Erasmus's *Education of a Christian Prince*


**Transcription conventions:** Page numbers in angle brackets refer to the edition cited as the source. Words or phrases singled out for indexing are marked by plus signs. In the index, numbers in parentheses indicate how many times the item appears. A slash followed by a small letter or a number indicates a footnote at the bottom of the page. Only notes of historical, philosophical, or literary interest to a general reader have been included. I have allowed Greek passages to stand as the scanner read them, in unintelligible strings of characters.

**TRANSLATOR'S INITIATORY QUOTATION:**
Three virtues should be taught the royal heir. The first is the virtue of moderation, so that he may learn the fundamental principle of how to live. The second is the virtue of adaptability, so that he may learn the fundamental principle of how to conduct himself. The third is the virtue of filial duty, so that he may learn what is in accordance with nature and what is in contradiction to it. - Constitution of Chow.

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Wisdom is not only an extraordinary attribute in itself, Charles, most bountiful of princes, but according to Aristotle+/1 no form of wisdom is greater than that which teaches a prince how to rule beneficently. Accordingly, Xenophon+/2 was quite correct in saying in his Oeconomicus that he thought it something beyond the human sphere and clearly divine, to rule over free and willing subjects. That kind of wisdom is indeed to be sought by princes, which Solomon as a youth of good parts, spurning all else, alone desired, and which he wished to be his constant companion on the throne. This is that purest and most beautiful wisdom of Sunamite, by whose embraces alone was David pleased, he that wisest son of an all-wise father. This is the wisdom which is referred to in Proverbs:/3 "Through me princes rule, and the powerful pass judgment." Whenever kings call this wisdom into council and exclude those basest of advisers - ambition+, wrath+, cupidity, and flattery+ - the state flourishes in every way and, realizing that its prosperity comes from the wisdom of the prince, rejoices rightly in itself with these words:/4 "All good things together come to me with her [i.e., wisdom]." Plato/5 is nowhere more painstaking than in the training of his guardians of the state. He does not wish them to excel all others in wealth, in gems, in dress, in statues and attendants, but in wisdom alone. He says that no state will ever be blessed unless the philosophers are at the helm, or those to whom the task of government falls embrace philosophy. By "philosophy" I do not mean that

1 E.g., Pol. 9. 2 Econ. XXI. 12. 3 Prov. 8: 16. 4 Wisdom 7:11 5 E.g., Laws IV-715; States. 311; Rep VI 503. <Eras-133>
potions of Circe with the molu flower. And not without reason did Plutarch/8 say that no one
serves the state better than he who imbues the mind of the prince, who provides and cares for
everyone and everything, with the best of ideas and those most becoming a prince. On the other
hand, no one brings so serious a blight upon the affairs of men as he who has corrupted the heart of
the prince with depraved ideas and desires. He is no different from one who has poisoned the
public fountain whence all men drink. Likewise Plutarch/9 judges not inapposite that celebrated
remark of Alexander the Great: Departing from the talk he had had with Diogenes the Cynic, and
still marveling at his philosophic spirit, so proud, unbroken, unconquered, and superior to all
things human, he said, "If I were not Alexander, I should like to be Diogenes." Nay, as great
authority is exposed to so many storms, the more was that spirit of Diogenes to be sought after,
since he could rise to the measure of such towering tumults.

But as much as you surpass Alexander in good fortune, mighty prince Charles, so much do we
hope you will surpass him in wisdom. For he had gained a mighty empire, albeit one not destined
to endure, solely through bloodshed. You have been born to a splendid kingdom and are destined
to a still greater one. As Alexander had to toil to carry out his invasions, so will you have to labor
to yield, rather than to gain, part of your power. You owe it to the powers of heaven that you came
into a kingdom untainted with blood, bought through no evil connection. It will be the lot of your
wisdom to keep

6 Od. X. 305. 7 Throughout the translation, words in square brackets are not found in the original
text. 8 Mor. 778D. 9 Alex. 14; Mor. 782A.
friends of kings (as to kings themselves) ought to be the only aim. Among the countless distinctions and praises which virtue, by the will of God, will prepare for you, this will be no small part: Charles was such an one that anyone could without the mark of flattery present [to him] the likeness of a pure and true Christian prince, which the excellent prince would happily recognize, or wisely imitate as a young man always eager to better himself. With best wishes./10

This letter is found in Allen (Ep. 393) as well as in both editions of the Opera omnia where it immediately precedes the text of the Institutio. In the title to the work itself, which immediately follows, Erasmus does not use capitula, the obvious word for "chapters." His Latin reads aphorismis digests, which could also be translated as "marked off with side-headings."

When a prince is to be chosen by election it is not at all appropriate to look to the images of his forefathers, to consider his physical appearance, his height of stature (which we read that some barbarians once most stupidly did) and to seek a quiet and placid trend of spirit./2 Seek rather a nature staid, in no way rash, and not so excitable that there is danger of his developing into a tyrant+ under the license of good fortune+ and casting aside all regard for advisers and counselors. Yet have a care that he be not so weak as to be turned now this way and now that by whomsoever he meets./3 Consider also his experience and his age - not so severe as to be entirely out of sympathy with frivolity, nor so impetuous as to be carried away by flights of fancy. Perhaps some consideration should also be paid to the state of health of the prince so that there will be no danger of a sudden/4 succession to be filled, which would be a hardship on the state.

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These references give the pages in the Opera omnia (Basle, 1540), IV (designated as B), and in the Opera omnia (Leyden, 1705-6), IV (designated as L), in which the Latin text of the Institutio is most easily accessible. 2 Cf. Plato Laws IV. 715; see also Seneca Ep. Mor. XLIV. 3-4. Throughout the translation references specifically cited or quoted by Erasmus have been cited in the notes; references to passages which may well have suggested the thought to Erasmus because of his familiarity with the writer from whom they are taken or because they are such striking parallels that mere coincidence would be hard to explain, have also been cited, but always prefixed by "cf." No attempt has been made to load the text with miscellaneous learning; any critic could suggest
many more passages to add as general parallels or illustrative material. Such information is
contained in detail in Chapters III and V of the Introduction and is not repeated here. 3 Cf. Plato
States. 311; Rep. VI. 503. 4 The Latin word is respublica, "commonwealth." Since Erasmus is
not concerned with the discussions of the "state" in connection with sovereignty, etc., and regularly
employs the word civitas to mean city, I have consistently rendered respublica as "state." Any
other word so rendered has been noted in the text where it occurs.

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In navigation the wheel is not given to him who surpasses his fellows in birth, wealth, or
appearance, but rather to him who excels in his skill as a navigator, in his alertness, and in his
dependability. Just so with the rule of a state: most naturally the power should be entrusted to him
who excels all in the requisite kingly qualities of wisdom, justice, moderation, foresight, and zeal
for the public welfare.

Statues, gold, and gems contribute no more to state government than they do to a master in
steering his ship. That one idea which should concern a prince in ruling, should likewise concern
the people in selecting their prince: the public weal, free from all private interests.

The more difficult it is to change your choice, the more circumspectly should your candidate be
chosen, or else the rashness of a single hour may spread its retributions over a lifetime. There is no
choice, however, in the case of hereditary succession of princes. This was the usual practice with
various barbarian nations of old, as Aristotle tells us, and it is also almost universally accepted in
our own times. Under that condition, the chief hope for a good prince is from his education, which
should be especially looked to. In this way the interest in his education will compensate for the
loss of the right of election. Hence, from the very cradle, as it were, the mind of the future prince,
while still open and unmolded, must be filled with salutary thoughts. Then the seeds of morality
must be sown in the virgin soil of his spirit so that little by little they may grow and mature
through age and experience, to remain firmly implanted throughout the course of life. Nothing
remains so deeply and tenaciously rooted as those things learned in the first years. What is
absorbed in those years is of prime importance to all, especially in the case of a prince.

When there is no opportunity to choose the prince, care should be exercised in the same manner
in choosing the tutor to the future prince. That a prince be born of worthy character-----

only to the end that for a while he may be kept away from base associations, but also that he may be imbued with certain definite moral principles. If diligent parents raise with great care a boy who is destined to inherit only an acre or two, think how much interest and concern should be given to the education of one who will succeed not to a single dwelling, but to so many peoples, to so many cities, yea, to the world, either as a good man for the common gain of all, or an evil one, to the great ruination of all! It is a great and glorious thing to rule an empire well, but nonetheless glorious to pass it on to no worse a ruler: nay, rather it is the main task of a good prince to see that he does not become a bad one. So conduct your rule as if this were your aim: "My equal shall never succeed me!" In the meantime, raise your children for future rule as if it were your desire to be succeeded by a better prince. There can be no more splendid commendation of a worthy prince than to say that he left such a successor to the state, that he himself seemed average by comparison. His own glory cannot be more truly shown than to be so obscured. The worst possible praise is that a ruler who was intolerable during his life is longingly missed as a good and beneficial prince each time a worse man ascends the throne. Let the good and wise prince always so educate his children that he seems ever to have remembered.

9 Cf. Plutarch A Philosopher Is to Converse with Great Men 1-3

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defense that they were born for the state and are being educated for the state, not for his own fancy. Concern for the state must always be superior to the personal feelings of the parent. However many statues he may set up, however many massive works he may erect, a prince can have no more excellent monument to his worth than a son, splendid in every way, who is like his excellent father in his outstanding deeds. He does not die, who leaves a living likeness of himself! The prince should choose for this duty teachers from among all the number of his subjects - or even summon from every direction men of good character, unquestioned principles, serious, of long experience and not merely learned in theories - to whom advancing years provide deep respect; purity of life, prestige; sociability and an affable manner, love and friendship. Thus a tender young spirit may not be cut by the severity of its training and learn to hate worthiness before it knows it; nor on the other hand, debased by the unseasoned indulgence of its tutor, slip back where it should not." In the education of anyone, but especially in the case of a prince, the teacher must adopt a mid-course; he should be stern enough to suppress the wild pranks of youth, yet have a friendly understanding to lessen and temper the severity of his restraint." Such a man should the future prince's tutor be (as Seneca elaborately sets forth)/12, that he can scold without railing, praise without flattering, be revered for his stainless life, and loved for his pleasing manner.

Some princes exercise themselves greatly over the proper care of a beautiful horse, or a bird, or a dog, yet consider it a matter of no importance to whom they entrust the training of their son. Him they often put in the hands of such teachers as no common citizen with any sense at all would want in charge of his sons [L 564]. Of what consequence is it to have begot a son for the throne, unless you educate him for his rule? Neither is the young prince to be given to any sort of nurse, but only to those of stainless character, who have been pre-

10 Cf. Seneca Ep. Mor. LII; Plutarch Training of Children 7. 11 Cf. Seneca De ira II. 21. 3; Plato
Previously instructed in their duties and are well trained. He should not be allowed to associate with whatever playmates appear, but only with those boys of good and modest character; he should be reared and trained most carefully and as becomes a gentleman. 13 That whole crowd of wantons, hard drinkers, filthy-tongued fellows, especially flatterers+, must be kept far from his sight and hearing while his mind is not yet fortified with precepts to the contrary. 14 Since the natures of so many men are inclined towards the ways of evil, there is no nature so happily born that it cannot be corrupted by wrong training. 15 What do you expect except a great fund of evil in a prince, who, regardless of his native character (and a long line of ancestors does not necessarily furnish a mind, as it does a kingdom), is beset from his very cradle by the most inane opinions; is raised in the circle of senseless women; grows to boyhood among naughty girls, abandoned playfellows, and the most abject flatterers+, among buffoons and mimes, drinkers and gamesters, and worse than stupid and worthless creators of wanton pleasures. In the company of all of these he hears nothing, learns nothing, absorbs nothing except pleasures, amusements, arrogance, haughtiness, greed, petulance, and tyranny - and from this school he will soon progress to the government of his kingdom! Although each one of all the great arts is very difficult, there is none finer nor more difficult than that of ruling well. Why in the case of this one thing alone do we feel the need of no training, but deem it sufficient to have been born for it? To what end except tyranny do they devote themselves as men, who as boys played at nothing except as tyrants? B.435] It is too much even to hope that all men will be good, yet it is not difficult to select from so many thousands one or two, who are conspicuous for their honesty and wisdom, through whom many good men may be gained in simple fashion. The real young prince should hold his youth in dis-
more deserving of that punishment. The teacher should enter at once upon his duties, so as to
implant the seeds of good moral conduct while the senses of the prince are still in the tenderness of
youth, while his mind is furthest removed from all vices and tractably yields to the hand of
guidance in whatever it directs. He is immature both in body and mind, as in his sense of duty. The
teacher's task is always the same, but he must employ one method in one case, and another in
another. While his pupil is still a little child, he can bring in his teachings through pretty stories,
pleasing fables, clever parables. When he is bigger, he can teach the same things directly.24

When the little fellow has listened with pleasure to Aesop's fable25 of the lion and the mouse
or of the dove and the ant,


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and when he has finished his laugh, then the teacher should point out the new moral: the first fable
teaches the prince to despise no one, but to seek zealously to win to himself by kindnesses the
heart of even the lowest peasant (plebs), for no one is so weak but that on occasion he may be a
friend to help you, or an enemy to harm you, even though you be the most powerful. {affable}
When he has had his fun out of the eagle, queen of the birds, that was almost completely done for
by the beetle, the teacher should again point out the meaning: not even the most powerful prince
can afford to provoke or overlook even the humblest enemy. Often those who can inflict no harm
by physical strength can do much by the machinations of their minds. When he has learned with
pleasure the story of Phaeton+, the teacher should show that he represents a prince, who while still
headstrong with the ardor of youth, but with no supporting wisdom, seized the reins of government
and turned everything into ruin for himself and the whole world. {history+} When he has finished
the story of the Cyclops who was blinded by Ulysses, the teacher should say in conclusion that the
prince who has great strength of body, but not of mind, is like Polyphemus. [L 566] Who has not
heard with interest of the government of the bees and ants?26 When temptations begin to descend
into the youthful heart of the prince, then his tutor should point out such of these stories as belong
in his education. He should tell him that the king/27 never flies far away, has wings smaller in
proportion to the size of its body than the others, and that he alone has no sting.27 >From this the
tutor should point out that it is the part of a good prince always to remain within the limits of his
realm; his reputation for clemency should be his special form of praise. The same idea should be
carried on throughout. It is not the province of this treatise to supply a long list of examples, but
merely to point out the

26 Cf., on bees, Vergil Georgics IV. 67-87, 153-219; Pliny Natural History XI. 5 (4); and on ants,
ibid., 30 (36). 27 Erasmus follows the majority of the ancients in referring to the queen bee as the
"king." 28 See the references in note 26, above.

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theory and the way. If there are any stories that seem too coarse, the teacher should polish and
smooth them over with a winning manner of speech. The teacher should give his praise in the
presence of others, but only within the limits of truth and proportion. His scoldings should be
administered in private and given in such a way that a pleasing manner somewhat breaks the
severity of his admonition. This is especially to be done when the prince is a little older. Before all
else the story of Christ must be firmly rooted in the mind of the prince. He should drink deeply of
His teachings, gathered in handy texts, and then later from those very fountains themselves,
whence he may drink more purely and more effectively. He should be taught that the teachings of
Christ apply to no one more than to the prince.

The great mass of people are swayed by false opinions and are no different from those in
Plato's cave+/29 who took the empty shadows as the real things. It is the part of a good prince to
admire none of the things that the common people consider of great consequence, but to judge all
things on their own merits as "good" or "bad./30 But nothing is truly "bad" unless joined with base
infamy. Nothing is really "good" unless associated with moral integrity. {Cicero+}

Therefore, the tutor should first see that his pupil loves and honors virtue+ as the finest quality
of all, the most felicitous, the most fitting a prince; and that he loathes and shuns moral turpitude
as the foulest and most terrible of things. Lest the young prince be accustomed to regard riches+ as
an indispensable necessity, to be gained by right or wrong, he should learn that those are not true
honors which are commonly acclaimed as such. True honor is that which follows on virtue and
right action of its own will. {Cicero+} The less affected+ it is, the more it redounds to fame. The
low pleasures of the people are so far beneath a prince, especially a Christian prince, that they
hardly become any man. There is another kind of pleasure which will endure, genuine and true, all
through life. Teach the young


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prince that nobility, statues, wax masks, family-trees, all the pomp of heralds, over which the great
mass of people stupidly swell with pride, are only empty terms unless supported by deeds+ worth
while. The prestige of a prince, his greatness, his majesty, must not be developed and preserved by
fortune's wild display, but by wisdom, solidarity, and good_deeds+.

Death+ is not to be feared, nor should we wail when it comes to others, unless it was a foul
death./31 The happiest man is not the one who has lived the longest, but the one who has made the
most of his life. The span of life should be measured not by years but by our deeds well performed.
Length of life has no bearing on a man's happiness. {Seneca+} It is how well he lived that
counts./32 Surely virtue+is its own reward [B 437]. It is the duty of a good prince to consider the
welfare of his people, even at the cost of his own life if need be. {onus+} But that prince does not
really die who loses his life in such a cause. All those things which the common people cherish as
delightful, or revere as excellent, or adopt as useful, are to be measured by just one standard
worth. On the other hand, whatever things the common people object to as disagreeable, or despise
as lowly, or shun as pernicious, should not be avoided unless they are bound up with dishonor./33

These principles should be fixed in the mind of the future prince. They should be impressed in
his tender young heart as the most hallowed laws, les lois les plus sacrees./34 Let him hear many
being praised for these ideas and others reprimanded for diverse ones. Then he will be accustomed
from the start to expect praise as a result of good things and to abhor

31 In addition to the various passages in the Testament, cf. also Seneca Ep. Mor. IV. 32 Cf. Seneca
Ep. Mor. XCIII. 2-5. 33 Cf. Augustine Civ. Dei V. 14. 34 The reading of the Basle edition here is leges sanctissimae, OEC@oi dYLV rOL; that of the Leyden edition, leges sanctissimae @L DXCVITOL. I have followed the reading of the Basle edition since nowhere else in the Institutio does Erasmus mix a Greek construction with his Latin as an integral part of the syntax. The words are always parenthetical, as here, or quoted. I have not been able to examine the reading of the editio princeps. In accordance with custom, I have here and throughout the translation rendered the Greek by French to give the effect of the original.

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the ignominy that comes from the opposite. But here some one of those frumps at the court, more stupid and worthless than any woman you could name, will interrupt with this: "You are making us a philosopher, not a prince." "I am making a prince," I answer, "although you prefer a worthless sot like yourself instead of a real prince!" You cannot be a prince, if you are not a philosopher; you will be a tyrant+. There is nothing better than a good prince. A tyrant+ is such a monstrous beast that his like does not exist. Nothing is equally baneful, nothing more hateful to all. {Cicero+} Do not think that Plato/35 rashly advanced the idea, which was lauded by the most praiseworthy men, that the blessed state will be that in which the princes are philosophers, or in which the philosophers seize the principate. I do not mean by philosopher, one who is learned in the ways of dialectic or physics, {Prospero+} but one who casts aside the false pseudo-realities and with open mind seeks and follows the truth./36 To be a philosopher and to be a Christian is synonymous in fact. {Lipsius+} The only difference is in the nomenclature.

What is more stupid than to judge a prince on the following accomplishments: his ability to dance gracefully, dice expertly, drink with a gusto, swell with pride, plunder the people with kingly grandeur, and do all the other things which I am ashamed even to mention, although there are plenty who are not ashamed to do them? The common run of princes zealously avoid the dress and manner of living of the lower_classes+. Just so should the true prince be removed from the sullied opinions and desires of the common folk. The one thing which he should consider base, vile, and unbecoming to him is to share the opinions of the common people who never are interested in anything worth while. How ridiculous it is for one adorned with gems, gold, the royal purple, attended by courtiers, possessing all the other marks of honor, wax images and statues, wealth that clearly is not his, to be so far superior to all because of them, and yet in the light of real goodness of spirit to be found inferior to many born from the very dregs of society./37


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What else does the prince, who flaunts gems, gold, the royal purple, and all the other trappings of fortune's+pomp in the eyes of his subjects, do but teach them to crave and admire the very sources from which spring the foulest essence of nearly all crimes that are punishable by the law of the prince? In others, frugality and simple neatness may be ascribed to want, or parsimony, if you are less kind in your judgment. These same qualities in a prince are clearly an evidence of temperance, since he uses sparingly the unlimited means which he possesses.
What man is there whom it becomes to stir up crimes and then inflict punishment for them? What could be more disgusting than for him to permit himself things he will not let others do? If you want to show yourself an excellent prince, see that no one outshines you in the qualities befitting your position - I mean wisdom, magnanimity, temperance, integrity. If you want to make trial of yourself with other princes, do not consider yourself superior to them if you take away part of their power or scatter their forces; but only if you have been less corrupt than they, less greedy, less arrogant, less wrathful, less headstrong.

No one will gainsay that nobility in its purest form becomes a prince. There are three kinds of nobility: the first is derived from virtue and good actions; the second comes from acquaintance with the best of training; and the third from an array of family portraits and the genealogy or wealth. It by no means becomes a prince to swell with pride over this lowest degree of nobility, for it is so low that it is nothing at all, unless it has itself sprung from virtue. Neither must he neglect the first, which is so far the first that it alone can be considered in the strictest judgment. If you want to be famous do not make a display of statues or paintings; if there is anything praiseworthy in them, it is due to the artist whose genius and work they represent. Far better to make your character the monument to your good parts. If all else is lacking, the very

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appurtenances of your majesty can remind you of your duty. What does the anointing mean if not greatness, leniency, and clemency on the part of the prince, since cruelty is almost always the companion of great power? What does the gold mean, except outstanding wisdom? What significance has the sparkle of the gems, except extraordinary virtues as different as possible from the common run? What does the warm rich purple purple mean, if not the essence of love for the state? And why the scepter, unless as a mark of a spirit clinging strongly to justice, turned aside by none of life's diversions? But if the prince has none of these qualities, these symbols are not ornaments to him, but stand as accusations against him. If a necklace, a scepter, royal purple robes, a train of attendants are all that make a king, what is to prevent the actors who come on the stage decked with all the pomp of state from being called king? What is it that distinguishes a real king from the actor? It is the spirit befitting a prince. I mean he must be like a father to the state. It is on this basis that the people swore allegiance to him. The crown, the scepter, the royal robes, the collar, the sword belt are all marks or symbols of good qualities in the good prince; in a bad one, they are accusations of vice.

Watchfulness must increase in proportion to his meanness, or else we will have a prince like many we read about of old. (May we never see the like again!) If you strip them of their royal ornaments and inherited goods, and reduce them to themselves alone, you will find nothing left except the essence of an expert at dice, the victor of many a drinking bout, the fierce conqueror of modesty, the craftiest of deceivers, an insatiable pillager; a creature steeped in perjury, sacrilege, perfidy, and every other kind of crime. Whenever you think of yourself as a prince, remember you are a Christian prince! You should be as different from even the noble pagan princes as a Christian is from a pagan.

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41 Cf. Cicero Rep. II. 26. 47, among many others, for this idea. This could not have been directly
used as a source, for the Republic, as Erasmus himself tells us, was lost until after his day. [but see Off. 357] 42 Cf. Augustine Civ. Dei V. 18.

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Do not think that the profession of a Christian is a matter to be lightly passed over, entailing no responsibilities unless, of course, you think the sacrament which you accepted along with everything else at baptism is nothing. And do not think you renounce just for the once the delights of Satan which bring pain to the Christ. He is displeased with all that is foreign to the teachings of the Gospel. You share the Christian sacraments alike with all others - why not its teachings too? You have allied yourself with Christ - and yet will you slide back into the ways of Julius and Alexander the Great? You seek the same reward as the others, yet you will have no concern with His mandates.

But on the other hand, do not think that Christ is found in ceremonies, in doctrines kept after a fashion, and in constitutions of the church. Who is truly Christian? Not he who is baptized or anointed, or who attends church. It is rather the man who has embraced Christ in the innermost feelings of his heart, and who emulates Him by his pious deeds. 43 Guard against such inner thoughts as these: "Why is all this addressed to me? I am not a mere subject. I am not a priest. I am not a monk." Think rather in this fashion: "I am a Christian and a prince." It is the part of a true Christian to shun carefully all vulgarity. It is the province of a prince to surpass all in stainless character and wisdom. You compel your subjects to know and obey your laws. With far more energy you should exact of yourself knowledge and obedience to the laws of Christ, your king! 44 You judge it an infamous crime, for which there can be no punishment terrible enough, for one who has sworn allegiance to his king to revolt from him. On what grounds, then, do you grant yourself pardon and consider as a matter of sport and jest the countless times you have broken the laws of Christ, to whom you swore allegiance in your baptism, to whose cause you pledged yourself, by whose sacraments you are bound and pledged? If these acts are done in earnest, why do we make a farce of them? If they are only sham, why do we vaunt ourselves under the glory of Christ as pretext? There is but one death for all - beggars and kings alike. But the judgment after death is not the same for all. None are dealt with more severely than the powerful.

Do not think you have acquitted yourself well in the eyes of Christ, merely because you send a fleet against the Turks, or build a shrine or erect a little monastery somewhere. There is no better way to gain the favor of God, than by showing yourself a beneficial prince for your people. Guard against the deceit of flatterers who claim that precepts of this kind have no concern for princes but pertain only to that class which they call ecclesiastics. The prince is not a priest, I confess, and therefore does not consecrate the body of Christ. He is not a bishop, and so does not rouse the people on the mysteries of Christianity, nor does he administer the sacrament. He has not professed the rule of St. Benedict, and therefore does not wear the cowl. But what is more than all this, he is a Christian. He has followed the rule of Christ himself. It is from Him that he has received his
white robe, not from St. Francis. The prince should vie with the other Christians, if he would have the same reward. You, too, must take up your cross, or else Christ will have none of you. "What," you ask, "is my cross?" I will tell you: Follow the right, do violence to no one, plunder no one, sell no public office, be corrupted by no bribes. To be sure, your treasury will have far less in it than otherwise, but take no thought for that loss, if only you have acquired the interest from justice. While you are using every means and interest to benefit the state, your life is fraught with care; you rob your youth and genius of their pleasures; you wear yourself down with long hours of toil. Forget that and enjoy yourself in the consciousness of right. As you would rather stand for an injury than avenge it at great loss to the state, perchance you will lose a little something of your empire. Bear that; consider that you have gained a great deal because you have brought hurt to fewer than you would otherwise have done. Do your

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private emotions as a man reproachful anger, love for your wife, hatred of an enemy, shame - urge you to do what is not right and what is not to the welfare of the state? Let the thought of honor win [B 439]. Let the concern for the state completely cover your personal ambitions. If you cannot defend your realm without violating justice, without wanton loss of human life, without great loss to religion, give up and yield to the importunities of the age! If you cannot look out for the possessions of your subjects without danger to your own life, set the safety of the people before your very life! But while you are conducting yourself in this fashion, which befits a true Christian prince, there will be plenty to call you a dolt, and no prince at all! Hold fast to your cause. It is far better to be a just man than an unjust prince. It is clear now, I think, that even the greatest kings are not without their crosses, if they want to follow the course of right at all times, as they should.

In the case of private individuals, some concession is granted to youth and to old age: the former may make a mistake now and then; the latter is allowed leisure and a cessation of toils. But the man who undertakes the duties of the prince, while managing the affairs of everyone, is not free to be either a young man or an old one; he cannot make a mistake without a great loss to many people; he cannot slacken in his duties without the gravest disasters ensuing. The ancients used to say that was a costly prudence which came from experience, because each one found it at his own expense./45 The prince should be sheltered from this by all means. When such experiences occur later, they bring great harm to all the people. If Africanus/46 spoke the truth when he said, "I did not think," is not a fit expression for any wise man," how much more unsuited is it to a prince! For it applies not only to the great man himself, but, alas, to the state as well! For example, a war begun in a moment of rashness by a young prince with no knowledge of war, lasts throughout twenty years.

45 Cf. Plato Symposium 222. 411 Valerius Maximus VII. 2. 2.

What a vast sea of misfortunes this floods over us! At length when it is too late, he recovers his senses and says, "I did not think." On another occasion he followed his own bent, or listened to the entreaties of others, and appointed corrupt public officials who overthrew the orderly functioning of the whole state. After a while he saw his mistake and said, "I did not think." That sort of
wisdom is too expensive for the state, if all else has to be bought at the same high price. Hence the instruction of the prince in accordance with established principles and ideas must take precedence over all else so that he may gain his knowledge from theory and not experience. Long experience which youth precludes will be supplied by the advice of older men. 47

Do not think you may do anything you please, as foolish women and flatterers are in the habit of telling princes. School yourself so that nothing pleases you which is not suitable. Remember that what is proper for private citizens, is not necessarily becoming in you. What is just a little mistake on the part of anyone else, is a disgrace in connection with a prince. The more others allow you, the less you should permit yourself. As others indulge you, so you should check yourself. 48 Even when everyone marks you with approval, be your own severest critic. Your life is open to all - you cannot hide yourself. You have either to be a good man for the common good, or a bad one, bringing general destruction. 49 As more honors are heaped upon you by everyone, you must make a special effort to see that you deserve them. No fitting honors or gratitude can ever be shown a good prince; no punishment can be bad enough for an evil prince. There is nothing in life better than a wise and good monarch; there is no greater scourge than a foolish or a wicked one. The corruption of an evil prince spreads more swiftly and widely than the scourge of any pestilence. In the same proportion a wholesome life on the part of the prince is, without question, the quickest and shortest way to improve public morals. The common people

47 Cf. Cicero De off. I. 34. 122. 48 Cf. Plutarch Discourse to an Unlearned Prince 2. 49 Cf. ibid., 7; Xenophon Cyropaedia VIII. 7. 23.

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imitate nothing with more pleasure than what they see their prince do. 50 Under a gambler, gambling is rife; under a warrior, everyone is embroiled [L 570]; under an epicure, all disport in wasteful luxury; under a debauche, license is rampant; under a cruel tyrant, everyone brings accusations and false witness. Go through your ancient history and you will find the life of the prince mirrored in the morals of his people. 51 No comet, no dreadful power affects the progress of human affairs as the life of the prince grips and transforms the morals and character of his subjects. 51

The studies and character of priests and bishops are a potent factor in this matter, I admit, but not nearly so much so as are those of princes. Men are more ready to decry the clergy if they sin than they are to emulate them in their good points. So it is that monks who are really pious do not excite people to follow their example because they seem only to be practicing what they preach. But on the other hand, if they are sinful everyone is shocked beyond measure. But there is no one who is not stimulated to follow in the footsteps of his prince! For this very reason the prince should take special care not to sin, because he makes so many followers in his wrongdoings, but rather to devote himself to being virtuous so that so many more good men may result.

A beneficent prince, as Plutarch said, is a living likeness of God, who is at once good and powerful. His goodness makes him want to help all; his power makes him able to do so. On the other hand, an evil prince, who is like a plague to his country, is the incarnation of the devil, who has great power joined with his wickedness. All his resources to the very last, he uses for the undoing of the human race. Was not each of these, Nero, Caligula, Heliogabalus, a sort of evil genius in the world? [B 440] They were plagues to the world during their lives, and their very memory is open to the curse of all mankind. When you who are a prince, a Christian
prince, hear and read that you are the likeness of God and his vicar, do not swell with pride on this account, but rather take pains that you correspond to your wonderful archetype, whom it is hard, but not unseemly, to follow./53

Christian theology attributes three prime qualities to God the highest power, the greatest wisdom, the greatest goodness. In so far as you can you should make this trinity yours. Power without goodness is unmitigated tyranny; without wisdom it brings chaos, not domain.\{\textbf{Lear}+\} In the first place, then, in so much as \textbf{fortune+} gave you power, make it your duty to gain for yourself the best store of wisdom possible, so you may clearly see the objectives to be striven for and the courses to avoid. In the next place, try to fill as many needs as possible for everyone, for that is the province of goodness. Make your power serve you to this end, that you can be of as much assistance as you want to be. But no, your desire in this respect should always exceed your means! On the other hand, always cause less hurt than you could have caused.

God is loved by all good men. Only the wicked fear Him, and even they have only that fear which all men have of harm befalling them. In like manner, a good prince should strike awe into the heart of none but the evildoers and criminals; and yet even to them he should hold out a hope of leniency, if only they reform. On the other hand, his Satanic majesty is beloved of no one, and is feared by all, especially the virtuous, for the wicked are his appropriate attendants. Likewise \textbf{tyrant+} is hated by every good man, and none are closer to him than the worst element in society.

This was clearly seen by St. Denis,/54 who divided the world into three hierarchies: what God is in the heavenly concourse, that should the bishop be in the church, and the prince in the state. He is supreme, and from him flows the fountain of all his goodness. No condition can be more absurd than that in which the greatest portion of all the state's misfortunes arise from him who should be the fountainhead of goodness. The common people are

unruly by nature, and magistrates are easily corrupted through avarice or ambition. There is just one blessed stay in this tide of evils - the unsullied character of the prince. If he, too, is overcome by foolish ideas and base desires, what last ray of hope is there for the state?

As God is good in all his beneficence and does not need the attendant services of anyone nor ask any recompense, so it should be with the prince who is really great - who is the likeness of the Eternal Prince. He should freely do works of kindness for everyone without thought of compensation or glory. God placed a beautiful likeness of Himself in the heavens - the sun. Among mortal men he set up a tangible and living image of himself - the king./55 The sun is freely shared by all and imparts its light to the rest of the heavenly bodies. The prince should be readily accessible \{\textbf{affability+}\} for all the needs of his people. He should be a virgin source of wisdom in
himself, so that he may never become benighted, however blind everyone else may be.

God is swayed by no emotions, yet he rules the universe with supreme judgment. The prince should follow His example in all his actions, cast aside all personal motives, and use only reason and judgment. God is sublime. The prince should be removed as far as possible from the low concerns of the common people and their sordid desires.

No one sees God in his government of the universe, but only feels Him and His kindness. The prince's native land should not feel his powers, except when its troubles are mitigated through his wisdom and goodness. On the other hand, tyrants are nowhere experienced, except to the sorrow of all. When the sun is highest in the zodiac, then its motion is slowest: so it is with you, the prince. The higher you are carried by fortune, the more lenient and less stern you should be./56

Loftiness of spirit is not shown by the fact that you will tolerate no
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55 Cf. Plutarch Discourse to an Unlearned Prince 3. The unusually close Similarity of this passage to that of Erasmus is striking, but Erasmus does not mention Plutarch here. Since Erasmus edited some of Plutarch's works, including this essay, the indebtedness can hardly be doubted. 56 Cf. Plutarch, loc. cit., 6.

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affronts, that you allow no one greater empire than your own, but rather that you consider it improper to admit of anything unbecoming a prince.

All slavery is pitiable and dishonorable, but the lowest and most wretched form is slavery to vice and degrading passions. {Caliban+} What more abject and disgraceful condition can there be than that in which the prince, who holds imperial authority over free men, is himself a slave to lust, irascibility, avarice, ambition, {vices+} and all the rest of that malicious category?/57 It is an established fact that among the pagans there were some who preferred death for themselves to defending the empire with great waste of human life - men who set the welfare of the state above their own lives./58 What an outrageous condition it is, then, for a Christian prince to be concerned with his pleasures and vicious passions in a period of great calamity to the state? When you assume the principate, do not think how much honor is bestowed upon you, but consider rather the great burden of care you have assumed. {onus+} Do not expend only your wealth and income but also a good deal of thought. Do not think that you have plundered a ship but rather that you have taken the wheel. [B 441] According to Plato,/59 no one is fit to rule who has not assumed the rule unwillingly and only after persuasion. For whoever strives after the princely place must of necessity either be a fool or else not realize how fraught with care and trial the kingly office really is, or he may be so wicked a man that he plans to use the royal power for his own benefit, not for that of the state, or so negligent that he does not carry out the task he assumed. To be a fit ruler, the prince should at the same time be diligent, good, and wise. The greater your dominion, the greater care you must exercise to keep down your conceit. Remember that you are thereby shouldering greater cares and responsibilities and that you are bound to give less and less to your leisure and pleasures. Only
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those who govern the state not for themselves but for the good of the state itself, deserve the title "prince." His titles mean nothing in the case of one who rules to suit himself and measures everything to his own convenience: he is no prince, but a tyrant. There is no more honorable title than "prince," and there is no term more detested and accursed than "tyrant." There is the same difference between a prince and a tyrant as there is between a conscientious father and a cruel master. The former is ready and willing to give even his life for his children; the latter thinks of nothing else than his own gain, or indulges his caprices to his own taste, with no thought to the welfare of his subjects. Do not be satisfied just because you are called "king" or "prince." Those scourges of the earth, Phalaris and Dionysius, had those titles. Pass your own judgment on yourself.

To summarize: In his Politics Aristotle differentiates between a prince and a tyrant on the basis that the one is interested in his own pursuits and the other is concerned for the state. No matter what the prince is deliberating about, he always keeps this one thing in mind: "Is this to the advantage of all my subjects?" A tyrant only considers whether a thing will contribute to his cause. A prince is vitally concerned with the needs of his subjects, even while engaged in personal matters. On the other hand, if a tyrant ever chances to do something good for his subjects, he turns that to his own personal gain. Those who look out for their people only in so far as it redounds to their personal advantage, hold their subjects in the same status as the average man considers his horse or ass. For these men take care of their animals, but all the care they give them is judged from the advantage to themselves, not to the animals. But anyone who despoils the people with his rapacity, or wracks them with his cruelty, or subjects them to all sorts of perils to satisfy his ambition, considers free citizens even cheaper than the common folk value their draft animals or the fencing master his slaves.

The prince's tutor shall see that a hatred of the very words "tyranny" and "dominion" are implanted in the prince. He shall often utter diatribes against those names, accursed to the whole human race - Phalaris, Mezentius, Dionysius of Syracuse, Nero, Caligula, and Domitian who wanted to be called "God and Lord." On the other hand, if he finds any examples of good princes who are as different as possible from the tyrant he should zealously bring them forth with frequent praise and commendation. Then let him create the picture of each, and impress upon mind and eye, to the extent of his capabilities, the king and the tyrant, so that the prince may burn to emulate the one and detest the latter even more than before.

Let the teacher paint a sort of celestial creature, more like to a divine being than a mortal: complete in all the virtues; born for the common good; yea, sent by the God above to help the affairs of mortals by looking out and caring for everyone and everything; to whom no concern is of longer standing or more dear than the state; who has more than a paternal spirit toward everyone;
who holds the life of each individual dearer than his own; who works and strives night and day for just one end - to be the best he can for everyone; with whom rewards are ready for all good men and pardon for the wicked, if only they will reform - for so much does he want to be of real help to his people, without thought of recompense, that if necessary he would not hesitate to look out for their welfare at great risk to himself; who considers his wealth to lie in the advantages of his country; who is ever on the watch so that everyone else may sleep deeply; who grants no leisure to himself so that he may spend his life in the peace of his country; who worries himself with continual cares so that

68 Cf. on Phalaris, e.g., Plutarch A Philosopher Is to Converse with Great Men 3; Aristotle Pol. V. 10; Seneca De ira II. 5; on Dionysius, e.g., Plutarch loc. cit., and Dion 7; Aristotle loc. cit.; on Nero, Caligula, and Domitian, e.g., see Suetonius Lives of the Caesars; on Domitian in particular, Suetonius Dom. 13.

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his subjects may have peace and quiet./64 Upon the moral qualities of this one man alone depends the felicity of the state. Let the tutor point this out as the picture of a true prince!

Now let him bring out the opposite side by showing a frightful, loathsome beast, formed of a dragon, wolf, lion, viper, bear, and like creatures;/65 with six hundred eyes all over it, teeth everywhere, fearful from all angles, and with hooked claws; with never satiated hunger, fattened on human vitals, and reeking with human blood; never sleeping, but always threatening the fortunes and lives of all men; dangerous to everyone, especially to the good; a sort of fatal scourge to the whole world, on which everyone who has the interests of state at heart pours forth execration and hatred; which cannot be borne because of its monstrousness and yet cannot be overthrown without great disaster to the city because its maliciousness is hedged about with armed forces and wealth [B 442]. This is the picture of a tyrant+ - unless there is something more odious which can be depicted. Monsters of this sort were Claudius and Caligula. The myths in the poets also showed Busyris, Pentheus, and Midas, whose names are now objects of hate to all the human race, to be of the same type.

The main object of a tyrant is to follow his own caprices, but a king follows the path of right and honor. Reward to a tyrant is wealth; to a king, honor, which follows upon virtue./66 The tyrants' rule is marked by fear, deceit, and machinations of evil. The king governs through wisdom, integrity, and beneficence./67 The tyrant uses his imperial power for himself; the king, for the state. The tyrant guarantees safety for himself by means of foreign attendants and hired brigands. The king deems himself safe through his kindness to his subjects and their love for him in return./68 Those citizens who are distinguished for their moral character, judgment, and prestige are held under suspicion and distrust by the tyrant./69 The king,

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however, cleaves to these same men as his helpers and friends. The tyrant is pleased either with stupid dolts, on whom he imposes; or with wicked men, whom he puts to evil use in defending his position as tyrant; or with flatterers, from whom he hears only praise which he enjoys. It is just the opposite with a king; every wise man by whose counsel he can be helped is very dear to him. The better each man is, the higher he rates him, because he can rely on his allegiance. He loves honest friends, \{Kent\} by whose companionship he is bettered. Kings and tyrants have many hands and many eyes, but they are very different. A tyrant's aim is to get the wealth of his subjects in the hands of a few, and those the wickedest, and fortify his power by the weakened strength of his subjects. The king considers that his purse is represented by the wealth of his subjects; the tyrant strives to have everyone answerable to him either by law or informers. The king rejoices in the freedom of his people; the tyrant strives to be feared, the king to be loved. \{love_fear\} The tyrant looks upon nothing with greater suspicion than the harmonious agreement of good men and of cities; good princes especially rejoice in this. A tyrant is happy to stir up factions and strife between his subjects and feeds and aids chance animosities. This means he basely uses for the safeguarding of his tyranny. A king has this one interest: to foster peaceful relations between his subjects and straightway to adjust such dissensions among them as chance to arise, for he believes that they are the worst menace to the state that can happen. When a tyrant sees that affairs of state are flourishing, he trumps up some pretext, or even invites in some enemy, so as to start a war and thereby weaken the powers. The opposite is true of a king. He does of his own people, everything and allows everything that will bring everlasting peace to his country, for he realizes that war is the source of all misfortunes to the state. The tyrant either sets up laws, constitutions, edicts, treaties, and all things sacred and profane to his own personal preservation or else perverts them to that end. The king judges everything by the standard of its value to the state. Most of the marks or schemes of a tyrant have been set forth at great length by Aristotle in his Politics; but he sums them up under three points. The tyrant is first concerned to see that his subjects neither wish to nor dare to rise against his tyrannical rule; next, that they do not trust one another; and thirdly, that they cannot attempt a revolution. He accomplishes his first end by allowing his subjects to develop no spirit at all and no wisdom, by keeping them like slaves and devoted to mean stations in life, or held accountable by a system of spies, or rendered effeminate through pleasure. He knows full well that noble and acute spirits do not tolerate a tyranny with good grace. He accomplishes his second point by stirring up dissension and mutual hatred among his subjects so that one accuses the other and he himself is more powerful as a result of their misfortunes. The third he attains by using every means to reduce the wealth and prestige of any of his subjects, and especially the good men, to a limit which no sane man would want to approach and would despair of attaining.

A prince should keep as far as possible from all such ideas, yes, tout au contraire i.e., be clearly separated from them and this is especially true of a Christian prince. If Aristotle, who was a pagan and a philosopher too, painted such a picture among men who were not holy and learned in the Scriptures, how much more is it fit for one who moves in the place of Christ to fulfill the task? Even in the dumb animals we may find comparisons to both king and tyrant. The king bee
has the biggest quarters, but in the middle of the hive, which is the safest place. He is relieved of all physical work, but is the overseer of the work of the others. If he is lost, the whole swarm will break up. Besides, the king is distinguished in form from the others, both as to size and shiny appearance. But according to Seneca/75

72 Pol. V. 11. 73 The text reads ix bLat&i-coov. 74 Erasmus again follows the erroneous practice of the ancients in referring to the queen bee as the "king bee." 75 De clementia 1. 19. 2. 3.

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this is the most outstanding difference, that although bees rise to such a pitch of anger that they leave their stings in the wound, yet the king alone has no sting. Nature did not want him to be cruel and seek vengeance appropriate to a great personage, and so she withheld his weapon and left his wrath ineffectual. This should be a great pattern for mighty kings. [L 574] If you want a comparison for the tyrant, take the lion, bear, wolf, or eagle, all of which live on their mangled prey. Since they know they are open to the hatred of everyone and are beset with ambuscades all around them, they dwell on rugged cliffs, or hide away in caverns and desolate regions - unless perchance the tyrant exceeds the savageness even of these beasts. [B 443] Huge snakes, panthers, lions, and all the other beasts that are condemned on the charge of savageness do not rage one against the other, but beasts of like characteristics are safe together. But the tyrant, who is a man, turns his bestial cruelty against his fellow men and fellow citizens. In the Holy Scriptures/76 God described the tyrant in these words:

This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectioneries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day.

And do not be exercised because he calls him "king" instead of "tyrant," for of old the title of "king" was as hateful as that of "tyrant." And since there is no greater benefit than a good king, why did God in his anger order this image to be set

761 Sam. 8:11-18.

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up before the people, by which he might deter them from seeking a king? He said the power of kings (ius regium) was the power of tyrants (ius tyrannicum). Yet Samuel had been a good king and governed his people's affairs justly and honestly for many years; but they did not realize their happiness, and, as is the way of people, begged their king to rule with arrogance and violence. And
yet in this image what a large part consists of the evils which within our memory we have discovered even in some Christian princes, to the great misfortune of the whole world!

Now we come to the description of a good prince, which God himself gives in the book of Deuteronomy. 77 When a king is established over you,

he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: . . . Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

If a Hebrew king is bidden to learn the law, which gave but the merest shadowy outlines of justice, how much more is it fitting for a Christian prince to follow steadfastly the teachings of the Gospels? If He does not wish the king of Judea to be exalted over his people, but wishes to call them brothers instead of slaves, how much less does it become a Christian [prince] to call them slaves whom Christ himself, the Prince of princes, called brothers?

Now this is what Ezekiel 78 says of a tyrant: "[Her] princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood." Plato 79 calls princes the guardians of the state, in that they may be for their country what dogs are for the

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flocks; but if the dogs should be turned into wolves what hope would there be for the flocks.
Again, in another place 80 he calls a cruel and rapacious prince a "lion," and in still another 81 he inveighs against shepherds who are taking good care of themselves, instead of giving attention to their flocks, and believes that they are like princes who use their power for themselves alone. 82 And in reference to Nero, Paul 82 said, "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." Now see how Solomon, 83 in his wisdom, pictured a tyrant with almost the same idea in mind: "As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people." And in another passage he says, "When the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" as if surrendered to slavery. In still another, "When the wicked rise, men hide themselves." There is another in "Isaiah," 84 according to which the Lord is angry at the misdeeds of the people and threatens them, saying, "And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them." Can this mean, anything else than that no more dire calamity can befall a country than a stupid and impious prince?

But why go on with all this? Christ himself, who is the one Prince and Lord of all, has most clearly set off the Christian prince from the pagan, saying, 85 "The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you." If it is the part of pagan princes to exercise dominion, it does not then become Christian princes. But what is the meaning of this phrase "but it shall not be so among you," unless that the same thing is not proper for Christians, with whom the principate is [only a matter of]
administration, not imperial power, and kingly authority is [a matter of] service, not tyranny./86 And no prince should ease his conscience by saying, "These things are for the bishops, not for me!" They surely are for you - if you are really a Christian. If you are not, nothing pertains to you! And do not get excited if perchance you find


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some bishops that have fallen far from this standard. Let them see to what they are doing. Give your attention to what is becoming in yourself. [B 444] Do not consider yourself a good prince, just because you appear less wicked by comparison with others. And do not think it is correct to do a thing, just because the great run of princes do it. Hold yourself of your own accord to a rule of honor and judge yourself according to it./87 Even if there be no one for you to surpass, strive against yourself, for surely there is no emulation more honorable or truly worthy of an unconquered prince than a daily effort to be better. If the name, or better, the principles, of a tyrant are repulsive, they will not become more honorable if they are made common to many. If virtue depends on worldly condition, then it does not depend on [the qualities of individual] men. Seneca+ has expounded impressively that kings who have the inclination of brigands and pirates should be put in the same class with them. For it is the character, not the title, that marks the king.

In his Politics Aristotle/88 tells us that in some oligarchies it was customary for the magistrates-elect to take the following oath, "I will persecute the common people with hatred and will strive with all my power to bring trouble upon them." A prince about to assume his functions takes quite a different oath before his subjects. And yet we hear of some who have acted toward the people as if sworn by the old oath of the barbarians to be the open enemy of the affairs of the people in every way. Surely this savors of tyranny: the best thing for the prince, is the worst thing for the people; the good fortune of the one springs from the misfortunes of the other - just as if a paterfamilias ran his affairs so that he would become richer and more powerful through the ill fortunes of his family. Whoever wants to claim the title "prince" for himself and to shun the hated name "tyrant," ought to claim it for himself, not through deeds of horror and threats, but by acts of kindness. For it is of no significance if he is called "prince" and

----- 87 Ibid. 88 Pol. V. 9.

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"father of his Country" by flatterers+ and the oppressed, when he is a tyrant in fact. And even if his own age fawns upon him, posterity will not. You can see with what colossal disgust succeeding generations treated the wicked deeds of those once awe-inspiring kings, whom no one dared offend by even a word during their lifetime, and how openly their very names were abominated. The good prince ought to have the same attitude toward his subjects, as a good paterfamilias toward his household - for what else is a kingdom but a great family? What is the king if not the father+ to a great multitude? He is superior, but yet of the same stock - a man ruling man, a freeman over free men, not untamed beasts, as Aristotle justly comments./89 and this is what those poets" of remotest
antiquity meant when they applied to Jupiter—to whom they assign supreme authority of the whole
world and the gods, as they say—these words, pere des hommes et des dieux," that is, "father of
gods and men." We have been taught by Christ our teacher that God is the unquestioned prince of
all the world, and we call Him "Father." But what is more revolting or accursed than that
appellation in Homer?/I92 monstre devorant ses sujets [i.e., the devourer of his people],/I93 which
Achilles, [L 576] I think it is, applied to the prince who ruled for his own benefit, not for that of his
subjects, for in his wrath he could find no more fitting epithet for him whom he considered unfit
for rule than "man-eater." But Homer, in giving a man the honorary title of "king," calls him the
tasteur de peuple."94 "shepherd of the people."/I95 There is a very great difference between a
shepherd and a robber. On what apparent ground, then, do they take the title "prince" to
themselves, who choose just a few of their subjects (and those only the most wicked) through
whom by trickery, trumped-up pretexts, and suddenly-created titles, they sap the strength of the
people and drain their wealth away at the same time?

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89 Pol. I. 5. 90 Homer Iliad XV. 47. 91 The original reads naT@Q eLv8QCoTF OEc0-nc. 92
Ibid., I. 231. 93 The original reads 81111006QOg Oa(ILXE6g. 94 The original reads notitav
XcLCov. 95 Ibid., I. 263.

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What they have unmercifully extorted they transfer to their privy purse, or squander shamefully on
pleasures, or spend in cruel wars. Each one that can appear as the cleverest knave in these matters,
considers it of prime importance, just as if the prince were the enemy of the people, not the father,
with the result that he especially seems to have the prince's concern at heart who bends every effort
to thwart the prosperity of the people. As a paterfamilias thinks whatever increase of wealth has
fallen to any of his house is [the same as if it had been] added to his own private goods, so he who
has the true attitude of a prince considers the possessions of his subjects to represent his own
wealth. Them he holds bound over to him through love, so that they have nothing to fear at all
from the prince for either their lives or their possessions.

It will be worth our while to see how Julius Pollux, I96 who had been the boyhood tutor of
Commodus, described to him the king and the tyrant. He at once ranked the king next to the gods,
as being nearest and most like them. [B 445] Then he said:

Praise the king with these terms: [call him] "Father," {virtue list+} mild, peaceful, lenient,
foresighted, just, humane, magnanimous, frank. Say that he is no money-grabber nor a slave to his
passions; that he controls himself and his pleasures; that he is rational, has keen judgment, is clear
thinking and circumspect; that he is sound in his advice, just, sensible, mindful of religious
matters, with a thought to the affairs of men; that he is reliable, steadfast, infallible, planning great
things, endowed with influential judgment; that he works hard, accomplishes much, is deeply
concerned for those over whom he rules and is their protector; that he is given to acts of kindness
and slowly moved to vengeance; that he is true, constant, unbending, prone to the side of justice,
ever attentive to remarks about the prince; that he is a check-and-balance on conduct; that he is
readily accessible, affable+ in a gathering, agreeable to any who want to speak with him,
charming, and open-countenanced; that he concerns himself for those subject to his rule and is
fond of his soldiers; {Henv+} that he wages war with force and vigor, but does not seek
opportunities for it; that he loves peace, tries to arrange peace, and holds steadily to it; that he is
opposed to changing forcibly the ways of his people; that he knows how to be a leader and a prince and to establish beneficial laws; that he is born to attain honors and has the appearance of a god. There

96 Onomasticon I. 40-42.

A wicked prince you will censure with the following epithets: tyrant, cruel, savage, violent, property-snatcher, miserly (as Plato says), arrogant, proud, exclusive, unsocial, difficult of approach, unpleasant to speak to, hot tempered, irritable, frightful, raging, slave-to-passion, intemperate, immoderate, inconsiderate, inhuman, unjust, regardless of counsel, unfair, wicked, brainless, carefree, fickle, easily taken in, disagreeable, fierce, moody, incorrigible, abusive, instigator of wars, severe, a scourge, untractable, intolerable.

Since God is the very opposite of a tyrant, so it must follow unfailingly that there is nothing more loathsome to Him than a baneful king. Since no wild beast is more deadly than a tyrant, it consistently follows that there is nothing more odious to all mankind than a wicked prince. But who would want to live hated and accursed by gods and men alike? When the Emperor Augustus realized that there were many conspiracies against his life and that as soon as one was put down another straightway sprang up, he said it was not worth while to live if you were a bane to everyone and your personal safety was preserved only at the great cost of life among your subjects. Furthermore, the kingdom is not only more peaceful and pleasant but will steadfastly endure for a longer time.

97 Erasmus gives this passage, a direct quotation, in the original Greek. At the end of it he says, "Although the Latin language cannot render these phrases handsomely because of the peculiar quality of Greek, yet we will at least turn them into something which can be understood," and then he repeats the thought verbatim in Latin. It seemed to me far better to risk the charge of inconsistency by not turning this and the following quotation into French, as has been done with all other Greek passages, than to incur that of pedantry by doing so.

98 Xenophon Memorabilia 1. 2. 5. 99 Iliad I. 231. 100 Erasmus likewise gives this direct quotation in the Greek and repeats it verbatim in Latin with the introductory comment, "Of which words the following is approximately the thought." 191 Cf. Seneca De clementia I. 9. 5.
dissolution. It is meet for him who is feared by all, to fear many; ... and he cannot be safe, whom the majority of men want removed. {Off+ II.23}  

In ancient times, those who ruled their empires well were decreed divine honors. Toward tyrants the ancients had the same law which we now apply to wolves and bears - the "reward" comes from the people who have had the enemy in their very midst. In very early times, the kings were selected through the choice of the people because of their outstanding qualities, which were called "heroic" as being all but divine and superhuman. Princes should remember their beginnings, and realize that they are not really princes if they lack that quality which first made princes.  

Although there are many types of state, it is the consensus of nearly all wise-thinking men that the best form is monarchy. This is according to the example of God that the sum of all things be placed in one individual but in such a way that, following God's example, he surpasses all others in his wisdom and goodness and, wanting nothing, may desire only to help his state. [B 446] But if conditions were otherwise, that would be the worst form of state. Whosoever would fight it then would be the best man. If a prince be found who is complete in all good qualities, then pure and absolute monarchy is the thing. (If that could only be! I fear it is too great a thing even to hope for.) If an average prince (as the affairs of men go now) is found, it will be better to have a limited monarchy checked and lessened by aristocracy and democracy. Then there is no chance for tyranny to creep in, but just as the elements balance each other, so will the state hold together under similar control. If a prince has the interests of the state at heart, his power is not checked on this account, so it will be adjudged, but rather helped. If his attitude is otherwise, however, it is expedient that the state break and turn aside the violence of a single man.  

Although there are many types of authority (man over beasts, master over slaves, father over children, husband over wife), yet Aristotle/105 believes that the rule of the king is finest of all and calls it especially favored of the gods because it seems to possess a certain something which is greater than mortal. But if it is divine to play the part of king, then nothing more suits the tyrant than to follow the ways of him who is most unlike God. A slave should be judged for his worth in comparison with a fellow slave, as the proverb/106 says, a master with a master, one art with another art, one performance of duty with another. [L 578] But a prince should excel in every kind of wisdom. That is the theory behind good government. It is the part of the master to order, of the servant to obey. The tyrant directs whatever suits his pleasure; the prince only what he thinks is best for the state. But how can anyone who does not know what is best direct it [to be done]? Or even worse, if he considers the wickedest things the most desirable, being utterly misled by his ignorance or personal feelings? As it is the function of the eye to see, of the ears to hear, of the nose to smell, so it is the part of the prince to look out for the affairs of his people. But there is only one means of deliberating on a question, and that is wisdom. If the prince lacks that, he can no more be of material assistance to the state than an eye can see when sight is destroyed.  

Xenophon,/108 in his book called Oeconomicus, said that it is a divine rather than a human position to rule over free men at their own consent, but it is dishonorable to rule over dumb creatures, or slaves that are under compulsion. But man is a divinely-inspired animal, and free
twice over: once by nature and again by his laws. (justice+) It is the mark of the highest capacity and clearly of God's inspiration for a king to control his authority in such a way that his people feel only the benefits, not


their subservient condition. Be careful not to consider as yours only those men whose services you employ in your cookshops, in your hunting, and in your domestic services, for very often no men are less yours, but consider all your subjects yours without distinction. If you single out any one at all, take a man of sterling qualities, patriotic and devoted to the state, as your nearest and closest associate. When you travel through the cities of your people, do not harbor such thoughts as these in your mind: "I am the master of these great possessions. All these places are subject to my will. I may do as I please here." But if you want to give some thought [to the occasion], as a good prince should, do so along these lines: "Everything has been placed in my trust; therefore, I must unceasingly strive to hand it over better than I received it." When you look upon the countless throng of your subjects, be careful not to think of them as so many slaves. Hold rather this thought: "These thousands of souls depend on my sincerity alone; they have entrusted themselves and the protection of all their worldly goods to me alone; they look upon me as a father. I can do good to these great numbers if I prove myself a good prince. I will bring harm upon even more if I am a bad prince. I must certainly exercise great care not to be unjust, lest I bring tribulation upon such vast numbers." Never forget that "dominion," "imperial authority," "kingdom," "majesty," "power" are all pagan terms, not Christian. The ruling power of a Christian state consists only of administration, kindness, and protection. But if these words were to your liking, remember this idea also, which was known and handed down by the pagan philosophers, that the rule of a prince over his people is no different from that of the mind over the body. The mind dominates the body because it knows more than the physical body, but it does so to the great advantage of the latter rather than to itself./109 The blessed fortune+ of the physical form is this rule of the mind. What the heart is in the body of a living creature,


that the prince is in the state. If the heart is sound, it imparts life to the whole body, since it is the fountain of the blood and life spirit; but if it has been infected, it brings utter collapse to every part of the body. The heart is the last part of a living body to be broken down, and the very last traces of life are thought to survive in it. Consequently the prince should keep himself clean and undefiled from all corrupting folly whenever any such disease lays hold of the people. In a man it is the finely organized part (namely, the mind) that exercises the control. Likewise, in the mind it is its finest element, reason+, that asserts itself. And God, who rules the universe, is the very
essence of all things. Therefore, whosoever assumes the functions of rule in a state, as in a sort of
great body, should excel all others in goodness, wisdom, and watchfulness. The prince should be
superior to his officers in the same degree that they are to the common people. [B 447] If there is
any evil in the mind it springs from infection, and contact with the body, which is subject to the
passions. Any good that the body possesses is drawn from the mind as from a fountain. How
unbelievable it would be and how contrary to nature, if ills should spread from the mind down into
the body, and the health of the body be corrupted by the vicious habits of the mind. It would be
just as absurd for wars, seditious uprisings, profligate morals, debased laws, corrupt officials, and
every similar curse to a state, to spring from the prince whose wisdom should lay the storms stirred
up by the folly of the common folk. But we often see states (civitates)/110 well established and
flourishing under the diligent activity of the people, overthrown by mismanagement of the princes.
How unlike a Christian it is to take pleasure in the title "Master," which many who were not in the
fold of Christ have shunned; that which in their ambition they desire to be but do not want to be
called because of the odium attached to the name. Yet will a Christian prince think it just in the
eyes of God for him to be the same [sort of man] and be called "The Magnificent?" The emperor
Augustus, even though he had gained the im 110 The translation "cities" is also possible here.

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perial throne through foul intrigue, considered it an insult to be called "Master;" and when this title
was used by an actor before all the people, he showed his disapproval by his facial expression and
his remarks, as if it were a term of reproach applied to tyrants./111 And shall the Christian prince
not imitate this propriety of the pagan? If you are master of all your subjects, they must of
necessity be your slaves. Then have a care that you do not fulfill the ancient proverb:/112 "You
have as many enemies as you have slaves." Nature created all men equal, and slavery was
superimposed on nature, which fact the laws of even the pagans recognized. Now stop and think
how out of proportion it is for a Christian to usurp full power over other Christians, whom the laws
did not design to be slaves, and whom Christ redeemed from all slavery. Recall the instance when
Paul/113 called Onesimus (who was born a slave) the brother of his former master Philemon, from
the time of his baptism. How incongruous it is to consider them slaves whom Christ redeemed with
the same blood [as He did you]; whom He declared free along with all others; whom He fostered
with the same sacraments as He did you; whom He calls to the same heritage of immortality! And
over them, who have the same Master as you, the Prince, Jesus Christ, will you impose the yoke of
slavery?

There is only one Master of Christian men./114 Why, then, do those who assume His functions,
prefer to take their pattern of government from anyone except Him, who alone is in all ways to be
imitated? It is proper enough to gather from others whatever virtues they have; but in Him is the
perfect example of all virtue and wisdom. This seems the [essence of] foolishness to those outside
the faith, but to us, if we are really faithful, He is the goodness of God and the wisdom of God.
Now I do not want you to think that this means that

XLVII. 5; Quintus Curtius Rufus VII. S. 28; and Festus, s. v. quot. 113 Col. 4:9. 114 Cf. Matt.
23:10.
you should be a slave, not a ruler. On the contrary, it illustrates the finest way to rule, unless, of
course, you think God is only a bondsman because He governs the whole universe without
recompense, because everyone and everything has felt His kindness, although they give Him
nothing in return, and unless the mind seems a slave because it looks out so zealously for the
welfare of the body, which it does not need, or unless you think the eye is a slave to all the other
parts of the body because it sees for them all. You may well consider this: if someone should turn
all these men whom you call your own into swine and asses by the art of Circe, would you not say
your ruling power had been reduced to a lower level? I think you would. And yet you may exercise
more authority over swine and asses than over men. You may treat them as you please, divide
tem off as you will, and even kill them. Surely he who has reduced his free subjects to slaves has
put his power on a meaner level. The loftier the ideal to which you fashion your authority, the
more magnificently and splendidly will you rule. Whoever protects the liberty and standing of your
subjects is the one that helps your sovereign power. God gave the angels and men free will so that
He would not be ruling over bondsmen, and so that He might glorify and add further grandeur to
His kingdom. And who, now, would swell with pride because he rules over men cowed down by
fear, like so many cattle? Do not overlook the words of the Gospels or of the writings of the
Apostles on the toleration of a master, on obeying the prefects, on honoring kings, and on paying
tributes. These must have been directed to pagan princes because at that time there were no
Christian princes. The people are bidden to endure worthless magistrates, so as not to disrupt the
order of the state, provided that they perform their duties and do not give orders that are opposed to
God. If the pagan prince demands honor, Paul bids him be honored; if he demands that taxes
be paid, Paul desires the taxes to be paid; if he demands tribute, Paul orders the tribute paid. For a
Christian


is not lowered by such acts, and the princes have certain peculiar rights and are not to be angered
just because there is an opportunity. But what does he add about Christians? Do not owe
anything to one another unless it be in such a way that you may still love one another. Surely you
do not believe that Christ really owed tribute to Caesar just because He is said to have paid him a
didrachma! According to the Gospel, when He was treacherously asked whether a
people which had been dedicated to God should pay tribute to Caesar, He bade them bring Him a
coin. He did not recognize it, and as if He did not know, He asked: "Whose is this image and
superscription?" When they told Him it was Caesar's, He gave His ambiguous answer to
those who were tempting Him in their wickedness: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which
are Caesar's; and unto God, the things that are God's." Thus He outwitted them in their treacherous
questioning and took the opportunity of calling all to devotion to God, to whom we owe
everything. This is really what He meant: "You see what you owe to Caesar, whom I do not know;
see rather what you owe to God. It is His work I am carrying out, not Caesar's." I hope that my
remarks have not caused any such questions as this to arise in the minds of anyone: "Why do you
deprive the prince of his own rights, and grant more to a pagan than to a Christian?" That is not so.
I defend the rights of the Christian prince. To subject his people through fear, to make them
perform servile tasks, to drive them from their possessions, despoil them of their goods, and finally, even to martyr them - those are the rights of a pagan prince. You certainly do not want the same things in a Christian, do you? Or will his rights seem diminished if these same privileges are not allowed him?

He does not lose his prerogatives, who rules as a Christian should; he has them in a different way and is as much more distinguished as he is safe. The following arguments will make that clear. First, those are not really yours whom you oppress in slavery, for common agreement makes princes. But they are 116 Rom. 13.8. 117 Matt. 22:17-22.

really yours who yield obedience to you willingly and of their own accord. Secondly, when you hold people bound to you through fear, you do not possess them even half. You have their physical bodies, but their spirits are estranged from you. But when Christian love unites the people and their prince, then everything is yours that your position demands, for a good prince does not demand anything for which service to his country does not call. On the other hand, when he uses the authority of a master instead of kindness, however much he may exact certainly he has less than if he had everything. No one gets more than he who makes no levies but gets everything as his just due. According to these standards, the honor which is shown a tyrant is no honor at all but either flattery or dissembling; and he gets no obedience, but slavish compliance. His is not real splendor, but only arrogance. He does not possess authority, but only force. All these things in their true form are possessed by the really Christian prince. No one gets more honor than the man who does not exact it. To no one are men more willingly obedient than to him who does not seek such attention. To no one do they more willingly pour out their wealth than to him whom they know will expend it for the development of the state and return it with interest.

There is a common relation between the prince and the people. To you the people owe money, allegiance, and honor. That is all very well; but you in turn owe the people a good and careful prince. Before you exact taxes from your subjects as your due, question yourself first whether you have fulfilled your obligation and duties toward them. Aristotle/118 says clearly that the theory of supreme authority is not in the possession, but rather in the use of slaves. Very well; but much less does the principate consist of titles and statues and the collection of moneys than in giving thought for others.

Since the state is a sort of body, composed of various members including the prince himself, it befits him, although different [from the others], to use moderation so that things will go well for everyone and not [to act] in such a way that when

118 Pol. I. 7.

all others have been reduced to weakness, one or two healthy and strong members may be developed. But if the prince rejoices in, and is supported by, evils he is not part of the state. He is no prince; he is a brigand.

Aristotle/119 says that the slave is a living part of the master if the latter is the right kind of master. At any rate there is a friendly relationship of the part and the whole and a mutual need each
for the other. If this is true between a master and a slave bought at the block, as they say, how much more true should it be between a Christian who is of poor birth and a Christian prince? As for the prince who can think of nothing else and do nothing else except to extort as much money as possible from his subjects, to see how much more he can gather in by his laws and for how much he can sell his magistracies and offices - is he really to be called a prince, or should he be called a business agent, or, to speak more to the point, a robber?

When Croesus saw the soldiers of Cyrus running madly and with wild tumult through the captured city, he asked what they were doing. When told by Cyrus that they were following the custom of the victorious army and were plundering the goods of the people, he said, "What is this I hear? Do not all these things belong to you who have conquered me? Why, then, are your men despoiling your own possessions?" Acting on this thought, Cyrus checked his soldiers in their plundering. It will be well for the prince to keep this same idea in mind [and say to himself], "Those things which are being extorted, are really mine. Those people who are being despoiled and weakened are really my subjects. Whatever sins I commit against them, I commit against myself." See that you conduct your rule so that you may readily give account of your acts. You should be more exacting of yourself if no one else is going to call you to account, for it will shortly happen that He will demand account of you. With Him the only effect of your being a prince will be [the fact] that you will be judged more severely in proportion to the great power entrusted to you.{onus+}


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Even if you were monarch of the whole world, you could not deceive this judge, nor escape Him, nor frighten Him, nor bribe Him.

After you have once dedicated yourself to the state, you are no longer free to live according to your own ways. {onus+} You must keep up and preserve the character which you have assumed. No one enters the Olympic games without first considering what the rules of the contest demand. [B 449] And he does not complain that the sun is bothersome, or the dust, or the perspiration, or any of the other things of this sort. All these are included in the general conditions of the sport. Likewise the man who undertakes to rule should first consider what the position of prince demands. He must give his thought to the best advantage of others and neglect his personal interests. He must always be alert so that others may sleep. {Seneca+} {onus+} He must toil so that others may rest. He must exhibit the highest moral integrity, while in others a general appearance of uprightness is enough. His mind must be divested of all private emotions. He who is carrying on the offices of the state must give his attention to nothing but that. He must perform kindnesses even to those who are ungrateful, to those who do not understand, and to those who are opposed. If these conditions are not to your liking, why do you desire the burden of ruling? Or if you inherited this authority, why do you not yield it to another? But if this is not possible, at least put the actual execution of the duties in the hands of some one who meets the requirements you should have.

A philosopher/121 among the Greeks very wisely said that the best things are the difficult ones. Accordingly you should remember that it is alike the honorable and the most difficult thing to stand out as a good prince. And do not be concerned if at this time you see some princes living in such a way that it would be harder to be an average paterfamilias than a prince of that sort. The old
proverb/122 is by no means without foundation: "He ought to have been born either a king or a

121 Plutarch Training of Children 9; cf. also Plato Rep. VI. 497. 122 Quoted in Seneca
Apocotocyntosis i.

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fool." All other men take great pains to get previous knowledge of the profession which they follow. How much more care should the prince take to get an early knowledge of the theory of government! Other arts are developed from four main essentials: inherent nature, instruction, precedent, and experience. Plato/123 demands a quiet and mild nature in a prince. He says that men of sharp and excitable nature are suited to a military career, but they are entirely unfit for governing. There are certain moral defects of nature which can be corrected by training and care. But it is conceivable to find a character either so dull, or else so wild and untractable, that it would be a fruitless task for anyone to attempt to develop it. The character of Nero was so corrupt that even Seneca+, who was a most august and remarkable teacher, could not prevent him from becoming the most ruinous of princes. As we have already said, sound doctrines suitable to a prince should be implanted at once. It was to this same end that Plato/124 wanted his guardians to take up dialectic at a late period, for that subject deals with every sort of question and tends to shape one's opinions with regard to true virtue and the dishonorable. The model in government is to be taken from God himself and from Christ who was both God and man. From His teachings there are many principles to be gathered. Trial practice, which is the last resort, is not a safe thing in the case of a prince. It is not a matter of great consequence if a young man who wants to be a great lute-player breaks several instruments [in his practice]. But it would be a serious matter for the state to be ruined while the prince is learning. Let the prince be accustomed from boyhood to attend at consultations, [Hal+] attend trials, to be present at the creation of magistrates, and hear the demands of kings [L 582]. But he should be instructed first so that he may better judge [of what is taking place]. He should not be allowed to make any decisions unless they are approved by the judgment of many men, until his age and experience have provided him with a more trustworthy judgment.

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123 Rep. VIII. 547,48; see also ibid., III. 410; VI. 503. 124 Rep. VII. 539; cf. Laws VII. 808.

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If Homer/125 was right when he said that the prince, to whom so many thousand souls and so many burdensome tasks are entrusted, should not sleep through the whole night, and Vergil/126. was not erring in judgment when he made his Aeneas the character that he did, whence, I ask you, does the prince get the leisure time to remain secluded for whole days, to waste the greatest part of his life in playing at dice, in dancing, in hunting, in associating with utter fools, and in [other forms of] idle nonsense, even more frivolous than these? The state is overthrown by party factions and sorely tried with wars; robbery is rife everywhere; the poor people are driven to starvation and the gallows through unrestrained despoliation [of their goods]; the weak are downtrodden by the iniquitous nobility; the civil officers are corrupt and do whatever they please, not what is according to law. [Hal+] In the midst of all this, as if he had no cares in the world, does the prince have time
for gaming?

The man at the wheel cannot be a sleepy-headed fellow. Can the prince in such times of danger snore [soundly on]? No sea ever has such dreaded storms+ as constantly beset every kingdom. So it is that the prince must ever be on his guard against any mistake at all, for he cannot make an error without great loss to many people.

The size of his ship, the value of his cargo, the number of his passengers does not make the good master merely swell with pride, but it makes him all the more concerned in his responsibility. So it is with a good king; the more people he rules over, the more watchful he should be, not the more arrogant. {onus+} If you will only think of the great task you have undertaken, you will never be at a loss for something to do. If you are accustomed to take your pleasure in the progress of your people, you will never be at a loss for a source of enjoyment. In this way there is no chance for ennui to trick the good prince with the gay pleasures of leisure.

A prince should first be taught that principle which has been given to the wisest men: Choose the best plan of life, not the

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125 Iliad V. 490. 120 Aeneid I. 305.

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pleasantest. Continued habit finally makes these best principles the most delightful. The painter gets pleasure from a picture beautifully executed [B 450]. The farmer, the truck gardener, the smith, all get pleasure from their work. What should bring more enjoyment to the prince than the contemplation of his country, improved and more flourishing as a result of his efforts? No one can deny that it is an onerous task [to try] to be a good prince; but it is far more troublesome to be a really wicked one. There is far less for the man who follows the course of nature and of honor to do, than for him who owes his existence to trickery and deceits./127 {Shylock+} If you are a real prince, it will be most unusual if you do not feel a great source of pride in your heart when you recall in your mind how, in one instance, a war was wisely avoided; in another, how an uprising was effectively suppressed, {Hal+} and with very little bloodshed; and again, the election of some particular man to office; and finally, your own conscious plans for the state and your own name. This sort of pleasure becomes a Christian prince./128 Store up the basis of it for yourself by acts of goodness every day. Leave those empty pleasures of the common folk to the rabble.

Solomon/129 was praised by all because at a time when he was free to ask whatever he wanted and would have instantly received whatever he asked for, he did not ask for great wealth, nor world empire, nor the destruction of his enemies, nor great honor and fame, nor worldly pleasures, but he asked for wisdom. And not just an indifferent sort of wisdom either, but such as he could use to govern with credit the kingdom which had been entrusted to him. Just the opposite is true of Midas, who is condemned by everyone because nothing was more precious to him than gold. But why should we have one judgment for facts of history and another for actual life? We pray that our prince will have good fortune+, and victories, and glory+, and long life, and riches. If we really are devoted to our prince, why do we not ask for that one thing which Solomon asked for? And do not think his request was ill

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advised. He was praised by God because of it. Why should we say that that quality which alone is important has nothing to do with the matter? Yet there are plenty who believe that this one thing alone, wisdom of the prince, is a stumbling block to actual rule. They say that a vigorous spirit weakens and becomes faint hearted. But it is only rashness, not boldness, only foolishness, not alertness, to have no fear for that which you consider nothing. The firm resolution of the prince must be sought from other sources. Young men very often take a chance after this fashion, but even more do those who act in a fit of anger. A sense of fear is an advantageous quality which points out danger, teaches one to avoid it, and restrains one from wicked and pernicious ways. The one man who has to look out for everyone must especially examine things. Whoever has to plan for everyone and everything must have an especial store of wisdom. What God is in the universe, what the sun is in the world, what the eye is in the body, that the prince should be in his state.

Those wise men of old who used to employ hieroglyphs and to throw a shadowy veil over the scheme of life with their symbolism, used to depict a king in this fashion: they added a scepter to the eye, symbolizing an upright life, a spirit that cannot be turned by any conditions from right, and inherently connected with prudence and the essence of watchfulness. Some represent the king’s scepter in this fashion: on the top is a stork, the symbol of devotion, and on the other end is that wild and dreadful creature, the hippopotamus. This means that if any fierce passions, such as wrath, vengefulness, greediness, and violence rage within the prince, devotion to his country will overcome and suppress these emotions. License, born of good fortune, and worldly success lead to insolent arrogance, but patriotism should be stronger. According to Plutarch the ancient Thebans used to have certain seated figures without hands among their sacred images. The first of these also was without eyes. The fact that they are seated means that magistrates and judges ought to be of a stable character not disturbed by any personal emotions. Their lack of hands clearly means that they should be pure and free from all corrupting bribes. The prince without eyes means that the [true] king is not to be led astray from the course of honor by bribes; is not to be affected by regard for someone else; but is only to learn from what he hears. There is more along this line. The prince should learn to philosophize about those very decorations with which he is adorned. What does the anointing of the king mean, unless the greatest mildness of spirit? What significance has the crown on his head, if not wisdom that is absolute? What is the meaning of the collar of plaited gold around his neck, except the union and harmony of all virtues? What is symbolized by the bright rays of gems shining with many colors, if not the highest degree of virtue and that whatever is honorable ought to be found in a special degree in the prince? What does the rich purple mean, except an ardent love toward his subjects? What do his various decorations mean, except that he should either equal or exceed the glorious deeds of his ancestors? What is the significance of the sword that is carried before him, unless that his country ought to be safe under the protection of this man, safe both from outside enemies and those within?

The first duty of a good prince is to desire the best things possible. The second duty, to see by
what means all things that are evil can be avoided or removed; and on the other hand, how good conditions can be gained, developed, and strengthened. In the case of a private citizen it is perhaps quite enough that he should have a good mind, since he is directed by the laws, and the public officials set forth what he shall do. But in the case of the prince, it is of little help that he shall have been endowed with a good mind that desires the best things if there is not also present wisdom which points the way to gain that which the prince desires. How little difference there is between a marble statue inscribed with the names of Croesus or Cyrus, magnificently set off with diadem and scepter, and a prince without a heart - unless you say that the senseless state of the one does no harm, while the latter's folly operates to the great misfortune of everyone. Judge yourself, not on your physical appearance or by your good fortune, but on the qualities of your spirit. Measure yourself, not by the commendations of others, but by the standard of your own deeds. Since you are a prince, do not admit of any commendations which are not worthy of a prince. If anyone speaks about your appearance, remember that women are praised after that fashion. If anyone praises your easy flowing speech, remember that such terms of commendation are applied to the sophists and rhetoricians. If anyone calls attention to your bodily strength and vigor, remember that that sort of praise is to be applied to athletes, not princes. If anyone extols your lofty station, this should be your thought: "He would praise me rightly if there were something to be taken from my high place." If there is someone who praises your wealth, remember that such praise is for the bankers. So far, while you have been listening to such laudatory remarks as the preceding, you have heard nothing that fits a prince.

What then is fitting praise for a prince? If he has eyes to the back as well as to the front (as Homer says, qui voit devant et derriere), that is, if he can look back on what has already happened and ahead to the future, thereby having the greatest knowledge possible, his wisdom will be used for the good of his country, not for himself. In no other way can his wisdom be turned to his own good than by using it for his country. If any one should praise a physician because he is handsome, wellbuilt, of good connections, possessed of plenty of money, and because he plays handsomely at dice, dances with skill, sings well, and plays a good game of ball, would you not immediately say to yourself: [L 158] "What has all this to do with a physician?" When you hear the same sort of thing from foolish eulogizers, there is even more reason for

133 Cf. Plutarch Discourse to an Unlearned Prince 2. 134 Iliad III. 109, 10. The original text of Erasmus reads Okijetov xQ6cFa(o xoti 6iticoo.

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you to say, "What has this to do with a prince?" There are three essentials that are sought in a physician. First, he must thoroughly know the practice of medicine, the relative powers of the body and of diseases, and the proper treatment of each malady. Secondly, he must be reliable, and have no interest other than the health of the patient, [although] some are moved by ambition or [lust for] wealth to administer a drug instead of a remedy. Thirdly, he must exercise all due care and diligence. For a prince, these same points are even far more important.
In his Politics, Aristotle/135 asks the question, "What does the average man demand in his prince?" Is it the figure of Nereus, or the strength of Milo, or the stature of Maximinus, or the wealth of Tantalus? No; it is none of these things. What is the answer then? He must have virtue in its highest and purest form and he must be content with a golden mean in his private affairs.

If you can be at the same time a prince and a good man, you will be discharging a handsome service. If you cannot, then yield the [chance to be] prince, rather than become a wicked man merely to enjoy it. It is quite possible to find a good man who would not make a good prince; but there can be no good prince who is not also a good man. Yet the ways of some princes have slipped back to such a point that the two ideas of "good man" and "prince" seem to be the very antitheses of one another. It is obviously considered foolish and ridiculous to mention [the idea of] a good man in speaking of a prince. But you cannot be a king unless reason completely controls you; that is, unless under all circumstances you follow [the course of] advice and judgment. You cannot rule over others, until you yourself have obeyed the course of honor./136 Those expressions of a tyrant, "Such is my will," "This is my bidding, "Let will replace reason," should be far removed from the mind of the prince. And far more that other one/137 which already has come into the open malediction of men,

135 Pol. III. 17; cf. ibid., I. 13. 136 Cf. Plato Laws VI. 762; Cicero Laws III. 2. 5. 137 Quoted in Seneca De clementia 1. 12. 4; Cicero De off. 1. 28. 97; et al.

"Let them hate, if only they fear." [Hal+] It is the mark of a tyrant and womanish, too - to follow the unbridled will of your mind; and fear is the poorest surety for a long duration of office. Let this be the permanent policy of the prince: to harass no one, to help everyone, especially his own subjects; to tolerate evils, or else to remedy them, as he will judge expedient for the common good. Whoever does not take this attitude toward the state is a tyrant, not a prince. If anyone would call you a tyrant and a robber, instead of a prince, would you not be greatly aroused and prepare severe penalties [for him]? You would, and rightly so, for insult is bitter and should not be borne under any condition. I wish you would think this over: "How much more abusive is that charge to one who is willingly the sort of man that he is charged with being." For it is a more serious matter to be a thief than to be called one, and it is more hideous to violate a maiden than to upbraid her for her sin.

If you want to be called just what you are, then see that you conduct yourself in such a manner that you enjoy an excellent reputation, and you will follow the surest road./138 For that is no true praise which is extorted through fear or is paid by flatterers. It is bad when the reputation of the prince and its protection lie in silence imposed through threats. Although your own age may maintain perfect silence, posterity will surely talk. Who was ever so formidable a tyrant that he could check the tongues of everyone? The first caution of a Christian prince must be exercised on the point upon which Seneca/139 has impressively discoursed. Among those who are called "king," there are found some who, by comparison with Phalaris, Dionysius, Polycrates (the very names of all of them have become an abomination in all ages) are unworthy even to be called "tyrants." It does not matter by what road, but it does matter to what end, you are tending. He who looks to the good of his people is a king; he who is concerned for himself is a tyrant. But now what terms shall we apply to
those who increase their own good fortune by the misfortunes of their country and are, in practice, robbers? Shall it be "prince," but falsely?

In his Laws Plato/140 forbade any one to name God as the cause of any evil, because by nature He is good and kind. [B 452] But the prince (if he is a real prince) is a sort of likeness of God./141 How inconsistent with this prototype are they who manage things in such a way that whatever evils spring up in the state arise from their misdeeds?

No attention should be given to any chance flatterer who says, "But that is only to reduce the station of the prince." On the contrary, he who wants to permit the prince what is not honorable is really lowering the prince! In what else does lowering a prince consist than in making him like the common run of men; to be a slave to anger, lust, ambition, avarice, and beholden to folly? {vice_list+} Would it be a shameful outrage and one not to be tolerated if that were not granted to a prince which is not granted God himself? God does not demand that He be allowed to act contrary to the course of propriety. But if He did, He would no longer be God! Consequently, whoever wants to grant the prince those things which will act contrary to the nature and reason of a prince despoils him of the honor of a prince and makes him one of the common throng. A prince should be unashamed to owe allegiance to honor, when God himself obeys it. And let him not think he is any less a prince if he approach the very image of the greatest Prince with his every effort.

Such seeds as all these should be sown in the young heart of the boy by his parents, his nurses, and his tutor in order to make him a prince. These principles he should learn willingly, not under compulsion. In this manner it is fit for a prince who

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140 Although Erasmus distinctly refers to the Laws here, I can find no passage in that work which compares to Rep. II. 380 which is a perfect parallel. It is quite possible that Erasmus was quoting from memory and confused the title. The thought of Laws X. 901 is only vaguely suggestive of his statement. Cf. also Plutarch According to the Doctrines of Epicurus 22. 141 This idea, already encountered, is found in several ancient writers (see above, chap. iii) and is very common in the medieval period (see above, chap. v).

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is to rule over free and willing subjects to be developed. Let him learn to love morality and loath dishonor; let him be restrained from shameful acts by a sense of shame, not of fear. Although there is some hope of a good prince to be found in changed ways and tempered passion, the main hope lies in sound ideas; for sometimes shame corrects wicked morals and maturer age or correction changes depraved desires. But when the argument is brought forth that that which is foreign to honor is joined with virtue and that that which is far more fitting a tyrant is an excellent function of a prince, that is, when the fountain from which all actions of life flow are polluted, then correction will be a very difficult matter. Therefore, in this matter of instruction, as has been said, the first and foremost care should be to see that all low ideas of the common folk are pulled out by the roots from within the prince's spirit, if by any chance they have gained root there, and that they are
replaced by salutary thoughts, worthy of a Christian prince.

**II. THE PRINCE MUST AVOID FLATTERERS**

But the objective [just mentioned above] cannot be accomplished, unless every means is used to stave off abject flatterers. To this malicious tribe the good fortune of great princes is especially exposed. The very innocence of the prince's age makes it vulnerable to attacks of this evil, partly because by natural inclination it takes more pleasure in blandishments than in truth, and partly because of inexperience. The less one suspects trickery, the less one knows how to avoid it. Let no one think that the evil of flatterers (being a sort of minor evil) should be passed over: the most flourishing empires of the greatest kings have been overthrown by the tongues of flatterers. Nowhere do we read of a state which has been oppressed under a great tyranny in which flatterers did not play the leading roles in the tragedy. Unless I am mistaken Diogenes had this clearly in mind. When asked what animal was the most dangerous of all, he said "If you mean among the wild beasts, I will say the tyrant; if among the tame ones, the flatterer." This pest has a pleasing sort of poison, but it is instantaneous, so that once demented by it, princes who were conquerors of the world allowed utterly worthless flatterers to sport with them and ride them roughly. Those abominable wretches of society, libertines and sometimes even slaves, dominated the masters of the world!

In the first place, care must be taken to have nurses that are either immune from this disease or else subject to it only in...

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1 Cf. Plutarch How to Distinguish between a Friend and a Flatterer 19, where the thought is attributed to Bias, another of the seven sages of Greece. Since Erasmus translated the particular essay of Plutarch in which this passage is found, he must have been familiar with it. The interchange of names, Diogenes and Bias, can easily be explained if Erasmus was quoting from memory, and this situation seems likely from the words "unless I am mistaken."

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[continued]
and threats and also to use rewards to urge them to discharge their office honorably. This will be greatly helped if anyone who is caught perverting the mind of the prince with biased talk and ignoble complaisance to those things which are unworthy of a prince, [B 453] would have publicly to suffer punishment (even death, if the crime should call for it) as an example to others. This should not seem cruel to anyone, since we inflict the death penalty (and that quite beyond the example of all the laws of the ancients) on a thief who has chanced to steal a few dollars. The supreme penalty should be paid by him who wishes to corrupt the best and most precious thing the country has. If the novelty of the idea presents an obstacle to its adoption (although the Roman emperor Alexander/2 ordered a vain boaster+ of Thurium bound to a stake, heaped about with green logs, and suffocated from their smoke) an example can be cleverly arranged in another way: if some one is convicted of any other capital offense, still

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Scriptores historiae Augustae, Alex. Sev. XXXVI. 2, 3.

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let him be punished on the charge of corrupting the mind of the future prince by malicious flattery. If one is going to weigh the relations of crimes in the matters of punishment, a malicious flatterer who corrupts and biases the early years of the prince's life with tyrannical ideas does more harm than one who plunders the public treasury. Whoever tampers with the coinage of the prince is visited with elaborate punishment; for those who corrupt the character of the prince there is almost a reward!

If only that statement of Carneades/3 were less true among us Christians! He said that the sons of kings could not properly learn anything except the art of horsemanship, because in all other matters everyone humored them and obsequiously agreed; but a horse+, Lear+ since he does not know whether his rider is a nobleman or a commoner, a rich man or a poor man, a prince or a subject, throws any unskilled rider who mounts him. Frequently we see it happen that not only the nurses and companions and ministers flatter the sons of princes, but even the tutor and preceptor of his youth who only wishes to gain further riches for himself, manages his duties without a thought to making a better prince. At no infrequent intervals do those who are assembled on holy matters speak graciously, seeking after the favor of princes and courtiers; and if they have any reproach to make, their correction is so phrased that even then they seem most flattering. I do not speak in this fashion because I believe approval should be given those who madly rage with turbulent clamors against the lives of princes, but because I desire the example of a good prince to be set forth by them without abuse, so that those matters which the pagans condemned in their pagan rulers should not be approved by flattering adulation in a Christian prince. I mean that magistrates do not frankly give their advice, and that the counselors do not amicably confer together. The nobility dissent from one another in their interests, and consequently they all zealously court the favor of the prince, but only to vanquish a rival or to give an enemy no chance for doing harm. [Lear+]

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3 Plutarch How to Distinguish between a Friend and a Flatterer 16.

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The priests flatter the prince, the physicians slavishly agree with him. Now and then to listen to
true words of praise from orators come from abroad is perfectly proper. There still remains one holy stay - and even that often fails. I refer to those whom the common folk call the "royal confessors." If they would be impartial and prudent, surely in that most intimate confidence they could help the prince with loving and frank advice. But it very often happens that while each one is watching out for his own interests he neglects the welfare of the state. Less harm is done by the poets and rhetoricians, to none of whom is unknown the scheme of measuring the praises of the princes not by the princes merits, but by their own genius. Far more dangerous is that group of magicians and soothsayers who promise long life, victories, triumphs, pleasures, and empires to some kings and again to others threaten sudden death, downfall, misfortune, and exile, thereby abusing the two principle tyrants of human life, hope and fear. To this class belong the astrologers who foretell the future from the stars. Whether they have any real skill or not, it is not for me to discuss here. As they now have a hold on the common people, they are causing no small trouble to humanity. [Lear+]

The most deadly of all flatterers are those who under a guise of candor assent, and by a wonderful artifice are able to urge one rigorously on while they are putting up a resistance, and to praise while scolding. Plutarch/4 has admirably depicted them in his little essay entitled How to Distinguish a Friend from a Flatterer.

There are two periods of life which are especially susceptible to flattery: extreme youth because of its inexperience, and old age because of its weakness. [Lear+] However, folly is found in every period and brings its handmaid, conceit. Plato/5 is right in his warning that the most dangerous type of flattery is flattery of one's self, which consequently makes one ready game for others who do just what he does of his own accord. There is a tacit sort of adulation in pictures, statues, and

4 Ibid., 18, 19. 5 Laws V. 731, 32.

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honorary titles. Apelles/6 flattered Alexander the Great in this manner by painting him hurling a thunderbolt; and Octavius took great pleasure in being painted in the likeness of Apollo./7 The same thing applies to those huge statues of colossal proportion, far greater than human size, which were formerly set up to the emperors. Perhaps this next point will seem trivial to some, but it really is of some consequence that artists should represent a prince in the dress and manner that befits a wise and serious prince. It is better to represent the prince as doing something in connection with state business, than as in a position of idleness; for example, [the statue of] Alexander holding his hand over one ear as he heard a case [tried before him] , [B 454] or that of Darius holding a pomegranate, or that of Scipio restoring to a youth his promised bride unharmed and rejecting the gold that had been offered. The princely halls should be adorned with wholesome pictures of the sort just suggested instead of those which inculcate wantonness, vain glory, or tyranny.

Now in the matter of titles I would not say that his due honor should not be shown the prince, but I should prefer the titles to be of the sort that would remind the prince of his duties; that is, I should prefer to have him called, "The Honorable," "The Incorruptible," "The Wise," "The Clement," "The Kind," "The Judicious," "The Watchful," "The Temperate," "The Zealous," rather than "The Exalted," "The invincible," "The Triumphant," "The Ever August," so as not to recount thereby exalted position, inviolate majesty, divinity, and even more flattering titles than these. I approve the custom by which they now call the Roman Pontiff "His Holiness," for by hearing this title constantly he is advised what qualities he should show and what is most becoming in him: not
great wealth or rule over a very wide domain, but distinction for his moral purity. But if the prince cannot avoid hearing these usual titles at times, even against his own desires, still he should not refrain from showing by what kind

6 Cf. Plutarch Alex. IV. 2. 7 Cf. Suetonius Aug. 70.

he is more pleased. Alexander Severus is said to have considered all flatterers distasteful to such a degree that if anyone saluted him in too humble a manner or bowed his head with too great a show of reverence, straightway he upbraided him with vehement reproach; or if the subject's position or office prevented open reproach, he was censured by a severe scowl. The boy should be instructed to turn to his own advantage those titles to which he is forced to listen. He hears himself called "Father of his Country": let him think that no title could ever be given to princes which more perfectly accords with the nature of a good prince than does that of "Father of his Country." He must then act in such a way as to appear worthy of that title. If he thinks of it in that way, it will be a warning; but if he takes it otherwise, it will be fawning adulation.

If the prince is called "The Unconquerable," let him think how ridiculous it is for one to be called unconquerable who is conquered by wrath, who daily is a slave to passion, and whom ambition pulls and leads as a captive whither she will. He is truly unconquerable who gives way to no passion and under no pretext can be deflected from the course of honor.

When the prince is referred to as "The Serene," let it occur to him that it is the duty of the prince to keep everything peaceful and composed. But if anyone disturbs and confuses the order of things through his ambitions or his anger, by seditions and the upheavals of wars, the title of "The Serene" does not add honor to him, [L 588] but mockingly flings his shortcomings hard at him.

When he is called "The Exalted," let him understand that there is no real honor except that which springs from virtue and good deeds. If anyone is defiled by license, contaminated by greed, sullied by ambition - what then is the title of "The Exalted," if not an admonition if he who has erred was an impudent man, or an open reproach, if the sinner should have known better? When the prince hears his various titles from the provinces, let him not immediately swell with conceit as if he were the absolute master of so many

8 Scriptores historiae Augustae, Alex. Sev. 18. i.
emperors. When they tell the prince that he is not bound by the laws, they yield themselves to him; when they ascribe to him power over everything, he must be careful not to think immediately that he may do anything that suits his fancy. To a good prince everything can be entrusted with safety; to a mediocre one, some things; to a bad one, nothing.

Demetrius Phalareus/9 wisely urges the reading of books, because the prince may frequently learn from them things which his friends would not dare to advise. But the prince must beforearmed with an antidote, after this fashion:/10 he whom you are reading is a pagan; you who are reading, are a Christian. Although he speaks with authority on many subjects, yet he by no means gives an accurate picture of the good prince. Look out that you do not chance upon something in his works which you think you must therefore imitate directly. Measure everything by the Christian standard.

The first matter is the selection of authors, for the sort of books the boy first reads and absorbs is of prime importance. Wicked conversations ruin the mind, and in no less a degree do wicked books. Those mute letters are transformed into manners and moods, especially if they come upon a native

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9 Plutarch Apophthegmata, s. v. Demetrius Phalareus. 10 Cf. Plutarch How a Young Man Ought to Hear Poetry 8.

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character that is prone to some weakness. A boy that is wild and impetuous by nature would easily be incited to tyranny, if without forewarning he should read about Achilles, Alexander the Great, Xerxes, or Julius Caesar. But today we see many a one taking delight in the tales of Arthur and Lancelot, and other tales of similar nature [B 455] which are not only about tyrants but are also very poorly done, stupid, and fit to be "old wives' tales," so that it would be more advisable to put in one's time reading the comedies or the legends of the poets instead of nonsense of that sort. But if any should desire to make use of my plan, as soon as the elements of language have been taught, he should set forth the Proverbs of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, and the Book of Wisdom, not with the idea that the boy may be tormented with the four senses (sensus) of the theologian/8 by a vaunting interpreter, but that he may fitly show in a few words whatever pertains to the functions of a good prince. First a love for the author and his work must be inculcated. You are destined to rule, he [the author] explains the art of ruling. You are the son of a king, yourself a future king you will hear what the wisest king of all teaches his own son, whom he is preparing to be his successor. Later take the Gospels. There the means by which the spirit of the boy is kindled with a love for the writer and his work is of great importance, for no small part will depend upon the cleverness and opportunism of the one interpreting, to explain briefly, clearly, plausibly, and vividly, not everything, but just those points which have most to do with the office of the prince and those that will cause [the young prince] to rid his mind of the undermining ideas common to the general run of princes. In the third place, read the Apophthegmata of Plutarch+ and then his Morals, for nothing can be found purer than these works. I should also prefer his Lives+ to those of anyone else. After Plutarch, I would readily assign the next place to Seneca+, whose writings are wonderfully stimulating and excite one to enthusiasm for [a life of] moral integrity, raise the mind of the reader from sordid cares, and especially decry tyranny everywhere. From the Politics of Aristotle and from the
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Offices/11 of Cicero many pasages that are worth knowing can well be culled out. But Plato+ is the most venerable source of such things - in my opinion at least. Cicero has followed him in part in his work The Laws; that entitled The Republic is lost.

Now I shall not deny that a great fund of wisdom may be gathered from reading the historians+, but you will also draw out the very essence of destruction from these same sources unless you are forearmed and read with discretion. Be on guard lest the names of writers and leaders celebrated by the approval of centuries deceive you. Herodotus+ and Xenophon+ were both pagans and often set forth the worst types of prince, even if they did write history, the one to give pleasure through his narrative, the other to show the picture of an exceptional leader. Sallust and Livy tell us many things very clearly and everything very learnedly to be sure, but they do not weigh all that they tell, and they approve some things which are by no means to be approved for a Christian prince. When you hear about Achilles+, Xerxes+, Cyrus+, Darius+, and JuliusCaesar+, do not be carried away and deluded by the great names. You are hearing about great raging robbers, for that is what Seneca/12 has called them on various occasions.

But yet, if you happen upon anything in these works that is worthy of a good prince, take care to rescue it as you would a jewel from a dung heap. There never was a tyrant so detestable that he did not do some things which, if they were not done in the cause of virtue, at least may be fitted to the example of such a quality. There are many things in the letters of Phalaris which are not unworthy of any excellent king, and his own creation reacted despotically enough on Perillus, the instigator of cruelty./13 Alexander+ did many things like a madman, but he acted honorably in keeping aloof from the captured women of Darius, and equally so when he ordered a woman -----

11 This erroneous translation of the title to Cicero's work De officiis (On Duty) is kept because of its established usage. 12 De ira III. 16. 3; ibid., II. 2. 3; ibid., III. 21. 1. I cannot find a specific passage on Julius Caesar; Gaius Caesar (Caligula) is mentioned in a context fitting our reference in De ira III. 19. 13 Cf. Plutarch Parallels 39.

sent back upon learning that she was married. /14 [Such things as] these are to be selected; then the examples of pagan or bad men have a great stimulus. [Ask yourself this:] if a tyrant and a pagan showed this selfrestraint; if this youthful conqueror showed this honorable attitude toward the women of the enemy, what should I, as a Christian prince do toward mine? If there was so much soul in a mere chit (mulieicula), what should a man show? If that was set down as a disgrace for a pagan prince by a pagan, how much zeal must I apply to keep a straight course, I, who profess Christianity!

How one may pile up examples by expansion I believe I have pointed out clearly enough in my book De copia rerum. But even the examples of evils can be turned to good. Great application and loftiness of spirit such as Julius Caesar used to favor his ambitions+ you should expend to the general good of your country. The clemency such as he feigned for preparing and bolstering up his tyrannical sway you should earnestly use to win for yourself the love of your subjects. {expediency+}

The examples of very depraved princes sometimes incite one to a higher standard than do those
of the mediocre princes, or even the best, for who is not checked in his avaricious desires by the story of Vespasian's tax on urine, and his statement, equally as disgusting as the tax, "Money has a good smell, whatever its source;" and that detestable phrase of Nero with which he regularly instructed his officers, "You know what I want, and see that no one has anything." By this method, whatever is found in the historian may be turned into an example for conducting one's self well. See that you choose for yourself only the best of the leaders from the whole throng - such men as Aristides, Epaminondas, Octavius, Trajan, Antoninus Pius, Alexander Mammeas. Nor yet should you take them in their entirety, but you should choose the best from the best, just as there are some things in David and Solomon (both kings who were praised by god) which you avoid.

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14 Cf. Plutarch Alex. xxi. 3; see also xii. 15 Suetonius Vesp. 23. 3. 16 Suetonius Nero 32-4.

THE PRINCE MUST AVOID FLATTERERS

[B 456] Now what could be more senseless than for a man who has received the sacraments of the Christian church to set up as an example for himself Alexander, Julius Caesar, or Xerxes, for even the pagan writers would have attacked their lives if any of them had had a little sounder judgment? As it would be most disgraceful to be surpassed by them in any honorable deed of theirs, so it would be the last degree of madness for a Christian prince to wish to imitate them without change.

The prince should have thorough warning that not all of the things that he reads in the Holy Scriptures are to be straightway imitated. Let him learn that the battles and the butcheries of the Hebrews, and their barbarity toward their enemies, are to be interpreted allegorically; otherwise it would be most disastrous to read them. [L 590] One course was allowed that people because of the standards of the time; quite a different one is laid down for the heaven-blessed Christian peoples.

Whenever the prince picks up a book, he should do so not with the idea of gaining pleasure but of bettering himself by his reading. He who really wants to be better can easily find the means of becoming better. A great part of goodness is the desire to be good; for example, anyone who knows and hates the disease of political ambition, irascibility, or passionate desire, and opens a book [to find something] by which he may cure his malady, easily finds a remedy that will either remove the cause or [at any rate] lessen it.

From no source is the truth more honestly and advantageously gained than from books; but the prince should accustom his friends to believe that they will gain favor by giving frank advice. It is the part of those who are closely associated with the prince to give him counsel that is seasonable, appropriate, and friendly. It will be well for the prince to pardon those whose counsel is crudely given, so that there may be no example to deter his good counselors from their duty. [Lear]

During a great tempest even the most skillful navigators will listen to advice from a layman. But the ship of state is
that he looked ungraceful when seated with his cloak pulled up to his knees. What he did in a trivial matter should be done much more by a prince for his country during stirring events; for example, in undertaking a journey to foreign lands, in revising the laws, in establishing treaties, in beginning war.

17 Plutarch Apothegmata, s. v. Philip.

III. THE ARTS OF PEACE

Although the writers of antiquity divided the whole theory of state government into two sections, war and peace, the first and most important objective is the instruction of the prince in the matter of ruling wisely during times of peace, in which he should strive his utmost to preclude any future need for the science of war. In this matter it seems best that the prince should first know his own kingdom. This knowledge is best gained from a study of geography and history and from frequent visits through his provinces and cities. Let him first be eager to learn the location of his districts and cities, with their beginnings, their nature, institutions, customs, laws, annals, and privileges. No one can heal the body until he is thoroughly conversant with it. No one can properly till a field which he does not understand. To be sure, the tyrant takes great care in such matters, but it is the spirit, not the act, which singles out the good prince. The physician studies the functions of the body so as to be more adept in healing it; the poisoning assassin, to more surely end it! Next, the prince should love the land over which he rules just as a farmer loves the fields of his ancestors or as a good man feels affection toward his household. He should make it his especial interest to hand it over to his successor, whosoever he may be, better than he received it. If he has any children, devotion toward them should urge him on; if he has no family, he should be guided by devotion to his country; and he should always keep kindled the flame of love for his subjects. He should consider his kingdom as a great body of which he is the most outstanding member and remember that they who have entrusted all their fortunes and their very safety to the good faith of one man are deserving of consideration. He should keep constantly in mind the ex-

ample of those rulers to whom the welfare of their people was dearer than their own lives; for it is obviously impossible for a prince to do violence to the state without injuring himself. In the second place the prince will see to it that he is loved by his subjects in return, but in such a way that his authority is no less strong among them. There are some who are so stupid as to strive to win good will for themselves by incantations and magic rings, when there is no charm more efficacious than good character itself; nothing can be more lovable than that, for, as this is a real and immortal good, nothing can be more lovable than that, for, as this is a real and immortal good, so it brings a man true and undying good will. The best formula is this: let him love, who would be loved, so that he may attach his subjects to him as God has won the peoples of the world to Himself by His goodness. They are also wrong who win the hearts of the masses by largesses, feasts, and gross indulgence. It is true that some popular favor, instead of affection, is gained by these means, but it is neither genuine nor permanent. In the meanwhile the greed of the populace is developed, which, as happens, after it has reached large proportions thinks nothing is enough. Then there is
an uprising, unless complete satisfaction is made to their demands. By this means your people are not won, but corrupted. And so by this means the [average] prince is accustomed to win his way into the hearts of the people after the fashion of those foolish husbands who beguile their wives with blandishments, gifts, and complaisance, instead of winning their love by their character and good actions. So at length it comes about that they are not loved; instead of a thrifty and well mannered wife they have a haughty and intractable one; instead of an obedient spouse they find one who is quarrelsome and rebellious. Or take the case of those unhappy women who desperately try to arouse love in their husbands' hearts by giving them drugs, with the result that they have madmen instead of sane lovers.

The wife should first learn the ways and means of loving


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her husband and then let him show himself worthy of her love. And so with the people - let them become accustomed to the best, and let the prince be the source of the best things. Those who begin to love through reason, love long. In the first place, then, he who would be loved by his people should show himself a prince worthy of love; after that it will do some good to consider how best he may win his way into their hearts. The prince should do this first so that the best men may have the highest regard for him and that he may be accepted by those who are lauded by all. They are the men he should have for his close friends; they are the ones for his counselors; they are the ones on whom he should bestow his honors and whom he should allow to have the greatest influence with him. By this means everyone will come to have an excellent opinion of the prince, who is the source of all good will.

For my part, I should like to see the prince born and raised among those people whom he is destined to rule, because friendship is created and confirmed most when the source of good will is in nature itself. The common people shun and hate even good qualities when they are unknown to them, while evils which are familiar are sometimes loved. This matter at hand has a twofold advantage to offer, for the prince will be more kindly disposed toward his subjects and certainly more ready to regard them as his own. The people on their part will feel more kindness in their hearts and be more willing to recognize his position as prince. For this reason I am especially opposed to the accepted alliances of the princes with foreign, particularly with distant, nations.

The ties of birth and country and a mutual spirit of understanding, as. it were, have a great deal to do with establishing a feeling of good will. A goodly part of this feeling must of necessity be lost if mixed marriages confuse that native and inborn spirit. But when nature has laid a foundation of mutual affection, then it should be
developed and strengthened by every other means. When the opposite situation is presented, then even greater energy must be employed to secure this feeling of good will by mutual obligations and a character worthy of commendation. In marriage, the wife at first yields entirely to the husband, and he makes a few concessions to her and indulges her whims until, as they come really to know one another, a firm bond unites them; so it should be in the case of a prince selected from a foreign country. Mithridates learned the languages of all the peoples over whom he ruled, and they were said to be twenty in number. Alexander the Great, however barbarous the peoples with whom he was dealing, at once used to imitate their ways and customs and by this method subtly worked himself into their good graces. Alcibiades has been praised for the same thing. Nothing so alienates the affections of his people from a prince as for him to take great pleasure in living abroad, because then they seem to be neglected by him to whom they wish to be most important. The result of this is that the people feel that they are not paying taxes to a prince (since the moneys are spent elsewhere and totally lost as far as they are concerned) but that they are casting spoils to foreigners. Lastly, there is nothing more harmful and disastrous to a country, nor more dangerous for a prince, than visits to faraway places, especially if these visits are prolonged; for it was this, according to the opinion of everyone, that took Philip from us and injured his kingdom no less than the war with the Gelrii, which was dragged out for so many years. The heart is situated in the very middle of the body. Just so should a prince always be found among his own people.

There are two factors, as Aristotle tells us in his Politics, which have played the greatest roles in the overthrow of empires. They are hatred and contempt. Good will is the opposite of hatred; respected authority, of contempt. Therefore it will be the duty of the prince to study the best way to win the former and avoid the latter. Hatred is kindled by an ugly temper, by violence, insulting language, sourness of character, meanness, and greediness; it is more easily aroused than allayed. A good prince must therefore use every caution to prevent any possibility of losing the affections of his subjects. You may take my word that whoever loses the favor of his people is thereby stripped of a great safeguard. On the other hand, the affections of the populace are won by those characteristics which, in general, are farthest removed from tyranny. They are clemency, affability, fairness, courtesy, and kindliness. This last is a spur to duty, especially if they who have been of good service to the state, see that they will be rewarded at the hands of the prince. Clemency inspires to better efforts those who are aware of their faults, while forgiveness extends hope to those who are now eager to make recompense by virtuous conduct for the shortcomings of their earlier life and provides the steadfast with a happy reflection on human nature. Courtesy everywhere engenders love - or at least assuages hatred. This quality in a great prince is by far the most pleasing to the masses.

Contempt is most likely to spring from a penchant for the worldly pleasures of lust, for excessive drinking and eating, and for fools and clowns - in other words, for folly and idleness. Authority is gained by the following varied characteristics: in the first
place wisdom, then integrity, self-restraint, seriousness, and alertness. These are the things by which a prince should commend himself, if he would be respected in his authority over his subjects. Some have the absurd idea that if they make the greatest confusion possible by their appearance, and dress with pompous display, they must be held in high esteem among their subjects. Who thinks a prince great just because he is adorned with gold and precious stones?

Everyone

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knows he has as many as he wants. But in the meanwhile what else does the prince expose except the misfortunes of his people, who are supporting his extravagance to their great cost? And now lastly, what else does such a prince sow among his people, if not the seeds of all crime? Let the good prince be reared in such a manner and [continue to] live in such a manner that from the example of his life all the others (nobles and commoners alike) may take the model of frugality and temperance. Let him so conduct himself in the privacy of his home as not to be caught unawares by the sudden entrance of anyone. And in public it is unseemly for a prince to be seen anywhere, unless always in connection with something that will benefit the people as a whole. The real character of the prince is revealed by his speech rather than by his dress. Every word that is dropped from the lips of the prince is scattered wide among the masses. He should exercise the greatest care to see that whatever he says bears the stamp of [genuine] worth and evidences a mind becoming a good prince.

Aristotle’s advice on this subject should not be overlooked. He says that a prince who would escape incurring the hatred of his people and would foster their affection for him should delegate to others the onerous duties and keep for himself the tasks which will be sure to win favor. Thereby a great portion of any unpopularity will be diverted upon those who carry out the administration, and especially will it be so if these men are unpopular with the people on other grounds as well. In the matter of benefits, however, the genuine thanks redound to be prince alone. I should like to add also that gratitude for a favor will be returned twofold if it is given quickly, with no hesitation, spontaneously, and with a few words of friendly commendation. If anything must be refused, refusal should be affable and without offense. If it is necessary to impose a punishment, some slight diminution of the penalty prescribed by law should be made, and the sentence should be carried out as if the prince were being forced [to act] against his own desires.

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9 Pol. V. 13.

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It is not enough for the prince to keep his own character pure and uncorrupted for his state. He must give no less serious attention, in so far as he can, to see that every member of his household - his nobles, his friends, his ministers, and his magistrates - follows his example. They are one with the prince, and any hatred that is aroused by their vicious acts rebounds upon the prince himself. But, someone will say, this supervision is extremely difficult to accomplish. It will be easy enough
if the prince is careful to admit only the best men into his household, and if he makes them understand that the prince is most pleased by that which is best for the people. Otherwise it too often turns out that, due to the disregard of the prince in these matters or even his connivance in them, the most criminal men (hiding under cover of the prince) force a tyranny upon the people, and while they appear to be carrying out the affairs of the prince, they are doing the greatest harm to his good name. What is more, the condition of the state is more bearable when the prince himself is wicked than when he has evil friends; we manage to bear up under a single tyrant. Somehow or other the people can sate the greed of one man without difficulty: it is not a matter of great effort to satisfy the wild desires of just one man or to appease the vicious fierceness of a single individual, but to content so many tyrants is a heavy burden. The prince should avoid every novel idea in so far as he is capable of doing so; for even if conditions are bettered thereby, the very innovation is a stumbling block. The establishment of a state, the unwritten laws of a city, or the old legal code are never changed without great confusion. Therefore, if there is anything, of this sort that can be endured, it should not be changed but should either be tolerated or happily diverted to a better function. As a last resort, if there is some absolutely unbearable condition, the change should be made, but [only] gradually and by a practiced hand.10

The end which the prince sets for himself is of the greatest consequence, for if he shows little wisdom in its selection he must of necessity be wrong in all his plans. The cardinal principle of a good prince should be not only to preserve the present prosperity of the state but to pass it on more prosperous than when he received it. To use the jargon of the Peripatetics, there are three kinds of "good" - that of the mind, that of the body, and the external good.11 The prince must be careful not to evaluate them in reverse order and judge the good fortune of his state mainly by the external good, for these latter conditions should only be judged good in so far as they relate to the good of the mind and of the body; that is, in a word, the prince should consider his subjects to be most fortunate not if they are very wealthy or in excellent bodily health but if they are most honorable and self-controlled, if they have as little taste for greed and quarreling as could be hoped for, and if they are not at all factious but live in complete accord with one another. He must also beware of being deceived by the false names of the fairest things, for in this deception lies the fountainhead from which spring practically all the evils that abound in the world. [B 459] It is no true state of happiness in which the people are given over to idleness and wasteful extravagance, any more than it is true liberty for everyone to be allowed to do as he pleases. Neither is it a state of servitude to live according to the letter of just laws. Nor is that a peaceful state in which the populace bows to every whim of the prince; but rather [is it peaceful] when it obeys good laws and a prince who has a keen regard for the authority of the laws.12 Equity does not lie in giving everyone the same reward, the same rights, the same honor; as a matter of fact, that is sometimes a mark of the greatest unfairness.

A prince who is about to assume control of the state must be advised at once that the main hope of a state lies in the proper education of its youth. This Xenophon13 wisely taught in his Cyropaedia. Pliable youth is amenable to any system of training. Therefore the greatest care should be exercised over public and private schools and over the education of the girls,
so that the children may be placed under the best and most trustworthy instructors and may learn the teachings of Christ and that good literature which is beneficial to the state. As a result of this scheme of things, there will be no need for many laws or punishments, for the people will of their own free will follow the course of right.

Education exerts such a powerful influence, as Plato says, that a man who has been trained in the right develops into a sort of divine creature, while on the other hand, a person who has received a perverted training degenerates into a monstrous sort of savage beast.

Nothing is of more importance to a prince than to have the best possible subjects. The first effort, then, is to get them accustomed to the best influences, because any music has a soothing effect to the accustomed ear, and there is nothing harder than to rid people of those traits which have become second nature to them through habit. None of those tasks will be too difficult if the prince himself adheres to the best manners. It is the essence of tyranny, or rather trickery, to treat the common citizen as animal trainers are accustomed to treat a savage beast: first they carefully study the way in which these creatures are quieted or aroused, and then they anger them or quiet them at their pleasure. This Plato has painstakingly pointed out. Such a course is an abuse of the emotions of the masses and is no help to them. However, if the people prove intractable and rebel against what is good for them, then you must bide your time and gradually lead them over to your end, either by some subterfuge or by some helpful pretence.

If sometimes the whirling course of events and public opinion beat the prince from his course, and he is forced to obey

14 Cf. Plato Laws VII. 794, 804, 813; Plato provides for the education of girls as well as boys. 15 Laws VI. 766. 16 Rep. VI. 493.
many seditions have arisen from immoderate taxation. The good prince must be careful that the feelings of the commoners be not aroused by such actions. He should rule without expense if he possibly can. The position of the prince is too high to be a mercenary one; and besides, a good prince has all that his loving subjects possess. There were many pagans who took home with them only glory as a result of their public activities which they had honorably discharged. There were one or two (for example, Fabius Maximus and Antoninus Pius) who spurned even this. How much more should a Christian prince be content with a clear conscience, especially since he is in the service of Him who amply rewards every good deed! There are certain ones in the circles of princes who do nothing else except extort as much as possible from the people on every new pretext they can find and then believe that they have properly served the interests of their princes, as if they were the open enemies of their subjects. But whoever is willing to hearken to such men, should know that he by no means comes under the title of "prince"!

A prince should studiously endeavor to minimize his demands on the people. The most desirable way of increasing the revenue is to cut off the worse than useless extravagances, to abolish the idle ministries, to avoid wars and long travels, which are very like wars [in their bad effects], to suppress graft among the office holders, and to be interested in the proper administration of the kingdom rather than in the extension of its boundaries. But if the prince is going to measure the amount of taxes by his greed or ambitions, what bounds or limits will there be to his demands? Greed knows no end and continually presses and extends what it has started until, as the old proverb goes, too great a strain breaks the rope, and finally the patience of the people is exhausted and they break into an uprising, which is the very thing that has been the undoing of kingdoms that once were most prosperous. If, however, circumstances force the levying of taxes on the people, then it is the part of a good prince to raise them according to such a system that as little as possible of the hardships will fall upon the poor. It is perhaps desirable to bring the wealthy to a simple life, but to reduce the poor to starvation and chains is most inhuman, as well as extremely dangerous. The conscientious king, at the time when he wants to increase his court, to obtain an excellent alliance for his grand-daughter or his sister, to raise all his children to rank with him, to fill the coffers of the nobility, to flaunt his wealth in the face of other nations by extended travels, should ponder again and again in his own mind how inhuman it is for so many thousands of men with their wives and children to starve to death, to be plunged into debt and driven to the last degrees of desperation, so that he can accomplish these ends. I should not even consider such persons under the class of human beings - much less princes - when they extort from the lowest paupers what they sinfully squander on lewd women and on gambling. And yet we hear of some men who think that even such actions come under their rights.

The prince should also give a good deal of thought to this fact, that whatever is once introduced as a temporary expedient and appears to be connected with the purse strings of prince or nobles, can never be set aside. When the occasion for the taxation is removed, not only should the burden be removed from the people, but recompense made by replacing, as far as possible, the former expenditures. He who has his
ON TRIBUTES AND TAXES

people's interests at heart will avoid introducing a calamitous precedent; but if he takes pleasure in the disasters of his subjects, or even disregards them, he is in no way a prince, regardless of his title whatever it may be.

The prince should try to prevent too great an inequality of wealth. I should not want to see anyone deprived of his goods, but the prince should employ certain measures to prevent the wealth of the multitude being hoarded by a few. Plato did not want his citizens to be too rich, neither did he want them extremely poor, for the pauper is of no use and the rich man will not use his ability for public service.

It happens that princes like those [which I have just described] are sometimes not even enriched by these levies. Whoever would like to find out for himself has only to recall how much less our ancestors received from their peoples and how much more beneficent they were and how much more they possessed in every way, because a great part of this money slips through the fingers of the collecting and receiving agents and a very small portion gets to the prince himself.

A good prince will tax as lightly as possible those commodities which are used even by the poorest members of society; e.g., grain, bread, beer, wine, clothing, and all the other staples without which human life could not exist. But it so happens that these very things bear the heaviest tax in several ways; in the first place, by the oppressive extortion of the tax farmers, commonly called assisiae, then by import duties which call for their own set of extortionists, and finally by the monopolies by which the poor are sadly drained of their funds in order that the prince may gain a mere trifling interest. As I have brought out, the best way of increasing the prince's treasury is to follow the old proverb, "Parsimony is a great revenue," and carefully check expenditures. However, if some taxation is absolutely necessary and the affairs of the

people render it essential, barbarous and foreign goods should be heavily taxed because they are not the essentials of livelihood but the extravagant luxuries and delicacies which only the wealthy enjoy; for example, linen, silks, dyes, pepper, spices, unguents, precious stones, and all the rest of that same category. But by this system only those who can well afford it feel the pinch. They will not be reduced to straitened circumstances as a result of this outlay but perchance may be made more moderate in their desires so that the loss of money may be replaced by a change for the better in their habits. In the minting of his money the good prince should observe that faith which he owes to God and his own people and not allow himself a liberty by which he inflicts the direst penalties on others. In this matter there are four ways of robbing the people, a fact which was only too clearly brought before us at the death of Charles, when a long period of anarchy more blighting
than any tyranny you could name afflicted your kingdom. The first way is to debase the coinage with alloys, the second is to make them short weight, the third is to clip them, and the fourth is to bring about intentional fluctuation of value to suit the needs of the prince's treasury.

V+. ON THE BENEFICENCES OF THE PRINCE

[L 596] The appropriate honor for good princes comes from their kindliness and their beneficence. How, then, can some men claim this title of "prince" for themselves, when they turn every thought to the improvement of their own affairs and to the ruin of everyone else. The mark of an ingenious and acute prince is [the ability] to assist everyone by every means he has available - and that does not merely mean by giving. Some he will help through his liberality, some he will assist by his favor, some who are downtrodden he will free from their difficulties, and some he will help by friendly advice. Let him count that day lost, I say, on which he has benefited no one. Yet the prince's liberality should by no means be promiscuous. There are some who heartlessly extort from the good citizen what they squander on fools, court informers, and panderers. Let the state see that the rewards of the prince are most ready for those who have used every means to do good for the state. Let merit, not fancy, be the basis for reward. The prince should be most liberal with those benefits which will cause no hurt or injury to anyone, for to despoil some to enrich others, to ruin one group to elevate another, is certainly no real benefit. It is really a twofold source of evil, especially if anything be taken from the deserving to be transferred to the unworthy.

In the mythical stories of the poets it has been truly shown that the gods never made a visit to any place without conferring great benefit upon those by whom they were received. But when on the arrival of a prince his subjects hide any rather elaborate piece of furniture, keep their comely daugh-

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and merely just to foreigners, but it is the part of a Christian prince to regard no one as an outsider unless he is a nonbeliever, and even on them he should inflict no harm. His own subjects should naturally come first in his thought, but he should help everyone that he can. Although the prince must ever try to see that no one suffers any harm, still, according to Plato, in the case of strangers he should be even more careful than in the case of his own subjects to see that no harm befalls them, for strangers are deprived of all their friends and relatives and are consequently more susceptible to mishaps. For this reason they are said to have Jupiter as their special protector, who in this capacity was called "Xenius" [the wayfarer's god].

1 Laws V. 729; cf. also Isocrates To Nicocles 22.

VI+. ON ENACTING OR EMENDING LAWS

The best laws under the best princes make a city (civitas) or a kingdom most fortunate. The most felicitous condition exists when the prince is obeyed by everyone, the prince himself obeys the laws, and the laws go back to the fundamental principles of equity and honesty, with no other aim than the advancement of the commonwealth.1

A good, wise, and upright prince is nothing else than a sort of living law. He will make it his effort to pass not many laws but the best possible ones that will prove most beneficial to the state. A very few laws suffice for a well organized state (civitas) under a good prince and honorable officials. Under any other conditions no number, however great, will be enough. A sick person does not get along best with an unskilled physician prescribing one medicine after another.

In the promulgation of laws, the first concern is to see that they do not savor of royal financial plans nor of private gain for the nobility but that they are drawn up on an honest plan and that everything looks to the welfare of the people. This welfare is to be judged not by the popular opinion but according to the dictates of wisdom, which should always be present in the councils of the prince. Even the pagans admitted that a law is really no law at all if it is not just, fair, and intended for public benefit. That is not a law which merely pleases the prince, but rather that which pleases a good and wise prince who has no interest in anything which is not honorable and for

1 Cf. Plato Laws IV, 715. 2 Cf. Aristotle Pol. III. 15; Plutarch A Philosopher Is to Converse with Great Men 4; Cicero Laws II. 5, 11; III. 1. 2; see also Suetonius Julius 77. 3 I have rendered civitas as "city" the first time because it seemed to denote something different from "kingdom"; in the second case, "state" seemed the more probable meaning.

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the good of his state. But if those standards by which evils are to be corrected are themselves distorted, there can be only one result from laws of this kind, namely, that even good things are perverted to evil. Plato/4 desired that the laws should be as few as possible, especially on the less important matters, such as agreements, commercial business, and taxes; for no more benefit accrues to the state from a mass of laws than would come [to a person] from a multitude of
medicines. When the prince is a man of unquestioned character and the officials fulfill their responsibilities, there is no need of many laws. Under other conditions, however, the abuse of the laws is turned into the destruction of the state, for even the good laws are perverted into other meanings, due to the dishonesty of these men.

Dionysus of Syracuse has been justly blamed for establishing most of his laws according to a tyrannical scheme, heaping one upon the other and then, as it turned out, allowing his people to disobey them so that by this means he could make everyone liable to his punishments. That is not law making, it is trapping.

Just condemnation has been brought on Epitadeus who passed a law to the effect that everyone should be free to leave his property to anyone he wished. His one purpose in this was that he himself might disinherit his son whom he hated. At first the people did not see through the scheme of the man, but the act itself eventually brought dire ruin on the state. [B 462] Let the prince propose such laws as not only provide punishment in particular for the sources of crime but also have influence against sin itself. Therefore, they are at fault who think that laws should be framed in the briefest compass, to be merely peremptory, not to instruct. The main purpose of law should be to restrain crime by reason rather than by punishment. It is true, however, that Seneca does not concur.

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4 Rep. IV. 425-26. 5 Cf. Plutarch Agis and Cleomenes 5. 6 Cf. Plato Laws X. 890. 7 Seneca Ep. Mor. XCIV. 37 which agrees with Plato's view. I cannot find a passage in Seneca which expresses the opposite of this idea. This contradiction of fact and statement is hard to explain; perhaps Erasmus has confused Seneca with someone else, or there may be some passage which I have not located.

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with Plato in his idea on this subject, but his dissent is a mark of daring rather than enlightenment.

Furthermore, young men should not be allowed to argue [at all] on the justice of the laws, and the older men but sparingly. It is not the part of the common people to criticize rashly the laws of princes, but it is the province of the prince to see that he makes laws which will please all good citizens. He should remember that even the lowest members of society have some appreciation.

M. Antoninus Pius has been praised because he never promulgated any law which he did not try to justify to all by accompanying letters, in which he gave the reasons why he judged the measure expedient for the state. [10 Xenophon/11 has cleverly set forth in his Oeconomicus that all other animals [except man], are mainly brought to obedience by [three] means: by food, if they are of the lower sort; by fondling if they are more intelligent, like the horse; or by beating if they are stubborn, like the ass. But since man is the highest of all animals, [L 598] he ought not to be so much coerced by threats and blows, as led to his duty by rewards. The laws should then not only provide punishments for the transgressors but also by means of rewards stimulate good conduct in the service of the state. We find many examples of this type among the ancients: whoever fought bravely in war, hoped for a reward; if he fell fighting, his children were reared by the state. Whoever saved a fellow citizen, whoever drove one of the enemy from the walls, whoever assisted the state by wise counsel, had his reward.

Although a good citizen should follow the path of honor even when no reward is offered, still inducements of that sort are desirable to spur on to an eagerness for good living the minds of those citizens who are still but little developed. Those who have more character are more interested in
the honor; those who are on a lower level are influenced by the money also.

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8 Cf. Plato Laws 1. 634. 9 Cf. ibid., III. 684. If Erasmus had this passage in mind, he carefully omits reference to Plato's refutation of the statement. 10 Scriptores historiae Augustae, Ant. Pius 12. 3. 11 Oecon. XIII. 6-10.

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A law should have its effect, then, in all these ways - honor and disgrace, profit and loss. Of course those who really are of a servile, or rather, beastial, character must be controlled by chains and floggings. Let your subjects grow up from childhood with this sense of honor and ignominy so that they will realize that rewards are not won through wealth or birth, but by good deeds. In a word, the watchful prince should use every means not only to see that offenses are punished but to look and reach much further back than that. He should see in the first place that no deed is committed which calls for punishment. The better physician is the one who prevents and wards off disease, not the one that cures the disease with drugs once it is contracted. Just so, it is not a little the more worthwhile achievement to prevent the inception of crime than to inflict punishment once crime is committed. The former will be accomplished if the prince will discover the causes from which most crimes spring and then cut them out if he can, or at any rate, suppress them and deprive them of their force.

First, then, the majority of crimes arise, as I have said, from polluted ideas, as if from poisoned springs. Your first course is to have your subjects grounded in the best principles, and secondly, to have as your officials men who are not only wise but also incorruptible. Plato/12 is right in his advice that nothing should be left untried and, as the saying goes, no stone left unturned before making use of the supreme penalty. Try by teaching to prevent the desire to sin, then try to stop [the backsliders] by [arousing] a fear of that divinity which takes vengeance on criminals and also by the threat of punishment. If no headway is made by these means, recourse must be had to punishments but only to those of the lighter sort which remedy the evil and do not destroy the whole being. As a last resort, if none of these efforts are fruitful, the incorrigible must be sacrificed by the law (just as a hopelessly incurable limb must be amputated) so that the sound part is not affected. {clemency+}

A reliable and skilled physician never resorts to an operation or cauterizes if he can stop the malady by plasters and

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12 Laws V. 731; cf. ibid., IX. 862; Rep. III. 409-10.

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strong medicines; and he never resorts even to those unless forced to do so by [the seriousness of] the disease. So a prince should try every remedy before resorting to capital punishment, keeping in mind that the state is a single body. No one cuts off a limb if [the patient] can be restored to health by any other means./13 The honest physician has only one purpose in mind when he prepares his remedies and that is how to overcome the ailment with the very least danger to the patient; so it is with the good prince in passing laws. He has no other end in view than the advantage of his people and the remedying of their misfortunes with the least disturbance.
A goodly part of crime arises from the one fact that everywhere wealth is exalted and poverty is scorned. The prince will therefore make an effort to see that his subjects are rated according to their worth and character rather than their material wealth. He should exemplify this first in himself and in his household. If the people see the prince flaunting his riches, observe that with him the man who has the most money is rated the highest, and that money opens the way to magistracies, honors, and official positions, is it surprising that these injustices arouse the efforts of the masses to win wealth by fair means or foul?

Now, to speak in more general terms, the great mass of the worthless crowd in every state is created through idleness, which they all seek in different ways. Those who have once become accustomed to an idle life will resort to any evil course, if they have no other means of supporting it. The prince will therefore always be on the lookout to keep the proportion of idlers down to the minimum among his courtiers, and either force them to be busy or else banish them from the country.

Plato/14 thinks that all beggars should be driven far from the boundaries of his state. But if there are any persons who are broken through old age or sickness and without any relatives to care for them, they should be cared for in public insti-

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<Erasmus> ON ENACTING OR EMENDING LAWS

The people of Marseilles did not admit into their city those priests who travel from town to town peddling pseudo-relics, so that under the guise of religion they might enjoy ease and luxury. Perhaps it would be to the advantage of the state if the number of monasteries were limited, for in them is found a peculiar form of idleness, especially among those whose lives have little to be said for them and are spent in a lazy and sluggish fashion. What I say about monasteries, is also true of colleges.

To this class [i.e., the idlers] belong also contractors, street peddlers, money lenders, brokers, procurers, caretakers of country establishments, wardens of game preserves, and that troop of servants and attendants that some men keep in their service because of their ambitious pretenses. When they cannot get the things which extravagant waste, the companion of laziness, demands, they resort to wicked practices. And in the military service there is a busy sort of time wasting, and it is by far the most destructive, for from it result the complete cessation of everything worth while and the source of all things evil. If the prince will strike out these seed beds of crime from his kingdom, he will have much less to punish by law. I should merely like to add in passing that useful occupation should be respected and sluggish indolence not graced with the title "nobility." I should not strip the wellborn of their honors if they follow in the footsteps of their forefathers and excel in those qualities which first created nobility. But if we see so many today who are soft from indolence, through sensual pleasures, with no knowledge of any useful vocation, but only charming table fellows, ardent gamesters (I will not mention any of their obscene practices) why, I ask you, why should this class of persons be placed on a higher level than the shoemaker or the farmer? In former times leisure from the baser activities was granted the best families, not so that they might indulge in wanton nonsense, but so that they might learn the
principles of government.

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Let it then be no disgrace if the wealthy citizen or descendants of the old families teach their sons a sedentary vocation. In the first place, while the young men are engaged in such a study they will be restrained from many vices; in the second place, if there is no need to use their training, it burdens no one. But if they suffer reverses (such is the fickleness of man's fortune), then, according to the proverb, any land or any position will give opportunity for their trade.

The ancients, realizing that most evils arose from extravagant prodigality, passed sumptuary laws and created the office of censor to restrain immoderate expenditures on banquets, dress, or building. Some one may think it is a severe course that does not allow a person to use or abuse his own possessions in accordance with his own unrestrained whims. Let him reflect that it is much worse for the morals of his subjects to become so depraved through this sort of extravagance that capital punishment is necessary. It is more in keeping for one to be forced into frugality than to be forced into utter ruin by vice. There is nothing less helpful than for monies to accrue to officials as a result of the offenses of the citizens; for who will turn his attention to reduce crime to the minimum, when it is to his advantage to have as many criminals as possible. It is an equitable arrangement, and one in common practice among the ancients, that fines should go largely to the injured party, then partly to the public treasury, and in the case of more outrageous crimes partly to the informer. This matter of outrage, however, must be adjudged in accordance with the harm done the state, not according to anyone's private prejudices.

The laws should see in the main that no wrong is done any man, be he poor or rich, noble or commoner, servant or slave, official or private citizen. But they should lean more in the direction of leniency to the weaker, for the lot of those in the lower stations is more exposed to injuries. What is lacking in the protection of fortune, that the humanity of your laws should equalize. Let them, then, punish more severely an outrage on a poor man than an offense against a rich man, and provide a heavier penalty for a corrupt official than for a faithless plebian, for the crimes of a man of rank than for those of a commoner.

According to Plato there are two kinds of penalty. The first is a penalty not too severe in proportion to the offense committed (consequently the supreme penalty must not be resorted to except after careful thought), for the seriousness of the crime must be judged not by our own eager desires but on the basis of justice and honesty. Why is it that everywhere simple theft is punished by death and adultery goes almost unscathed (which is in direct contradiction to the laws of all the ancients), unless with everyone money is held in too high esteem and its loss is measured not by the facts but by their own feelings? But this is not the place to reason out why at the present
time there is little disturbance made against adulterers, while formerly the laws were very severe
against them. The second class [of penalties] which Plato designates as exemplary, [B 464] should
but rarely be resorted to, and then should only be employed in such a way that all other men are
restrained rather by the uniqueness of the penalty than by its enormity, for there is nothing so
awful but that it is held in contempt through long familiarity. Nothing does less good than to make
your subjects accustomed to punishments.

In treating a disease, new remedies are not tried if the malady can be cured by old ones. Just so
new laws should not be enacted if the old ones will suffice to remedy the troubles of the state./17 If
useless laws cannot be repealed without causing a great deal of confusion, they should little by
little be allowed to fall into disuse or else should be emended. It is a dangerous procedure to recast
the laws promiscuously, but it is


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necessary to suit the remedy to the condition of the body and likewise the laws to the present
condition of the state. Therefore certain institutions that were once beneficial are [now] better
repealed.

Many laws have been established with the best intentions but have been perverted to
dishonorable uses by the wickedness of officials. Nothing is more ruinous than a just law which
has been perverted to evil purposes. No possible loss to his purse should deter the prince from
abolishing or emending such laws, for there is no gain which is not linked with a loss of honor,
especially when the laws are in such a condition that their repeal will be readily applauded. Do not
let the prince deceive himself, if such laws have become strongly established in some places and
have become deeply rooted through long custom. Mere numbers in approval do not make for the
justice of a measure, and the more deeply rooted an evil is, the more diligently should it be pulled
out. I should like to mention one or two examples. It is the practice in some places for the prefect
to take over in the king's name the effects of a deceased foreigner. That practice was started as a
good measure to prevent those who had no right to the stranger's property from claiming it, and it
remained in the hands of the prefect until the rightful heirs appeared. But now that [situation] has
become disgracefully distorted, so that the property of a foreigner reverts to the treasury whether
there be heirs or not.

That was once a good practice [which provided] that whatever was found on a thief was seized
by the prince or an officer acting in his name to prevent, of course, the fraudulent assignation to an
illegitimate owner, as would be the case if there were an indiscriminate right to claim it. As soon
as the rightful owner was identified, the property was to be restored to him. But now there are
some people who believe that whatever they find on a thief belongs to them just as much as if it
had come to them by inheritance. Even they who do [so believe] are perfectly conscious that it is
grossly unjust, but the sense of right is overcome by the desire for gain.

Long ago there was an excellent plan for the establishment

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on the borders of the various kingdoms of officials who were to supervise the imports and exports,
with the special purpose of guaranteeing passage safe from highwaymen to merchants and travelers. The result was that if anything was stolen within the confines of his territory, every prince saw to it that the merchant suffered no loss and that the robber did not go completely free. It was perhaps as a matter of courtesy that the merchants started to give a small fee. But as it is now, everywhere the traveler is stopped for his custom fee, the stranger is bothered by it, the merchants are fleeced, and although the tax mounts from day to day, there is no suggestion of protecting these peoples. The result is that the purpose for which this institution was created is now completely lost and a measure that was beneficial in its first stages has been completely transformed into a tyrannical institution by the vicious practices of public officers.

There was in the past a law enacted that all property cast up from a shipwreck should be held by the prefect of marine affairs. This was not done so that this property should fall into his or the prince's possession, but so as to prevent it from being claimed by people without just title. It only became state property if no one appeared with proper claim. But now in some places, the prefect, more unrelenting than the sea itself, seizes upon whatever is lost by any cause at sea as if it were his own. What the storm has left the poor wretches, this official, like a second tempest, sweeps away from them.

See how everything has gone wrong. The thief is punished because he has stolen another man's property. But the magistrate who is appointed to prevent theft steals it over again, and the owner is robbed a second time by him who was appointed for the specific purpose of preventing loss to anyone. The merchant traders are harassed and plundered most by those who were expressly created to prevent the traveler from being annoyed and robbed. And those very men whom the law established to see that property does not rest in illegal possession are the ones who prevent its reaching the rightful owner. There are many provisions like these among many nations which are no less unjust than injustice itself. It is not the purpose of this treatise to change any particular state. These practices are common to substantially all states, and they have been condemned by the judgment of everyone. I have brought them up for purposes of instruction. Of course there may be some of these institutions which could not be set aside without great confusion, but their abolition would win favor for the prince and a good reputation, which should seem greater than any pecuniary gain.

Nothing should be more democratic or just than the prince; [B 465] so with the law. Under any other conditions, you will have the situation which the Greek philosopher/18 well stated: "Laws are merely spider webs, which the birds, being larger, break through with ease, while the flies are caught fast."

The law, like the prince, should always be more prone to pardon than to punish, either because it is more nearly according to the law of God - for His anger is but very slowly stirred to vengeance - or because a criminal who escapes can be brought back for punishment, but no help can be given an innocent man who has been condemned./19 Even if he [the innocent man] does not lose his life, who can judge the suffering of another?

We read that there were formerly rulers (not princes, but tyrants) from whose example the Christian prince should be as different as possible, for they judged the crimes that were committed according to their own private discomfiture. Consequently, to them it was only a petty theft when a poor man was stripped of his goods and along with his wife and children driven into chains or beggary; but it was a very serious matter, deserving of all the tortures, if anyone defrauded the
privy purse or a grasping collector of a penny. Likewise they would cry out that slander had been brought on their majesty if anyone should murmur against even the wickedest prince, or should speak a bit too freely of an oppressive official. Even the emperor Hadrian, a pagan and not to be classed among

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18 Anacharsis, quoted in Plutarch Solon V. 2, 3; Valerius Maximus VII. 2. 14. 19 Cf. Plutarch God Is Slow to Punish 5.

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the good princes, would never listen to a charge of lese-majeste; " and not even that cruel monster Nero gave much heed to secret accusation on that charge./21 There was another one/22 who paid no attention at all to charges of this sort and said, "In a free country, tongues likewise should be free." Therefore, there are no crimes which a good prince will pardon more readily or more gladly than those which affect him alone. Who can scorn such trivial things more easily than the prince? It is easy for him to take vengeance and therefore hateful and unbecoming. Vengeance is a proof of a small, weak character; and nothing is less appropriate in a prince, who should be generous and magnanimous./23 It is not enough for the prince to be clear of all crime; he should be untainted by any suspicion or appearance of crime. For this reason he will not only carefully weigh the deserts of him who commits a crime against the prince but also the opinions of others concerning the prince, and out of respect for his own position he will sometimes pardon an unworthy man and with a thought for his own reputation will be lenient to those who deserve no clemency. Do not let anyone cry out at once that this idea shows too little thought for the majesty of princes which with the greatest care should be kept sacrosanct and inviolate by the state. There is no other way, on the contrary, by which to look out for the greatness of the prince than for the people to understand that he is so alert that nothing escapes him; so wise that he understands what things comprise the real majesty of a prince; so lenient that he avenges no injury to himself, unless the good of the state calls for it. The majesty of Caesar Augustus was enhanced and made safer by the clemency extended to Cinna, when so many punishments had gained nothing./24 He is really guilty of injury to the prince's majesty who cuts down that in which the prince's true greatness lies. The

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prince's greatness is in the quality of his character and in the affairs of his people that are prospering through his wisdom. Whoever destroys these factors is to be accused of lese-majeste. They go far astray and have no real conception of the real majesty of the prince, who think that it is increased when the laws are reduced to a minimum of effectiveness and the liberty of the people is broken, [L 602] as if the prince and the state were two separate entities. But if a comparison is to be made between the things which nature has united, the king should not compare himself with anyone of his subjects that he pleases but with the whole body of the state; for thus he will see how much more important the latter is, embodying so many men and women, than the prince alone, who is the head. The state will be a state./25 even if there be no prince. Even the greatest
dominions prospered without a prince; for example, the republics of Rome and Athens. But a prince cannot exist without a state; in other words, a state carries with it the idea of a prince, but the reverse does not hold. What is that which alone makes a prince, if it is not the consent of his subjects? A man who is great because of his own good qualities, that is, his virtues, will be great even if his princely authority is stripped from him. It is perfectly plain, then, that they who measure the position of a prince by those things which are unworthy of the high position of a prince are very wrong in their judgment. He is called a "traitor" (for this is accepted to be the most hated epithet) who by his frank advice recalls the prince to a better course when he has swerved to those interests which are neither becoming nor safe for himself nor beneficial to the state (patria). Surely he is not looking out for the position of the prince, is he, who corrupts the prince with plebeian ideas, leads him into disgraceful worldly pleasures, into wild feasts, into gambling, and into other disgraceful diversions of that sort? It is called "loyalty" to flatter a stupid prince by ready obsequiousness, but "treason" to block any of these wicked plans. On the contrary, no one is

25 The Latin term here is respublica, as elsewhere; not civitas, the technical, "sovereign state."

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The prince should demand the same integrity which he himself exhibits, or at any rate the closest approximation to it, from his officials. He should not consider it enough to have appointed his magistrates, but it is a matter of prime importance how he appoints them. In the second place, he must be on the watch to see that they perform their duties honorably. Aristotle/1 wisely and with deliberation gives us the advice that good laws are passed to no purpose unless they are defended by those who passed them. The very opposite sometimes has happened, and laws that were enacted with the loftiest purpose were turned to the complete ruin of the state through the vicious practices of the magistrates.

Although the magistrates should not be selected on the basis of wealth or family or age, but rather on that of wisdom and integrity, yet it is more appropriate that older men should be selected for those offices on which the safety of the state depends. This is not only because older men possess more prudence as a result of their experience and their personal feelings are more restrained but also because among the people their advanced years give them some authority./2 Accordingly Plato/3 laid down the rule that no one who was less than fifty years old, or more than seventy, should be made a custodian of the law. He would not have a priest less than sixty. After the richest maturity of life there is a decline to which is due a release and relaxation from all duties.

A chorus dance is a delightful spectacle if it is developed in rhythm and harmony. On the other hand, it is a farce when the gestures and voices are a confused jumble. So a city

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1 Pol IV. 8. 2 Cf. Olato Rep III. 409. Laws VI. 755

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<Erast-236> ON MAGISTRATES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

(civitas) or a kingdom is a wonderful thing if each [citizen] has his own place, if each one performs his own peculiar duties, that is, if the prince conducts himself as he should, if the magistrates are faithful to their parts, and if the common folk yield obedience to good laws and honorable magistrates. But when the prince looks out for his own business and the magistrates do nothing but fleece the people, when the common people do not obey fair laws, but only flatter the prince and officials, whatever the matter may be, then there is sure to be a disgraceful lack of order in everything. The first and prime interest of the prince should be to see how he can be of most service to his state. There is no better way of showing this service than by being careful to see that the magistrates and offices are filled by men of the best character and with the greatest interest in the public welfare. (Hal+1)

What is the prince but the physician of the state? It is not enough for a physician to have skilled assistants if he himself is not most adept and alert. Likewise it is not enough for the prince to have trusted magistrates if he is not the most honorable of all, for through him the others are selected and corrected.

The parts of the mind are not all equal in importance - some control, others obey. The body only obeys. As the prince is the most important part of the state he ought to know most and be farthest divorced from all gross passions. Closest to him will be the magistrates, who obey in part and rule in part, for they obey the prince and rule over the common people. Therefore the prosperity of the state is closely associated with the honest creation of the magistrates and the honest apportionment of officers. Let there be in addition an action against malpractice in office,
just as there was in antiquity an action against extortion. And finally, let there be the severest penalty inflicted on these men if they are convicted.

The magistrates will be honestly created if the prince will select not those who pay the most nor those who bribe most disgracefully nor those who are closely related to him nor those who especially suit his habits, whims, and fancies but those who have the most reputable characters and are most adapted to the performance of the specific duties required. But when the prince does just one thing and that is to sell his offices to the highest bidders, what else can he expect from them except that they sell the offices over again, replenish their own loss by any means whatsoever and commercialize their administration just as they did their private businesses. And this practice should not seem less ruinous to the state, merely because by a lamentable custom it has been received by a great many nations, although it was considered a disgrace even among the pagans, and the laws of the Caesars directed those who presided over courts to have a princely salary so they would have no excuse for graft. At one time it was a very serious crime to give a corrupt judgment, but on what basis can the prince punish a judge who, after a bribe, has given a judgment or has refused to give one, when he himself sold the position on the bench and taught the future judge his corrupt ways? The prince's relation to the magistrates should be that which he wishes them to have toward the common people.

Aristotle gives us the prudent advice in his Politics that above all else we are to be on guard lest the magistrates gain from the magistracies. Otherwise a double evil will result: the first is that all the avaricious and dishonest men will bribe, or rather seize upon and literally take possession of, the office, and [secondly] that the people will be wracked between the two misfortunes of being not only shut out from [attainment to] honor, but also robbed of their money.

4 Cf. Dio Cassius LII. 23; LIII. 15. 5 Pol. V. 8.

VIII+. ON TREATIES

[604] In concluding treaties, as in everything else, the good prince should look to nothing but the advantage of his people. But when the opposite is done, when the prince considers it more to his advantage that the interests of his people have been reduced, then it is not a treaty, but a conspiracy. Whoever are of this opinion make two people out of one - the nobles and the commoners, one of whom profits by the other's loss. When that situation exists, there is no state. Among all Christian princes there is at once a very firm and holy bond because of the very fact that they are Christian. Why, then, is there a need to conclude so many treaties every day as if everyone were the enemy of everyone else and human agreements were essential to gain what Christ could not [accomplish] ? When a matter is transacted through many written agreements, it is a proof that it is not done in the best faith and we often see it happen that many lawsuits arise as a result of these agreements which were prepared for the very purpose of preventing litigation. When good faith is [Off passim] a party and the business is between honest men, there is no need for
many painstaking contracts. When the transaction is between dishonest men and not made in good faith, these very agreements produce grounds for suit. Likewise among good and wise princes, even if there is no treaty, there is an established friendship; but among stupid and wicked princes those very treaties into which they entered to prevent the outbreak of war are the causes of war, for some one complains that this or that clause among the countless articles has been violated. A treaty is usually prepared to set an end to war, but at the present time an agreement that starts a war is called a treaty.

ON TREATIES  <Eras-239>

These alliances are nothing but war measures, and wherever the situation looks best, there treaties are arranged.

The good faith of princes is shown by their fulfillment of the duties they accepted, so that a mere promise from them is more sacred than an oath from anyone else. How base it is then not to live up to those agreements which they made in solemn treaty, with those ceremonies included in which are the most sacred of all among Christians? And yet we see this happen every day through somebody's fault. I do not know anything more about it, but it certainly cannot happen except by the fault of some one. If any portion of a treaty appears to have been broken, we should not at once conclude that the whole pact is invalidated, lest we seem to have pounced upon an excuse for breaking off friendly relations. On the contrary, we should rather strive to patch up the breach with the least trouble possible. It is advantageous sometimes even to overlook some points, since not even among private individuals do agreements long remain in effect, if they carry out everything to the letter, as the saying goes. You should not at once follow the dictates of anger but rather that for which the need of the state (publica utilitas) calls. expediency. A good and wise prince will make an effort to preserve peace with everyone but especially with his neighbors; for if they are wrought up they can do a great deal of harm, while if they are friendly they are a big help, and without their mutual business relations the state could not even exist./1 Friendship easily arises and becomes fixed among those who have a common tongue, who are geographically close, and who have similar characteristics and traits. There is so great a difference in everything between some nations that it is far wiser to have refrained from relations with them than to be bound by even the stoutest treaties. Some are so far away that even if they were well inclined they could be of no assistance. Then there are some that are so surly, untrustworthy, and arrogant that even though they are close at hand yet they are worthless as friends. With them the wisest course will be neither to break in war nor to be bound to them in any

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<Eraser-240>  ON TREATIES

close ties of treaties or alliances, because war is always disastrous and the friendship of some peoples is hardly more bearable than war.

A part of the wisdom of a ruler lies in his knowledge of the traits and characters of all peoples. Hal. This he will gain partly from books, and partly from the memories of wise and experienced men. He need not think that it will be necessary for him to wander over all lands and seas as Ulysses did. For the other things, it is not easy to set down a definite rule. In general it may
be said that the prince should not be too closely allied to those who differ from us in religion, as, for example, the heathens; or those whom the foresight of nature separated from us by mountains or seas, or those whom vast stretches of land cut off from us. These we should not ally with nor should we attack them. [B 468] Although there are many examples of this very point, yet one from close at hand will be enough. France is obviously by far the most prosperous of all countries, but it would be much more flourishing if it had refrained from attacking Italy.

 IX+. ON THE MARRIAGE ALLIANCES OF PRINCES

For my part, I should think that it would be by far most beneficial to the state if the marriage alliances of princes were confined within the limits of their own kingdoms or, if they had to go beyond their boundaries, with only their nearest neighbors and then only those who warrant faithful friendship. But, they say, it is not right for the daughter of a king to marry anyone except a king or a king’s son. Those are merely the fancies of individuals to raise their own kin to as high a position as they can, and the prince should have no sympathy with them at all. Suppose the sister of a king marries one who is less powerful? What of it if it is more felicitous to everyone? The disregard for the dignity of his sister's marriage will bring the prince more prestige than if he sacrificed the advantage of his people to the desires of a mere_woman+. The marriage of princes is really a private matter of their own. It is called the greatest of human affairs, so that we too often have a recurrence of what happened to the Greeks and the Trojans because of Helen. But if you please to make a choice becoming a prince, your wife should be selected from all women for her integrity, modesty, and wisdom, and [she should be] one who would be an obedient wife to a good prince and would bear him children worthy both of their parents and the state (patria). She is honorable enough, whatever her birth, who will make a good wife for the good prince. It is admitted that nothing is so important to everyone as that a prince should warmly love his people and be loved by them in return. [love_fear+] Common characteristics of body and mind, a sort of native essence which a deep affinity of character develops, is of major interest to the country; but a great part of this must of course be destroyed if marriages between differ-

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ent peoples confuse all these factors. It could hardly be expected that the state (patria) would wholeheartedly recognize children born of such alliances, or that such children would be lastingly devoted to the state (patria). Yet the common opinion is that these are the adamantine bonds of public harmony, although the very facts show that the greatest upheavals of human affairs spring from this source. One [prince] complains that something or other in the betrothal contract has been broken; another takes offense at something and withdraws the bride; a third changes his mind, renounces his first intention, and marries another. One thing or another is always making trouble. But what does the state get out of all this? If the mutual alliances of princes would give peace to the world, I should wish each of them to have six hundred wives. What was gained a few years ago by the alliance of King James of Scotland, since he invaded England with his hostile forces? It sometimes happens that after long violent wars, after countless disasters, a marriage is finally
arranged and the matter settled, but only after both parties are worn out from misfortunes. Princes
must strive to bring about a lasting peace among all peoples and direct their common plans to this
end. Although marriages may secure peace, they certainly cannot make it perpetual; for as soon as
one of the pair dies, the bond of accord is broken. If, however, peace is established on real
grounds, then it will be fixed and lasting. Someone will say that the rearing of children will cement
the bonds forever. Why, then, is there most fighting among those who are most closely related? [L
606] Why? From these children come the greatest changes of kingdoms, for the right to rule is
passed from one to another: something is taken from one place and added to another. From these
circumstances can come only the most serious and violent consequences; the result then, is not an
absence of wars, but rather the cause of making wars more frequent and more atrocious; for while
one kingdom is allied to another through marriage, whenever anyone is offended he uses his right
of relationship to stir up the others. As a result, a great part of the Christian world is at once
called to arms over a trivial offense, and the petty anger of a single individual is placated by a
tremendous shedding of Christian blood. I shall advisedly refrain from example so as not to offend
anyone.

In a word, by alliances of this sort the sway of princes is perhaps increased, but the affairs of
their people are weakened and shattered. A good prince does not consider his own affairs
prosperous unless he looks out for the welfare of the state. I shall not talk about the heartless effect
(the result of these alliances) on the girls themselves, who
[marry] men who have no similarity of language, appearance, character, or habits, just as
if they were being abandoned to exile. They would be happier if they could live among their own
people, even though with less pompous display. Although I am aware that this custom is too long
accepted for one to hope to be able to uproot it, yet I thought it best to give my advice in case
things should turn out beyond my hopes.

[B 469] The prince who has been instructed in the teachings of Christ and in a protecting wisdom
will consider nothing dearer (or rather, nothing dear at all) than the prosperity of his people, whom
he ought to love and care for as king and member of one body. All his plans, all his efforts, all his
interests will be turned to the one aim of ruling over the province entrusted to him in such a
manner that when Christ makes the final reckoning he will win approval and leave a very
honorable memory of himself among all his fellow men. Whether the prince be at home or
traveling, let him imitate the famous and admirable Scipio,1 who said he was never less alone
than when he was by himself, or less idle than when at leisure, for whenever he was free from the
cares of the state, he was always going over in his mind some plans for the welfare or position of
the state. Let him imitate Vergil's Aeneas, whom the wise poet2 depicts often turning over many
problems in his mind during the night while others slept, so that he could better look out for their
interests. And these verses from Homer, These claim thy thoughts by day, thy watch by night,
Rise, son of Tydeus! to the brave and strong Rest seems inglorious, and the nights too long. (the
general idea of which is that it is not becoming for him to whom the people are entrusted and upon
whom there are so many responsibilities, to sleep the whole night through) should be inscribed on
the walls of every palace, or better, in the minds of kings. [Henv+]

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1 Cicero De off. III. 1. 2 Aen. I. 305. 3 Iliad V. 490; ibid., X. 159. Erasmus gives the Greek, followed by a Latin verse rendering. The translation is by Pope.

X+. ON THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE PRINCE IN PEACE

Whenever the prince travels in public he should be doing something for the common good; that is, he should nowhere be anything but a prince. It is more becoming a prince to appear at public functions than to remain secluded; but whenever he goes out, let him be careful that his looks, his carriage, and especially his speech be such as will better his people. He should always be mindful that whatever he does or says is observed and known by all. Wise men have not approved the custom of the Persian kings who spent their/4 lives buried in their palaces. [affability+] They hoped to be acclaimed highly by their subjects by this means alone, that they were not regularly seen and rarely appeared before their people [for state occasions]. Whenever they did go forth they merely displayed a barbaric arrogance and immoderate wealth in the face of the people's misfortunes. The rest of the time they spent in sports or in bad expeditions, just as if there were nothing for a good prince to do in times of peace, when there is waiting such a great harvest of wonderful deeds if only the prince has a spirit worthy of a prince./5 There are some even today who think that the one thing which is most honorable for kings, that is, participation in public affairs, is unworthy of a king. There are likewise some bishops who think that there is nothing less their function than teaching the people (which, in fact, is the one duty for a bishop to perform), and who by some wondrous scheme delegate to others, as if unworthy of them, their especial functions and claim steadfastly for themselves the most debased. But Mithridates, who was a noble king no less for his learning than for his rule, was not ashamed to pronounce to the people the laws with his own lips and without an interpreter. In order to do this he is said to have thoroughly familiarized himself with twenty-two languages./6 And Philip of Macedon did not deem it beneath the position of a king to sit and listen to cases every day; nor did his son, Alexander the Great, although ambitious to the point

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4 Xenophon Agesilaus IX. 1. 5 Cf. ibid., VIII. 8, 9. 6 Cf. Aulus Gellius N. A. XVII. 17. 2; Valerius Maximus VIII. 7. 16; on p. 208 the number is given as 20.

of madness in other respects. He was said to have had a habit of covering one ear with his hand while trying a case, saying that he kept this ear unbiased for the other party./7 The perverted praising of princes is to blame for the turning of some so far away from these things, for the old proverb/8 says that each one likes to employ the art he knows and avoids those things in which he realizes he has little ability. How, then, can you expect that anyone who has spent his first years among flatterers+ and frothy women, corrupted first by base opinions and then by sensual pleasures, and wasting these years engaged in gambling, dancing, and hunting, could later on be

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happy in those duties the fulfillment of which requires the most diligent thought? Homer says the prince does not have enough leisure to sleep the whole night away, and yet such persons as I have in mind have only one desire and that is to while away the boredom of life by finding ever new pleasures just as if there were nothing at all which princes could do. A good paterfamilias is never at a loss for something to do in his own home. Is a prince without anything to do in so vast a domain?

Evil practices are to be checkmated by good laws, distorted laws are to be emended, evil ones are to be repealed, good magistrates are to be sought out, and corrupt ones are to be punished or corrected. The prince must seek out the means by which the poor common folk will be burdened as little as possible, by which his country is freed from robbery and criminals (and that with the least bloodshed), and by which he may foster and strengthen lasting agreement among his people. There are some other things, less important than these but not unworthy of even the greatest prince, such as visiting his cities (civitates) with a mind to improving them. He should strengthen the places that are unsafe; adorn the city (civitas) with public buildings, bridges, colonnades, churches, river walls, and aqueducts. He should purify places

7 Cf. Plutarch Alex. XLII. 2. 8 Quoted in Cicero Tusc. Disp. I. 18, 41, and in other places. 9 Iliad V. 490.

ON THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE PRINCE IN PEACE <Eras-247>

filled with deadly pestilence either by changing the buildings or by draining the swamps. Streams that flow in places of no advantage he should change to other courses; he should let in or shut out the sea as the need of his people demands; he should see that abandoned fields are cultivated so that the food supply is increased and that fields which are being cultivated to little advantage are farmed in other ways - for example, by forbidding vineyards where the wine does not warrant the trouble of the farming but where grain could be grown. There are literally countless activities in which it would be honorable for a prince, and for a good prince even pleasant, to engage. Consequently, he never will have need to seek a war because of the tedium of idleness, or to waste the night in gambling. In those matters which pertain to public affairs (such as his public buildings or games) the prince should not be extravagant or lavish, but splendid; so, too, in receiving embassies that relate to the affairs of his people. In those matters which pertain to him as an individual, he should be more frugal and moderate, partly that he may not seem to be living at the public expense, and partly that he may not teach his subjects extravagance, which is the cause of many misfortunes.

I observe that many of the ancients fell into this error (I only wish it did not claim any [victim] today!) of turning all their efforts to one end, namely, to leave their kingdoms not better but greater. I have often seen it happen that while interested in extending their boundaries they have even lost what they already had. That much-praised statement of Theopompus/10 is not irrelevant here. He said that he was not interested in knowing how great a kingdom he should leave to his children but only how much better and more secure he should leave it. And I think the Laconic proverb, "Sparte t'est ichue par le sort, orne-la," [L 608] that is, "Sparta is yours, adorn her," is worthy of being engraved on the devices

10 Plutarch Discourse to an Unlearned Prince 1. 11"Diogeniamus 8. 16; 8. 46. Erasmus's text gives
as the original Greek, MXIIQTCLV gkCCXE9, 'rQiMTIV X6(YtLEL, but Diogenianus reads xeivav for -raimnv (as does Euripides, Frag. 723: XELV?lv).

ON THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE PRINCE IN PEACE

of every prince. The good prince should be thoroughly convinced that he can do nothing more magnificent than to hand over more prosperous and in all ways more beautiful the kingdom - whatever it may be - which fortune assigned to him. The character of the general Epaminondas has been praised by the most learned men. When, because of envy, he had been assigned a magistracy that was lowly and commonly despised, he so conducted himself that after his term it was considered one of the most distinguished and was sought after by the greatest men; thus he proved that the office did not confer dignity on the man but the man on the office. If, as we have shown in part, the prince will see to those things especially which strengthen and beautify the state, it follows that he will likewise shut out and ward off those which reduce the condition of the state. It is helped by the example of the good prince, by his wisdom and his watchfulness; by the integrity of magistrates and officials; by the holiness of priests; by the choice of schoolmasters; by just laws; and by interests leading to good habits. All the attention of the good prince should be devoted to increasing and confirming these things. Harm is done by the opposite things, which will more easily be excluded from the state if we will first try to tear out the very roots and sources whence these things come. The philosophy of a good prince teaches him to be zealous and painstaking in matters of this sort. To make beneficial arrangements together for these things, and to compare all their plans for these ends is the one thing really worthy of Christian princes.

If the celestial bodies are thrown out of order only slightly, or wander from their true course, they do not do it without serious disasters to mankind, as we clearly see manifested in eclipses of the sun and moon. The same is true of the great princes. If they wander from the path of honor or do any wrong through ambition, anger, or stupidity, they cause a great deal of misfortune to the whole world. No eclipses ever brought so much harm upon the human race as the conflict between Pope Julius and Louis, king of France, which we have just witnessed and wept over.

ON BEGINNING WAR

Although a prince ought nowhere to be precipitate in his plans, there is no place for him to be more deliberate and circumspect than in the matter of going to war. Some evils come from one source and others from another, but from war comes the shipwreck of all that is good and from it the sea of all calamities pours out. Then, too, no other misfortune clings so steadfastly. War is sown from war; from the smallest comes the greatest; from one comes two; from a jesting one comes a fierce and bloody one, and the plague arising in one place, spreads to the nearest peoples and is even carried into the most distant places. A good prince should never go to war at all unless, after trying every other means, he cannot possibly avoid it. If we were of this mind, there would hardly be a war. Finally, if so ruinous an occurrence cannot be avoided, then the prince's main care should be to wage the war with as little calamity to his own people and as little shedding of Christian blood as may be, and to conclude the struggle as soon as possible. [B 471] The really Christian prince will first weigh the great difference between man, who is an animal born for peace
and good will, and beasts and monsters, who are born to predatory war; [he will weigh also] the difference between men and Christian men. Then let him think over how earnestly peace is to be sought and how honorable and wholesome it is; on the other hand [let him consider] how disastrous and criminal an affair war is and what a host of all evils it carries in its wake even if it is the most justifiable war - if there really is any war which can be called "just." Lastly, when the prince has put away all personal feelings, let him take a rational estimate long enough to reckon what the war will cost and whether the final end to be gained is worth that much - even if victory is certain, victory which does not always happen to favor the best causes. Weigh the worries, the expenditures, the trials, the long wearisome preparation. That barbaric flux of men in the last stages of depravity must be got together, and while you wish to appear more generous in favor than the other prince, in addition to paying out money you must coax and humor the mercenary soldiers, who are absolutely the most abject and execrable type of human being. Nothing is dearer to a good prince than to have the best possible subjects. But what greater or more ready ruin to moral character is there than war? There is nothing more to the wish of the prince than to see his people safe and prospering in every way. But while he is learning to campaign he is compelled to expose his young men to so many dangers, and often in a single hour to make many and many an orphan, widow, childless old man, beggar, and unhappy wretch.

The wisdom of princes will be too costly for the world if they persist in learning from experience how dreadful war is, so that when they are old men, they may say: "I did not believe that war was so utterly destructive!" But - and I call God to witness - with what countless afflictions on the whole world have you learned that idea! The prince will understand some day that it was useless to extend the territory of the kingdom and that what in the beginning seemed a gain was [in reality] tremendous loss, but in the meantime a great many thousands of men have been killed or impoverished. These things should better be learned from books, from the stories of old men, from the tribulations of neighbors: "For many years this or that prince has been fighting on for such and such a kingdom. How much more is his loss than his gain!!" Let the good prince establish matters of the sort that will be of lasting worth. Those things which are begun out of a fancy are to our liking while the fancy lasts, but the things which are based on judgment and which delight the young man, will also afford pleasure to the old man. Nowhere is this truth more to be observed than in the beginning of war.

Plato/I calls it sedition, not war, when Greeks war with Greeks; and if this should happen, he bids them fight with every restraint. What term should we apply, then, when Christians engage in battle with Christians, since they are united by so many bonds to each other? What shall we say when on account of a mere title, on account of a personal grievance, on account of a stupid and youthful ambition, a war is waged with every cruelty and carried on during many years?

Some princes deceive themselves that any war is certainly a just one and that they have a just cause for going to war. We will not attempt to discuss whether war is ever just; but who does not think his own cause just? Among such great and changing vicissitudes of human events, among so
many treaties and agreements which are now entered into, now rescinded, who can lack a pretext - if there is any real excuse - for going to war? But the pontifical laws do not disapprove all war. Augustine approves of it in some instances, and St. Bernard praises some soldiers. But Christ himself and Peter and Paul everywhere teach the opposite. Why is their authority less with us than that of Augustine or Bernard? Augustine in one or two places does not disapprove of war, but the whole philosophy of Christ teaches against it. There is no place in which the apostles do not condemn it; and in how many places do those very holy fathers, by whom, to the satisfaction of some, war has been approved in one or two places, condemn and abhor it? Why do we slur over all these matters and fasten upon that which helps our sins? Finally, if any one will investigate the matter more carefully, he will find that no one has approved the kind of wars in which we are now commonly involved.

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1 Rep. V. 470; cf. also Laws I. 628. 2 Civ. Dei IV. 15; see also XIX. 7. 3 St. Bernard (1090-1153) favored the military orders of the church, and in 1129 wrote De laudibus novae Militia which he dedicated to Hugh de Payns, prior of Jerusalem; in 1146 he preached the Second Crusade. His apologia for its failure is contained in the second part of his Book of Considerations. 4 Matt. 5:9; Luke 2:14; John 14:27; 16:33. 5 1 Pet. 3:11; 11 Pet. 3:14; Hebrews 12:14; II Cor. 13:11. 6 Augustine Civ. Dei V. 17; see also III. 14; IV. 3 and 14; XII. 22.

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Certain arts are not countenanced by the laws on the ground that they are too closely allied to imposture and are too frequently practiced by deceit; for example, astrology and the so-called "alchemy," even if someone happens to be employing them for an honorable purpose. This restriction will be made with far more justice in the case of wars, for even if there are some which might be called "just," yet as human affairs are now, I know not whether there could be found any of this sort - that is, the motive for which was not ambition, wrath, ferocity, lust, or greed. It too often happens that nobles, who are more lavish than their private means allow, when the opportunity is presented stir up war in order to replenish their resources at home even by the plunder of their peoples. [L 610] It happens sometimes that princes enter into mutual agreements and carry on a war on trumped-up grounds so as to reduce still more the power of the people and secure their own positions through disaster to their subjects. [B 472] Wherefore the good Christian prince should hold under suspicion every war, no matter how just.

People may lay down the doctrine that your rights must not be forsaken. In the first place those rights are connected to a large extent with the private affairs of the prince if he has acquired them through alliances. How unfair it would be to maintain them at the expense of such great suffering to the people; and while you are seeking some addition or other to your power, to plunder the whole kingdom and to plunge it into deadliest turmoil. If one prince offends another on some trivial matter (probably a personal one such as a marriage alliance or other like affair) what concern is this to the people as a whole? A good prince measures everything by the advantage of his people, otherwise he is not even a prince. He does not have the same right over men as over animals. A large part of the ruling authority is in the consent of the people, which is the factor that first created kings. If a disagreement arises between princes, why not go to arbiters? There are plenty of bishops, abbots, and learned men, or reliable magistrates, by whose judgment the matter
could better be settled

ON BEGINNING WAR <Eras-253>

than by such slaughter, despoliation, and calamity to the world. /7

The Christian prince should first question his own right, and then if it is established without a
doubt he should carefully consider whether it should be maintained by means of catastrophes to the
whole world. Those who are wise sometimes prefer to lose a thing rather than to gain it, because
they realize that it will be less costly. Caesar, I think, would prefer to give up his rights rather than
seek to attain the old monarchy and that right which the letter of the jurisconsults conferred on
him. But what will be safe, they say, if no one maintains his rights? Let the prince insist by all
means, if there is any advantage to the state, only do not let the right of the prince bear too hard on
his subjects. But what is safe anywhere while everyone is maintaining his rights to the last ditch?
We see wars arise from wars, wars following wars, and no end or limit to the upheaval! It is
certainly obvious that nothing is accomplished by these means. Therefore other remedies should be
given a trial. Not even between the best of friends will relations remain permanently harmonious
unless sometimes one gives in to the other. A husband often makes some concession to his wife so
as not to break their harmony. What does war cause but war? Courtesy, on the other hand, calls
forth courtesy, and fairness, fairness. The fact that he can see, from the countless calamities which
war always carries in its wake, that the greatest hardship falls on those to whom the war means
nothing and who are in no way deserving of these catastrophes, will have an effect on the devoted
and merciful prince.

After the prince has reckoned and added up the total of all the catastrophes [which would come]
to the world (if that could ever be done), then he should think over in his own mind: "Shall I, one
person, be the cause of so many calamities? Shall I alone be charged with such an outpouring of
human blood; with causing so many widows; with filling so many

7 Cf. Deut. 17:8-10. Arbitration, especially in a small way, was not a new idea; the authority of
Erasmus must certainly have increased its standing.

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homes with lamentation and mourning; with robbing so many old men of their sons; with
impoverishing so many who do not deserve such a fate; and with such utter destruction of morals,
laws, and practical religion? Must I account for all these things before Christ?" [Williams++] The
prince cannot punish his enemy unless he first brings hostile activities upon his own subjects. He
must fleece his people, and he must receive [into his realm] the soldier, who has been called
ruthless (and not without justification) by Vergil. /8 He must cut off his subjects from those
districts which they formerly enjoyed for their own advantage; [or else the reverse], he must shut
up his subjects in order to hem in the enemy. And it frequently happens that we inflict worse
sufferings upon our own people than upon the enemy. It is more difficult, as well as more
desirable, to build a fine city than to destroy it. But we see flourishing cities which are established
by inexperienced and common people, demolished by the wrath of princes. Very often we destroy
a town with greater labor and expense than that with which we could build a new one, and we
carry on war at such great expense, such loss, such zeal, and pains, that peace could be maintained
at one-tenth of these costs.

Let the good prince always lean toward that glory which is not steeped in blood nor linked with the misfortune of another.\textit{Off.} I.62-78; II, 31) In war, however fortunately it turns out, the good fortune of one is always the ruin of the other. Many a time, too, the victor weeps over a victory bought too dearly. If you are not moved by devotion, nor by the calamity of the world, surely you will be stirred by the honor of the term "Christian." What do we think the Turks and Saracens are saying about us when they see that for century after century there has been no harmony between Christian princes; that no treaties have secured peace; that there has been no end to bloodshed; and that there has been less disorder among the heathen than among those who profess the most complete accord in following the teachings of Christ?

How fleeting, short, and delicate is the life of man, and

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5 Eclog. I. 70; cf. Georgics I. 511. The Latin word is impius.

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\textbf{ON BEGINNING WAR}  

How exposed to calamities, with so many diseases and accidents which are continually happening such as the falling of buildings, shipwrecks, earthquakes, and lightning? \textbf{fortune+} There is no need, then, of wars to stir up misfortunes; and more calamities come from that source than from all else. It was the duty of the preachers to have uprooted completely the ideas of discord from the hearts of the common people. But now practically every Angle hates the Gaul, and every Gaul the Angle, for no other reason than that he is an Angle. [B 473] The Irishman, just because he is an Irishman, hates the Briton; the Italian hates the German; the Swabian, the Swiss; and so on throughout the list. District hates district, and city (civitas) hates city. Why do these stupid names do more to divide us than the common name of Christ does to unite us? Although we may grant some war to be just, yet, since we see that all men go mad over this scourge, it is the part of wise priests to deflect the minds of commoners and princes into different channels. Now we see them often as the very firebrands of war. The bishops are not ashamed to go about in the camp, and there is the cross, and there the body of Christ, and they mix His heavenly sacraments with things that are more than Tartarean and in such bloody discord produce the symbols of the greatest charity. What is more ridiculous, Christ is in both camps, as if he were fighting against himself. It was not enough that \textbf{war+} was tolerated among Christians, it must also be given the place of highest honor.

If the whole teachings of Christ do not everywhere inveigh against war, if a single instance of specific commendation of war can be brought forth in its favor, let us Christians fight. The Hebrews were allowed to engage in war, but only by consent of God. Our oracle, which we hear steadily in the Gospels, restrains us from war, and yet we wage war more madly than they. David was most pleasing to God for various good qualities, and yet He forbade His temple to be built by him on the one ground that he was tainted with blood; that is, he was a warrior. He chose the peaceful Solomon for this task.\textit{9 If}

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9 1 Chron. 22:7-10.
these things were done among the Jews, what should be done among us Christians? They had a shadow of Solomon, we have the real Solomon, the Prince of Peace, Christ, who conciliates all things in heaven and earth.

Not even against the Turks do I believe we should rashly go to war, first reflecting in my own mind that the kingdom of Christ was created, spread out, and firmly established by far different means. Perchance then it is not right that it should be maintained by means differing from those by which it was created and extended. We see how many times under pretexts of wars of this kind the Christian people have been plundered and nothing else has been accomplished. Now, if the matter has to do with faith, that has been increased and made famous by the suffering of martyrs and not by forces of soldiery; but if it is for ruling power, wealth, and possessions, we must continuously be on guard lest the cause have too little of Christianity in it. But on the contrary, to judge from some who are conducting wars of this kind, it may more readily happen that we degenerate into Turks than that they become Christians through our efforts. First let us see that we ourselves are genuine Christians, and then, if it seems best, let us attack the Turks.10

We have written elsewhere more extensively on the evils of war and should not repeat here. I will only urge princes of Christian faith to put aside all feigned excuses and all false pretexts and with wholehearted seriousness to work for the ending of that madness for war which has persisted so long and disgracefully among Christians, that among those whom so many ties unite there may arise a peace and concord. Let them develop their genius to this end, and for this let them show their strength, combine their plans, and strain every nerve. Whoever desires to appear great, let him prove himself great in this way. If any one accomplishes this, he will have done a deed far more magnificent than if he had subdued the whole of Africa by arms. It would not be so difficult to do, if everyone would cease to favor his own cause, if we could set

10 Cf. John 8:7.

ON BEGINNING WAR <Eras-257>

aside all personal feelings and carry out the common aim, if Christ, not the world, was in our plans. [L 612] Now, while everyone is looking out for his own interests, while popes and bishops are deeply concerned over power and wealth, while princes are driven headlong by ambition or anger, while all follow after them for the sake of their own gain, it is not surprising that we run straight into a whirlwind of affairs under the guidance of folly. But if, after common counsel, we should carry out our common task, even those things which are purely personal to each one would be more prosperous. Now even that for which alone we are fighting is lost.

I have no doubt, most illustrious of princes, but that you are of this mind; for you were born in that atmosphere and have been trained by the best and most honorable men along those lines. For the rest, I pray that Christ, who is all good and supreme, may continue to bless your worthy efforts. He gave you a kingdom untainted by blood; He would have it always so. He rejoices to be called the Prince of Peace; may you do the same, that by your goodness and your wisdom, at last there may be a respite from the maddest of mad wars. The memory of the misfortunes we have passed through will also commend peace to us, and the calamities of earlier times will render twofold the favor of your kindness.