morality is defined by religion when the scriptures, prescribed by Christ, are practiced. In this instance, religion and morality can be considered to be constituents to each other (Buickerood, xxiii).
have been commonly enough term’d Splendid Vices,\textsuperscript{103} in those they account not [3] true Believers; And the Books writ by others, to recommend the Practice of them to the World, are look’d upon by these Men, as little more worthy of a Christian’s Perusal, as such, than Histories or Maxims of humane Prudence.

But others there are, who do not in this manner undervalue Morality, that yet perhaps are not less injurious to it; Whilst they strain the Duties of it to an impracticable Pitch; or pretend to ascend by it to something beyond, or above it: Which has been mightily the Fault of those in the Church of Rome; Who having a better Relish of Religion, than to be satisfied with one consisting of nothing but idle superstitious, and pompous Shows, have betaken themselves to that which they call the inward Way, or Life of Contemplation:\textsuperscript{104} Of which, there never has wanted great Numbers in that Church, known in several times by several Names, which distinguish’d them more than their [4] Opinions.\textsuperscript{105} For in those, they all agreed in one common Difference from all the rest, though variously express’d: And who (whatever their Errours have been) have yet seem’d the most in earnest in the Business of Religion, of any that the Roman Church can boast of.

But however excusable these may be, in regard of their own Church (which perhaps allows them no other Way of being Religious, than that which leads them into these Mistakes) they yet are certainly very injurious to Christianity in the Representations they make of it; by supporting, as they do, the Perfection of a Christian State to consist in Contemplation; And the Duties of social Life (for which ‘tis plain Mankind were intended) to be low Matters, fit only to exercise the young Christian, not yet advanced into the spiritual State; to which when he arrives, even but to the first Degree (for they talk of three Degrees at least of it, by which [5] Perfection is to be ascended to) he then looks down

\textsuperscript{103} According to James Wetzel, in his “Splendid Vices and Secular Virtues: Variations on Milbank’s Augustine,” the term, ‘Splendid Vices’ or ‘Vitia Splendida’ though commonly attributed to Augustine is not found in any of Augustine’s works. The term ‘splendid vices’ is used to describe pagan virtues. James Wetzel, “Splendid Vices and Secular Virtues,” Journal of Religious Ethics 32, no. 2 (2004): 271.

\textsuperscript{104} Norris in his letters with Astell refers to meditating on the idea of love as the only path to realizing God. He claims that no scholar has come close to the truth of God because they have been studying the wrong aspects of Him. Norris claims that God is love, therefore it is only when we better understand love that we can better come to an understanding of God’s existence (Astell et al., 56). Norris cites 1 John 4:16, “God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God.” Norris follows by adding that the theory of love because of this is “So Noble,” that it deserves our attention (Norris, Theory, 7).

\textsuperscript{105} Due to the limitless interpretation of scriptures and claimed divine experiences, many people were claiming that their interpretation was more sound than the Church of England’s. For Masham, these opinions just lacked credit. These opinionated individuals are later referred to as “Enthusiasts” by both Masham and Locke. Locke adds a section in his second publication of his Essay entitled “Of Enthusiasm” (Book IV, Chapter XIX). “Their Minds being thus prepared, whatever groundless Opinion comes to settle it self strongly upon their Fancies, is an Illumination from the Spirit of GOD, and presently of divine Authority: And whatsoever odd Action they find in themselves a direction from Heaven, and must be obeyed; ‘tis a Commission from above, and they cannot err in executing it” (Locke, Essay, ed. Peter H. Nidditch, 4.19.699).
upon all the Duties of the second Table, as an inferiour Dispensation, belonging to those of a lower class. And when he is ascended to the highest Degree, he is then got above Reason it self; being first melted and brought to nothing, and then lost and swallowed up in God. And by these, who suppose themselves thus far advanced, the Use of Reasoning, and internal Discourse, tending to fix our Affections upon God, and expressing it self in sensible Devotion; and even outward Acts of Obedience to God’s Will, are look’d upon as parts of the active Life, and less perfect State of a Christian; as may be seen in divers Books which treat of this Matter, and particularly in Santa Sophia, Treat. 1st Ch. 1. c. 3.

Which sufficiently shows of how dangerous Consequence it is to talk after this Fashion; and to erect into a Rule, or Dispensation of Life, what possibly the Experience of some (whole [6] Circumstances, or extraordinary Illuminations, for ends unknown (and which we have nothing to do with) may have inabled them to give a sober, and intelligible Sense of to themselves; though to others it appear Jargon, Enthusiasm, or even Irreligion.

If Books of this kind (which more or less those usually are, the Papists call their spiritual Books) are wanting in the Church of England, it is well that they are so; since they would be likely to make many more enthusiasts than good Christians. For as the Bishop of Worcester (in his Fanaticism of the Roman Church) says very well: If once an unintelligible Way of Practical Religion become the Standard of Devotion, no Men of Sense and Reason will ever set themselves about it; but leave it to be understood by mad Men, and practis’d by Fools. Which is a Reflection that it were to be wish’d all would make, who may be tempted by Affectation of Novelty, Fondness [7] of an Hypothesis, or

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106 Commandments 4-10 of the Ten Commandments. “And accordingly the Love of God being the fundamental Principle of all natural Religion and Virtue, or (as lour Lord here terms it) the first and great Commandment, upon which all the Duties of the first Table do immediately, and those of the second remotely depend, it was very requisite that there should be an express Precept concerning it, tho it be never so evident that we ought to love God, and withal never so necessary and unavoidable that we should” (Norris, Practical Discourses, 4).

107 Baker, Augustine. Sancta Sophia; Or, Directions for the Prayer of Contemplation (Doway: John Patte and Thomas Fievet, 1657).

108 “Upon this occasion I shall take the Liberty to consider a third Ground of Assent, which with some Men has the same Authority, and is as confidently relied on as either Faith or Reason, I mean Enthusiasm. Which laying by Reason would set up Revelation without it. Whereby in effect it takes away both Reason and Revelation, and substitutes in the room of it, the ungrounded Fancies of a Man’s own Brain, and assumes them for a Foundation both of Opinion and Conduct.” John Locke. An Essay concerning Human Understanding, ed. John W. Yolton (London: Dent, 1993), 698. It is also interesting to know that Locke published his second edition of An Essay Concerning Human Understanding after living with Masham.

109 It is likely that Masham is referring to Malebranche’s Christian Conversations.

110 Edward Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester, a correspondent of Locke.

111 It is interesting to see that Stillingfleet follows with “But supposing this way were intelligible and practicable, which it is not; yet what the effect of it be, but the highest Enthusiasm?” (291).
any other better Reason, to build their Practical and Devotional Discourses upon Principles which not only will bear the Test, but which oblige them to lay down such Assertions in Morality, as sober and well disposed Christians cannot understand to be practicable; Than which, I think there never was any more evidently so, than that Mankind are obliged strictly, as their Duty, to love with Desire, nothing but God only; Every Degree of Desire of any Creature whatsoever, being Sin. This Assertion, though not altogether new, yet has been but lately brought into our Pulpits, and been pretended to be set on Foot upon a Philosophical, or Natural Ground, viz. That God, not the Creature, is the immediate, efficient Cause of our Sensations: For whatever gives us Pleasure (say they who hold this Hypothesis) has a right to our Love; but God only gives us Pleasure, therefore he only has a right to our Love.

[8] Indeed, in a Sermon upon this Subject, Matt. xxii. 37. the Author pretends to establish his Sense of the Words upon a double Basis. 1. That God is the only Cause of our Love. 2. That he is also the only proper Object of it. But in Reference to the first, he does no more to this Purpose, but prove what (plainly express’d) cannot be contested; viz. That we receive the Power which we have of Desiring, from God: And then asks himself several Questions, as, Can God act for a Creature? Does not God make all things himself? &c. Which amount only to thus much, that they signify it is his Opinions, that God (who doubtless made all things for himself) because his own Glory was his primary End in creating all things, had not therefore Secondary, and intermediate Ends for which he made the Creatures to operate one upon another: Which is but in a tacit: Way to beg the Question. But he confesses rightly, that the Stress of this Business lies in the Proof of the second Proposition. Upon this Hinge (says he) the whole Weight of

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112 Norris believes that the theory of love is the main concern for the Moralist. “For what is the grand Intendment and final Upshot of Morality but to teach a Man to Love regularly?” (Norris, Theory, 3).

113 Cf. “Indeed were there any part or degree of our Love which God did not produce, That we might give away from him, That we might bestow upon a Creature; but if God be the Author of it all, if there be not one degree of our Love but what he produces, ’tis highly just and reasonable that he should have it all; and we cannot let the least Spark of this sacred Fire light upon the Creature without so far defrauding the Creator” (Norris, Practical Discourses, 316).

114 Again, Masham is most likely attacking Norris. Cf. “No, my fair Delight, I will never be drawn off from the love of thee by the Charms of any of thy Creatures” (Astell et al., 80).

115 This is the sermon that Norris advocated in his Practical Discourses. In doing so, Norris established one of his more important views, that being we must love God only.

116 Norris, Practical Discourses, 12-13. We can also find this discussed in the letters between Norris and Astell (Astell et al., 72).

The Theory turns, viz.\textsuperscript{118} That God is the only proper Object of our Love,\textsuperscript{119} as being the only Cause of all our pleasing Sensations; the Creatures having no Efficiency at all to operate upon us; they being only occasional Causes of those Sentiments which God produces in us.\textsuperscript{120} And on this Foundation it then is, that he asserts, that every Act that carries our Desires towards the Creature is sinful: Which Opinion if receiv’d, and follow’d, must necessarily bring in the like unintelligible Way of Practical Religion, which the Bishop of Worcester\textsuperscript{121} has justly censured in the Church of Rome.

But however persuaded, either the Author himself, or this great Assertor of this Hypothesis are of its Truth, or Reasonableness; As there was no need at all of interesting Religion, and Morality, in the Matter; so it is also very unserviceable \([10]\) to them; Since that which they would infer from it is manifestly no just Consequence, any more than a useful, or practicable Doctrine. And a Man that had not been mighty fond of an Hypothesis, would never have attempted from the Pulpit, to fortify by Scripture, an Opinion so opposite to the Tenour of it; as well as to that Morality which has been so excellently preach’d to the World by the Divines of his own Church: Whose Discourses are generally, if not universally, founded upon this Supposition; (or at least imply it) that there may be a lawful Love of the Creatures:\textsuperscript{122} And being herein conform’d to right Reason, and consequently adapted to humane Life, they have helped to make some Opposition to that Irreligion, which by looseness of Manners on the one hand, and uncharitable Zeal on the other, has spread it self amongst us in this last Age; But must doubtless have prevailed further, had not more reasonable \([11]\)

\textsuperscript{118} “And ’tis a great Point indeed; for upon this Hinge the whole Weight of the present Theory turns, and the whole Issue of it will depend. Here therefore let us stop and fix, and with all possible heed and attentiveness enquire after the true Cause of our Pleasure. For whatever we find that, there to be sure we shall also find the only proper Object of our Love” (Norris, Practical Discourses, 19-20).

\textsuperscript{119} In The Theory and Regulation of Love, Norris takes a very Aristotelian perspective to the meaning of love as found in the De Anima, “For as ’tis observ’d by Aristotle with more than Ordinary Niceness in his 3d de Anima; The Motion of Love is in a Circle. First, Good moves and acts upon the Soul, and then the Soul moves and exerts it self towards Good, that so there may be the End whence was the Rise of its Motion” (9). This is the highest love one can express and it is deemed only towards God since He is the highest good.

\textsuperscript{120} One of Masham’s reasons for writing this book was to refute the occasionalist view point endorsed by Malebranche and the idea that any act out of desire was a sin. See the introduction to this work for a broader discussion of occasionalism and critiques of it.

\textsuperscript{121} Edward Stillingfleet.

\textsuperscript{122} This lawful love is the act of loving with benevolence (Charity). To love a creature benevolently is considered lawful in the same way that considers loving your neighbor benevolently. To love benevolently is not to wish an object to be a good for ourselves but rather by wishing it good for itself. Prior to the letters between him and Atell, Norris acknowledges that loving the creatures is inevitable. But the love exhibited towards a creature is different from the love for God: “Our Love to the universal Good [God] is invincible Absolutely and Simply, we will it necessarily, and we will it thoroughly, but our Love to particular Good is invincible only in some certain respect. We do not always love it thoroughly and effectually, tho’ we must always love it” (Norris, Theory, 30).
Principles of Morality been inculcated into Men, than can be grounded upon seeing all things in God, &c.\textsuperscript{123}

For apparently, if the practical Duties of Religion had not been better accounted for, and inforc’d, than by the so much boasted of spiritual Books of the Roman Church, Religion and Vertue had before this time been disputed, or ridicule’d, out of our World. And yet any of these Books of mystical Divinity, will be found as well able to support them, as some of the late practical Discourses of Mr. N. or as any Man’s else can be, upon the Principle of our being obliged to have no Love of Desire\textsuperscript{124} for any of the Creatures: Which is particularly endeavour’d to be made good in the foremention’d Sermon, upon the great Commandment of the Law, Matt. xxii. 37. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.\textsuperscript{125} Wherein the Author pretends to [12] show, that all our Love is to be so entirely center’d upon God, that not any part of it is to be allow’d to the Creatures.

But least the inlarging this first Commandment to such a Magnitude, should make it seem to swallow up the second;\textsuperscript{126} He prevents that Objection by shewing, that these Two Commandments clash not at all: The Love of God, and of our Neighbour, (as he says) being different Loves: For we love God with Love of Desire; and love, or should love, our Neighbor, only with Love of Benevolence.\textsuperscript{127} Which Distinction, in other Discourses of his, he is more large

\textsuperscript{123} Cf. Nicolas Malebranche and Steven M. Nadler, \textit{The Search After Truth}, Rev. Ed. Translated by Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co, 1992. “We should know, furthermore, that through His presence God is in close union with our minds […]. Thus, the mind can see God’s work in Him, provided that God wills to reveal to it what in Him represents them” (40). It is likely that Masham was familiar with Malebranche and Nadler’s \textit{The Search after Truth}. It is found that in book three, part two, chapter six, Malebranche elaborates on his idea of seeing all things in God as an argument against the proposition of each mind’s possessing an infinite number of ideas. The idea of “seeing all things in God” would likely have gotten further if reason did not lead us to something better, which is what Masham discusses.

\textsuperscript{124} Cf. Norris, \textit{Theory and Regulation of Love}: “For Love in reference to God signifies \textit{Simple Desire}, and in reference to our Neighbour, \textit{wishing well to}; which Ideas are as different as East and West, and yet because of the Commonness of the Name, and the Jingling turn of the Proposition, this passes smoothly and unquestionably for one and the same Love” (7-8).

\textsuperscript{125} The first mention of this passage in Norris’s \textit{Theory and Regulation of Love} is found on page 70. It follows after his discussion about why we are unable to love God with benevolence and are only able to do so with desire.

\textsuperscript{126} Cf. Norris, \textit{Practical Discourses}: “If it should now be objected (as ’tis very probable it may) that the enlarging this First Commandment to such a Magnitude, will make it devour and swallow up the Second. For if the Love of God must be thus perfect and entire, so as to be exclusive of all Creatures, what room can then be left for the Love of our Neighbour? (71).

\textsuperscript{127} Norris, \textit{Practical Discourses}, 72. We can find this elaborated more in the \textit{Letters Concerning the Love of God},: “For he who permits his Desires to run after his Friend, will in the End neither please himself nor advantage his Friendship” (Astell et al., 101). Cf. “When applied to GOD in the first Commandment signifies desiring him as a Good, and when applied to Men in the second signifies not desiring them as a Good, but desiring good to them” (Astell et al., 104).
upon; and seems to believe the latter part of it confirm’d by these Words, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbor as thy self.*\(^{128}\)

*Moses,* in *Levit.* xix. repeating to the Children of *Israel* sundry Laws, and amongst others, several special Duties towards their Neighbour, thus concludes the last; (ver. the 18\(^{th}\).) *Thou shalt love thy Neighbor as thy self.* [13] Which Conclusion is comprehensive of all that preceded it, or that had been omitted; And in a short Rule, better teaches the Extent of what we owe to our Neighbour, than it was possible any Enumeration of Particulars could. This Duty is indeed so fully express’d herein, that we cannot conceive any Addition could be made to the Perfection of this Precept by our Blessed Saviour; Who came to teach us the whole Will of the Father, and to give us the most perfect Rule of Life that had yet been delivered to Mankind; and accordingly, *Luke* the 4\(^{th}\). ch. v. 25. being asked, *Master what shall I do to inherit Eternal Life?* He said, *How readest thou in the Law?* It being answer’d, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength; and thy Neighbor as thy self:* He replied, *Thou hast answer’d right; This do, and thou shalt live.* He had answer’d right, in joining together these two [14] Commandments in the Law, *on which all the rest of the Law and Prophets did depend,* Matt. xxii. 40. And our Saviour assures him the Rule of the Law was in neither part short, or defective: for he says, *This do, and thou shalt live.* We are here taught, that the Love of God, and of our Neighbour, comprises the whole of our Duty: And accordingly we are else-where also told, *That Love is the fulfilling of the Law.*\(^{129}\) Its Regulation therefore is certainly of the utmost Consequence to us; And the Measures of it are, *That we love God with all our Heart, with all our Souls, with all our Mind, and with all our Strength; and our Neighbor as our selves.*

These Precepts are joined together in the Gospel, and there is a very near Affinity between them. But they are not so joined in the Law\(^{130}\) from whence they are cited; Neither is there any Appearance that those to whom they were there given understood, or could understand [15] by them, the Love of God and the Love of their Neighbour to be distinct Affections, differing in kind;\(^{131}\) as is affirm’d by Mr. *N.* Who in Pursuance of (at best) a useless Notion, would take from a great part of Mankind their only sure Retreat, when bewildered in the Maze of Opinions, endlesly contested by the Men of Skill in Disputation: He having done as much to perplex the plain Duties of Morality, as others have done

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\(^{128}\) A silent implication is found here. It is such that we must also love ourselves with benevolence based upon the presupposition that to love our neighbor as our self, we must first love our self.

\(^{129}\) Romans 13:10.

\(^{130}\) That is, the Mosaic law.

\(^{131}\) “The Enjoyment of GOD does certainly put a final Period to all desire, and utterly quench the most flaming Thirst of a Creature, and how then can he whose desire is satisfied, desire any further, or if he does, how then is it satisfied?” (Astell et al., 107). Therefore the difference lies in the assertion that to love GOD fulfills our desire, but to love our neighbor does not. Thus we need only to love our neighbor benevolently.
the speculative parts of Religion. But there appears no Ground from the Text here, to affirm that the Command of loving their Neighbour as themselves, was (as he says it was) *not only an absolute Measure, but a relative Character put in on purpose to distinguish it from their Love of God*, Page 165. Unless that Mr. N. will say, that the Words necessarily imply so much; which is to beg the thing he contests for, and not to prove it. [16] Moses speaking as a Law-giver, to a Multitude that did not much refine in their Speculations, or distinguish things with Philosophical Niceness, seems very plainly by this Text (as the foregoing ones make it evident) to design only to tell them how far the Love of their Neighbour ought to extend: As not only to the doing no Injury (specified in sundry Instances) but even to the *bearing no Grudge*; And (Finally says he) *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* That is, do him as little Harm, and as much Good, as thou desiroush should be done to thy self. Whether, or no, he should be the Object of Desire, is not determined by this Precept, any farther than as Love naturally draws Desire after it. But against the Lawfulness of any Creature’s being desired by us, it is said by Mr. N. *that as we cannot love God with a Love of Benevolence, he wanting nothing to be wished to his Perfection, and Happiness; so we [17] ought not to love the Creatures with a Love of Desire, they being uncapable to make any part of our Happiness.* What we cannot do, we are certain we shall not: And we need little Caution, not to desire what is not desirable, or (which is here equivalent) not pleasing to us. But though Men may possibly (in the Ignorance they are in of their own Being, and the Constitution of other things, with their mutual Relations) mistake, that which can make them finally happy; yet none can be supposed not to know what, at the present, pleases them; which is the Happiness, or Pleasure here intended. How little it signifies to this Matter (though the Stress of the Assertion lies in it) to say, That *sensible Objects are not the efficient, but occasional Causes of our pleasing Sensations,* will soon be consider’d. But if when we use the

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132 Astell et al., 106-107.

133 There is a standing debate as to whether Masham’s *Discourse* was a response to the Astell-Norris letters or to Norris’s *Discourses Upon Several Divine Subjects*. This is the first known published reference to the Astell-Norris correspondence. The first edition of the Astell-Norris letters was entitled *Letters Philosophical and Divine*. Masham also references the *Letters* on pages XX20 and XX121. As discussed in the introduction, I believe that the attributing of the *Discourse* as a response chiefly or solely to the *Letters* is an understatement if not completely false.

134 Leviticus 19:18: “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD.”

135 Masham often uses italics to indicate a quotation, and though this idea is prevalent throughout Norris’s works, I am unable to locate this particular passage.

136 This is the “hypothesis” Masham referred to in the preface and is the basis for Norris/Malebranche’s philosophy. This subject is discussed in Norris’s *Practical Discourses*: “That the Bodies that surround us do really act in and upon us, not only by making impression upon our *bodies*, and striking upon our Organs of *sense*, but also raising and exciting, those Sensations our Spirits are conscious of, so to be the true efficient Causes of our *Pleasure* and our *Pain*” (6).
Word *Love*, we reflected what it is we mean by it we should perhaps be more inlight’en’d than by Mr. *N’s* Definition of it,\(^{137}\) and should [18] learn to distinguish better, than to call different Passions by the same Name; or confound Love, with whatever is a Concomitant of it.

When I say that I love my Child, or my Friend, I find that my Meaning is, that they are things I am delighted in; Their Being is a Pleasure to me.

When I say that I love God above all, I find I would express that he is my chiefest Good, and I delight in him above all things.\(^{138}\)

Again, when I say that I love my self, I likewise mean by it that my Being is dear, and pleasing to me. To say one loves a thing, and that it is that which one has Complaisancy in, is just the same: Love being only a Name given to that Disposition, or Act of the Mind, we find in ourselves towards any thing we are pleas’d with;\(^{139}\) And so far as it is simply Love, consists barely in That; and cannot be distinguish’d into different Acts of wishing well, and desiring; which are other different [19] Acts of the Mind, consequential to Love, according to the difference of the Object.\(^{140}\) To intelligent Beings that we love, our Love is follow’d with acts of Benevolence, or wishing well to the Being, and Happiness of that thing that helps to make us happy; and with desire of injoying that in them that delights us: And our Love to Inanimate things is follow’d with Benevolence and Well wishing to their Being, if it may be continued with their Injoyment; and with desire also of injoying them. But, because Benevolence appears most in Wishing Happiness to Beings capable of it; And the use of most Inanimate things which we love and desire to injoy, destroys them in the Injoyment; Therefore Learned Men have talk’d as if there were two sorts of Love; Whereas Love is but one simple act of the Mind, always accompanied with Desire, and Benevolence too, where the Object is capable of it[.]. But as that Definition which Mr N has given us, (viz *That Love is that Original Weight, Bent on Indeavour, whereby the*...
Soul stands inclin’d to, and is mov’d forwards to Good in general, or Happiness) tells us not so well what Love is, as our own Hearts can, when we consult them; So perhaps an Examination of them will not only better acquaint us with the Nature of our Passions; but also direct us better to the Measures of their Regulation, than Notions concerning them deduced from the Consequences of an Hypothesis.

Let us therefore consider more particularly, how by the different Objects of our Love our Hearts are affected.

When we say we love our selves; Have we then only a simple Perception of Pleasure, and Complaisance in our Being? Or is any thing else annex’d to that Pleasure as a necessary Concomitant, or Consequence of it? Mr. N. says, (Letters Philosophical and Divine, p. 165.) that our love of our selves is not love of Desire, but love of Benevolence most undoubtedly. Most undoubtedly these words of Mr. N. very much clash with what he affirms elsewhere (see this Theory and Regulation of Love, p 14. and 15) where having reduced or comprehended Love under Concupiscence and Benevolence, he expressly tells us that There is no desire without Benevolence, and no Benevolence without desire. But he does not in this oppose himself only, but Truth also, since the desire of the continuation of our Being is truly a Desire of our Selves, a Desire of something of our selves which we have not already; As he, that having Light and Warmth enough of the Sun, desiring its Continuation, desires more of the Sun than he has already. The Continuation of our Being is necessary to our Happiness in the Beatifick Vision. And if we desire more of that Happiness, by only desiring the

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141 This “B” appears in the text; it is most likely an annotation for meant for the printer. Other such notations are included throughout this transcription.

142 Norris, Practical Discourses, 13.

143 “Our Love of our selves is not Love of Desire, but Love of Benevolence. Most undoubtedly so, for whoever reflects upon the Love of himself will presently perceive that ’tis not a desiring of himself as his good, but a desiring of some good to himself” (Astell et al., 107).

144 It is interesting to see Masham make specific reference to this book with exact page numbers. While being a host to Locke for a number of years, Masham likely had access to his library, but Theory and Regulation of Love, as far as we can tell, was not in Locke’s collection. The question of how Masham had access to this book is of some relevance to possibly knowing how long she had been investigating the works of Norris and Malebranche.

145 “A simple Tendency of the Soul to Good, not at all considering whether it will sit to any Person or Being or no” (Norris, Theory, 25).

146 Though Norris makes the claim that these two acts accompany one another, he follows by asserting a clear distinction between the two: “For every thing that is desired is desired to some body; and so again, desiring to some body implies and supposes simple Desire. And this I suppose has been the occasion of that great Confusion which has been generally incur’d in this matter, Men being very apt from Union and Concomitancy to infer Indistinction and Identity. But notwithstanding this Connexion, the Ideas of Desire and Benevolence are very distinct, as will easily and clearly appear to any close and attentive Thinker” (Theory, 13).

147 According to Plato, the Beatific Vision is the vision of the Good. Later, Thomas Aquinas describes it
Continuation of it, we certainly desire more of our selves, by desiring the Continuation of our Being.

Let us farther observe, how our Hearts are affected in our love of other things. Our being, we evidently find, stands in need of other Beings for its Support and Happiness; because it is not sufficient alone B2 [22] for either: And therefore to the Complaisance\textsuperscript{148} or Pleasure we have in it, we find necessarily annex’d a wishing to it whatever we conceive may either continue, or improve it.

As to God himself, whom Mr. N. makes the sole Object of our Desire; I wish Mr. N. had a little more explain’d himself what he means by our Desiring of God.\textsuperscript{149} For the Perfection and Superlativeness of his Nature, makes him the Object of our Love, Desire and Benevolence, in a quite different way from Created Beings.\textsuperscript{150} We love God for those Excellencies of his Nature, wherein he infinitely surpasses all that is good, or desireable in the Creature. When we are said to Desire him, I think we mean such a Communication of his Goodness, whereby he bestows on us any Degree of Happiness: And in this sense, we shall to Eternity desire more and more of him.

But he being both Necessary and Perfect, we can therefore wish no good to him, which he has not already; [23] Because we cannot conceive any Addition of Good can be made to him.\textsuperscript{151} Our Benevolence is limited by his perfect Nature, only to Acts of Joy and Complaisance in his Perfections, which is all we can do; But the doing of That declares, That if any thing could be added to his

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\textsuperscript{148} For Norris, “Complaisance” is a tendency that arises from the soul towards good: “This I take to be that peculiar Habitude of the Soul to Good […] which I consider as really distinct from, and antecedent to its actual Motion towards it” (Theory, 9).

\textsuperscript{149} Norris discusses that we love God because He is good and the objects that we desire have good (aspects of God) in them, but we love and desire God because of this completeness (Theory, 10). Unfortunately, this is not adequate definition for Masham.

\textsuperscript{150} “As to the Sense, I think the highest that is generally put upon these Words amounts to no more than this, That God is to be the prime and principal Object of our Love and Delight; That we are to love him in a Superlative way, above all other things whatsoever, so as to lose any Good, or suffer any Evil rather than commit the least Sin against him” (Norris, Practical Discourses, 5).

\textsuperscript{151} Masham is making it clear here that we cannot love God with benevolence since there is nothing we can wish to make God better, happier, more complete, more long lasting, etc. If, however, it were possible to add to God, then we (out of love) would wish it.
Perfection and Happiness, we should wish it. And therefore, as an Expression of that Benevolence, it is made our Duty to give him Praise, and as much as we can to Glorifie him.\textsuperscript{152}

Again, When we say, That we love our Children, or Friends; it is evident also from the Nature of the Object, that we not only wish to them as to our selves, whatever we conceive may tend to continue, or improve their Being; but also, that Desire of them is a necessary Concomitant of our Love: Because we are not always present with them, whereby we should enjoy them more: And it is impossible to love the Presence, or Kindness of any B3 [24] thing, without desiring to possess it. Now, If any one will say, we ought not to be so pleased; They then deny that we ought to love: For we cannot love but what we are pleased with. It is true, that every one may apply words as they think fit; But then others ought to take care not to be imposed on by them. And if any one will either tell us, That we love things in which we find no Pleasure; Or, That being pleased with a thing, we do not yet love it; Or will call different Passions by the same Name; Or imply in the word \textit{Love}, that complication of other Passions inseparable, indeed, from Love, but varying according to the Objects of it; It will concern us to examine what they say, before we receive their Dictates, as Measures for the Regulation of a Passion, upon the right Regulation of which depends both our Present, and Future Happiness.

Love is but one simple Act of the Mind: But whether our desiring \textsuperscript{25} of what we love, or only wishing well to it, or both, follow that act of Love; the Nature of the lov’d Object alone Determines.\textsuperscript{153} For if that be both capable of being a good to us, and of receiving good from us, or from any thing else, it is then certain that we with both: If it be capable of but one, and we know it to be so, it is certain we can then wish but one. The Distinction which is made of love of Benevolence, and Concupiscence, (arising only from the different Natures of the Objects of our Love) is only the Mis-application of the word Love to different acts consequent to Love, but distinct from it, and depending on the different Nature of the Object.

But it is said, That no Creature is capable of being a Good to us.\textsuperscript{154} Every Man’s Experience confutes this every Day, and would do so, although that were

\textsuperscript{152} Here Masham is advocating that God does need something and that is our Praise. This necessity compromises the ideas of Norris, thus resulting in the ability to love God with benevolence (i.e., to love God because He needs or wants us to).

\textsuperscript{153} With regard to our love of God, Norris explains in the \textit{Practical Discourse} that our love is created by God for God alone. Therefore it is in our nature to love God without ever having to will it. “Does not an intelligible Good bear the same proportion to a reasonable Nature, as a sensible Good does to Sense; and is not God the same to the Soul, as Musick is to the Ear, or as Light to the Eye?” (2).

\textsuperscript{154} Norris adds: “Indeed if we allow the Creature to be in any degree our Good, ’tis hard to keep our selves from desiring it, and if we permit Desire, we can never be secure from irregular Love, that Shame and Misery of Mankind, it being easier not to desire at all than to desire with Moderation (Astell et al., 91).
true that these Men contend for; which therefore cannot in the least tend to promote Piety. B4 [26] It is certain, that to believe (which is evidently true) that we receive all our Good from the Hand of God; ought to be, and effectively is, the proper Ground of our Love of Him above all things. But that we do receive all our good from the Hand of God, is equally acknowledged whether we believe the creature receives an Efficiency from God to excite pleasing Sensation in us; Or that God himself exhibiting part of his Essence to us, at the presence of the Creature, is himself the immediate Author of those Pleasing Sensations: Which is the Hypothesis proposed for the Advancement of the Love of God.155

But as Truth of no kind is ever advantaged by Falshood; so also, it seems to respect Due to so important, and withal, so evident a Duty as the Love of God, not needlessly to lay the stress of it upon any Doubtful, Unintelligible, or Precarious Hypothesis; whatever Pretences it carries with it of Piety. [27]

Pompous Rhapsodies156 of the Soul’s debasing her self, when she descends to set the least part of her Affections upon any thing but her Creator, (however well they may possibly be intended) are plainly but a complementing God with the contempt of his Works, by which we are the most effectually led to Know, Love, and Adore him. And such kind of Expressions as carry not a Relative, but Absolute Abhorrence, or Contempt of Injoyments the most Lawful, seem only allowable, as unpremeditated Raptures of Devout Minds, not the Productions of Philosophical Disquisition; and will only affect those that are truely Pious, whilst they carry a show of some Truth in the Heart of the Speaker, which they strictly have not in themselves. For ’tis not unlikely that a lively Remorse may so turn the Stream of some Men’s affections from all sensible Pleasures, and give them so strong a Disgust for them, that the very Remembrances and B5 [28] Ideas of those Pleasure, even where allowable, may become Ungrateful: As Men have often Aversion to see or hear of Places or Persons, (othertimes Dear to them) by which, or in which, they have suffer’d much. The Passions where they are strong, argue by a Logick of their own, not that of Reason, which they often and significantly enough, invert to serve their own Purpose. And when Religion is in the case (with which too many are perswaded Reason has little to do) they can easily advance this so far, as to dress out an intire System, intelligible only by Sentiment, not to Reason; of which, perhaps some of the Mystical Divines are an Example. But to what Extravagance soever this may be carried, it is not therefore to be believed, That he who requires

155 This is the beginning of her criticism of occasionalism. Malebranche, Norris, and Astell hold that God alone creates sensations in us; Masham here is plainly allowing for the option that God could work through creatures so that it’s the creatures that produce the sensations.

156 Buickerood notes in his “What Is It with Damaris, Lady Masham?” “A seventeenth-century usage of ‘rhapsody’ ignored by commentators, though t is quite likely pertinent here, is to signify a miscellaneous collection, a string, medley, or confused mass of materials. Quite arguably this is a fair characterization of much of Norris’s published work to the 1690s. This usage is illustrated in, e.g. Robert Boyle, A Free Enquiry into Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature (London, 1686), Preface.” (212).
the Service of the whole Man, rejects the Passions from bearing a part; whilst we suffer them neither to impose upon our selves, nor others, to the admitting of wrong Notions, [29] Prejudicial to true Religion. And it is likely, that many People of weak Understandings, may owe most of their Religion to their Passions; It being certain, that if some Men had no more Religion than they are capable of having by a Rational Disquisition, it must be exceeding little.157

But whenever any one pretends to prescribe Measures of Duty, not suited to a Popular Audience, but such as shall challenge the strictest Attention and Scrutiny of Reason, he ought to exclude all Metaphor and Hyperbole. For those Notions will deservedly be suspected of some Defect, which are usher’d in, or attended with Flights, not only out of the reach of common Sense, but which oppose the Experience of Mankind; As all such do that have for Foundation the Creature’s being uncapable to procure us any good: There being none of them, perhaps, that we approach, which either does not, or may not, [30] contribute to our Good, or Ill; And which truly are not in Effect allow’d to do so, by those who deny them to be Efficient Causes. For it will be found to amount to the same thing in regard of us, and our Obligation to desire them, whether they are Efficient, or Occasional Causes, of our pleasing Sensations: The proof of which last Opinion, (taken from their own Ignorance of any other way to explain the Nature of our Ideas, and Perceptions) They can hardly feel the force of; Without having a great Opinion of their own Faculties, or a very small one of the Power, and Wisdom of God. And they must also be very clear sighted, if they can discern how this Hypothesis of seeing all things in God, helps us one jot further in the Knowledge of our Ideas, and Perceptions,158 which is the thing it was

157 Masham is condemning the notion that the soul debases itself whenever it gives even a little attention to anything other than God (no matter what good intention the soul has in doing so) since this insults God by disapproving of God’s work even though it is through creation that we can best know, love, and adore God. Such an opinion seems to condemn universally even the most innocent pleasures, and such an opinion can’t be thoughtful philosophical reasoning but only be due to uncontrolled and spontaneous thoughts of someone who may be deep in prayer; such a thought might affect those who are really pious, but even though these expressions are true in some way, but they aren’t really true. After all, it’s not unlikely that very strong feelings of regret could change how a person feels about some physical pleasure so that this person will then be disgusted with all pleasures; even if pleasure is innocent enough, he will become ungrateful even at the idea of any pleasure. For example, think of people who now dislike people or places that they used to love but which have caused them pain in the past. Strong emotions have their own “logic,” which is not always reasonable, and this logic is often just a rationalizing in order to satisfy an emotion. When these feelings have to do with religion (which many think has nothing to do with reason in the first place) they cannot carry this to an extreme so that their whole philosophy is based on this “logic” using only emotions, not reason, and as we can see by the examples of certain mystics. But just because we take it to the extreme doesn’t mean we have to believe it when we think that we have to consider the entire person except for emotions, by not allowing emotions to affect us or other people with incorrect ideas about true religion. Since it is likely that simpleminded people are religious because of their emotions, then it is certain that if people’s religion required them to be intelligent, then few would be religious.

158 By seeing all things in God, this implies that we see the ideas that exist in God’s mind. This relationship can be very detrimental to God. Norris attributes it to be absurd for one to think and suggest that humans are capable of creating thought. “For certain it is a great deal more to be able to produce Thought, then
Primarily pretended to be design’d for. They who advance this Notion, do only fetch a Circuit, and then return where they were before, [31] without gaining any advantage, by Derogating (as they do) from the Wisdom of God, in framing his Creatures like the Idols of the Heathen, that have Eyes, and see not; Ears, and hear not, Ec.

But we are only now concern’d, to inquire of what the Use this Opinion is in Morality; That any one should be zealous in asserting it on that account.

The Creatures they say are occasional Causes of our pleasing Sensations. Then, however, they are Causes of them. They deny not also, That they are such Causes as are always accompanied with the Effect, and without which the Effect is not produced. And are they not then consider’d as Goods to us, just the same as if they were efficient Causes? Or must we think a beautiful Flower has not the same Appearance, whether it be believ’d that God has lodg’d a power in the Flower to excite the Idea of its Colour in us, or that he himself exhibits the Idea of its Colour at the presence of that Object? If the Flower is either way equally pleasing (as certainly it is) then it is also equally desireable. But the Wisdom of God cannot herein be equally admired, because it is not equally conspicuous. For if God immediately exhibits to me all my Idea’s, and that I do not truly see with my Eyes, and hear with my Ears; then all that wonderful Exactness and curious Workmanship, in framing the Organs of Sense, seems superfluous and vain; Which is no small Reflection upon infinite Wisdom.

We are moreover told, That the whole of our Duty, and Happiness, consists in making God the sole Object of our Desires; The least spark of which to be merely caplable of it. I my self am capable of Thought, but I do not find I have a Power to produce it, not so much as in my self, much less in another” (Practical Discourse, 32). It is here that Norris proclaims his support of Malebranche’s “seeing all things in God” theory.

One can only imagine how strongly Masham first reacted to Malebranche’s The Search after Truth, Book III Part II Chapter VI: “it is also apparent from the economy found throughout nature that God never does in very complicated fashion what can be done in a very simple and straightforward way. For God never does anything uselessly and without reason. His power and wisdom are not shown by doing lesser things with greater means – this is contrary to reason and indicates a limited intelligence. Rather, they are shown by doing greater things with very simple and straightforward means” (42).

This is the first implication that Masham makes about the occasionalist God’s being unwise in His creation of objects with sensory faculties of the body that are of no use.

Here seems to be a chief point: if occasionalism is true, then why should God have made the sensible objects? They would be unnecessary and in vain and would thus detract from God’s wisdom. Norris addresses acquiring pleasure through our senses in the beginning of his Practical Discourses: “is not God the same to the Soul, as Musick is to the Ear, or Light to the Eye? […] They are the proper Goods of their respective Powers” (2). In Theory and Regulation of Love, Norris pursues a discussion on the topic of sensual pleasures, and in doing so Norris states, “And besides, I consider, that in the Human Frame God has prepared Organs and Instruments for the use of Sensual Pleasure, and that he has also given us Natural Appetites and Inclinations to it. Whereby it appears, that God has provided for the gratification of the Animal as well as the Divine Life” (83-84).
sacred Fire cannot light upon Creatures, without so far defrauding him: And that the Reason of this Duty is, because the Creatures are not the efficient Causes of our Sensations. If this be so, this seems also to say an Imputation upon the Wisdom [33] and Goodness of God, who has laid the Foundation of our Duty in a Reason which he has concealed from us. For this great Cause why we should love him alone, (viz. because the Creatures are not the efficient Causes of our Sensations) is so hidden from us by all the Art, and Contrivance, observable in Nature, that if it were purposely design’d to be conceal’d, and we purposely intended to be misled, it could not be more so. For in Effect till this last Age, it has not been discover’d; Or at least very sparingly; And even still (as it seems) only Heads cast in Metaphysical Moulds are capable of it. This, I say, one would think were some Reflection upon the Divine Wisdom; Yet no less than this is said. For the whole of our Duty is placed in a right Regulation of our Love. The whole of that Regulation in making God the sole Object of our Desires; And having only Charity, or Benevolence, for his Creatures. And this Distribution is grounded on no clear Text of Scriptures; Nor on other Foundation from Reason, than this only, That the Creatures are not the efficient Causes of our pleasing Sensations.

Indeed, sometimes, the Severity of some Precepts of Morality may well be thought to have been a hindrance to the Discovery of their Truth; And this of Centring all our Affections upon God, and not permitting the least part of our Desires to run out after sensible Goods, carries at first Sight, a specious Pretence of being of that Nature. And doubtless, with many plain, well-meaning People, (who understood not the Metaphysical Ground of it, But endeavour’d to practise it without pretending to prove it) it tended to great Austerities; sometimes perhaps Useful; but most commonly Superstitious, and Pernicious to true Religion. But a late Teacher of this Doctrine, tho’ he has advanced the Theory, is more favourable in the practical part, than to recommend by it any such Popish Mortifications and Severities: And he with great Reason, seems to believe, that the good things of this World were given to be enjoyed by us. No Creature he says, indeed, can be Loved, or Desired, without Defrauding God, and even committing the Sin of Idolatry, Vol. III. Practical Discourse, p. 62, 67.

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162 Norris, Practical Discourses, 16.

163 Here is a further argument against occasionalism: it seems pretty farfetched to think that God would excite ideas in us of sensible objects that do not exist so that we could better know God and nature.

164 It seems pretty evident that Masham is referring to Norris’s Theory and Regulation of Love.

165 Second only to the logical impossibility found in occasionalism, here Masham presents her problem that the proposition proposed by Norris lacks support from the Scriptures. It seems to her that Norris is guilty of only making assertions instead of arguing for his contentions (Buiceroood, xviii).

166 Norris, considered the English Malebranche, sought to finish what what he believed Malebranche had left out of his philosophy of occasionalism.

167 Cf. Norris: “I know but of one sort of Spiritual Sin besides that is call’d Adultery in Scripture, and that
Consequently therefore, there can be no more hateful Sin to the Almighty than (feeling Cold, or Hunger) to desire Fire, or Food, as any good to us: But he tells us at the same time, That tho’ the things which satisfy these Natural Cravings are by no means to be desired as Goods; Yet they may be securely sought for as such, and enjoyed,\textsuperscript{168} p. 73, 74. He whose Head is cast in a Metaphysical Mould\textsuperscript{169} has, it may be, Privileges of Nature which accompany it, that ordinary Mortals are Stranger to; Who tho’ they can conceive indeed a thing to be lov’d without being sought, or to be sought without being lov’d; Yet from [36] the frailty of their own Constitutions will scarce ever be persuaded in Fact that they, and this Author, being thoroughly Cold, seek for Fire, upon different Motives; Or will think that He being truly Hungry, seeks Food only upon a prudential Account, and not out of any Desire that he has to the Meat; Should he tell them ever so much, That the Mind of Man, conscious of its own Dignity, and Innate Nobleness, ought not to debate it self to such mean Affections, as the Love of any Creature: The Creatures being no more capable to please any Faculty than to Create it; And therefore have no Pretence to the least interest in our Love, Prac. D. p. 59.\textsuperscript{170} And it will even not be easie for him to perswade them, That he does not, in this, vilifie the Wisdom of his Creator, and reproach God for not having made him as he ought to have done. For Men are very seldom talk’d out of their Senses. And if they should not want the Charity to believe him [37] sincere; they will yet also be very ready to conclude him unacquainted with the World, and Humane Nature, to judge of that of others by his own extraordinary, and Metaphysical Constitution.

But the Words of the Test, Matt. xxii. 37. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind,\textsuperscript{171} he says, will admit of no other good Interpretation than that God is solely, and only, to be Loved: Since with no tolerable Sense he can be said to Love God with all his

\textsuperscript{168} The closest quotation I found in the Practical Discourse to what Masham has here is “and though in regard that they do so much they may be innocently sought for and used, yet because they do no more, they must not be loved” (Norris, Practical Discourses, 74).

\textsuperscript{169} Norris, “Reflections Upon the Conduct of Human Life “ In Treatises Upon Several Subjects (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., [1698] 1978). This appears in a work Norris dedicated to Masham for an individual to acquire true “Clearness and Distinctness of Conception”: “Nor will all the Pains in the World do, unless a Man be Naturally made for it, unless he be of a Notional Complexion, and has had his Head cast in a Metaphysical Mould.” In the introduction of the Letters between Norris and Astell, Derek Taylor and Melvyn New describe the use of this as a way of Masham’s parodying Norris (Astell et al., 35).

\textsuperscript{170} “Since they Communicate to me no Good, nor are any more able to please a Faculty than to Create it, what pretence have they to the least interest in my Love?” (Norris, Practical Discourses, 59).

\textsuperscript{171} This is found on the opening page of A DISCOURSE CONCERNING The Measure of Divine Love, with the Natural and Moral Grounds upon which it stands (Norris, Practical Discourses, 1).
Soul, and all his Mind, that only loves him above other things; Allowing other things at the same time a share in his Love, \(^{172}\) p. 10. The highest Sense, he thinks, that is generally put upon these Words amounts to no more than this: That God is to be the Prime, and Principal, Object of our Love, and Delight: That we are to Love him in a superlative way above all other things whatsoever, so as to lose any Good, or suffer any Evil, rather than commit the least Sin against him: [38] That we are always to prefer him in our Love, chusing to obey him rather than Man, and to please him rather than satsisfie our own Will, and to enjoy him rather than any Worldly or Carnal Pleasure, p. 5.6.\(^{173}\) But this Interpretation, he thinks, exhaust not the Sense of the Commandment; since no Logick, or Grammar, can bear to call the Part, though the larger Part, the whole, p.10.\(^{174}\) But it is not the Question whether Logick, or Grammar, will bear calling the Part the whole; but whether every Text in Scripture is to be interpreted by his Logick, and Grammar: Or whether, in some Cases, Scripture does not accommodate it self to the fashion, and figurative ways of speaking usual amongst Men; Which when rightly, not literally understood, are not contrary to Logick, and Grammar. This it is plain the Opinion of the Divines, and other Learned Men is, That the Scripture does so accommodate it self: Because they have interpreted his Text, and not this alone, but [39] other also in such a Sense. And therefore if he would put any Stress upon this Argument, he must first show that those are mistaken who think that Scripture oftentimes speaks figuratively and popularly; which is so receiv’d an Opinion, that to oppose it as he does (or else says nothing to the Purpose) without giving any reason at all, in this place, for so doing, seems to argue more Arrogancy than Impartiality in the search of Truth.\(^{175}\) Now if Scripture does sometimes accommodate it self to the ordinary ways of speaking amongst Men; Why should it not be thought to do so in this Text? Wherein the common Sense of Mankind opposes any other Meaning as possible, than that which is familiar to us. For it cannot be deny’d, that, in every Language, nothing is more ordinary than to say we love a Person intirely, or with all our Hearts, when we love them very much; And yet better may this be said, if we love them above all others.\(^{176}\) And as we

\(^{172}\) Norris, Practical Discourse, 10; The quote in the Practical Discourses is found as such, “Can he be said with any tolerable sense to love God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind, that only loves him above other things, at the same time allowing other things a share in his Love?”

\(^{173}\) Norris, Practical Discourse, 4.

\(^{174}\) Norris, Practical Discourse: “Does this exhaust the sense of this great Comandment? Can he be said with any tolerable sense to love God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind, that only loves him above other things, at the same time allowing other things a share in his Love? Can he be said to love God with \textit{all} his Love that loves him only with a \textit{Part}? What though that Part be the larger Part, ‘tis but a Part still; and is a \textit{Part} the \textit{Whole}? What Logick, or what Grammar, will indure this?” (7).

\(^{175}\) Here we find Masham’s accusation of Norris’S arguing from ignorance.

\(^{176}\) Norris’s problem with loving other objects with desire is that it violates the 7th commandment. “But how Love of Desire fulfills it [The second table of law], or any one Precept of it, is to me very difficult to understand; and I should be glad to be inform’d how Love of Desire can be said to fulfil the Seventh Commandment, \textit{Thou Shalt not commit Adultery}” (Astell et al., 108).
mean [40] no more than one of these two things, by these Expressions, so we design not to be understood otherwise: and this is so well known, that we are also never mistaken in them.

But it is yet more evident, that this Text is to be understood in the familiar Sense of the Words; If it be remembred that they are the Injunction of a Law-Maker (Deut. vi. 5. from whence our Saviour cites them) to a Rude, and Illiterate People. Now the Duty that these Words injoins, Mr. N. himself confesses, cannot be carried higher than the Interpreters have carried it (viz. to Love God supremely, and above all things) without building in the Air; Unless his Hypothesis be received. 177 Which unless he will say Moses delivered also to the Israelites, he makes him an admirable Lawgiver, to deliver to his People the most Essential of all his Laws, so as it was not, or cannot be thought, likely that one of a Hundred, if at least any one amongst them, did understand it. For I suppose it will [41] not be deny’d by Mr. N. That though be the Parturiency of his own Mind, he very early light upon this Notion, 178 and was not (as the World imagine he was) beholden to Pere Malebranche for it; That the Israelites generally were not so speculative, and philosophical as he, in their Natural Genius; And yet less, that they either Cultivated any such Speculations in the time of Moses; Or had any Tradition, or receiv’d Opinion amongst them, That the Creatures were not Efficient, but Occasional Causes of their Pleasing Sensations; by which they might be enabled to understand this Command concerning loving God, not in the familiar, and conceivable Sense of the Words, but in Mr. N’s Logical, and Grammatical, though otherwise Inconceivable Sense of them.

But besides that Lawgivers always give their Laws in the most familiar manner they can; The inconceivableness also of Mr. N’s Sense of the Words as a Moral Rule, is sufficient [42] reason in it self why Moses should not be understood according to his Explanation; Which puts a Meaning upon the Command that is apparently, and plainly impracticable: viz. That God is so wholly to be loved, that it is defrauding Him, to place the least Degree of our Love upon the Creatures; And that therefore, though they may be sought and enjoyed by us as Goods, yet they cannot be desired by us as such, without Sin. 179 This Inconceivableness of any other Sense, that could (by his Auditors at least) be put upon his Words; might, I doubt not, in any other Case, plead Moses’s Excuse to Mr. N. himself, for having thus transgress’d, as he thinks, against Logick and Grammar, whilst he express’d himself in a way, that may well be suppos’d to have been as familiar and usual then, as it is now. It is to be hoped, that to many others he will not need excuse in this, wherein, (with what has a Natural Connexion, and is accordingly, out [43] of Moses, joined to it by our Saviour) he has so well comprehended the Duty of Mankind, that Christ says, This do, and

177 Norris, Practical Discourse, 5.
179 I.e., adultery and/or idolization.
thou shalt live: That is, Love the Lord thy God with all thy Soul, with allthy Heart, with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength: And thy Neighbour as thy self.

These Commands have no Obscurity, or Difficulty at all to be understood, if we have honest Hearts, and Heads not possess’d with an Hypothesis which every thing must be made to chime to. For to love any thing with all our Hearts, is in its known and usual Signification, to love it ardently. Moses joins to loving God with all our Hearts, loving him also, with all our Souls, and all our Minds; That is, with all the Faculties of our reasonable Nature. And by this, we are taught not only to love him very ardently, but above all other things; As being our Creator, and great Benefactor, upon whom we depend every Moment, and from whom we receive all the C [44] Good that we injoy, and from whose Bounty we expect all that we hope for; As also, as being every way in himself infinitely (beyond all Degrees of Comparison) a Being the most lovely. Foolish Men (too frequent Experience shows) love ardently oftentimes, without considering whether the Object of their Love be worthy of it. But to love with the Mind and the Soul, as well as the Heart, is not to love so; but to love with the Understanding, Rationally, as well as Passionately. And we cannot Love God with our Souls and with our Mind, that is, with the Application of our Understandings, and with a reasonable Love, without loving him above all his Creatures; Because he is infinitely more lovely;180 And every ones reason, when he consults it, must always assent that he is so.

The Duty then that we are taught is plainly what reason requires, viz. That we love the most lovely Being above all others; And that all the [45] Powers, and Faculties of our Mind, consent in this Preference of him. That we think of him (as well as we are able) as he is; and pay the highest Tribute of Affection, and Adoration, to him that our Natures are capable of. This is also plainly Practicable, and what we may know whether we perform or no, by asking our selves, whether we are willing to part with any other Good for the Sake of this; (as Father, Mother, Husband, Wife, or Children, &c.) Which our Saviour tells us, whoever is not ready to part with for his Sake is not worthy of him; But that whosoever parts with any of these for the Gospel’s Sake, shall receive manifold Reward, both in this Life, and in the World to come. Now if none of these were allow’d to be desirable to us, but to be only Objects of our Charity181 (as Mr. N. says they ought to be) Why should we deserve so great Reward for forsaking of them for God’s Sake? And why should our Saviour, as he plainly does, confirm C2 [46] the

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180 Here we see a naturalist tendency of Masham: to recognize God, we must experience the things on earth, and through rational thinking, we can conceive of something more absolutely perfect than anything on earth.

181 Cf. Letters: “that Love of Desire is not the Love required of us in the second Commandment, but only Love of Benevolence, which whoever has, does by that alone sufficiently satisfie the Intention and Obligation of that law” (Astell et al., 106).
Desireableness of these things to us, if they were not in some Degree allow’d to be desired?\textsuperscript{182}

But Mr. \textit{N.} says, we are commanded to \textit{Love our Neighbour, as our selves}; And that it being plain, that we do not love our selves with a \textit{Love of Desire}, therefore it is plain that we ought not to love our Neighbour so.\textsuperscript{183}

\textit{Moses}, in \textit{Levit. xix}. From whence the above cited Text is taken, having rehearsed divers other Laws to the People, comes to tell them what they owe to their Neighbour; which he does from the 13 to the 18\textsuperscript{th} Verse; with which he thus concludes: \textit{Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the Children of thy People. But thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.} The Sense of these Words could not be mistaken by anyone who was not prepossess’d with an Hypothesis, which he was willing to support from Scripture Authority. For \textit{Moses} having told the People, \textit{That they should not defraud their Neighbour}; \textit{That they should not mock at his Infirmities: That they should not oppress him; But judge in Righteousness, not respecting the Person of the Poor or the Rich; That they should not only not stand against the Blood of their Neighbour; But also, not hate him in their Heart; And further, That they should not only take care of his Temporal Welfare, but also of his Spiritual; By rebuking him when he sins; And likewise, be so far from avenging themselves when injured by him, that they should not so much as bear a Grudge against him; He concludes all with that which ought to be the Spring from which all these good Offices to our Neighbour should proceed; and which in short, fully teaches us the extent of our Duty to him: \textit{Thou shalt Love thy Neighbour as thy self}. That is, plainly, \textit{That as we love our selves; and from that Principle of Love, do good to our selves; so we should also love our Neighbour, and from that Principle C3 of Love to him, should do him all the good that we can.\textsuperscript{184}} Not only barely performing towards him the outward Acts of those Duties here enjoined, or any other; But performing them upon the same Principles of Delight, and Complaisance in his well being which we have in our own; Without which, all our Performances will be defective.

We must here consider, \textit{Moses} speaking either as a Lawgiver, or as a Philosopher. If as the First, then without doubt he must be thought to have spoke so, as the People whom he spoke to could to the easiliest apprehend him. And the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Masham is attempting to make the reader see how under Norris’s understanding we can doubt the goodness of God by implying that He is a deceiver or possibly even wicked. Here we see Masham attack Norris for the immoral implications of his claims.
\item Cf. Astell et al., \textit{Letters}: “For our Saviour commands us to love our Neighbour as our selves, which by the Way seems to me not only an absolute Measure, but a relative Character, put in on purpose to distinguish it from the Love of GOD. But now, you well resume, our Love of our selves is not Love of Desire, but Love of Benevolence. Most Undoubtedly so, for whoever reflect upon the Love of himself will presently perceive that ’tis not a desiring of himself as his good, but a desiring of some good to himself” (106-107).
\item \textit{Love} (says the Apostle, Romans 13:10) \textit{worketh no ill to his Neighbour}, that is, does not hurt or injure him, but does him all good” (Astell et al., 107).
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whole Scope of his Discourse, makes the above mentioned Sense of his Words plainly the most obvious meaning of them, viz. That as People love themselves, and upon that Principle of Love do good to themselves; So also it is their Duty to love their Neighbour; without which, they cannot discharge what they owe to him. Neither could any other Sense [49] be put upon the Words of Moses, *Thou shalt Love thy Neighbour as thy self*; Without the Learned Distinction of Love of Benevolence, and Love of Concupiscence; Which it is hard to believe, That Mr. N. or any one else can think many, if any, of the Israelites were acquainted with. Tho’ if he could suppose they had been so, and that Moses himself had had Regard to it; and had also Philosophiz’d as ill as the People; I wonder Mr. N. should not see that it would yet make nothing to his purpose: Since Moses is not here telling them all that they lawfully may do, but all that they necessarily must do, not to fail in their Duty.

But if Mr. N. had rather Moses should be consider’d here, speaking as a Philosopher, according to, (and instructing the People in) the true Nature of things; as well as laying down Precepts for them to obey; It is then more evident, That the Words of Moses will not only not C4 [50] comply with the Sense He puts upon them, but also that they are opposite to it. For Moses says, *Thou shalt Love thy Neighbour as thy self*: That is, thou shalt take the same Complaisance, in the Being, and well Being of thy Neighbour, as in thy own. Now it is manifestly impossible, and contradisticious, that we should rejoice, and take Complaisance, in what is no way desireable to us: Or that we should not desire that in which we rejoice, and take Complaisance. The Being therefore, and well Being of our Neighbour, must necessarily be desireable to us; and we could not otherwise love him as ours elves. For it is certain, That our own Being, and well Being, are desirous to us: (Who is there that does not desire the Continuation of them?) And therefore that there is no Love without Desire, any more than without Benevolence (as is apparent in our Love of God) so far as the Objects of our Love admits of both. [51]

But Love simply, as is above said, is that Disposition, or Act, of the Mind, which we find in our selves towards any thing we are pleas’d with; and consists barely in that Disposition, or Act; And cannot be distinguish’d into different Acts of wishing well, or Benevolence; And Desiring: Which are other different Acts of the Mind, exerted according to the different Objects of our Love. We desire to injoy in every thing, that in them which delights us: And we wish well to the Being of every thing that helps to make us happy. If their Being can be continued with our Injoyment of them; that Injoyment is also necessarily desire by us: It being impossible for any Creature not to Desire whatever appears to them to make a part of their Happiness.

But now whence is it that arises either those Wars, and Violences, that are in the World amongst Men once with another; or those Tumults and Perturbations, that too frequently C5 [52] spring up in their own Breasts, when all things without them are Serene, Peaceable, and Quiet? From Desire, it is true, all
these Mischiefs proceed: And Desire is the inexhaustible Fountain of Folly, Sin, and Misery.

Is it not therefore worthy of our greatest Application, and Endeavours, to free our selves from so Dangerous Evils? Without doubt it is so. And this has always been the Care of the Wise: Present, as well as Future Happiness, being concern’d in it.

*Qui Cupit aut metuit, juvat*

*illum sic Domus aut res;*

*Ut Lippam pictæ Tabulæ fomenta*

*podagram,*

*Auriculas Citharæ collecta*

*Sorde dolentes.*

But we are to enquire what remedy Religion gives us to this Disease? And that we are sure can be no other than Reason prescribes; which is to proportion [53] our Desires to the worth of things: For where they go beyond that, we are certain to be disappointed, whether we miss or obtain, what we desire. But so far as the enjoyment of things are in their real worth answerable to our Desires; so far we are really Happy: And should we always so succeed in a constant train of our Desire, we should, according to our Capacity, be perfectly Happy.

We cannot conceive any Being to be without Desires but God.186 Nor can we conceive it to be a fault for any Creature to act suitable to its Nature; and desire things that can be joy’d; and will contribute to its Happiness. This I am sure Holy Writ allows us: For the Apostle tell us, That *God has given us all things richly to injoy.*187 And *Moses* himself, (whatever Metaphysical Notions Mr. N. puts into him) tells the People of *Israel,* Deut. xxvi. 11. *Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God has given to thee; Thou [54] and the Levite, and the Stranger that is amongst you:* Which was but suitable to the Land of Promise, flowing with Milk, and Honey, proposed to the Desire of that whole People. And, I think, we may say, not one of the Six hundred Thousand would have marched through the Wilderness, had not *Moses* allow’d them to desire the

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186 Here Masham is referring to the concept of the fullness of God. Being that God is absolutely complete He cannot desire anything else, because he lacks nothing.

187 Interestingly, we find Locke quotes this same passage in chapter 5:31 of his *Two Treatises on Government,* published seven years prior to Masham’s *Discourse.* Locke is citing Saint Paul’s statement to Saint Timothy; Paul A Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern,* Vol 2 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 271.
good things of Canaan, but told them they must desire nothing of Creature. But our Errour, and Unhappiness is, that we do not regulate our Desire aright. They are not under the Government, and Direction of our Reason, and Judgment; but lead these away Captive with them in their endless Chace after whatever strikes our Imaginations with any Pleasing Idea. The best Remedy for which that Reason can prescribe, is what Religion has injoyn’d us; viz. an Ardent Love of God above all things. For our Desires placed upon this Object will not only never be disappointed; But also the Love of God

[55 ] above all other things, will the most effectually secure us from any immoderate Love of any of his Creatures: Because the contrariety between such a Love of God, and any sinful or inordinate Love of the Creature makes them inconsistent. If therefore the Love of God, and the Interests of another life, were constantly our Ruling and Predominant Passion; If in this sense (as low as it seems to Mr. N.) we did Love God with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength; We should not only be sure of doing our Duty, but also make the best provision that we could for our Happiness even here in this World. For then the disappointments we might meet with in the Love of any thing else, would never indanger the foundations of our Satisfaction; which, like a House buildt upon a Rock, could not be mov’d by any storms or Tempests of Fortune: And we might say, with Dr. H. More,188 [56]

*What’s Plague, or Prison, Loss of Friends,*

*War, Dearth, or Death, that all things Ends?*

*Mere Bugbears for the Childish Mind;*

*Pure Panick Terrors of the Blind.*189

Which however it may look to some like a Religious Rant, is no more than in other instances we may find Experience to have made good the truth of. For even in the Love of the things of this World, very often, one Affection, or Desire, has so much the Possession of a Man’s Heart, that all other (how natural a tendency soever he has to them) do but very weakly, and superficially affect him in their Success, or Miscarriage: And this no Man that is either very Ambitious; very

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188 Dr. Henry More (1614-1687), theologian, philosopher, and Cambridge Platonist. More was a close friend and acquaintance of Masham’s father, Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688).

Covetous; very much in Love; or possess’d strongly with any other Passion; can deny to be so. [57]

The Love of God therefore as we are capable of loving him, (that is, chiefly, not solely) does effectually secure our Happiness, and consequently our Duty: For he desires nothing of us, but that we should be as Happy as he has made us capable of Being; And has laid no Traps, or Snares, to render us Miserable; Nor does he require impossible Performances from us. Yet it is true nevertheless, that the constant communication that we have with the sensible Objects, which are apt too far to ingage our Affections, makes the Regulation of our Desire to demand our greatest Care, and Watchfulness: And too much can never be said of the Necessity of this Duty, which in general consists in desiring every thing according to its worth. And the Objects of our desires are either Things of Temporal concern only, or of Eternal also; between which, as there cannot be in themselves, so therefore there ought not to be in our Estimation, any Comparison. [58]

Of things Temporal which are the Objects of our Desires, They are either such as are so, from Wants of Nature; or Wants of our own making. For it is certain, That Custom, and Education (to which we owe most of the Mischiefs we suffer, and usually charge upon Nature) have procur’d us very many Wants which She intended us not; And which therefore accordingly vary in different Countries, and Ages of the World: And these Wants are very many more (especially in the Civiliz’d Nations as we call them) than the Wants of Nature, \( \text{viz.} \)

\[ \text{Quis humana sibi doleat Natura negatis.} \]

They are wise who indeavour to contract their Desires to the last: But whoever says the Denial of what Nature requires, ought not to be esteem’d an Unhappiness, talks like a Disciple of Chrysippus,\(^{190}\) and not of Jesus Christ; Whole Followers are so [59] often exhorted to do good to all Men: Which, at least a chief part of it, consist in removing the Pains and Miseries they suffer from their Natural Wants, and Necessities: And This great part of Charity must be perform’d according to that Rule of the Apostle, 

\[ \text{Heb. xiii. 16. To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such Sacrifice God is well pleased.} \]

And altho’ when the want of those things which Nature requires, comes in competition with any good of Eternal Concernment, they may well be thought light, and be slighted in that Comparison; yet in themselves they cannot, nor ought to be so. And our Master himself, thought thus; When \text{for the Joy that was set before him be indured the Cross,}\(^{191}\) &c. But tho’ it be a great part of Wisdom

\(^{190}\) Chrysippus, a famous Stoic philosopher of Soli in Cilicia Campestris. He became a disciple of Cleanthes and the successor of Zeno.

\(^{191}\) Hebrews 12:2, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”
to contract our Desire, only to what Nature requires; Yet, as we must not seek the
Satisfaction of our Natural Appetites, when it cannot be obtain’d without
prejudice to some Duty which ought at that time to be preferr’d; So the
gratification of Appetites which are not properly Natural, but which we have receiv’d from Custom, and Education, is not always Sinful. For besides that
custom (which it may be was none of our fault) is oftentimes as strong as Nature
in us; Those acquired Appetites are also many times no ways prejudicial to what
we owe either to God, or our Neighbour; And where they are not so, their
Gratification cannot be Sinful. Our Saviour, who said, This do, and thou shalt
Live; assures us, That he who heartily loves God, and his Neighbour as himself,
can make no mistake in his Duty dangerous to his Salvation;\footnote{192} And those
Mistakes which are so, only to our happy living whilst here; are sufficiently
punish’d in the disappointment they carry along with them. It is not therefore
hard for a Man, if he be sincere, to know when his Desires are rightly regulated:
And he will need no Casuist besides himself,\footnote{[61]} self, to tell him what, and how
far, he may lawfully Love, or Desire; and what or how far he may not do so.
Loves he any thing in the World to the prejudice of his Love of God, of his
Neighbour; it is Sinful: Does he not do so, there is no Sin. To oppose this, would
be to contradict those words of our Saviour. And indeed these two great Duties of
the Love of God, and our Neighbour, imply or include each other. If, says the
Apostle, (1. John iv.20.) a man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a
Liar; and v. 12. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and the Love of God
is perfected in us. Again, v. 7. Let us love one another, every one that loveth is
born of God, and knoweth God: v. 8. He that loves not, knoweth not God,: Chap.
iii. 17. But who so has this Worlds Goods, and seeth his Brother have need, and
shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in
him?

\footnote{[62]} God is an invisible Being: And it is by his Works, that we are led
both to know, and to love him. They lead us to their invisible Author. And if we
lov’d not the Creatures, it is not conceiveable how we should love God; at least,
how they should have lov’d him, who not having the Law, yet did by Nature the
things contain’d in the Law. And this, however opposite to what some tell us,
seems nevertheless the sense of the above-named Apostle, who says (1 John iv.
20.) He that loveth not his Brother whom he has seen, how can he love God
whom he has not seen? And I would demand of any one if they could suppose
themselves, or any other, never to have loved any Creature, what they could
imagine they should love? I suppose it must be reply’d by such a one, That as he
was not the Author of his own Being, and saw clearly that he could not be
produced by nothing; He was thereby led to the Acknowledgment of a Superiour

\footnote{192} We find Masham reassuring the reader that as long as an individual’s actions are reflective of her love
for God and her neighbor, she shall always find salvation. This is important for those who were unaware of
occasionalism and its interpretations of how one should conduct her life; by not doing so, one would be
condemned.
Being, to whom he was indebted for his own; and therefore stood obliged to love him. But Being, or Existence, barely consider’d is so far from being a Good, that in the state of a Damn’d, few are so Paradoxical as not to believe it an intolerable Misery: And many, even in this World, are so unhappy, that they would much rather part with their Existence, than be eternally continued in the State they are in. The Author of our Being therefore merits not our Love, unless he has given to us such a Being as we can Love. Now if none of the Objects that every way surround us, were pleasing to us; How could our Beings, that have a continual Communication with, and necessary Dependance upon these, be so?

But if the Objects that surround us do please us; that is, if we do love them; As it is then evident, they must be the first Objects of our Love, so from their Gratefulness, or Pleasingness to us, it is also evident, that we have both the Idea of Love, and are led to the Discovery of the Author of that Being, that produces what is lovely. And like as our own Existence, and that of other Beings, has assur’d us of the Existence of some Cause more Powerful than these Effects; so also the Loveliness of his Works as well assures us, that that Cause, or Author, is yet more Lovely than they, and consequently the Object the most worthy of our Love. But if none of those Beings which surround us did move our Love, we should then both be ignorant of the Nature of the Author of all things, and of Love it self. For what should then exert it, that it should not lie for ever Dormant? And which way could we (in the state we are in) receive the Idea of Love, or Lovely? For God as Powerful (which is all we should know of him, consider’d barely as a Creator) is no more an Object of Love than of Hate, or Fear; and is truly an Object only of Admiration. It seems therefore plain, that if any could be without the Love of the Creatures, they would be without the Love of God also: For as by the Existence of the Creatures, we come to know there is a Creator; so by their Loveliness it is that we come to know That of their Author, and to Love him.

But it will be said here, That we have Pleasing Sensations (‘tis true) as soon as Perception; But that we have them not from the Beings which surround us, but from God. I ask, can we know this, before we know that there is a God? Or, will they say that we know there is a God as soon as ever we have Perception? Let it be true, that the Creatures have receiv’d no efficiency from God to excite pleasing Sensations in us, and are but the occasional Causes of those we feel: Yet,

193 In the letters, we find Astell asking Norris why God is not also the object of our hatred and aversion since he is the efficient cause to all our sensations, including pain. Norris responds, “And I wonder why you should stick to allow GOD to be the Author of mental Pain or Grief, when you allow him to be the Cause of mental Pleasure or Joy. If he be the Cause of our Happiness, why cannot he be as well the Cause of our Misery? And if of Pain, why not Grief? […] I think the best Apology that can be offered for GOD’s being the Author of it, and to save him from being the Object of our Aversion upon that Account, viz. to say, that though sensible Pain be truly an Evil as well as mental, and that though GOD be the true Cause of both, yet GOD does not will our Pain as he does our Pleasure and Happiness, for it self and as such, but merely for the sake of something else, as it is a means to our greater good. And is therefore so far from merits our Hatred for the Pain which he causes in us, that he ought for that very reason to be loved by us, since, ‘tis for the sake of Pleasure that he causes Pain” (Astell et al., 84-5).
does a Child in the Cradle know this? Or is this apparent so soon as it is that the Fire pleases us when we are Cold? or Meat when we are Hungry? No, nor is it at any time a self evident Truth. We must know many other Truths before we come to know this; which is a Proposition containing many complex Ideas in it; and which we are not capable of framing, till we have been long acquainted with pleasing Sensations. In the mean while, it is certain, that till we can make this Discovery, we shall necessarily Love that which appears to us to be the Cause of our Pleasure, as much as if it really were so; It being unavoidably by us the same thing to us: And we are necessitated by God himself to that which Mr. N. says is truly Idolatry, For our Passions are not moved by the reality, but appearance of things. To the prevention of which, this Notion were it true, and receiv’d amongst Men as such, could be of no use at all, neither could it teach them not to ascend to the Love of God, by the Love of Creatures: Since it can be of use to none till they are convinc’d of it, and none are capable of being convinc’d of it, till sensible Objects by appearing the Causes of their Pleasing Sensations, have gotten Possession of their Love, and have as soon assur’d them that God is the Object the most worthy of their Love, as they have assured them of his Existence. It is true, when first in our infancy we feel pleasing Sensations, we are no more capable of being taught by them that there is a Superior Invisible Being that made these things to affect us thus, who therefore ought supremely to be lov’d; than that this Invisible Being, at the Presence of these Objects, exhibits to us a part of his own Essence, by which these Pleasing Sensations are excited on occasion of those Objects without us, and that therefore he is only and solely to be loved. But tho’ we are uncapable of these both alike, when first we cry for the Fire, or the Sucking-Bottle; Yet it is certain, that by the former way we are not only safe, all the time of our Ignorance, from the Sin of Idolatry, and the fatal pre-engagement of a sinful affection; but that our love to God upon that ground is of easier deduction, and earlier apprehended than by the latter. So soon as we do begin to leave off judging by appearances, and are Capable of being convinc’d that the Diameter of the Sun exceeds that of a Bushel; We are capable also of understanding that there is a Superior Invisible Being, the Author of those things which afford us pleasing Sensations, who therefore is supremely to be loved. But if we are not capable of escaping Idolatry unless we love God alone, because he immediately exhibits to us a part of his Essence, by which all pleasing Sensations

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194 Norris would possibly respond, Yes, but conscious knowing may not be implied. Norris states in his Theory and Regulation of Love, “Nay we Love and Desire before we can Apprehend, Judge, Reason or Discourse […] we love long before we know whether we love or no, even as soon as we receive the Breath of Life” (20).


196 In the Theory and Regulation of Love, Norris references idolatry when discussing becoming a victim to sensual love: “that one would think all Mankind were intoxicated with some general Philtium or Love Potion, that has thus charm’d them into this most stupid and wretched Degree of Idolatry” (40).
are caus’d in us, I fear all Mankind (before this present Age) lived and died Idolaters, and the greatest part for the future will do so. Since I guess not One of a Thousand will be found capable of apprehending, and being convinced of this new Hypothesis of seeing all things in God. And as, I think, this cannot [69] be denied, so is it also more suitable to the Wisdom, and Goodness of God, that it should be true. For one must say, that the Happiness and Welfare of Mankind were ill taken care for, if it depended upon a Knowledge, which not only few are ever likely to have, but which comes too late to any for much Use to be made of it. For when sensible Ideas have taken Possession of us for Twelve, or Twenty Years, they must be very ignorant of the constitution of Humane Nature, that can think it possible they should presently, or probably they should ever, be dispossess’d by a Notion, altho’ a true one.

And for this, Mr. N. is not so kind as to furnish us with any remedy. But he whom he is suppos’d to have receiv’d this Hypothesis from, indeavours to solve the Goodness and Wisdom of God in this Matter, and to help us out of this Difficulty, by making this Principle of our being obliged to have no Love for the Creatures, to be the very D2 [70] Ground upon which Christianity stands; Which he thus, in short, accounts for.

We must not Desire, or Love the Creatures, they being uncapable to be our Good. We yet do Love, and desire them, tho’ Reason assures us of This. And our Doing thus, is the Original Sin which we bring into the World with us: Which makes us Children of Wrath, and liable to Damnation; Unable to please God but by a Mediator, both God and Man, who only could atone the Justice of God by the Excellency of his Sacrifice; Intercede to God by the Dignity of his Priesthood; and send us the Holy Ghost by the quality of his Person.

But as his Ground of Christianity has a weak Foundation, viz. The Creature’s being only occasional Causes of our Pleasing Sensation, (which is neither proved, nor would support the Superstructure that is rais’d upon it, if it could be proved) So it is to be hoped, that if we reject [71] what so few have receiv’d, or so much as thought of, we may yet be good Christians. And those seem more than a little to indanger Christianity, if not Deism also, who lay the great stress of their proof upon the Hypothesis of seeing all things in God. For in that, the whole Argument for both (by which Atheists or Sceptics are propos’d to be brought over to Deism, or Christianity) terminates; in the Conversations Chrestiennes of Mr. Malebranche, lately Translated into English, for the introducing amongst us that Unintelligiable way of Practical Religion, above spoken of. And I doubt not, but if it were generally receiv’d and Preach’d by our

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198 It is interesting to see a reference to this book by Malebranche because it is not part of Locke’s library. This brings to mind the question, Where did Masham get access to these books, which Locke did not possess? Her father, being a neo-Platonist, supposedly had a great library. Did she start reading these books at a young age, prior to Locke’s becoming a permanent resident at her home?
Divines, that this Opinion of Seeing all things in God was the Basis upon which Christianity was built, Scepticism would be so far from finding thereby a Cure, that it would spread it self much farther amongst us than it has yet done; And that many who find Christianity a very Reasonable Religion D3 [72] in the Scriptures, would think it a very unaccountable one in a System that (laying down That for its foundation) adds also further, That the Desire we have to the Creature, is the Punishment of Sin, not the Institution of Nature: For this Concupiscence is transmitted to us from our first Parent.

“Qui voyoit Claire-
“ment Dieu en toutes choses: Il sç'a-
“voit avec evidence, que les Corps ne
“pouvoient estre son bien, ni le render
“par eux mêmes heureus ou Malheu-
“reux en aucune manière: Il estoit
“convaincu de l’opération continue
“de Dieu sur luy; Mais sa Conviction
“n’estoit pas sensible. Il le connoissoit
“sans le sentir. Au contraire il sen-
“toit que les Corps agissoient sur lui,
“quoy qu’il ne le connût pas. Il est
“vrai qu’estant raisonnable, il devoit
“suivre sa lumière, et non pas son sen-
“timent; & qu’il pouvoit facilement
“suivre sa lumière contre son senti-
“ment, sa connoissance claire contre sa
“sensation confuse, parce qu’il arrestoit
“sans peine ses sentimens, lors-qui’il le
[73]
“vouloit, á cause qu’il étoit sans con-
“cupiscence. Cependant s’arrêtant
“trop á ses sens, se laissant aller peu-
“à-peu á les écouter plus volontiers
“que Dieu meme, á cause que les sens
“parlent toûjours agréablement, et
“Que Dieu ne le portoit pas à l’écouter
“par des plaisirs prévenans qui au-
“roient diminué sa Liberté; vous
“concevez bien comment il à pû s’é-
“loigner de Dieu jusqu’à le perdre de
“vûe, pour s’unir de volonté à une

“Creature, Entr. iv. p. 106,107. 199 Who did clearly see God in all things, and
evidently knew that Bodies could not be his true Good, nor properly make him in
the least happy, or unhappy, and was fully convinc’d of God’s continual
Operation on him. But he had no sensible conviction: He knew this, but without
feeling it. On the contrary, he could feel that Bodies acted on him, tho’ he could
not know it: Yet having Reason, he should have follow’d his Light, not his
Sentiment; And could have done it; since he could stop his Sentiment when he
pleas’d, being free D4 [74] from Concupiscence: However deferring to his senses,
and suffering himself to hearken to them more willingly than to God, by reason
the sense always move pleasingly, and God did not move him by pre-ingageing
Pleasure, which might have lessen’d his freedom, it is easie to conceive how he
came to remove himself so far from God as to lose sight of him, and to joyn
himself to the Creature. The same Author also gives us an account how Adam’s
Posterity came to be infected; (which, it seems, was not from Adam, as is
commonly taught, but from Eve)

“à cause de l’union que les enfans ont
“avec leur mere, p. 110. By reason of the Union that Children have with their
Mother. “Il n’y a point de fem-
“me qui n’ait dans le cerveau quelque
“trace & quelque movement d’esprits,
“qui la fasse penser, et qui la porte à
“quelque chose de sensible. Or quand
“l’enfant est dans le sein de sa mere,
“il a les mêmes traces et les mêmes
“émotions d’esprits que sa mere; donc
“en cet état il connoît et aime les

199 The current critical version of this text has been established by Geneviève Rodis-Lewis. Nicolas
Malebranche, Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, and Germain Malbriel, “ConversationsChrétienes”, In Œuvres, Vol.1
(Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 1209.
And there is no Woman that has not some traces in her Brain, and motions of her Spirits, which carry her to something sensible. Now when the Child is in the Womb of its Mother, it has the same traces, and the same motion of the Spirits: Therefore in this estate it knows and loves Bodies, and consequently is born a Sinner. And this no holiness of the Mother can hinder; Since

“L’amour de Dieu ne se communique pas comme l’amour des Corps:
“Don la raison est, que Dieu n’est pas sensible, et qu’il n’y a point de traces dans le Cerveau, qui par l’institution de la Nature representent Dieu, ni aucune des choses qui font purement intelligibles.

“Une femme peut bien se representer Dieu fous la forme d’un Venerable Vieillard: Mais lors qu’elle pensera à Dieu; son enfant pensera à un Vieillard: Lors qu’elle aimera Dieu, son enfant aura de l’amour pour les Vieillards,

So that the Children of Women who represent to themselves God in the form of a Reverend old Man, will love Old Men: And whenever the Mothers think upon God and love God, the Children will think Old Men and love Old Men. Wherefore from this Original Corruption, springs the Necessity of a Mediator, who must be both God and Man, &c.

There seems to be some things in this Hypothesis very unintelligible; And also that it has Consequences intolerable to be admitted. But if neither of these were so; ’tis yet reason enough not to imbrace it, that it is no where either

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200 Malebranche et al., “ConversationsChrétiennes”, 1212.
201 There is not in Malebranche’s text the equivalent of Masham’s “and consequently is born a Sinner.”
reveal’d, or prov’d; it being all but the Chain of Consequences (such as they are) depending upon the Supposition of our seeing all things in God. For the Desire [77] we have to the Creatures, is asserted to be the Punishment of Sin, not the institution of Nature, because (which is a strange Reason) the Desire of the Creatures is suppos’d Sinful, upon the ground of their not being the Efficient Causes of our Pleasing Sensations. And the Proof which is brought that they are not the Efficient Causes of our Pleasing Sensations is, that we see all things in God. But this Proof it self which is the Foundation of all, remains yet to be proved: For neither Pere Malebranche, nor any one else has done it; nor I think can do it. And that which might alone give just ground for this suspicion is, That this Hypothesis tends to the shaking and unsettling the known Grounds of True Piety; tho’ He, and a late Follower of his, would establish it upon this new, and formerly unknown Foundation.

But setting aside those Absurdities that this new Conceit would run us into, in Morality (which are sufficient [78] Reasons for rejecting it) there are, I doubt not, some, who, if they would be at the Pains to treat it Philosophically, might be able to demonstrate its Weakness and Inconsistency on other Grounds, as well as those of Morality. But whether, or no, any one shall believe That a Work worth their while; This hypothesis seems, yet at least, of moment enough to be so far inquired into, as these Papers have Undertaken: Since how unserviceable or injurious soever it really is to Piety, it has yet been Seriously and Zealously pretended to be of great Use to Religion; And that not only by a young Writer, whose Judgment may, perhaps, be thought Byassed by the Affectation of Novelty;203 But also it is made the very Ground of Christianity, by a Man of an establish’d Character in the World for Philosophical Science. But as Christianity (whatever some are perswaded) is a rational Religion, and needs to Inventions of Men to support it; so it receives no Advantage [79] by this, which it has not in the Orthodox, and commonly receiv’d Doctrine of Original Sin. That serves to all the purposes, this is brought in for, as well; and therefore makes this Needless; Unless it be pretended that the Opinion of Seeing all things in God, &c. is needful to give Light to, and to make the commonly receiv’d Doctrine of Original Sin intelligible; Which is, to charge this Doctrine with having wanted such Evidence before this Discovery was made as was necessary for them making it the Foundation of Christian religion: Which surely those cannot agree to who have made it so. And those who have not made it so, will not be concern’d in the Light pretended to be brought to it; The thing it self being no more prov’d by this explanation of the manner of it, than it was before. Upon which of these two accounts, or whatever other, Mr. N. declin’d, or approv’d not the declaring this Opinion of the Creatures not being Efficient Causes [80] of our Sensation, &c. to be the Ground and Basis of Christianity; Yet certainly his Subject (especially being Preached to a Country Congregation) obliged him, if not to account for the Goodness of God in this

203 I believe that this is the passage to which Buickerood refers to as the only one “clear, perfectly neutral” reference to Astell found in the Discourse (Buickerood, 212 ).
Matter, in making us without any fault of ours, the Subjects of his Wrath; yet at least to have show’d which way we were to be brought out of that State, and by what means after we were come to the Knowledge of the Truth, we should be made obedient to it. For it (as it is to be hoped he does) he believes God to wink at our Sins in the time of our Ignorance, before we are capable of understanding the Creatures to be only Occasional Causes of our Pleasing Sensation; Yet we must suppose when Men are convinced of that Truth, they are call’d on not only to Repentance, but Amendment. And if Loving the Creatures so, as yet to be willing readily to part with them all for the Love of God, or rather than offend in any thing that [81] we know to be our Duty, (which is the highest Love of him that most People can conceive themselves capable of,) will not hinder us from being truely Idolaters, and Sacrilegious; Whilst being Hungry or Cold, Food or Fire are desired by us; And that we cannot Love our Children, or Friends, without looking on them as Goods Desireable to us; Me-thinks he should tell us by what means we may get rid of Appetites and affections so offensive to God, and destructive to our Soul’s Happiness; and should let us know whether he finds this attainable by our own Natural Abilities, or whether Christ has Purchas’d the Ability of doing it for those that believe in him; Or what we are to do, or conceive of our selves in an Estate so deplorable. He says indeed, That could we but see how God alone acts in us, and Causes all our Sensations, whilst the Creatures stand mute and silent, like so many Ciphers in his Presence, having not the least Activity or Operation [82] upon us; We should quickly dismiss the whole Creation from our Hearts, and be wholly swallow’d up by the Love of God. But as the case is, he gives us no Remedy at all. For his making no question afterwards, but that it is thus in Heaven, and that this is the Measure of Divine Love There, is so far from helping us; That it will not so much as infer (if he could prove it were so) that this ought to be the Measure of Divine Love upon Earth. But we have a better Authority than his for it, That we know not what we shall be There; Therefore cannot tell what may be added to, or chang’d in our present Faculties: And as for those of Angels, and Arch-Angels, (which he mentions we are yet less acquainted with them: And everyone will not be convinc’d (tho’ they did agree in Mr. N—’s Supposition concerning them) that it were more reasonable to propose or pray to be like them (at least whilst upon Earth) then it would be for the Fishes (if they were capable of it) to propose, or pray to God, that they might fly in the Air like Birds; or Rid Post-Horses as Men do. For it may be our Earthly Element no more admits of the first, than theirs of the last. And those must be very little considerate or serious in their Prayers, who will venture to ask God for their sakes, to change the Order of Nature, which he has establish’d. It is certain, that if we had no Desire but after God, the several Societies of Mankind could not long hold together, nor the very Species be continued: For few would give themselves Care, and Sorrow, in the pursuit of Possessions not desireable.

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204 Norris, Practical Discourse, 81.
205 Norris, Practical Discourse, 82.
But Mr. N. pretends that there are places of Scripture, besides that of his Text, which make good his Opinion. Scripture-Authority, is that to which Reason may safely refer it self: But it were to be wished that it were appeal’d to with more Care and Consideration than it often is; and that Men would not presently, [84] because perhaps they are persuaded their Opinions are Right, back them with any Text of Scripture that they can make Chime to them, tho’ they be very little, or not at all to the Purpose; as they could not often-times but discern, if they would but either regard the Scope of the Discourse; or read to the end of it.

The first Text Mr. N. brings his purpose, it is Mat. vi. 24. No Man can serve two Masters; for either he will either hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon.206 Here, Mr. N. says, We are plainly told, we cannot divide between God, and the Creature: and the reason is not only because our Capacities are too narrow and scanty to be employ’d upon two such vastly different Objects; but also because we cannot love either of them, but upon such a Principle as must utterly exclude the Love of the other. For we must not love any thing but what is our true Good, what can both deserve and reward [85] our Love: And there can be but one thing that is so, and that must either be God or the Creature. If then the Creature be our Good, let us Love That, and that only; That, and not God; But if God be our True Good (as most certainly he is) then let us Love God, and God only; God, and not the Creature: For’tis a most inconsistent and impracticable thing to talk of Carving out our Love between both: Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.207 Practical Discourse, p. 64, 65. By Mammon, I suppose was never understood before, any thing but Riches, or those things for which Riches are desired: And our Saviour here tells us, we must not set our Hearts upon these things, or make our selves Slaves, or Servants to them: That is, the Desire of them must not command us; If we command it, and make it Obedient to Reason, it is then certain it does not command us, and consequently that we are not Servants to it. This is then plainly no more, but that our [86] Desires after Riches, &c. must not be beyond their Worth; So as that we forget they are perishable, and uncertain Goods, such as Moth and Rust do corrupt, and the Violence and Injustice of Men may deprive us of; No longer (at best) of any value, than during our short abode in this World. For, if we do otherwise, our Reason is captivated, and we become truly Servants; The Servants of Mammon; And cannot be the Servants of God; Because we cannot Serve two so opposite and differing Masters. For it is from the contrariety of their Commands, and not from the littleness of our Minds, or Capacities, that we cannot Serve God and Mammon; Since neither little nor great can obey two Master that command Contraries; And that is true of the Apostle, His Servants ye are, to whom you obey.208 But our Minds, as little as

206 Norris, Practical Discourse, 64.
208 Romans 6:16: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”
they are, may love God, and the Creatures; when the Love of the Creature is Subordinate; And I think Mr. N. nor no [87] one else, will deny, That there are many who sincerely love God, that do yet love something in the Creature; And if so, whether their Love be Sinful, or no, it is evident their Capacities are not too little to love both; As it is also that our Reason is not captivated, and we thereby inslav’d, or render’d the Servants of every thing that we love. And here is nothing at all said by our Saviour of any other degree of Love, but such as makes us the Servants of what we love. And therefore it is no more true that we are here forbid by our Saviour to love any thing but God, than that our Capacities are too little to love any two different Objects. For if Mr. N. means any thing else by to employ’d, than To Love, when he says, That our Capacities are too narrow and scanty to be employ’d upon two such vastly different Objects,209 it is not to his purpose. But if he means by employ’d, to Love; what he affirms is then neither true in his own sense of Love, nor in that [88] of the Text. For it is not true that our Capacities are too narrow to Love any two different Objects, either in the smallest degree, (which he contends for) or so as to become the Servants of them, which is what the Text says; Provided, there be no contrariety in their Commands. His first Reason therefore why we cannot divide our Love, viz. From the scantiness of Our Capacities, is utterly false; our Capacities being evidently not too narrow to love any two different Objects, or even every Object which appears to us to be lovely. And there is no reason that if we love the Creatures in some degree, as occasions of Pleasure to us (we necessarily loving whatever is accompanied with Pleasure) that That Love of the Creature should exclude the Love of God; any more than that the Love of Cherries should exclude the love of our Friend that gives them us. And if we love God, yet less does the Love of him exclude our Love of his Creatures: For we love [89] them then not only for the Pleasure that they occasion us, but for the sake of their Author; and the more we Love God, the more we shall Love his Creatures.210

But another Reason, beside the narrowness of our Capacities, Why we cannot divide our Love between God and the Creature, is, because we cannot love either of them, but upon such a Principle as must utterly exclude the love of the other; which is thus offer’d to be made out: We must not love any thing but what is our true Good: There can be but one thing that is so: And that must be either God, or the Creature.211

What is our True Good, he tells us is that which can both Deserve and Reward our Love.212 But certainly whatever is a Good to us, is the True Good;

209 Norris, Practical Discourses, 45.

210 Masham deploys an essential aspect to her philosophy here. Exposing her naturalist characteristic, yet again, she takes the extreme opposition to Malebranche and Norris’s philosophy regarding the objects of our love.

211 Norris, Practical Discourse, 45.

212 Norris, Practical Discourse, 65.
since whatever pleases us, pleases us: And our Love, which he says is to be
deserv’d and rewarded, is nothing else but the Disposition of Mind, which we
find in our selves towards any thing with which we are [90] pleas’d. So that to
tell us, that we must not love any thing but what is our True God;213 Is as much as
to say, that we must not be pleas’d with any thing but what Pleases us; Which it is
likely we are not in Danger of. And what is added of deserving and rewarding
our Love, being put in as a Synonymous Expression, to explain to us what is
meant by our True Good; Our True Good, does consequently tell us what is meant
by deserving and rewarding our Love; They both signifying one and the same
thing. There can therefore no more be made of This notable Principle, viz. That
we must not love any thing but what is our True Good, that is, which can both
deserve and reward our Love, then that we must not be pleased with any thing but
what Pleases us; or reflect upon the Pleasure any thing causes in us, which never
did cause us any Pleasure.

This, without doubt, carries much information with it; But the word True
(otherwise very impertinent [91] here) is Subtilty to insinuate that which should
be prov’d, viz. That the Creatures are not the Efficient Causes of our Pleasing
Sensations. And in the Lines following, he scruples not to beg the Question in
more express terms; When he says, There can be but one thing that is so; viz. our
True Good: And then follows, and that must be either God, or the Creature; But
if God be our True Good (as most certainly he is) let us Love God, and God only;
God and not the Creature: For ’tis a most inconsistent and impracticable thing to
carve out our Love between both: Ye cannot serve God, and Mammon.214 Here
we see, having needlessly told us that we must not love any thing but our True
Good; That is, that which pleases us; He tells us next, that there can be but one
thing this is so, viz. our True Good: Which is yet more evidently false, than this
first Assertion is impertinent. Notwithstanding, as if it were as evidently True, as
it is manifestly the contrary; He offers E [92] not any thing at all to make it good;
His Assertion only seeming to him sufficient to oppose to the daily Sense and
Experience of all Mankind. But indeed if by the True Good; he did mean our
chief Good; then it is true that there is but one such Good, and that is God alone,
who is also the Author and Donor of all our other Good: But in this sense it is
nothing to his purpose. To conclude his Demonstration, that we cannot Love
God, or the Creature, but upon such a Principle as must utterly exclude the Love
of the other; Having said we must Love nothing but our True Good; and that That
can be but one thing; He tells us lastly, that that one thing must be either God or
the Creature. Which Conclusion, when he has prov’d his foregoing Assertion,
viz. That there can be but one thing our Good;215 it may be convenient for him to
explain a little better; But till he has proved that there is but one thing a Good to

213 I believe that Masham meant for this not to say God but rather Good.
214 Norris, Practical Discourse, 65.
215 Norris, Practical Discourse, 45.
us, this last Assertion serves for [93] nothing, unless to make it more evident that he has all along said nothing to the Purpose. For his Affirmation that we cannot Love either God, or the Creature, but upon such a Principle as must utterly exclude the Love of the other, Was of as much Authority to us as his Assertion, that there can be but one thing a Good to us: And there is no more proof offer’d by him for the one, than the other.

This, I believe, his own Observation and Experience, has often offer’d to him, for the confutation of what he affirms, viz. That it is not true that all Men in the World either Love God, and God only; Or the Creature only, and God not at all: Which ought to be, according to his Principles. But the Admonition of St. John, he says, is somewhat more express to his Purpose than that of our Saviour was, 1 Joh. 11.15.216 Love not the World nor the things of the World: If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not E2 [94] in him. Here again Mr. N. acknowledges, that according to the common interpretation, this is meant of the immoderate love of the World.217 But he says, they interpreted it so for want of Principles on which to raise a higher sense. 'Tis plain the words import more; viz. That we are not to love the World at all; That all Love of it is immoderate.218 And by his, former measures (before laid down) it appears how, and why, it is so. But I believe St. John will be found to explain himself much better than Mr. N. explains him. St. John says, Love not the World, nor the things of the World, the Love of the Father is not in him. No the Question is, whether Mr. N. be in the right in understanding (as he does) by Love; every the least degree of Love: Or whether other Interpreters are so, in thinking that by Love, immoderate Love is meant: And I think there needs nothing more to satisfy us that the last are in the [95] Right than Mr. N—’s own concession, viz. That without his Hypothesis, this Scripture could not be understood otherwise than those Interpreters understand it. So that unless St. John writ not to be understood by those he wrote to, or that the Christians to whom he wrote, had Mr. N—’s Hypothesis, it is past doubt that the other Interpreters he mentions are to be thought in the Right. But because it is believed by him, that St. John, who so much presses Love to others, had himself so little Love to Mankind, as to leave the strongest inforcement of their greatest Duty in obscurity, We will see whether, or no, there is any appearance that he did so, And whether Mr N—’s Hypothesis serve to illustrate this Scripture For that his Hypothesis could not be learnt from it, is apparently confess’d, Because the Hypothesis must be known (as he himself owns) before the Scripture Proof of it can be understood And therefore our former Argument against E3 [96] this Hypothesis from the Goodness, and Wisdom of God, that would not permit a

216 1 John 2:15.
217 Norris, Practical Discourse, 65.
218 Norris, Practical Discourse, 66: “But this is only for want of Principles upon which to raise an higher Sense. 'Tis plain that the Words import a great deal more, namely, that we are not to love the World at all, that all Love of it is immoderate.”
Doctrine of the consequence this is pretended to be, to be so obscure as it is, stands still good, for all this fresh pretence to Scripture Proof. But St. John (1 Joh 11 15) says, *Love not the World, nor the things which are in the World. If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* Now that this is meant of the sinful Pleasure of the World, or the immoderate, and consequently sinful Love of Pleasure in themselves not sinful; what words can make Plainer than the immediately following ones, wherein the Reasons are given why we should not Love, the World, nor the things of the World? viz. (v 16\textsuperscript{219}) Because all that is in the World, as *the Lust of the Flesh, that Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of the Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World.* That is, proceeds not from God, but from the Passions, Vanities, and Follies of corrupt \[97\] and sinful Men: And we should not set our Hearts upon the World; That is, even the allowable Pleasures of it; Because (v 17\textsuperscript{220}) *The World passes away;* And therefore by no means ought to be consider'd as the ultimate Good of a Being of a more induring Nature, But is indeed so far remov'd from it, as the little Duration of the one holds of proportion to the endless Duration of the other. This is what St John says; And it seems too plain to need any other Explanation, than what he himself has given. But as if every Text in Scripture were a distinct Aphorism, it is frequently enough quoted by some, without any regard to what goes before, or to what comes after, with how much sincerity cannot be said, But certainly to the manifest bringing into Contempt those Oracles of Truth

But for whatever Cause Mr N omitted these Reasons of St John for our not loving the World, and the things of it,\textsuperscript{221} And substituted one of E4 \[98\] his own in the Place; viz That the Creatures are not the Efficient, but Occasional Cause of our Pleasing Sensations; He does say, That, without the knowledge of this his Hypothesis, we cannot know that every degree of Love of the Creature is sinful, and consequently that St. John’s Reasons for enforcing the Duty he urges, were defective. But St. John tells us not that every degree of Love of the Creature is sinful: On the contrary, he says, *If we love not our Brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?*\textsuperscript{222}

Therefore there is no more need of Mr N’s Opinion, to inforce what St John teaches, than there is use of what St John teaches to confirm Mr N—’s Opinion For that St John meant not by Love every degree of Love, is evident, Both because he would contradict himself if he did, and also from the Reason he gives why we should not love the World, and the things of the World: viz. [99] Because all that is in the World is not of the Father, and passes away quickly.

\textsuperscript{219} 1 John 2:16.

\textsuperscript{220} 1 John 2:17: “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

\textsuperscript{221} 1 John 2:15.

\textsuperscript{222} 1 John 4:20: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”
For he would either have given us the true Reason of This, or stopping where Mr N did in his Citation of him, not have misled us, by giving us Reasons, which not only reach not the matter, But which also serve to Determine us to another sense For, as short-liv’d Flowers, tho’ they ought not to imploy the continual care of our whole lives, may yet reasonably enough be found in our Gardens, and delight us in their Seasons; So the fading Good Things of this Life, tho’ (for that reason) they are not to be fixed on as the Ultimate Good of Eternal Beings, yet there is no reason why we may not rejoice in them, as the good Gifts of God, and find all that Delight which he has joined with the lawful use of them

But St John says, Love not, Therefore Mr N says, we must not Love them at all Our Saviour also in St. Matthew, in the Chapter above [100] cited, says, Seek not But Mr N. says not in the like manner seek not at all. On the contrary, he tell us very expressly, we may seek the good things of this World, provided we love them not Now, if he knows a Reason why one of these places must be taken strictly according to the Letter, and not the other, he was doubtless obliged to tell it us; especially having been so indulgent to Seeking as to have given no rules of restriction to that But our Saviour says, Seek not what ye shall Eat, or what ye shall Drink, or with what you shall be cloathed, for after these do the Gentiles seek Mr N must doubtless say to this that our Saviour meant by not seeking, that we should not seek immoderately and solicitously, And so say other to what St. John says The sense of Discourse in both places determining that to be the meaning of both. And till Mr N has told us why Seeking must be understood in this sense, and not Loving be understood [101] so; he cannot surely disallow of it, if (after his example) we thus understand the words of St John, viz. That we should not love immoderately; that is, beyond the worth of what we love And thus the Admonition of the St John is no more express to his purpose than that of our Saviour, in St Matt was I am sure the reason with which St John inforses his Admonition, is expressly contrary to that with which Mr N inforses his interpretation of it. St John says, Love not the World, &c. For all that is in the World, viz. the lust of the Flesh, the lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World But Mr N says, Love not the World, &c For all that is in the World, viz. all those Pleasure Worldly-minded Men so greedily hunt after, as the lust of the Flesh, the lust of the Eye, and the Pride of the life, are not of the World, but of the Father Which seems not only to oppose St John, But also sounds very harshly, and [102] offensively to many Pious Persons; Who are apt to think it unworthy of, and mis-becoming the Majesty of the great God, who is of Purer Eyes than to behold iniquity, to be as it were at the beck of his sinful

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223 Matt 6:31-32 : “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”

224 1 John 2:16.

225 Habakkuk 1:13: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore
Creatures, to excite in them Sentiments of Delight, and Pleasure, whenever they are dispos’d to transgress against his Laws, tho’ in the most gross, and erroneous Instances.

But the Author of his Hypothesis tells us, That this is that indeed which makes Sin to be so exceeding sinful, viz. That we oblige God in Virtue of that first immutable Law, or Order, which he has establish’d (that is, of exciting Sentiments of Pleasure in us upon some operation of Bodies upon us) to Reward our Transgressions against him with Pleasure, and Delight. It is strange that we cannot seem sinful enough, without having a Power of forcing God to be a Partner in our Wickedness! But this is a Consequence of a Hypothesis whose usefulness, and want of proof, are alone sufficient Causes for rejecting it. And if we will once quit what Reason and Revelation evidently and plainly tells us, to build our Religion upon the foundation of uncertain Opinions, where must we stop? Every Man, indeed, cannot so handsomely compose his System as P. Malebranche, But every Man has as much Authority to impose it upon others, or to be credited without Proof. The above mention’d account of Sin, is plainly only supported upon its being a consequence of our seeing all things in God, who being the alone efficient Cause of our Pleasure Sensations, must necessarily be the only efficient Cause of sinful, as well as innocent Pleasures. But no Pleasure, simply as Pleasure, being evil, God is not suppos’d in this by P. Malebranche the Author of Sin, but only Man himself, Who, he says,

“étant pécheur & par consequent
“indigne d’être récompensé par des
“sentimens agréables, oblige Dieu
“en conséquence de ses volontés im-
“muables, de lui faire sentir du
“plaisir dans le temps même qu’il

We being Sinners, and by consequence unworthy to be recompenc’d by agreeable Sentiments, oblige God in consequence of this immutable Will, to make us feel pleasure in the time that we offend him Viz.

lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”

Cf. Locke: “Here it is that Enthusiasm fails of the Evidence it pretends to. For Men thus possessed boast of a Light whereby they say, they are enlightened, and brought into the Knowledge of this or that Truth. But if they know it to be a Truth, they must know it to be so either by its own self-evidence to natural Reason; or by the rational Proofs that make it out to be so” (Locke, ed. Peter H. Nidditch, Essay, 4.19.702).

I am unable to locate this passage in Malebranche et al.’s “ConversationsChrétiennes”, but cf. “Conversations III”: “Ainsi ceux qui produisent dans leur corps ces mouvements, sans raison, et même contre les reproches secrets de la raison, obligent Dieu en consequence de sa volonté générale, à les recompense par des sentiments agréables, lors meme qu’ils devraient être punis” (1197).
Whenever we Love or Delight in any Creature. But our seeing all things in God, upon which this Notion of Sin, or Original Corruption, and the following account of Christianity stands, remains yet to be better proved, Before we reject, for so unintelligible a fancy, what is evident and plain; What may satisfie the Wise, and what the Weak (whose Souls are Doubtless of as much value, and They as much concern’d for them) may easily comprehend.

That God has made us Reasonable Creatures, we certainly know: And it is evident also, that by virtue of our being such; we are obliged to Live by the Law of Reason; which whenever we transgress, we must necessarily offend against God; We inverting that Order which he has established, in making that to obey, which ought to command, and that to command, which ought to obey. And that we are so prone (as Experience shews we are) to offend against this Law of Reason, is from the Unruliness of our Affections; Which being strong in us, (whilst Reason is weak and unable to direct them) take up with the first alluring Objects, whose impressions making settled habits in us, it is not easie for Reason to remove them, even when it does discover their Pravity; and sets us to struggle against them. And to this loose Education, and ill Custom, greatly contribute. There being scarce any Vice we are capable of, which is not instill’d into us (or at least the Seed of it) in our very childhood, by those foolish People that usually have the Direction of it. For it is obvious that there are few Children who are not taught by their Nurses to be [106] Proud, Angry, Covetous, and Revengeful; and principled with those Vices, even before they have Language enough to talk of them. But God made Adam a Man, and not a Child; Therefore his Reason was in its full strength as early as his Appetites, and he had not the unhappy Preventions which others receive He himself therefore, and his Posterity, one would have thought, ran no very great Hazard of losing those Advantages his Obedience would have procured them.

That Mankind did lose by Adam what they are restor’d to by Jesus Christ, we are plainly told in the Scripture: But that by this Miscarriage, or Eve’s, any one single Soul should be doom’d to Eternal Misery, or to any condition worse than not being; whether immediately, as some hold, for Adam’s Sin; or by subjecting them to a state of necessary sinning, Can neither comport with the Goodness of God, or is any where reveal’d in Scripture. [107]

The last of these Opinions, Pere Malebranche’s Hypothesis maintains; tho’ he accounts for it differently from others. Children, he expressly tells us, become (through their Union with their Mothers) Sinners; and are in a state of Damnation before they are born into the World. But both the Apostle and Reason assure us, that where there is no Law, there is no Transgression. And Pere Malebranche opposes this, upon no other ground offer’d by him for so doing, but that the conclusion he makes, viz. That Children are born Sinners, is a necessary consequence of our seeing all things in God. For God only causing us Pleasure,

\[\text{Roman 4:15: “Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.”}\]
he only has a right to our Love, and all love of the Creature is sinful. But a Child (by virtue of its union with the Mother) does, whilst in her Womb, know and love Bodies; consequently therefore is a Sinner, and shall be necessarily Damn’d, p. 114. (Tho’ indeed in a Note upon that Word, he mitigates the sense of it to being eternally depriv’d of the Possession of God) And that we come into the World utterly incapable to please God, (as he expressly says we do) is not through any fault at all of our own, but for Eve’s; Concerning whose Transgression any ways influencing her Posterity, the Scripture yet makes no mention at all.

However, this Principle is made by Pere Malebranche (p. 94.) the foundation of Christianity. But it is certain, that the New Testament tells us nothing of it: And there it is, surely, that we ought to look for the Christian Religion. What we are there told, is, That as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive, 1 Cor. xv. 22. That he came to abolish Death, and to bring Life and Immortality to light, 2 Tim. i. 10 That we shall be justified by Faith, without the works of the Law, Rom. iii. 28. And that for this end, God sent his Son into the World, that as many as believe in him might have Eternal Life. Yet do we then (says the Apostle) make void the Law through Faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the Law Rom. III. 31. But the Wisdom of God in Christ Jesus, is manifest in this, that we are hereby at once the most effectually put upon using our Endeavours to work out our Salvation with fear and trembling; And also kept from Despair, in the sense of our own weakness to perform that Law which Adam in his more Advantageous Circumstances transgressing against, forfeited thereby Bliss and Immortality: We having not only a Promise that we shall receive from God whatever (asking as we ought) we shall ask in his Son’s Name; And also of his Spirit to help our Infirmities, But to compleat all, that for the sake of Christ, our sincere, tho’ imperfect, Obedience shall be accepted, Faith in him supplying its defects.

This is what the Scripture tells us of the Dispensation of God to Mankind in the Gospel of his Son: Which is so visibly suitable to, and worthy of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, that no Inventions of Man can add any thing to it, to make it appear more so. Yet were our Views larger than to comprehend only the compass of our little Globe, they would probably afford us still further Matter for our Admiration. For ’tis a thought too limited and narrow for Women and

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229 I am unable to locate a text that corresponds to Masham’s citation, however, Malebranche’s views on original sin (the Christian doctrine that all people are born corrupted or disordered and thus merit eternal damnation) as noted in “Christian Conversations” could allow for Masham to have provided here a suitable gloss. Cf. “Conversations IV”, 1211-1213, especially “Si donc je fais voir, qu’à cause de l’union que les enfants ont avec leur mère, l’âme des enfants est nécessairement tournée vers le corps, qu’elle n’aime que le corps, et que tout son mouvement se borne à quelque chose sensible dès l’instant qu’elle est formée; […] Son cœur est corrompu. […] et il [l’enfant] sera nécessairement damné ou privé éternellement de l’héritage des enfants de Dieu” (1211, 1213).

230 Philippians 2:12.
Children now to be kept in, that this Spot of ours is all the Habitable part of the Creation. But without understanding the System of the World, or considering what Mathematicians and Naturalists offer to convince us, that so many Regions fit for Inhabitants are not empty Deserts, and such numberless Orbs of Light more insignificant than so many Farthing Candles; We read, in the Scripture, of other Ranks of Intelligent Beings, besides our selves; Of whom, tho’ it would be Presumption to affirm any thing beyond what is reveal’d, yet we know not what Relation may possibly be between them and us. The Scripture plainly intimates great Numbers of them, Superior to us in the Dignity of their Creation, to be fallen by Disobedience (like Man) from a Happier State; And also that they are Enemies to us: Whether out of Envy for what Jesus Christ had undertaken for our Redemption, or for other Reasons, we know not But by the small account we have of them, they seem to have set up themselves in opposition to their Maker, as thinking themselves sufficient to carve out their own Happiness; And shall find full reward of their Folly and Rebellion, when the Judgment of the great Day shall meet them.

But on Man, who after his Transgression saw his Nakedness, and was asham’d, the Father of Mercies has had Compassion, and has found out a Way for his Restoration. Such a Way as may well humble these Proud ones in the Imagination of their hearts; And which leaves no room to us for Boasting For it is certain, That by the Works of the Law no Flesh shall be Justified, Rom. iii. 20. Faith, which would have preserved Adam in the state of Innocence, shall alone justify his Posterity. And tho’ the Wisdom of God has made Faith in his Son that which is required to Salvation, in those to whom he is reveal’d; We are told that the Just, in all Ages, have liv’d by Faith: Which is necessarily the Immutable Bases of all true Religion. For without we believe not only in the Being, but also in the Veracity of God, That he Is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, it is impossible we should love him with all our Hearts, with all our Souls, &c which contains the whole Moral Law; Whose Obligations not being Arbitrary, but arising from the Nature of things, must necessarily under every Dispensation be always the same: And Christ tells us expressly, He came not to destroy his Law, but to fulfil it. He came to give us a clearer and fairer Transcript of it; To inforce it by his Authority and Example; To assure us of our own Future Existence, which Reason could not; And of the great Love of God to Mankind, in accepting of Faith to supply the Defects of Sincere Obedience; By which we are freed from the Terrors of an offended Deity; And have hope of being made Heirs of a glad Immortality; Co-heirs with Christ, the Author and Finisher of our Salvation, Who, for the Joy that was set before him, indured the

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231 Deserts.

232 Hebrew 11:6: “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

233 Matthew 5:17.
Cross, and despised the Shame, and has obtain’d for himself a Kingdom of which all true Believers are the Subjects. We are restored by him to a more assured Felicity than that from which *Adam* fell, by not believing that *in the Day he ate of the forbidden Fruit he should surely Die*; Too little attending to the Light of his Reason; (Which would have taught him not to question the Divine Veracity) and having yet no Experience to oppose to the Solicitations of his Appetite. And perhaps God in this Restoration of Mankind [114] by Jesus Christ (*who took not on him the Nature of Angels*)\(^{234}\) having herein *put down the Mighty from their feats, and exalted those of Low degree*\(^{235}\), does by this Oeconomy of his Providence in our Salvation, teach all the Orders of Intellectual Beings, whom he has made free Agents (as well as Man) That as he cannot make a Being Independent on himself for its Happiness; So the most inlightned Reason is only safe and secure, whilst it feels its weakness and dependency: Which if we be thoroughly [sic], as we ought, sensible of, we shall necessarily *love God with all our Hearts, with all our Souls, &c.*

Mr. *N*. says these words signifie, *That we must love nothing but God alone.* And to confirm that his sense of them, he brings yet two other places of Scripture: The first is, *James* iv. 4. *Ye Adulterers and Adulteresses, know ye not that the Friendship of the World is Enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a Friend of the World, is the Enemy of [115] God.*\(^{236}\) He tells us here, That in St. James’s account, *Our Heart is so much God’s Property and Peculiar, and ought so entirely to be devoted to him, that ‘tis a kind of Spiritual Adultery to admit any Creature into a Partnership with him in our Love.*\(^{237}\) It is certain these are not St. James’s words, and we have only Mr. *N*-'s Affirmation that this is his sense. But tho’ Mr. *N*-'s affirming without any Proof, that all love of the Creature is here condemn’d, and said to be a kind of Spiritual Adultery, needs no other Answer but a bare Negation; And the saying without any proof, that it is only the inordinate love of the Creature that is so call’d and condemn’d, would be enough; Yet the context further plainly shows, that that is the meaning of St. *James* here, by what he calls Friendship of the World. To which let me add, that Adultery does not wholly exclude all other Love of any other Person; but a love that come in competition, or invades that which F [116] properly belongs to the Husband. For a Woman may love her Brother, or her Child, without being an Adulteress; it being not with the Love that is due to her Husband. The last place Mr. *N*. cites to prove that Love of the Creatures is Sinful, is, from St. *Paul*, Gal. vi. 14. *The World is Crucified to me, and I unto the World.* Which last words, Mr. *N*. says at once comprise his present conclusion, *that the Creature is not to be (in any*

\(^{234}\) Hebrews 2:16.

\(^{235}\) Luke 1:52.

\(^{236}\) James 4:4, as per Norris, *Practical Discourse*, 66.

\(^{237}\) In Norris’s *Practical Discourse*, 47, the quotation reads a little differently: “‘tis a kind of Spiritual Fornication and Adultery to admit any Creature into a Partnership.”
the Object of our Love, with the very same ground and bottom upon which he has built it. For the Apostle here first of all suppose the World to be Crucified, that is to be a Dead, Unactive, Silent, and Quiescent thing, in respect of himself, as not being able to operate upon him, or affect his Soul with any Sentiment as an Efficient Cause: and then in consequence of that declares himself to be also Crucified to the World, p. 68.\textsuperscript{238} which Mr. N. explains very truly (tho’ not very conformably to his Opinion) by being insensible to all its Charms:\textsuperscript{239} For, according [117] to his Explanation, St. Paul knew very well that the World had no Charms. But whosoever will read this whole Passage in St. Paul, will evidently see that it amounts to this; That there were some Men so Preach’d Christ, as yet to have regard to the favour and good like of Men; That they might avoid Perfection from some, and gain Glory from others: But St. Paul in his Preaching of the Gospel, had so entirely given up himself to it, that he minded nothing but the Preaching of the Gospel; Going on in that Work, without any regard either to Perfection, or Vain-Glory. And thus the World was Crucified to him, and he to the World: They were as Dead things, and in this respect had no operation. St. Paul’s words are, \textit{As many as desire to make a fair shew in the Flesh, they constrain you to be Circumcis’d; Only, lest they should suffer Persecution for the Cross of Christ.} For neither They themselves, who are Circumcis’d, keep the Law; \textit{But desire to have you Circumcis’d, that they may glory in your Flesh. But God forbid that I should Glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the World is Crucified to me, and I unto the World}\textsuperscript{240}. Very often it happens, that a piece of a Discourse, or as here, even a piece of a F2 \textsuperscript{118} Verse, serves for a Quotation, much better than the whole would do. This is so evident in this place, that it requires some Charity to think that a Man is in earnest searching after Truth, or believes himself, whilst he is a Writing after such a manner.

But because the Character Mr. N. bears ought to be a Warrant for his Sincerity, we must conclude, that he does think St. Paul tells that Galatians, that some would have them Circumcis’d only that they might avoid Persecution, and might Glory in their Flesh. But God forbid that he should Glory in any thing but the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the Creatures are only the Occasional, not the Efficient Causes of his Pleasing Sensations; and he Dead to them. This Mr. N. it seems, does think was the Sense of what St. Paul said: But

\textsuperscript{238} Norris, \textit{Practical Discourse}, 68, reads as such, “which at once comprises our present Conclusion (that the Creature is not to be the Object of our Love) with the very same Ground and Bottom upon which we have built it. The Apostle here first of all supposes the World to be crucified, that is, to be a dead, un-active, silent, and quiescent thing in respect of himself, as not being able to operate upon him, or affect his with any Sentiment as a true, proper Efficient Cause, and then in Consequence of that declares himself to be also crucified to the world.”

\textsuperscript{239} Norris, \textit{Practical Discourse}, 48.

\textsuperscript{240} Galatians 6:12-14.
that it was not, I think common Sense will sufficiently satisfie us, without consulting Interpreters about it.

There are the Texts brought by Mr. N. to support an Opinion grounded on an Hypothesis, perhaps Demonstrably false; That has evidently no proof, but the poor one from our Ignorance, that yet is not at all help’d by this Hypothesis: Which is (therefore) as well as for the Ends [119] of Morality, plainly useless. Yet all this might well be Pardon’d to any Effort of advancing our Knowledge, if it did not pretend to influence our Religion, And not only so, but to be the very Basis, and Foundation of Christianity, as it is made to be by the first Ingenious Inventor of it Mr. N has not, indeed, advanced that so directly. But with more Confidence a great deal, making it the ground of Morality, he falls as little short of it as is possible. And his Discourses upon this Subject being in a more Popular way, are more likely to do hurt. For certainly to perswade Men that God requires what they find impossible to perform, and opposite to their very Constitution and Being in this World, is to make Religion, and the Teachers of it, ridiculous to some; And to drive others weaker, but better-minded People into Despair; By giving them occasion to think that they do not love God as they ought. Such Effects, I fear, may be the Consequences of Mr. N’s Doctrine, who teaches that we do not love God as we ought, whilst we love any Creature at all: And particularly in the above-cited Sermon, He positively says, That the Creatures are no more our Goods, that our Gods, and that we may as well worship them, as love them. Pract. Disc. p. 62 F3 [120]

These Opinions of Mr. N. seem also to indanger the introducing, especially amongst those whose Imaginations are stronger than their Reason, a Devout way of talking; which having no sober, and intelligible sense under it, will either inevitably by degrees beget an Insensibility to Religion, in those themselves who use it, as well as others; By thus accustoming them to handle Holy things without Fear, Or else will turn to as wild an Enthusiasm as any that has been yet seen; and which can End in nothing but Monasteries, and Hermitages, with all those Sottish and Wicked Superstitions which have accompanied them wherever they have been in use. And this the Author of the Christian Conversations foresaw very well must be the Consequences; Or rather conformably to his Religion and Profession, might perhaps have it in his View and Design, to justify those things by this his Hypothesis, which makes them not only allowable, but of necessary use. But however that were, he concludes his Discourse of our being obliged to have no Love for any Creature, with a sincere Acknowledgment that if this be true (which he has concluded it is) it is then absolutely necessary to renounce the World, and betake our selves to Woods and Desarts: [121] For it is impossible to live in the daily Commerce and Conversation of the World, and

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241 Morality for Norris is in regards to that to which we direct our love and act to benefit. If we act to acquire the proper good (God), then God would not allow us to do that which is bad to reach the good unless it was a necessary evil (Practical Discourse, 70-71).
love God as we ought to do. And accordingly he makes his Young Men, introduced to be Converts to Religion upon these Principles, bid Adieu to the World, even to their Dearest Friends, and Relations.

For Pere Malebranche, it seems, was unacquainted with the Distinction which Mr. N. says, ought to be made of Movements of the Soul, and Movements of the Body. Otherwise he might have assured his Aristarchus, that he was in a very great Mistake, to believe that the Principles before laid down, obliged him to any retreat from the World, or Renunciation of the Injoyments of it: Since the Movements of the Body (Mr. N. tells us) may be determin’d by those Objects which inviron it; and by those Movements, Aristarchus might have United himself to those things which were the Natural or Occasional Causes of his Pleasure. (See Mr. N’s Letters Philosophical and Divine, p. 75.) But Pere Malebranche designing his Notions to be of some use to the World pursued them, whether by just consequence they led him; and sought not for any contrivance to make them insignificant to any other Purpose than to shew the Parturiency [122] of their Author. He therefore reasonably from his Principles, insist upon it, that the retreat from the World, is best for all; and necessary to most who design to lead a Christian Life; Those being much to be pitied whom God calls to live in the World for the Conversion of others.

This in a Papist, and one of a Religious Order amongst them, cannot seem strange. But there can certainly be no greater Disparagement to Christian Religion, than to say, That it unfits Men for Society; That we must not only literally become Fools for Christ’s sake; but also cease to be Men. Can any Rational Man, not bred up in the Bigotry of Popery, ever perswade himself that such a Religion can be from God? Or is there any appearance throughout the whole New Testament of its being so? John, indeed, who had not the power of Miracles, or a Voice from Heaven to Authorize his Mission, made himself be taken notice of, by the remarkable Austerity of his Life: But he neither Preach’d it, nor propos’d himself, in that, an Example to others. He was by something extraordinary (tho’ without Miracles) to draw Auditors to him, whom he might prepare to receive the Messiah. But that living in a Desart, and bidding adieu to Society, were not necessary to Religion, our Saviour’s Example as well as his Precepts, show. He came Eating and Drinking, Conversing in the World like other Men: And he assure us, That he came not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law; viz. The Law of Reason; than which Heaven and Earth, shall sooner pass away; and in which are legibly found those Duties of an active and social Life, that have so much recommended and eterniz’d the Memories of many Philosophers, and

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242 Aristarchus of Samos was a Greek astronomer and mathematician. He is known for presenting the first heliocentric model of the solar system, but it was rejected by the geocentric idea of Aristotle and Ptolemy.

243 Astell et al., 86.

244 Some see here an echoing of Stillingfleet in Masham’s words. Patricia Springborg, Mary Astell: Theorist of Freedom from Domination (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 72.
Lawgivers, and other great Men of Antiquity; Whose Religion Mankind would be apt to think they had reason to wish for again, if they were persuaded that Christianity were opposite to, and inconsistent with those admired and beneficial Virtues that Support and Profit Society.

There is nothing more evident than that Mankind is design'd for a Sociable Life. To say that Religion unfits us for it, is to reproach the Wisdom of God as highly as it is possible; And to represent Religion as the most mischievous thing in the World, dissolving Societies. And there could not be a greater Artifice of the Devil, or Wicked Men to bring Christianity into contempt than this But it is to be hoped, that where the Scriptures [124] are allow'd to be read, this can never prevail; And that those who are not in danger of being led into it by the Superstitions of Priest Craft, will not be impos'd upon in it by vain Philosophy: Nor can there be any stronger Evidence, that (That Notion, of the Love of God, grounded on his Being the immediate Cause of all our Sensations) is false, than this, *viz.* That it Destroys all the Duties and Obligations of Social Life. This indeed is not Mr. N.'s deduction from thence, But it is that of his Oracle *Pere Malebranche*, and that of Reason; And he will scarce be believ'd to be Sincere, that shall say he can daily see and enjoy the Creatures as Goods, without desiring them as such; Or that shall deny, that if it be our Duty not to desire any Creature, it must then necessarily be our Duty (as *P. M.* expressly says it is) to have as little communication with them as is possible; and to betake our selves to Desarts. But whether it were that Mr. N. has no inclination to this way of Living, and that it is to That that we owe his Happy Invention of Seeking, and enjoying the good things of the World, without loving them; Or that he was afraid by owning his Opinion (that we are obliged to renounce the World and live in [125] Woods) He should be suspected of Favouring Popish Superstitions; He can scarcely be presum'd not to see that this inevitably follows from the Hypothesis he has embraced. But yet how injurious soever, this Consequence is to Religion, so much is not therefore deny'd to what *Pere Malebranche* largely insists upon, *viz.* That Retirement is sometimes useful, if not necessary to a Christian Life. Those who live always in the hurry of the World, and the avocations of Worldly Business, without giving themselves time, and retreat, frequently to reflect, being no doubt very likely to enter too much into the Spirit of it; We insensibly giving up our selves to, and uniting our Hearts with what we are constantly ingaged in, and with delight apply our selves to. But if in opposition to this, any one should run into the other extream, of retreating wholly from all commerce and conversation with Men; And should give themselves the Happiness *Pere Malebranche* speaks of, of attending *Eternity in Desarts*; it is to be fear'd they would not mend the Matter. For whatever Vices they might part with by it, they must necessarily oppose thereby, one great end that they were sent into the World for, *viz.* of doing good; By becoming [126] wholly useless to others: And such a one would certainly, by such a renunciation of all commerce with Men, be likelier to grow Wild, than improve the great Virtue of Christianity, and Ornament of Humane Nature, Good Will, Charity, and the being Useful to others.
As for Monasteries, and Religious Houses, (as they are call’d) all who are acquainted with them, know that they are nothing less than what is pretended; And serve only to draw in Discontented, Devout People, with an imaginary Happiness. For there is constantly as much Pride, Malice, and Faction, within those Walls, as without them; And (if we may believe what is said, and has not wanted farther Evidence) very often as much licentiousness.

In short, our Natures are so suited to a mediocrity in all things, that we can scarce exceed in any kind with Safety, To be always busy in the Affairs of the World, or always shut up from them, cannot be born: Always Company, or always Solitude, are Dangerous: and so are any other Extreams.

FINIS.
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