

which of those duties ought to have the preference in particular circumstances or cases, when they have a kind of conflict or opposition that does not permit us to discharge them all alike.

The general principle to judge rightly of this subordination, is that the stronger obligation ought always to prevail over the weaker. But to know afterwards which is the stronger obligation, we have only to attend to the very nature of our duties, and their different degrees of necessity and utility; for this is the right way to know in that case the will of God. Pursuant to these ideas, we shall give here some general rules concerning the cases above-mentioned.

1. The duties of man towards God should always prevail over any other. For of all obligations, that which binds us to our all-wise and all-bountiful Creator, is without doubt the nearest and strongest.

2. If what we owe to ourselves comes in competition with our duty to society in general, society ought to have the preference. Otherwise, we should invert the order of things, destroy the foundations of society, and act directly contrary to the will of God, who by subordinating the part to the whole, has laid us under an indispensable obligation of never deviating from the supreme law of the common good.

3. But if, every thing else equal, there happens to be an opposition between the duties of self-love and sociability, self-love ought to prevail. For man being directly and primarily charged with the care of his own preservation and happiness, it follows therefore that in a case of intire equality, the care of ourselves ought to prevail over that of others.

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