

CHAPTER II.

Directions to Young Christians, or Beginners in Religion, for their Establishment and Safe Proceeding.*

BEFORE I come to the common Directions, for the exercise of grace, and walking with God, containing the common duties of Christianity, I shall lay down some previous instructions, proper to those that are but newly entered into religion; presupposing what is said in my book of Directions to those that are yet under the work of conversion, to prevent their miscarrying by a false or superficial change.

Direction 1. 'Take heed, lest it be the novelty or reputation of truth and godliness, that takes with you, more than the solid evidence of their excellency and necessity: lest, when the novelty and reputation are gone, your religion wither and consume away.'

It is said of John and the Jews, by Christ, "He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light^b." All men are affected most, with things that seem new and strange to them. It is not only the infirmity of children, that are pleased with new clothes, and new toys and games; but even to graver, wiser persons, new things are most affecting, and commonness and custom dulls delight. Our habitations, and possessions, and honours, are most pleasing to us at the first; and every condition of life, doth most affect us at the first. If nature were not much for novelty, the publishing of news-books would not have been so gainful a trade so long, unless the matter had been truer, and more desirable. Hence it is, that changes are so welcome to the world, though they prove, ordinarily, to their cost. No wonder then, if religion be the more acceptable, when it comes with this advantage. When men first hear the doctrine of godliness, and the tidings of another world, by a powerful preacher opened and set home, no wonder if things of so great moment affect them for a time. It is said of them that received the seed of God's

* I have since written a book on this subject, to which I refer the reader for fuller direction.

^b John v. 35.

Word as into stony ground, that “forthwith it sprung up” and they “anon with joy received it;” but it quickly withered for want of rooting. These kind of hearers can no more delight, still in one preacher, or one profession, or way, than a glutton in one dish, or an adulterer in one harlot; for it is but a kind of sensual or natural pleasure that they have in the highest truths; and all such delight must be fed with novelty, and variety of objects. The Athenians were inquisitive after Paul’s doctrine, as novelty, though after, they rejected it, as seeming to them incredible. “May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest, is? for thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore, what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing^d).”

To this kind of professors, the greatest truths grow out of fashion, and they grow weary of them, as of dull and ordinary things: they must have some new light, or new way of religion, that lately came in fashion: their souls are weary of that manna, that at first was acceptable to them, as angel’s food. Old things seem low, and new things high to them; and to entertain some novelty in religion, is to grow up to more maturity: and too many such, at last so far overthrive their old apparel, that the old Christ, and old Gospel are left behind them.

The light of the Gospel is more speedily communicated, than the heat: and this first part being more acceptable to them, is soon received: and religion seemeth best to them at first. At first they have the light of knowledge alone: and then they have the warmth of a new and prosperous profession. There must be some time for the operating of the heat, before it burneth them: and then they have enough, and cast it away in as much haste as they took it up. If preachers would only lighten, and shoot no thunderbolts, even a Herod himself would “hear them gladly, and do many things after them:” but when their Herodias is meddled with, they cannot bear it. If preachers would speak only to men’s fancies or understandings, and not meddle too smartly with their hearts, and lives, and carnal interests, the world would bear them, and hear them as they do stage-

^c Matt. xiii. 5. 20.

^d Acts xvii. 19—21.

players, or at least as lectures in philosophy, or physic. A sermon that hath nothing but some general, toothless notions, in a handsome dress of words, doth seldom procure offence or persecution. It is rare that such men's preaching is distasted by carnal hearers, or their persons hated for it. "It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun *;" but not to be scorched by its heat. Christ himself at a distance, as promised, was greatly desired by the Jews; but when he came, they could not bear him: his doctrine and life were so contrary to their expectations. "The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple even the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap †." Many when they come first (by profession) to Christ, do little think that he would cast them into the fire, and refine them, and purge away their dross, and cast them anew into the mould of the Gospel ‡. Many will play awhile by the light, that will not endure to be melted by the fire. When the preacher cometh once to this, he is harsh, and intolerable, and loseth all the praise which he had won before, and the pleasing novelty of religion is over with them. The Gospel is sent to make such work in the soul and life, as these tender persons will not endure. It must captivate every thought to Christ, and kill every lust and pleasure which is against his will; and put a new and heavenly life into the soul. It must possess men with deep and lively apprehensions of the great things of eternity. It is not wavering, dull opinions, that will raise and carry on the soul, to such vigorous, constant, victorious action, as is necessary to salvation. When the Gospel cometh to the heart, to do this great, prevailing work, then these men are impatient of the search and smart, and presently have done with it. They are like children, that love the book, for the gilding and fineness of the cover, and take it up as soon as any; but it is to play with, and not to learn: they are weary of it when it comes to that. At first many come to Christ with wonder, and will needs be his servants, for something in it that seemeth fine: till they hear that the Son of Man hath not the accommodation of the birds or

* Eccles. xi. 7.

† Mal. iii. 1—3.

‡ Rom. vi. 17.

foxes; and that his doctrine and way hath an enmity to their worldly, fleshly interest, and then they are gone. They first entertained Christ, in compliment, thinking that he would please them, or not much contradict them; but when they find that they have received a guest, that will rule them, and not be ruled by them, that will not suffer them to take their pleasure, nor enjoy their riches, but hold them to a life which they cannot endure, and even undo them in the world, he is then no longer a guest for them. Whereas, if Christ had been received as Christ, and truth and godliness deliberately entertained, for their well discerned excellency and necessity, the deep rooting would have prevented this apostasy, and cured such hypocrisy.

But, alas! poor Ministers find, by sad experience, that all prove not saints that flock to hear them, and make up the crowd; nor that "for a season rejoice in their light," and magnify them, and take their parts. The blossom hath its beauty and sweetness; but all that blossometh, or appeareth in the bud, doth not come to perfect fruit: some will be blasted, and some blown down; some nipt with frosts; some eaten by worms; some quickly fall; and some hang on, till the strongest blasts do cast them down: some are deceived and poisoned by false teachers; some by worldly cares, and the deceitfulness of riches become unfruitful, and are turned aside: the lusts of some had deeper rooting than the Word; and the friends of some had greater interest in them than Christ, and therefore they forsake him to satisfy their importunity: some are corrupted by the hopes of preferment, or the favour of man: some feared from Christ by their threats and frowns, and choose to venture on damnation, to escape persecution: and some are so worldly wise, that they can see reason to remit their zeal, and can save their souls and bodies too; and prove that to be their duty, which other men call sin (if the end will but answer their expectations): and some grow weary of truth and duty, as a dull and common thing, being not supplied with that variety, which might still continue the delights of novelty.

Yet mistake not what I have said, as if all the affection furthered by novelty, and abated by commonness and use, were a sign that the person is but an hypocrite. I know

that there is something in the nature of man, remaining in the best, which disposeth us to be much more passionately affected with things, when they seem new to us, and are first apprehended, than when they are old, and we have known or used them long. There is not, I believe, one man of a thousand, but is much more delighted in the light of truth, when it first appeareth to him, than when it is trite, and familiarly known; and is much more affected with a powerful Minister at first, than when he hath long sat under him. The same sermon, that even transported them at the first hearing, would affect them less, if they had heard it preached an hundred times. The same books, which greatly affected us at the first or second reading, will affect us less when we have read them over twenty times. The same words of prayer, that take much with us when seldom used, do less move our affections, when they are daily used all the year. At our first conversion, we have more passionate sorrow for our sin, and love to the godly, than we can afterwards retain. And all this is the case of learned and unlearned, the sound and unsound, though not alike. Even heaven itself is spoken of by Christ, as if it did participate of this, when he saith, that "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, that need no repentance^g." And I know, it is the duty of Ministers to take notice of this disposition in their hearers, and not to dull them with giving them still the same, but to profit them by a pleasant and profitable variety: not by preaching to them another Christ, or a new Gospel: it is the same God, and Christ, and Spirit, and Scripture, and the same heaven, the same church, the same faith, and hope, and repentance, and obedience, that we must preach to them, as long as we live: though they say, we have heard this an hundred times, let them hear it still, and bring them not a new creed. If they hear so oft of God, and Christ, and heaven, till by faith, and love, and fruition, they attain them as their end, they have heard well. But yet there is a grateful variety of subordinate particulars, and of words, and methods, and seasonable applications, necessary to the right performance of our ministry, and to the profiting

^g Luke xv. 7. 10.

of the flocks: though the physician use the same apothecary's shop, and dispensatory, and drugs, yet how great a variety must he use of compositions, and times, and manner of administration?

But for all this, though the best are affected most with things that seem new, and are dulled with the long and frequent use of the same expressions, yet they are never weary of the substance of their religion, so as to desire a change. And though they are not so passionately affected with the same sermons, and books, or with the thoughts, or mention of the same substantial matters of religion, as at first they were; yet do their judgments more solidly and tenaciously embrace them, and esteem them, and their wills as resolutely adhere to them, and use them, and in their lives they practise them, better than before. Whereas, they that take up their religion but for novelty, will lay it down when it ceaseth to be new to them, and must either change for a newer, or have none at all^b.

And as unsound are they, that are religious, only because their education, or their friends, or the laws, or judgment of their rulers, or the custom of the country, hath made it necessary to their reputation. These are hypocrites at the first setting out, and therefore cannot be saved by continuance in such carnal religiousness as this. I know law, and custom, and education, and friends, when they side with godliness, are a great advantage to it, by affording helps, and removing those impediments that might stick much with carnal minds. But truth is not your own, till it be received in its proper evidence; nor your faith divine, till you believe what you believe, because God is true who doth reveal it; nor are you the children of God, till you love him for himself; nor are you truly religious, till the truth and goodness of religion itself, be the principal thing that maketh you religious. It helpeth much to discover a man's sincerity, when he is not only religious among the religious, but among the profane, and the enemies, and scorners, and persecutors of religion: and when a man doth not pray only in a praying family, but among the prayerless, and the deriders of fervent, constant prayer: and when a man is heavenly among

^b Fere idem itaque exitus est odii et amoris inani. Senec. de Ben. lib. vi. c. 25. Elz. 1649. p. 511.

them that are earthly; and temperate among the intemperate and riotous; and holdeth the truth among those that reproach it, and that hold the contrary: when a man is not carried only by a stream of company, or outward advantages to his religion; nor avoideth sin for want of a temptation; but is religious, though against the stream, and innocent when cast, unwillingly, upon temptations; and is godly where godliness is accounted singularity, hypocrisy, faction, humour, disobedience, or heresy: and will rather let go the reputation of his honesty, than his honesty itself.

Direct. 11. 'Take heed of being religious only in opinion, without zeal, and holy practice; or only in zealous affection, without a sound, well-grounded judgment: but see that judgment, zeal, and practice be conjunct.

Of the first part of this advice (against bare opinionative religion), I have spoken already, in my "Directions for a Sound Conversion." To change your opinions, is an easier matter than to change the heart and life. A holding of the truth, will save no man, without a love and practice of the truth. This is the meaning of St. James, where he speaketh so much of the unprofitableness of a dead, ineffectual belief, that worketh not by love, and commandeth not the soul to practice and obedience. To believe that there is a God, while you neglect him, and disobey him, is unlike to please him. To believe that there is a heaven, while you neglect it, and prefer the world before it, will never bring you thither. To believe your duty, and not to perform it; and to believe that sin is evil, and yet to live in it; is to sin with aggravation, and have no excuse, and not the way to be accepted or justified with God. To be of the same belief with holy men, without the same hearts and conversations, will never bring you to the same felicity. "He that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be" so far from being accepted for it, that he shall be "beaten with many stripes." To believe that holiness and obedience is the best way, will never save the disobedient and unholy.

And yet if judgment be not your guide, the most zealous affections will but precipitate you; and make you run, though quite out of the way, like the horses when they have cast the coachman or the riders'. To ride post when you

' *Scientia quæ est remota à justiciâ, calliditas potius quam sapientia appellanda*

are quite out of the way, is but laboriously to lose your time, and to prepare for further labour. The Jews that persecuted Christ and his apostles, had the testimony of Paul himself, that they had a "zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." And Paul saith of the deceivers and troublers of the Galatians (whom he wisheth even cut off), that they did zealously affect them, but not well^k. And he saith of himself, while he persecuted the Christians to prison and to death, "I was zealous towards God as ye are all this day^l." Was not the Papist, St. Dominick, that stirred up the persecution against the Christians in France and Savoy, to the murdering of many thousands of them, a very zealous man? And are not the butchers of the Inquisition zealous men? And were not the authors of the third Canon of the General Council at the Lateran, under Pope Innocent the Third, very zealous men, who decreed that the Pope should depose temporal lords, and give away their dominions, and absolve their subjects, if they would not exterminate the godly, called heretics? Were not the Papists' powder-plotters zealous men? Hath not zeal caused many of later times, to rise up against their lawful governors? and many to persecute the church of God, and deprive the people of their faithful pastors without compassion on the people's souls? Doth not Christ say of such zealots, "The time cometh, when whosoever killeth you will think he doth God service^m," (or offereth a service acceptable to God.) Therefore Paul saith, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thingⁿ." Shewing you that zeal indeed is good, if sound judgment be its guide. Your first question must be, Whether you are in the right way? and your second, Whether you go apace? It is sad to observe what odious actions are committed, in all ages of the world, by the instigation of misguided zeal? And what a shame an imprudent zealot is to his profession, while making himself ridiculous in the

est. P. Scalig. The imprudencies of well-meaning men, have done as much hurt to the church sometimes, as the persecution of enemies. e. g. When Constantine, the son of Constans, was emperor, some busy men would prove, from the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, that his two brethren, Tiberius and Heraclius, should reign with him: saying, Si in Trinitate credimus, tres etiam coronemus; which cost the chief of them a hanging. Abbas Urspergens. edit. Melanct. p. 162.

^k Rom. x. 2. Gal. iv. 17.

^l Acts xxii. 3, 4.

^m John xvi. 2.

ⁿ Gal. iv. 18.

eyes of the adversaries, he brings his profession itself into contempt, and maketh the ungodly think that the religious are but a company of transported, brain-sick zealots; and thus are hardened to their perdition. How many things doth unadvised affection provoke well-meaning people to, that afterwards will be their shame and sorrow.

Labour therefore for knowledge, and soundness of understanding; that you may know truth from falsehood, good from evil; and may walk confidently, while you walk safely; and that you become not a shame to your profession, by a furious prosecution of that which you must afterwards confess to be an error; by drawing others to that which you would afterwards wish that you had never known yourselves. And yet see that all your knowledge have its efficacy, upon your heart and life; and take every truth as an instrument of God, to reveal himself to you, or to draw your heart to him, and conform you to his holy will.

Direct. 111. 'Labour to understand the true method of divinity, and see truths in their several degrees and order; that you take not the last for the first, nor the lesser for the greater. Therefore see that you be well grounded in the catechism; and refuse not to learn some catechism that is sound and full, and keep it in memory while you live.'

Method, or right order, exceedingly helpeth understanding, memory, and practice*. Truths have a dependence on each other; the lesser branches spring out of the greater, and those out of the stock and root. Some duties are but means to other duties, or subservient to them, and to be measured accordingly; and if it be not understood which is the chief, the other cannot be referred to it. When two things, materially good, come together, and both cannot be done, the greater must take place, and the lesser is no duty at that time, but a sin, as preferred before the greater. Therefore it is one of the commonest difficulties among cases of conscience, to know which duty is the greater, and to be preferred. Upon this ground, Christ healed on the sabbath-day, and pleaded for his disciples rubbing the ears

* *Opus est imprimis duplici catechismo: uno compendario et brevi quem memoriter addiscant; ubi summa sit eorum omnium quæ ad fidem et mores Christianos sunt necessaria: altero ubi eadem amplius, dilucidiusque dicantur, et copiosius confirmantur: ut ille prior discipulis potius, hic posterior ipsis præceptoribus usu sit.* Acosta, lib. v. c. 14. p. 490.

of corn, and for David's eating the shew-bread, and telleth them, that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath, and that God will have mercy, and not sacrifice."

Divinity is a curious, well-composed frame. As it is not enough that you have all the parts of your watch or clock, but you must see that every part be in its proper place, or else it will not go or answer its end; so it is not enough that you know the several parts of Divinity or duty, unless you know them in their true order and place. You may be confounded before you are aware, and led into many dangerous errors, by mistaking the order of several truths; and you may be misguided into heinous sins, by mistaking the degrees and order of duties. As when duties of piety and charity seem to be competitors: and when you think that the commands of men contradict the commands of God: and when the substance and the circumstances or modes of duty are in question before you as inconsistent: or when the means seemeth to cease to be a means, by crossing of the end: and in abundance of such cases, you cannot easily conceive what a snare it may prove to you to be ignorant of the methods and ranks of duty.

Objection. If that be so, what man can help being confounded in his religion, when there be so few that observe any method at all, and few that agree in method, and none that hath published a scheme or method so exact and clear as to be commonly approved by Divines themselves. What then can ignorant Christians do?

Answer. Divinity is like a tree that hath one trunk^p, and thence a few greater arms or boughs, and thence a thousand smaller branches: or like the veins, or nerves, or arteries in the body, that have first one or few trunks divided into more, and those into a few more, and those into more, till they multiply at last into more than can easily be seen or numbered. Now it is easy for any man to begin at the chief trunk, and to discern the first divisions, and the next, though not to comprehend the number and order of all extreme and smaller branches. So is it in Divinity: it is not very hard to begin at the unity of the eternal God-

^p Stoici dicunt virtutes sibi invicem ita esse connexas, ut qui unam habuerit, omnes habeat. Diog. Laert. in Zenone, lib. vii. *segm.* 125. p. 444.

head, and see there a trinity of persons, and of primary attributes, and of relations; and to arise to the principal attributes and works of God as in these relations, and to the relations of man to God, and to the great duties of these relations, to discern God's covenants and chiefest laws, and the duty of man in obedience thereto, and the judgment of God in the execution of his sanctions: though yet many particular truths be not understood. And he that beginneth and proceedeth as he ought, doth know methodically so much as he knoweth; and he is in the right way to the knowledge of more: and the great mercy of God hath laid so great a necessity on us to know these few points that are easily known, and so much less need of knowing the many small particulars, that a mean Christian may live uprightly, and holy, and comfortably, that well understandeth his catechism, or the creed, Lord's prayer, and ten commandments, and may find daily work and consolation in the use of these.

A sound and well-composed catechism, studied well and kept in memory, would be a good measure of knowledge to ordinary Christians, and make them solid and orderly in their understanding, and in their proceeding to the smaller points; and would prevent a great deal of error and miscarriage, that many by ill teaching are cast upon, to their own and the churches' grief! Yea, it were to be wished, that some teachers of late had learned so much and orderly themselves.

Direct. iv. 'Begin not too early with controversies in religion: and, when you come to them, let them have but their due proportion of your time and zeal: but live daily upon these certain, great substantials, which all Christians are agreed in.'

1. Plunge not yourselves too soon into controversies: for, (1.) It will be exceedingly to your loss, by diverting your souls from greater and more necessary things: you may get more increase of holiness, and spend your time more pleasingly to God, by drinking in deeper the substantials of religion, and improving them on your hearts and lives.

(2.) It will corrupt your minds, and instead of humility, charity, holiness, and heavenly-mindedness, it will feed

your pride, and kindle faction and a dividing zeal, and quench your charity, and possess you with a wrangling, contentious spirit, and you will make a religion of these sins and lamentable distempers.

(3.) And it is the way to deceive and corrupt your judgments, and make you erroneous or heretical, to your own perdition, and the disturbance of the church: for it is two to one but either you presently err, or else get such an itch after notions and opinions that will lead you to error at the last. Because you are not yet ripe and able to judge of those things, until your minds are prepared by those truths that are first in order to be received. When you undertake a work that you cannot do, no wonder if it be ill done, and must be all undone again, or worse.

Perhaps you will say, that you must not take your religion upon trust, but must "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good."

Answer. Though your religion must not be taken upon trust, there are many controverted, smaller opinions that you must take upon trust, until you are capable of discerning them in their proper evidence. Till you can reach them yourselves, you must take them on trust, or not at all. Though you must believe all things of common necessity to salvation with a divine faith; yet many subservient truths must be received first by a human faith, or not received at all until you are more capable of them. Nay, there is a human faith necessarily subservient to the Divine faith, about the substance of religion; and the officers of Christ are to be trusted in their office, as helpers of your faith. Nay, let me tell you, that while you are young and ignorant, you are not fit for controversies about the fundamentals of religion themselves. You may believe that there is a God, long before you are fit to hear an atheist proving that there is no God: you may believe the Scripture to be the word of God, and Christ to be the Saviour, and the soul to be immortal, long before you will be fit to manage or study controversies hereupon. For nothing is so false or bad, which a wanton or wicked wit may not put a plausible gloss upon: and your raw, unfurnished understandings will scarcely be able to see through the pretence, or escape the cheat. When you cannot answer the arguments of seducers, you will find them

leave a doubting in your minds ; for you know not how plain the answer of them is to wiser men. And though you must prove all things, you must do it in due order, and as you are able : and stay till your furnished minds are capable of the trial. If you will needs read before you know your letters, or pretend to judge of Greek and Hebrew authors before you can read English, you will but become ridiculous in your undertaking.

2. When you do come to smaller controverted points, let them have but their due proportion of your time and zeal. And that will not be one hour in many days, with the generality of private Christians. By that time you have well learned the more necessary duties, you will find that there will be but little time to spare for lesser controversies. Opinionists that spend most of their time in studying and talking of such points do steal that time from greater matters, and therefore from God and from themselves : better work is undone the while. And they that here lay out their chiefest zeal divert their zeal from things more necessary, and turn their natural heat into a fever.

3. The essential, necessary truths of your religion, must imprint the image of God upon your hearts, and must dwell there continually, and you must live upon them as your bread, and drink, and daily necessary food : all other points must be studied in subserviency to those. All lesser duties must be used as the exercise of the love of God or man, and of a humble, heavenly mind. The articles of your creed, and points of catechism are fountains ever running, affording you matter for the continual exercise of grace : it is both plentiful and solid nourishment of the soul, which these great, substantial points afford. To know God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, the laws and covenant of God, and his judgment, and rewards and punishments, with the parts and method of the Lord's prayer, which must be the daily exercise of our desires and love : this is the wisdom of a Christian, and in these must he be continually exercised.

You will say, perhaps, that the apostle saith, " Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works," &c.

Answer. 1. By " leaving" he meaneth not passing over the

practice of them, as men that have done with them and are past; but his leaving at that time to discourse of them, or his supposing them taught already: though he lay not the foundation again, yet he doth not pluck it up. 2. By "principles" he meaneth the first points to be taught, and learned, and practised: and, indeed, regeneration and baptism is not to be done again: but the essentials of religion, which I am speaking of, contain much more; especially to live in the love of God, which Paul calls "the more excellent way". 3. "Going on to perfection," is not by ceasing to believe and love God, but by a more distinct knowledge of the mysteries of salvation, to perfect our faith, and love, and obedience.

The points that opinionists call higher, and think to be the principal matter of their growth, and advancement in understanding, are usually but some smaller, less necessary truths, if not some uncertain, doubtful questions*.

Direct. v. 'Be very thankful for the great mercy of your conversion: but yet overvalue not your first degrees of knowledge or holiness; but remember that you are yet but in your infancy, and must expect your growth and ripeness, as the consequent of time and diligence.'

You have great reason to be more glad and thankful, for the least measure of true grace, than if you had been made the rulers of the earth: it being of a far more excellent nature, and entitling you to more than all the kingdoms of the world. See my sermon called "Right Rejoicing," on those words of Christ, "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven". Christ will warrant you to rejoice, though enemies envy you, and repine both at your victory and triumph. If there be "joy in heaven in the presence of the angels" at your conversion, there is great reason you should be glad yourselves. If the prodigal's father will needs have the best robe and ring brought forth, and the fat calf killed, and the music to attend the feast, that they may eat and be merry", there is great reason that the prodigal son himself should not have the smallest share of joy: though his brother repine.

* 1 Cor. xii. xiii. * Mark well 1 Tim. i. 4. and iv. 4. 2 Tim. ii. 23. Tit. iii. 9. compared with John xvii. 3. Rom. xiii. 8—10. 1 Cor. xiii. 1 John fil. 1 Cor i. 23. xv. 1—3. ii. 2. Gal. vi. 14. James ii. iii. 1.

† Luke x. 20.

‡ Luke xv. 23.

But yet, take heed lest you think the measure of your first endowments to be greater than it is². Grace imitateth nature, in beginning, usually, with small degrees, and growing up to maturity by leisurely proceeding. We are not new born in a state of manhood, as Adam was created. Though those texts that liken the kingdom of God to a grain of mustard-seed, and to a little leaven³, be principally meant of the small beginnings, and great increase of the church or kingdom of Christ in the world; yet it is true also of his grace, or kingdom in the soul. Our first stature is but to be "new-born babes desiring the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow by it⁴." Note here, that the new birth bringeth forth but babes, but growth is by degrees, by feeding on the Word. The Word is received by the heart, as seed into the ground⁵. And seed useth not to bring forth the blade and fruit, to ripeness, in a day.

Yet I deny not, but that some men (as Paul) may have more grace at their first conversion, than many others have at their full growth. For God is free in the giving of his own, and may give more or less as pleaseth himself. But yet in Paul himself, that greater measure is but his smallest measure, and he himself is capable of increase to the last. And so great a measure at first is as rare, as his greater measure, at last, in its full growth, is rare, and scarce to be expected now.

And if God should give a great measure of holiness at first, to any now, as possibly he may, yet their measure of gifts is never great at first, unless they had acquired or received them before conversion. If grace find a man of great parts and understanding, which by study and other helps, he had attained before, no wonder if that man, when his parts are sanctified, be able in knowledge the first day: for he had it before, though he had not a heart to use it. But if grace find a man ignorant, unlearned, and of mean abilities, he must not expect to be suddenly lifted up to great understanding, and high degrees of knowledge by grace. For this knowledge is not given, now, by sudden infusion, as gifts were, extraordinarily, in the primitive church. You need no other proof of this but experience, to stop the mouth of

² Laertius saith of Cleanthus, "Cum aliquando probro ille daretur, quod esset timidus, At ideo, inquit, parum pecco." Diog. Laert. lib. vii. Segm. 171. p. 473.

³ Matt. xiii. 31. 33.

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 2.

⁵ Matt. xiii.

any gainsayer. Look about you, and observe whether those that are men of knowledge, did obtain it by infusion, in a moment? or whether they did not obtain it by diligent study, by slow degrees? though I know God blesseth some men's studies more than others. Name one man that ever was brought to great understanding, but by means and labour, and slow degrees; or that knoweth any truth, in nature, or Divinity, but what he read, or heard, or studied for, as the result of, what he read or heard. The person that is proudest of his knowledge, must confess that he came to it in this way himself.

But you will ask, 'What then is the illumination of the Spirit, and enlightening the mind, which the Scripture ascribeth to the Holy Ghost? Hath not our understanding need of the Spirit for light, as well as the heart or will for life?'

Answ. Yes, no doubt; and it is a great and wonderful mercy: and I will tell you what it is. 1. The Holy Spirit, by immediate inspiration, revealed to the apostles the doctrine of Christ, and caused them infallibly to indite the Scriptures. But this is not that way of ordinary illumination now. 2. The Holy Spirit assisteth us in our hearing, reading, and studying the Scriptures, that we may come, by diligence, to the true understanding of it; but doth not give us that understanding, without hearing, reading, or study. "Faith cometh by hearing^b." It blesseth the use of means to us, but blesseth us not in the neglect of means. 3. The Holy Spirit doth open the eyes and heart of a sinner, who hath heard, and notionally understood the substance of the Gospel, that he may know that piercingly, and effectually, and practically, which before he knew but notionally, and ineffectually: so that the knowledge of the same truth, is now become powerful, and, as it were, of another kind. And this is the Spirit's sanctifying of the mind, and principal work of saving illumination: not by causing us to know any thing of God, or Christ, or heaven, without means; but by opening the heart, that, through the means, it may take in that knowledge deeply, which others have but notionally, and in a dead opinion: and, by making our knowledge clear, and quick, and powerful, to affect the heart, and rule the

^b Rom. x. 17.

life. 4. The Holy Spirit sanctifieth all that notional knowledge which men had before their renovation. All their learning and parts are now made subservient to Christ, and to the right end, and turned into their proper channel. 5. And the Holy Ghost doth, by sanctifying the heart, possess it with such a love to God, and heaven, and holiness, and truth, as is a wonderful advantage to us, in our studies for the attaining of further knowledge. Experience telleth us, how great a help it is to knowledge, to have a constant love, delight and desire to the thing which we would know. All these ways the Spirit is the enlightener of believers.

The not observing this Direction, will have direful effects; which I will name, that you may see the necessity of avoiding them.

1. If you imagine that you are presently men of great understanding, and abilities, and holiness, while you are young beginners, and but new-born babes, you are entering into the snare and condemnation of the devil, even into the odious sin of pride; yea, a pride of those spiritual gifts which are most contrary to pride; yea, and a pride of that which you have not, which is most foolish pride. Mark the words of Paul^c, when he forbids to choose a young beginner in religion to the ministry, "Not a novice, (that is, a young, raw Christian) "lest being lifted up," (or besotted) "with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." Why are young beginners more in danger of this, than other Christians? One would think their infancy should be conscious of its own infirmity. But Paul knew what he said. It is (1.) Partly because the suddenness of their change, coming out of darkness, into a light which they never saw before, doth amaze them, and transport them, and make them think they are almost in heaven, and that there is not much more to be attained. Like the beggar that had an hundred pounds given him, having never seen the hundredth part before, imagined that he had as much money as the king. (2.) And it is partly because they have not knowledge enough to know; how many things there are, that yet they are ignorant of^d. They never heard of the Scripture-difficulties, and the

^c 1 Tim. iii. 6.

^d Qui discipulum rudem et elatum habet, contra ventum adverso flumine navigat, serpentem nutrit, aconitum excolet, hostem docet. Petrarch, Dial. 41. lib. 3.

knots in school divinity, nor the hard cases of conscience : whereas, one seven year's painful studies, will tell them of many hundred difficulties which they never saw : and forty or fifty year's study more, will clothe them with shame and humility, in the sense of their lamentable darkness. (3.) And it is, also, because the devil doth with greatest industry, lay this net to entrap young converts, it being the way in which he hath the greatest hope.

2. Your hasty conceits of your own goodness, or ability, will make you presumptuous of your own strength, and so to venture upon dangerous temptations, which is the way to ruin. You will think you are not so ignorant, but you may venture into the company of Papists, or any heretics or deceivers, or read their books, or be present at their worship. And I confess you may escape ; but it may be otherwise, and God may leave you, to "shew you all that was in your hearts," as it is said of Hezekiah *.

3. And your overvaluing your first grace, will make you too secure, when your souls have need of holy awfulness and care, "to work out your salvation with fear and trembling," and to "serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, as knowing that he is a consuming fire," and security is the forerunner of a fall.

4. It will make you neglect the due labour and patience in the use of means for further knowledge and increase of grace, while you think you are so well already. And so you will be worse than those that are ever learning, and never come to any ripe knowledge ; for you will think you are fit to be teachers, when you have need to be taught that which you will not submit to learn. And then "When for the time ye ought to have been teachers, you will have need to be catechised, or taught again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, as having need of milk, and not of strong meat." Mark here, how the Holy Ghost maketh time and exercise, necessary to such growth as must enable you to be teachers. Therefore he addeth, "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age ; those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil^b." Mark here, how wisdom and strength are to be expected.

* 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. 25, 26.

^f Phil. ii. 12.

^g Heb. xii. 28, 29.

^b Heb. v. 12—14.

5. This over-hasty conceit of your own ability, will tempt you to run into controversies, and matters that you are not fit for; and so divert you from necessary and seasonable studies.

6. It will make you over confident of all your own opinions, and stiff in all your own conceits: too like him, Prov. xiv. 16. "The fool rageth and is confident." How many, and many a time have I heard a man, that understood not what he talked of, and could scarce speak sense, to plead for his opinion so confidently, as to scorn or pity the wisest contradictor, when his ignorance, and phrenetic confidence and rage, did make him a real object of pity, to men of ordinary understandings. There is a kind of madness in this disease, that will not leave you wit enough to know that you are mad.

7. It will make you also very censorious of others: this ignorant pride will make you think other men's knowledge to be ignorance, if they be not just of your fond opinions: and other men's graces to be none, if they be not of your mind and way. None are so ready as such, to censure those that are better than themselves, or that they have no acquaintance with, as being but civil, moral men, or being erroneous or deluded. It is a very loathsome thing, to hear an ignorant, self-conceited fellow to talk of those that are an hundred times wiser and much better than himself, as magisterially, with a proud compassion or contempt, as if he were indeed the wise man, that knoweth not what he saith.

8. And it will make you rebellious against your governors and teachers, and utterly unteachable, as despising those that should instruct and rule you. You will think yourselves wiser than your teachers, while you are but in the lowest form. It is such that James speaks to, chap. iii. 1. "My brethren, be not many masters (or teachers), knowing that ye shall receive the greater condemnation." And that whole chapter, well worth your studying, is spoke to such.

9. And thus it will entangle you in heretical opinions, to which there is no greater preparatory, than pride possessing half-witted, young beginners in religion.

10. And so it will make you troublers of the church, contending unpeaceably for that which you understand not.

11. And it tendeth to hypocrisy, making you give thanks for that which you never had, as puffed up with a knowledge that is not enough to keep you humble, and wanting the charity which would edify yourselves and others¹.

12. And it tendeth to delude you in point of assurance of salvation, taking your own over-valuing self-esteem, for true assurance; which is not ordinarily to be expected, till grace be come to greater strength.

13. Lastly, It tendeth to corrupt your apprehensions of the nature of Christianity itself; while you will judge of it in others, according to your own over-valued measure: when, if you knew it as it is, in the heart and practice of the sober, wise, humble, charitable, peaceable, mortified, heavenly believer, you would see that it hath a higher glory, than any that is manifested by you.

I have named to you all these sad effects of overvaluing your beginnings in religion, that as you love your souls, you may avoid them. I take it to be a matter of exceeding great moment, for your safety and perseverance, that while you are infants in grace, you know yourself to be such; that you may keep your form, and learn first, the lessons that must first be learned, and "walk humbly with your God, and obey those that are over you in the Lord^m," and may wait on the Spirit, in the use of means, and may not rejoice the tempter, by corrupting all that you have received, and imitating him, in falling from your state of hope.

Direct. vi. 'Be not discouraged at the difficulties and oppositions which will rise up before you, when you begin resolutely to walk with God.'

As discouragements keep off multitudes from religion, so they are great temptations to many young beginners to turn back, and as the Israelites in the wilderness, ready to wish themselves again in Egypt. Three sorts of discouragements arise before them. 1. Some from the nature of the work. 2. Some from God's trials. 3. And some from the malice of the devil and his instruments: or all these.

1. It cannot be expected but that infants and weaklings should think a little burden heavy, and an easy work or journey to be wearisome: young beginners are ordinarily puzzled, and at a loss, in every trade, or art, or science.

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 1.

^m Heb. xiii. 7. 17. 1 Thes. i. 5. 12.

Young scholars have a far harder task, than when they are once well entered. Learning is wondrous hard and unpleasant to them, at the first; but when they are once well entered, the knowledge of one thing helps another, and they go on with ease. So a young convert, that hath been bred up in ignorance, and never used to hear prayer, or to heavenly discourse; nor to hear, or join with any that did, will think it strange and hard at first. And those that were used to take their pleasure, and fulfil the desires of the flesh, and perhaps to swear, and talk filthily, or idly, or to lie, will find, at first, some difficulty to overcome their customs, and live a mortified, holy life: (yet grace will do it, and prevail.) Especially in point of knowledge, and ability of expression, be not too hasty in your expectation, but wait with patience, in a faithful, diligent use of the means, and that will be easy and delightful to you afterwards, which before discouraged you with its difficulties.

2. And God himself will have his servants, and his graces, tried and exercised by difficulties. He never intended us the reward for sitting still; nor the crown of victory, without a fight; nor a fight, without an enemy and opposition. Innocent Adam was unfit for his state of confirmation and reward, till he had been tried by temptation. Therefore the martyrs have the most glorious crown, as having undergone the greatest trial. And shall we presume to murmur at the method of God?

3. And satan, having liberty to tempt and try us, will quickly raise up storms and waves before us, as soon as we are set to sea; which make young beginners often fear, that they shall never live to reach the haven. He will shew thee the greatness of thy former sins, to persuade thee that they shall not be pardoned. He will shew thee the strength of thy passions and corruptions, to make thee think that they will never be overcome. He will shew thee the greatness of the opposition and suffering which thou art like to undergo, to make thee think thou shalt never persevere. He will do his worst to meet thee with poverty, losses, crosses, injuries, vexations, persecutions, and cruelties, yea, and unkindness from thy dearest friends, as he did by Job, to make thee think ill of God, or of his service. If he can, he will make them thy enemies that are of thine own household. He

will stir up thy own father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or brother, or sister, or children, against thee, to persuade or persecute thee from Christ: therefore Christ tells us, that if we hate not all these, that is, cannot forsake them, and use them as men do hated things; when they would turn us from him, we cannot be his disciples^a. Look for the worst that the devil can do against thee, if thou hast once lifted thyself against him, in the army of Christ, and resolvest, whatever it cost thee, to be saved. Read Heb. xi. But how little cause you have to be discouraged, though earth and hell should do their worst, you may perceive by these few considerations.

(1.) God is on your side, who hath all your enemies in his hand, and can rebuke them, or destroy them in a moment. O what is the breath or fury of dust or devils, against the Lord Almighty? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Read often that chapter, Rom. viii. In the day when thou didst enter into covenant with God, and he with thee, thou didst enter into the most impregnable rock and fortress, and house thyself in that castle of defence, where thou mayst (modestly) defy all adverse powers of earth or hell. If God cannot save thee, he is not God. And if he will not save thee, he must break his covenant. Indeed, he may resolve to save thee, not from affliction and persecution, but in it, and by it. But in all these sufferings you will "be more than conquerors, through Christ that loveth you:" that is, it is far more desirable and excellent, to conquer by patience, in suffering for Christ, than to conquer our persecutors in the field, by force of arms. O think on the saints' triumphant boastings in their God: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea^b." When his "enemies were many" and "wrested his words daily," and "fought against him, and all their thoughts were against him," yet he saith, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word; in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me^c." Remember Christ's charge, "Be not afraid of them that kill

^a Luke xiv. 26. Matt. x.

^b Rom. viii. 31.

^c Psal. xlv. 1—3.

^d Psal. lvi. 1—5.

the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him¹." If all the world were on thy side, thou might yet have cause to fear; but to have God on thy side, is infinitely more.

(2.) Jesus Christ is the Captain of thy salvation², and hath gone before thee this way himself, and hath conquered for thee; and now is engaged to make thee conqueror: and darest thou not go on where Christ doth lead the way? He was perfected through suffering himself, and will see that thou be not destroyed by it. Canst thou draw back, when thou seest his steps, and his blood?

(3.) Thou art not to conquer in thy own strength, but by the Spirit of God, and the power of that grace, which is sufficient for thee, and his strength, which appeareth most in our weakness³. And you "can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth" you⁴: "be of good cheer, he hath overcome the world⁵."

(4.) All that are in heaven have gone this way, and overcome such oppositions and difficulties as these. They were tempted, troubled, scorned, opposed, as well as you; and yet they now triumph in glory. "These are they that come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell among them⁶". And all that ever come to heaven, at age, are like to come this way. And doth not the company encourage you? and the success of those that have overcome before you? Will you have the end, and yet refuse the way?

(5.) Consider how much greater difficulties ungodly men go through to hell. They have stronger enemies than you have: the devil and wicked men are your enemies; but God himself is theirs, and yet they will go on. Men threaten but death, to discourage you; and God threateneth damnation, to discourage them; and yet they go on, and are not discouraged. And will you be more afraid of man, than

¹ Luke xii. 4. 5.² Heb. ii. 10.³ 2 Cor. xii. 9.⁴ Phil. iv. 13.⁵ John xvi. 33.⁶ Rev. vii. 14. 15.

sinner's are of God? and of death or scorn, than they are of hell?

(6.) Yea, and you yourselves must cast your souls on these greater evils, if by discouragement you turn from the way of godliness. You must run into hell, for fear of burning; and upon everlasting death, to escape a temporal death, or less: you will choose God for your enemy, to escape the enmity of man: and how wise a course this is, judge you; when, if you do but see that "your ways please God," he can "make your enemies be at peace with you," if he see it for your good. If you will fear, fear him that can damn the soul.

(7.) Lastly, Remember what abundance of mercies you have to sweeten your present life, and to make your burden easy to you: you have all that is good for you in this life, and the promise of everlasting joy: "for godliness" thus "is profitable to all things." What abundance of mercy, have you in your bodies, estates, friends, names, or souls, which are the greatest! What promises and experiences to refresh you! What liberty of access to God! A Christ to rejoice in! A heaven to rejoice in! and yet, shall a stony or dirty way, discourage you more, than these shall comfort you?

The sum of all is, your work will grow easier and sweeter to you, as your skill and strength increase. Your enemies are as grasshoppers before you: the power of the Almighty is engaged, by love and promise, for your help: and do you pretend to trust in God, and yet will fear the face of man? "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up." "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their

7 Prov. xvi. 7.

8 1 Tim. iv. 8.

9 Isa. l. 6—9.

revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation^b." He is no soldier for Christ, that will turn back for fear of scorns, or of any thing that man can do against him.

And consider, whether heaven should be more easily come to? They are things of unspeakable glory that you strive for: and they are unworthily despised, if any thing be thought too good to part with for them, or any labour, or difficulties, or sufferings too great to undergo to procure them.

Direct. vii. 'If it be in your power, live under a judicious, faithful, serious, searching, powerful minister^c; and diligently attend his public teaching, and use his private counsel, for more particular directions and application, for the settling and managing the affairs of your souls; even as you take the advice of physicians for your health, and of lawyers for your estates, and tutors for your studies.'

I give this direction only to those that may enjoy so great a mercy, if they will. Some live where no such minister is. Some are children, or servants, or wives, that are bound, and cannot remove their habitations, or enjoy such liberty, by reason of the unwillingness and restraint of others. Some are so poor, that they cannot remove their dwelling, for such advantages. And some are so serviceable in their places, that they may be bound to stay under a very weak minister, that they may do good to others, where they have best opportunity. But let him that can be free, and pos-

^b Isa. li. 7, 8.

^c His maxime utile est nôsse ita esse præponendas verbis sententias, ut præponitur animus corpori: ex quo fit, ut ita malle debeant veriores quam disertiores audire sermones, sicut malle debent prudentiores quam formosiores habere amicos. Noverint etiam non esse vocem ad aures Dei nisi animi affectum: ita enim non irridebunt si aliquos antistites et ministros forte animadverterint vel cum barbarismis et solecismis Deum invocare, vel eadem verba quæ pronunciant, non intelligere, perturbateque distinguere. Vid. Filesacum de Episc. autorit. p. 103. Pœnituit multos vanæ sterilitis, cathedræ. Juven. Sat. 7. 203. Ruperti. p. 195. Italis Ciceronianis sum iniquior, quia tantum loquuntur verba, non res, et rhetorica ipsorum plerumque est ~~solamur~~: est glossæ sine textu: nux sine nucleo: nubes sine pluvîa. Plurimæ sunt meliores quam avis ipse. Bucholtzer. Take heed lest prejudice, or any corruption, possess your minds; for then all that you hear, will be unsavoury, or unprofitable to you. Magna debet esse eloquentia, quæ invitis placeat, ait Senec. præf. lib. 10. Controv.

ness so great a mercy, accept it thankfully, though to his cost. As Christ said in another case, "Every man cannot receive the saying; but he that can receive it, let him."

There is abundance of difference between a weak, unskilful, inexperienced, dead-hearted, formal teacher, and such a one as is described in the Direction. Some that are senseless or indifferent, in such matters as these, themselves, would persuade you to be so too, and look first in your settlement to your bodily conveniences, and be content with such a teacher as accidentally you are cast upon. And they will tell you, that the work of grace dependeth not on the preacher's gifts, but on the gift, and blessing of the Spirit of God. The Formalists and the Enthusiasts concur in this, though from different principles. But though God can frustrate the fittest means, and can work without means, or by that which is least fitted to the end, yet it is his ordinary way to work by means, and that for the soul, as well as for the body; and to work most by the aptest means. And, I am sure, it is the duty of every teacher, to preach in the fittest manner that he can, for the people's edification; and not to do God's work deceitfully, and inaptly, because God can bless the unfittest means: and it is the people's duty to attend upon the best they can enjoy, though God can equally work by the weakest, or by none. As that pretence will not excuse the contemners of God's ordinances, that upon every little business stay at home, and attend upon no ministry at all; no more will it excuse them, that refuse that help that is most suited to their edification, and take up with a worse, when they might have a better. We are not to neglect duty, upon a presumptuous expectation of miraculous or extraordinary works. When we can have no better, we may hope for the greater benefit from the weakest; but not when it is the choice of our own presumptuous, irreligious hearts. God can make Daniel and his companions to thrive better by eating pulse, than others that fed at the table of the king: and rather than sin against God, we must cast ourselves on him for unusual supplies, or leave all to his will. But few would therefore be persuaded causelessly to live on pulse, when they may have better. And one would think this truth, should have no contradiction, especially from those men, that are apt to obscure and extenuate

the Spirit's operations on the soul, and to confess no grace, but what consisteth in a congruous ordination of means and circumstances. When their doctrine layeth all a man's hopes of salvation, upon this congruity of means and circumstances, should they afterwards teach men to undervalue, or neglect the fittest, and wilfully cast their souls upon the most unfit and unlikely means? But ungodliness first resolveth what to speak against, before it resolveth what to say; and will contradict God's word, though it contradict its own; and will oppose holiness, though by a self-opposing.

But the spiritual relish and experience of the godly, is a very great preservative to them, against such deluding reasonings as these. It is harder for a sophister, of greatest subtlety or authority, to persuade him that hath tasted them, that sugar is bitter, or wormwood sweet, than to persuade him to believe it, that never tasted them. And it is hard to make a healthful man believe, it is best for him to eat but once a week, or best to live on grass, or snow. I doubt not, but those that now I speak to, have such experience and perception of the benefit of a judicious and lively ministry, in comparison of the ignorant, cold, and lifeless, that no words will make them indifferent herein. Have you not found the ministry of one sort enlighten, and warm, and quicken, and comfort, and strengthen you, much more than of the other? I am sure I have the common sense and experience of the faithful on my side, in this, which were enough of itself, against more than can be said against it. Even new-born babes in Christ, have in their new natures, a desire, not to senseless or malicious pratings, but to the rational, sincere milk, (*τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα*.) that they may grow by it, and to perform to God a rational service ^d.

And it must needs be a very proud and stupid heart, that can be so insensible of its own infirmity, sinfulness, and necessity, as to think the weakest, dullest Minister may serve their turns; and that they are able to keep up their life, and vigour, and watchfulness, and fruitfulness, with any little, ordinary help. I cannot but fear, such men know not what the power and efficacy of the Word upon the heart and conscience mean; nor what it is, to live a life of faith and

^d Rom. xii. 1.

holiness, and to watch the heart, and walk with God. If they did, they could not but find so much difficulty herein, and so much backwardness and unskilfulness in themselves, hereto, as would make them feel the necessity of the greatest helps; and, it could not be but they must feel the difference, between a clear and quickening sermon, and an ignorant, heartless, dead discourse, that is spoken as if a man were talking in his sleep, or of a matter that he never understood, nor had experience of.

Alas! how apt are the best to cool, if they be not kept warm by a powerful ministry! How apt to lose the hatred of sin, the tenderness of conscience, the fervency in prayer, the zeal and fulness in edifying discourse, and the delights and power of heavenly meditations, which before we had! How apt is faith to stagger if it be not powerfully under-proped, by the helpers of our faith! How hardly do we keep up the heat of love, the confidence of hope, the resolution and fulness of obedience, without the help of a powerful ministry! Nay, how hardly do we do our part in these, in any tolerable sort, even while we have the clearest, liveliest helps, that are ordinarily to be had! And can any, that are not blind, and proud, imagine that they are so holy and good, that they are above the necessity of such assistance; and that the weakest breath is enough to kindle the fire of holy love and zeal, and keep them in the fear and obedience of God? Alas! we are under languishing weakness, and must be dieted with the best, or we shall soon decay; we are cripples, and cannot go or stand without our crutches. And there must be some savour of the Spirit in him, that will be fit to make us spiritual, and some savour of faith and love in him, that would kindle faith and love in us; and he must speak clearly and convincingly, that will be understood, and will prevail with such as we; and he must speak feelingly, that would make us feel, and speak seriously, that would be much regarded by us, and would make us serious.

And ministers are not set up only for public preaching, but for private counsel also, according to our particular needs. As physicians are not only to read you instructions for the dieting and curing of yourselves; but to be present in your sickness, to direct you in the particular application of remedies. And as lawyers are to assist you in your particular

cases, to free your estates from encumbrances, and preserve, or rescue them from contentious men. Choose, therefore, some able minister to be your ordinary counsellor in the matters of God. And let him be one that is humble, faithful, experienced, and skilful; that hath leisure, ability, and willingness to assist you*.

As infants in a family are unable to help themselves, and need the continual help of others, and therefore God hath put into the hearts of parents a special love to them, to make them diligent and patient in helping them: so is it in the family of Christ; most Christians, by far, are young or weak in understanding and in grace. It is long before you will be past the need of others' help, if ever, in this life. If you feel not this your infirmity and need, it is so much the greater. God will have no men to be self-sufficient: we shall all have need of one another, that we may be useful to one another; and God may use us as his messengers and instruments of conveying his mercies to each other; and that even self-love may help us to be sociable, and to love one another. And our souls must receive their part of mercy, by this way of communication, as well as our bodies: and therefore, as the poor, above all men, should not be against charity, and communicating, that need it most; so young Christians that are weak and unexperienced, above all others, should be most desirous of help, especially from an able, faithful guide.

But be sure you deal sincerely, and cheat not yourselves, by deceiving your counsellor, and hiding your case. To do so by your lawyer, is the way to lose your suit; and to do so by your physician is the way to lose your life; and to do so with your pastor, and soul-counsellor is the way to lose your souls. And let the judgment of your pastor or judicious

* Acosta noteth it as a great hindrance of the Indians' conversion, that their Teachers shift for better livings, and stay not till they are well acquainted with the people, and that the Bishops are of the same temper: *Hæc tanta clades est animarum, ut satis deplorari non possit; nihil sacerdos Christi præcari proficiet in salute Indorum, sine familiari et hominum et rerum notitiâ. lib. iv. c. 10. p. 390. Sunt autem multi qui injuncto munere copiose se satis facere existimant, orationem dominicam et symbolum et salutationem angelicam, tum præcepta decalogi Hispan. idiomate identidem Indis recitantes, eorum infantes baptisantes, mortuos sepelientes, matrimonio juvenes collocantes, et res sacram festis diebus facientes.— Neque conscientia, quam utinam canterisatam non habeant, mordentur quod dispersæ sint oves domini, &c. c. 7. p. 373.*

friend about the state of your souls, be much regarded by you, though it be not infallible. How far such must be trusted, I am afterward to open to you, with other of your duties belonging to you in this relation, I now only proceed to general advice.

Direct. viii. 'Keep right apprehensions of the excellency of charity and unity among believers, and receive nothing hastily that is against them; especially take heed lest under pretence of their authority, their number, their soundness, or their holiness, you too much addict yourselves to any sect or party, to the withdrawing of your special love and just communion from other Christians, and turning your zeal to the interest of your party, with a neglect of the common interest of the church: but love a Christian as a Christian, and promote the unity and welfare of them all^s.'

Use often to read and well consider the meaning and reason of those many urgent passages in Scripture, which exhort all Christians to unity and love. Such as John xi. 52. xvii. 11. 21—23. 1 Cor. iii. 10. 17. and xii. throughout: 2 Cor. xiii. 11. 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Phil. ii. 1—3. 1 Pet. iii. 8. Rom. xvi. 17. 1 Cor. i. 10. iii. 3. and xi. 18. And John xiii. 35. Rom. xii. 9, 10. xiii. 10. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Gal. v. 6, 13, 22. Col. i. 4. 1 Thess. iv. 9. 1 John iii. 14. 23. and iv. 7, 11. 16. 19, 20, 21. Surely, if the very life of godliness lay not much in unity and love, we should never have had such words spoken of it, as here you find. Love is to the soul, as our natural heat is to the body: whatever destroyeth it destroyeth life; and therefore cannot be for our good. Be certain, that opinion, course, or motion tends to death, that tends to abate your love to your brethren, much more which under pretence of zeal, provoketh you to hate and hurt them. To divide the body is to kill it, or to maim it: dividing the essential, necessary parts is killing it: cutting off any integral part is maiming it. The first can never be an act of friendship, which is the worst that an enemy can do: the second is never an act of friendship, but when the cutting off a member which may be spared is of absolute necessity to the saving of the whole man, from the worse division between soul and body. By

^s Against uncharitableness and schism, see more in part ii. ch. 23.

this judge what friends dividers are to the church, and how well they are accepted of God.

He that loveth any Christian aright must needs love all that appear to him as Christians. And when malice will not suffer men to see Christianity in its profession, and credible appearance in another, this is as well contrary to Christian love, as hating him when you know him to be a true Christian. Censoriousness (not constrained by just evidence) is contrary to love, as well as hatred is.

There is an union and communion with Christians as such: this consisteth in having one God, one head, one spirit, one faith, one baptismal covenant, one rule of holy living, and in loving and praying for all, and doing good to as many as we can. This is an union and communion of mind, which we must hold with the catholic church through the world. And there is a bodily, local union and communion, which consisteth in our joining in body, as well as mind, with particular congregations: and this, as we cannot hold it with all, nor with any congregation, but one at once; so we are not bound to hold it with any that will drive us from it, unless we will commit some sin: stately we must hold it, with the church which regularly we are joined to and live with; and occasionally we must hold it with all others, where we have a call and opportunity, who in the substance worship God according to his Word, and force us not to sin in conformity to them. It is not schism to lament the sins of any church, or of all the churches in the world: the catholic church on earth consists of sinners. It is not schism to refuse to be partaker in any sin of the purest church in the world: obedience to God is not schism. It is not schism that you join not bodily with those congregations where you dwell not, nor have any particular call to join with them; nor that you chuse the purest and most edifying society, rather than one that is less pure and profitable to you; 'cæteris paribus,' supposing you are at liberty: nor that you hold not bodily communion with that church, that will not suffer you to do it, without sinning against God; nor that you join not with the purest church, when you are called to abide with one less pure.

But it is worse than schism to separate from the universal church: to separate from its faith is apostasy.

infidelity. To separate from it in some one or few essential articles, while you pretend to hold to Christ the head is heresy : to separate from it in spirit, by refusing holiness, and not loving such as are truly holy, is damning ungodliness or wickedness : to differ from it by any error of judgment or life, against the law of God, is sin. To magnify any one church or party, so as to deny due love and communion to the rest, is schism. To limit all the church to your party, and deny all or any of the rest to be Christians, and parts of the universal church, is schism by a dangerous breach of charity ; and this is the principal schism that I here admonish you to avoid. It is schism also to condemn unjustly any particular church, as no church : and it is schism to withdraw your bodily communion from a church that you were bound to hold that communion with, upon a false supposition that it is no church, or is not lawfully to be communicated with. And it is schism to make divisions or parties in a church, though you divide not from that church. Thus I have (briefly) told you what is schism.

1. One pretence for schism is (usurped) authority, which some one church may claim to command others that owe them no subjection. Thus pride, which is the spirit of hell, having crept into the church of Christ, and animated to usurpations of lordship and dominion, and contending for superiority, hath caused the most dangerous schisms in the church, with which it was ever infested. The bishop of Rome (advantaged by the seat and constitution of that empire) having claimed the government of all the Christian world, condemneth all the churches that will not be his subjects ; and so hath made himself the head of a sect, and of the most pernicious schism that ever did rend the church of Christ : and the bishop of Constantinople, and too many more, have followed the same method in a lower degree, exalting themselves above their brethren, and giving them laws, and then condemning and persecuting them that obey them not. And when they have imposed on other churches their own usurped authority and laws, they have laid the plot to call all men schismatics and sectaries, that own not their tyrannical usurpation, and that will not be schismatics and sectaries with them : and the cheat lieth in this, that they confound the churches' unity with their pre-

tended authority, and schism with the refusal of subjection to them. If you will not take them for your lords, they cry out that you divide from the church: as if we could hold communion with no churches, but those whose bishops we obey? Communion with other churches is maintained by faith and charity, and agreement in things necessary, without subjection to them. As we may hold all just communion with the churches in Armenia, Arabia, Russia, without subjection to their bishops, so may we with any other church besides that of which we are members. Division or schism is contrary to unity and concord, and not to an usurped government: though disobedience to the pastors which God hath set over us is a sin, and dividing from them is a schism. Both the Pope and all the lower usurpers should do well first to shew their commission from God to be our rulers, before they call it schism to refuse their government. If they had not made better advantage of fire and sword, than of Scripture and argument, the world would not have laughed them to scorn, when they had heard them to say, 'All are schismatics that will not be our subjects: our dominion and will shall be necessary to the unity of the church.' The universal church indeed is one; united under one head and governor: but it is only Jesus Christ who is that head, and not any usurping vicar or Vice-Christ. The bishops of particular churches are his officers; but he hath deputed no vicar to his own office, as the universal head. Above all sects, take heed of this pernicious sect, who pretend their usurped authority for their schism, and have no way to promote their sect, but by calling all sectaries that will not be sectaries and subjects unto them.

2. Another pretence for schism is the numbers of the party. This is another of the Papists' motives: as if it were lawful to divide the church of Christ, if they can but get the greater party? They say, 'We are the most, and therefore you should yield to us:' (and so do others, where by the sword they force the most to submit to them.) But we answer them, As many as they are, they are too few to be the universal church. The universal church, containing all true, professing Christians, is much more than they. The Papists are not a third part, if a fourth, of the whole church. Papists are a corrupted sect of Christians: I will

be against dividing the body of Christ into any sects, rather than to be one of that sect or divided party, which is the greatest.

3. Another pretence for schism is the soundness or orthodoxness of a party. Almost all sects pretend that they are wiser and of sounder judgment than all the Christian world besides : yea, those that most palpably contradict the Scriptures (as the Papists in their half-communication and unintelligible service), and have no better reason why they so believe or do, but because others have so believed and done already.

But (1.) the greatest pretenders to orthodoxness are not the most orthodox : (2.) and if they were, I can value them for that which they excel, without abating my due respect to the rest of the church. (3.) For the whole church is orthodox in all the essentials of Christianity, or else they were not Christians : and I must love all that are Christians with that special love that is due to the members of Christ, though I must superadd such esteem for those that are a little wiser or better than others, as they deserve.

4. The fourth pretence for schism, is the holiness of the party that men adhere to. But this must make but a gradual difference, in our esteem and love to some Christians above others : if really they are most holy, I must love them most, and labour to be as holy as they ; but I must not therefore unjustly deny communion, or due respect, to other Christians that are less holy ; nor cleave to them as a sect or divided party, whom I esteem most holy. For the holiest are most charitable, and most against the divisions among Christians, and tenderest of their unity and peace.

The sum of this direction is : 1. Highly value Christian love and unity : 2. Love those most that are most holy, and be most familiar with them, for your own edification : and if you have your choice, hold local personal communion, with the soundest, purest, and best qualified church. 3. But entertain not hastily any odd opinion of a divided party ; or, if you do hold it as an opinion, lay not greater weight on it, than there is cause. 4. Own the best as best, but none as a divided sect ; and espouse not their dividing interest. 5. Confine not your special love to a party ; especially for agreeing in some opinions with you ; but extend

it to all the members of Christ. 6. Deny not local communion, when there is occasion for it, to any church that hath the substance of true worship, and forceth you not to sin. 7. Love them as true Christians and churches, even when they thus drive you from their communion.

It is a most dangerous thing to a young convert, to be ensnared in a sect: it will, before you are aware, possess you with a feverish, sinful zeal, for the opinions and interest of that sect; it will make you bold in bitter invectives and censures, against those that differ from them; it will corrupt your church-communion, and fill your very prayers with partiality and human passions; it will secretly bring malice, under the name of zeal, into your minds and words: in a word, it is a secret, but deadly enemy to Christian love and peace. Let them that are wiser, and more orthodox and godly than others, shew it, as the Holy Ghost directeth them: "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying (or zeal) and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion (or tumult), and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality (or wrangling), and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace^b."

Direct. ix. 'Take heed lest any persecution or wrong from others, provoke you to any unwarrantable passions and practices, and deprive you of the charity, meekness, and innocency of a Christian; or make you go beyond your bounds, in censuring, reviling, or resisting your rulers, who are the officers of God.'

Persecution and wrongs are called temptations in Scripture, because they try you, whether you will hold your integrity. As many fall in such trials, through the fear of men, and the love of the world, and their prosperity; so when you seem most confirmed against any sinful compliance, there is a snare laid for you on the other side, to

^b James iii. 13-18.

draw you into passions and practices, that are unwarrantable.

Those that are tainted with pride, uncharitableness, and schism, will itch to be persecuting those that comply not with them in their way: and yet, while they do it, they will most cry out against pride, uncharitableness, and schism themselves. This is, and hath been, and will be too ordinary in the world. You may think that schism should be far from them, that seem to do all for order and unity. But never look to see this generally cured, when you have said and done the best you can: you must, therefore, resolve, not only to fly from church-division yourselves, but also to undergo the persecutions or wrongs of proud or zealous church-dividers. It is great weakness in you, to think such usage strange: do you not know that enmity is put, from the beginning, between the woman's and the serpent's seed? And do you think the name, or dead profession of Christianity, doth extinguish the enmity in the serpent's seed? Do you think to find more kindness from proud, ungodly Christians, than Abel might have expected from his brother Cain? Do you not know that the Pharisees (by their zeal for their pre-eminence, and traditions, and ceremonies, and the expectation of worldly dignity and rule from the Messiah,) were more zealous enemies of Christ, than the heathens were? and that the carnal members of the church, are oft the greatest persecutors of the spiritual members? "As then he that was born after the flesh, did persecute him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now¹" (and will be). It is enough for you, that you shall have the inheritance, when the sons of the bondwoman shall be cast out. It is your taking the ordinary case of the godly for a strange thing, that makes you so disturbed and passionate, when you suffer: and reason is down, when passion is up. It is by overwhelming reason with passion and discontent, that "oppression maketh" some "wise men mad²:" for passion is a short, imperfect madness. You will think in your passion, that you do well, when you do ill; and you will not perceive the force of reason, when it is ever so plain and full against you. Remember, therefore, that the great motive that causeth the devil to persecute you is not

¹ Gal. iv. 29.

² Eccles. vii. 7.

to hurt your bodies, but to tempt your souls to impatience and sin: and if it may be said of you as of Job, "In all this Job sinned not¹," you have got the victory, and are "more than conquerors^m."

Doth it seem strange to you, that "few rich men are saved," when Christ telleth you it is "so hard," as to be "impossible with menⁿ?" Or is it strange, that rich men should be the ordinary rulers of the earth? Or is it strange, that the wicked should hurt the godly, and the world hate them that are "chosen out of the world?" What of all this should seem strange? Expect it as the common lot of the faithful, and you will be better prepared for it.

See therefore that you "resist not evil" (by any revengeful, irregular violence): "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, and not resist lest they receive damnation^p." Imitate your Lord, that "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed all to him that judgeth righteously; leaving us an ensample, that we should follow his steps^q." An angry zeal against those that cross and hurt us is so easily kindled and hardly suppressed, that it appeareth there is more in it of corrupted nature than of God. We are very ready to think that we may "call for fire from heaven" upon the enemies of the Gospel: but "you know not what manner of spirit ye are then of^r." But Christ saith unto you, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven^s." You find no such prohibition against patient suffering wrong from any. Take heed of giving way to secret wishes of hurt to your adversaries, or to return reproachful words against them: take heed of hurting yourself by passion or sin, because others hurt you by slanders or persecutions. Keep you in the way of your duty, and leave your names and lives to God. Be careful that you keep your innocency, and in your patience possess your souls, and God will keep you from any hurt from enemies, but what he will cause to work for your good,

¹ Job i. 22.^m Rom. viii. 37—39.ⁿ Luke xviii. 27.^p Matt. v. 39.^q Rom. xiii. 1—3.^r 1 Pet. ii. 21, 23.^s Luke ix. 55.^t Matt. v. 44, 45.

Read Psalm xxxvii. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in anywise to do evil."

Direct. x. 'When you are repenting of, or avoiding any extreme, do it not, without sufficient fear and caution of the contrary extreme.'

In the esteem and love of God, your ultimate end, you need not fear overdoing: nor any where, when impediments and backwardness or impotency, do tell you that you can never do too much. But sin lieth on both sides the rule and way: and nothing is more common, than to turn from one sin to another, under the name of duty or amendment. Especially this is common in matter of opinion: some will first believe, that God is nothing else but mercy, and after, take notice of nothing but his justice. First, they believe that almost all are saved, and afterwards, that almost none: first, that every profession is credible, and next, that none is credible without some greater testimony: first, that Christ satisfied for none at all that will not be saved, and next, that he died for all alike: first, that none are now partakers of the Holy Spirit; and next, that all saints have the Spirit, not only to illuminate and sanctify them, by transcribing the written Word upon their hearts; but also to inspire them with new revelations, instead of Scripture. First, they think that all that Papists hold or do, must be avoided; and after, that there needed no reformation at all. Now, they are for legal bondage, and anon for libertinism: to-day, for a liberty in religion to none, that agree not with them in every circumstance; and to-morrow, for a liberty to all: this year, all things are lawful to them; and the next year, nothing is lawful, but they scruple all that they say or do. One while, they are all for a worship of mere show and ceremony; and another while, against the determination of mere circumstances of order and decency, by man. One while, they cry up nothing but free grace; and another while, nothing but

¹ Psalm. xxxvii. 5—8.

free will. One while, they are for a discipline stricter than the rule; and another while, for no discipline at all. First, for timorous compliance with evil; and afterwards, for boisterous contempt of government. Abundance of such instances we might give you.

The remedy against this disease, is, to proceed deliberately, and receive nothing, and do nothing rashly and unadvisedly in religion. For, when you have found out your first error, you will be affrighted from that, into the contrary error. See that you look round about you; as well to the error that you may run into on the other side, as into that which you have run into already. Consult also with wise, experienced men: and mark their unhappiness, that have fallen on both sides; and stay not to know evil by sad experience. True mediocrity is the only way that is safe: though negligence and lukewarmness be odious, even when cloaked with that name.

Direct. xi. 'Let not your first opinions, about the controverted difficulties in religion, where Scripture is not very plain, be too peremptory, confident, or fixed; but hold them modestly, with a due suspicion of your unripe understandings, and with room for further information, supposing it possible, or probable, that upon better instruction, evidence, and maturity, you may, in such things, change your minds.'

I know, the factious, that take up their religion on the credit of their party, are against this Direction: thinking that you must first hit on the right church, and then hold, all that the church doth hold; and therefore change your mind in nothing, which you this way receive. I know, also, that some libertines and half believers, would corrupt this Direction, by extending it to the most plain and necessary truths; persuading you to hold Christianity itself, but as an uncertain, probable opinion.

But, as God's foundation standeth sure, so we must be surely built on his foundation. He that believeth not the essentials of Christianity, as a certain, necessary revelation of God, is not a Christian, but an infidel. And he that believeth not all that he understandeth in the Word of God, believeth nothing on the credit of that Word. Indeed faith hath its weakness, on those that are sincere; and they are fain to lament the remnants of unbelief, and cry, "Lord in-

crease our faith : help thou our unbelief." But he that approveth of his doubting, and would have it so, and thinks the revelation is uncertain, and such as will warrant no firmer a belief, I should scarcely say, this man is a Christian. Christianity must be received as of divine, infallible revelation. But controversies about less necessary things, cannot be determined peremptorily, by the ignorant or young beginners, without hypocrisy, or a human faith going under the name of a Divine. I am far from abating your Divine belief of all that you can understand in Scripture, and implicitly of all the rest in general. And I am far from diminishing the credit of any truth of God. But the reasons of this Direction, are these,

1. When it is certain that you have but a dark, uncertain apprehension of any point, to think it is clear and certain, is but to deceive yourselves by pride. And, to cry out against all uncertainty, as scepticism, which yet you cannot lay aside, is but to revile your own infirmity, and the common infirmity of mankind, and foolishly to suppose that every man can be as wise and certain, when he list, as he should be. Now reason and experience will tell you, that a young, unfurnished understanding, is not like to see the evidence of difficult points, as, by nearer approach, and better advantage it may do.

2. If your conclusions be peremptory, upon mere self-conceitedness, you may be in an error for aught you know : and so you are but confident in an error. And then how far may you go in seducing others, and censuring dissenters, and come back when you have done, and confess that you were all this while mistaken yourselves.

3. For a man to be confident that he knoweth what he knoweth not, is-but the way to keep him ignorant, and shut the door against all means of further information. When the opinion is fixed by prejudice and conceit, there is no ready entrance for the light.

4. And, to be ungroundedly confident, so young, is not only to take up with your teacher's word, instead of a faith and knowledge of your own, but also to forestall all diligence to know more : and so you may lay by all your studies, save only to know what those men hold, whose judgments are your religion : too popish and easy a way to be safe.

5. If you must never change your first opinions or apprehensions, how will you grow in understanding? Will you be no wiser at age, than you were at childhood, and after long study and experience, than you were before? Nature and grace do tend to increase.

Indeed, if you should be never so peremptory in your opinions, you cannot resolve to hold them to the end: for light is powerful, and may change you whether you will or no: you cannot tell what that light will do, which you never saw. But prejudice will make you resist the light, and make it harder for you to understand.

I speak this upon much experience and observation. Our first, unripe apprehensions of things, will certainly be greatly changed, if we are studious, and of improved understandings. Study the controversies about grace and free-will, or about other such points of difficulty, when you are young, and it is two to one that ripeness will afterward make them quite another thing to you. For my own part, my judgment is altered from many of my youthful, confident apprehensions: and where it holdeth the same conclusion, it rejecteth abundance of the arguments, as vain, which once it rested in. And where I keep to the same conclusions and arguments, my apprehension of them is not the same, but I see more satisfying light in many things, which I took but upon trust before. And if I had resolved to hold to all my first opinions, I must have forborne most of my studies, and lost much truth, which I have discovered, and not made that my own, which I did hold: and I must have resolved to live and die a child.

The sum is, Hold fast the substance of religion, and every clear and certain truth, which you see in its own evidence: and also reverence your teachers; especially the universal church, or the generality of wise and godly men; and be not hasty to take up any private opinion: and especially to contradict the opinion of your governors and teachers, in small and controverted things. But yet, in such matters, receive their opinions but with a human faith, till indeed you have more, and therefore, with a supposition, that time and study is very like to alter your apprehensions; and with a reserve, impartially to study, and entertain the truth, and not to sit still just where you were born.

Direct. xii. 'If controversies occasion any divisions where you live, be sure to look first to the interest of common truth and good, and to the exercise of charity. And become not passionate contenders for any party in the division, or censurers of the peaceable, or of your teachers, that will not over-run their own understandings, to obtain with you the esteem of being orthodox or zealous men; but suspect your own unripe understandings, and silence your opinions till you are clear and certain; and join rather with the moderate and the peacemakers, than with the contenders and dividers.'

You may easily be sure, that division tendeth to the ruin of the church, and the hindrance of the Gospel, and the injury of the common interest of religion^a. You know it is greatly condemned in the Scriptures. You may know that it is usually the exercise, and the increase of pride, uncharitableness, and passion; and that the devil is best pleased with it, as being the greatest gainer by it. But, on the other side, you are not easily certain which party is in the right: and if you were, you are not sure that the matter will be worth the cost of the contention: or if it be, it is to be considered, whether the truth is not like to get more advantage by managing it in a more peaceful way, that hath no contention, nor stirreth up other men so much against it, as the way of controversy doth. And whatever it prove, you may and should know, that young Christians, that want both parts, and helps, and time, and experience to be thoroughly seen in controversies, are very unfit to make themselves parties; and that they are yet more unfit to be the hottest leaders of these parties, and to spur on their teachers, that know more than they. If the work be fit for another to do, that knoweth on what ground he goeth, and can foresee the end, yet certainly it is not fit for you. And therefore forbear it till you are more fit.

I know those that would draw you into such a contentious zeal, will tell you, that their cause is the cause of God, and that you desert him and betray it, if you be not zealous in it: and that it is but the counsel of flesh and blood which maketh you pretend moderation and peace: and that it is a sign that you are hypocrites, that are so lukewarm, and car-

^a Stoici dicunt cum nemine stultorum esse litigandum: omnesque stultos insanire. Diog. Laert. in Zenone, lib. viii. Segm. 124. p. 444.

nally comply with error: and that the cause of God is to be followed with the greatest zeal and self-denial. And all this is true, if you be but sure that it is indeed the cause of God; and that the greater works of God be not neglected on such pretences; and that your zeal be much greater for faith, and charity, and unity, than for your opinions. But upon great experience, I must tell you, that of the zealous contenders^a in the world, that cry up 'The cause of God, and Truth,' there is not one of very many, that understandeth what he talks of; but some of them cry up the cause of God, when it is a brat of a proud and ignorant brain, and such as a judicious person would be ashamed of. And some of them are rashly zealous, before they have parts or time to come to any judicious trial. And some of them are misguided by some person or party, that captivateth their minds. And some of them are hurried away by passion and discontent. And many of the ambitious and worldly are blinded by their carnal interests. And many of them in mere pride, think highly of an opinion, in which they are somewhat singular; and which they can, with some glorying, call their own, as either invented by them, or that, in which they think they know more than ordinary men do. And abundance, after long experience, confess that to have been their own erroneous cause, which they before entitled the cause of God. Now when this is the case, and one crieth, 'Here is Christ,' and another, 'There is Christ;' one saith, 'This is the cause of God,' and another saith, 'That is it;' no man that hath any care of his conscience, or of the honour of God and his profession, will leap before he looketh where he shall alight;

^a Consuming zeal, doth use at last to burn up the owners of it. Whatever they say or do against others, in their intemperate violence, they teach others at last to say and do against them, when they have opportunity. How the orthodox taught the Arians to use severity against them, may be seen in Victor. Utic. p. 447—449. in the edict of Himerichus: *Legem quam dudum Christiani Imperatores nostri contra eos et alios hæreticos pro honorificentia Ecclesiarum Catholicarum dederunt, adversus nos illi proponere non erubuerunt. v. g. Rex Hun. &c. Triumphalis et Majestatis Regiæ probatur esse virtutis, mala in autores consilia retorquere: quisquis enim pravitate aliquid invenerit, sibi imputet quod incurrit. Nullos conventus hominum Sacerdotes assument, nec aliquid mysteriorum, quæ magis polluant, sibi vindicent. Nullam habeant ordinandi licentiam. Quod ipsarum legum continentia demonstratur quæ induxisse Imperatoribus, &c. viz. ut nulla, exceptis superstitionis antiquitibus, Ecclesia pateret; nullis liceret aliis aut convictis agere, aut exercere advençtas, nec Ecclesias, aut in urbibus, aut in quibudam minimis locis.*

or run after every one, that will whistle him with the name or pretence of truth or a good cause. It is a sad thing to go on many years together in censuring, opposing, and abusing those that are against you, and in seducing others, and misemploying your zeal; and parts, and time, and poisoning all your prayers and discourses, and in the end to see what mischief you have done for want of knowledge, and with Paul to confess, that you were mad in opposing the truth and servants of God, though you did it in a zeal of God through ignorance. Were it not much better to stay till you have tried the ground, and prevent so many years grievous sin, than to escape by a sad repentance, and leave behind you stinking and venomous fruits of your mistake? And worse, if you never repent yourselves. Your own and your brethren's souls, are not so lightly to be ventured upon dangerous, untried ways. It will not make the truth and church amends, to say at last, 'I had thought I had done well.' Let those go to the wars of disputing, and contending, and censuring, and siding with a sect, that are riper, and better understand the cause: wars are not for children. Do you suspend your judgment till you can solidly and certainly inform it; and serve God in charity, quietness, and peace, and it is two to one, but you will live to see the day, that the contenders that would have led you into their wars, will come off with so much loss themselves, as will teach them to approve your peaceable course; or teach you to bless God that kept you in your place and duty.

In all this, I deny not, but every truth of God is to be valued at a very high rate: and that he that shall carry himself in a neutrality, when faith or godliness is the matter in controversy, or shall do it merely for his worldly ends, to save his stake by temporizing, is a false-hearted hypocrite, and at the heart, of no religion. But withal I tell you, that all is not matter of faith or godliness, that the Autonomian-Papist, the Antinomian-Libertine, or other passionate parties shall call so. And, that as we must avoid contempt of the smallest truth, so we must much more avoid the most heinous sins, which we may commit for the defending of an error. And, that some truths must be silenced for a time, though not denied, when the contending for them is unseasonable, and tendeth to the injury of the church. If you were mas-

ters in the church, you must not teach your scholars to their hurt, though it be truth you teach them. And if you were physicians, you must not cram them, or medicate them to their hurt. Your power and duty is not to destruction, but to edification. The good of the patient is the end of your physic. All truth is not to be spoken, nor all good to be done, by all men, nor at all times. He that will do contrary, and take this for a carnal principle, doth but call folly and sin by the name of zeal and duty, and set the house on fire to roast his egg, and with the Pharisees, prefer the outward rest of their sabbath, before his brother's life or health. Take heed what you do when God's honour, and men's souls, and the church's peace are concerned in it.

And let me tell you my own observation. As far as my judgment hath been able to reach, the men that have stood for pacification and moderation, have been the most judicious, and those that have best understood themselves, in most controversies that ever I heard under debate among good Christians: and those that furiously censured them as lukewarm or corrupted, have been men that had least judgment, and most passion, pride, and foul mistakes in the points in question.

Nay, I will tell you more of my observation, of which these times have given us too much proof. Profane and formal enemies on the one hand, and ignorant, self-conceited wranglers on the other hand, who think they are champions for the truth, when they are venting their passions and fond opinions, are the two thieves, between whom the church hath suffered, from the beginning to this day. The first are the persecutors, and the other the dividers and disturbers of the church. Mark what the Holy Ghost saith in this case, "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men." "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine, as lights in the world." "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is ac-

* 2 Tim. ii. 23, 24.

* Phil. ii. 14, 15.

cording to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil-surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, &c.^a” “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith: now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned^b.”

Yet I must here profess, that if any false-hearted, worldly hypocrite, that resolveth to be on the saving side, and to hold all to be lawful, that seemeth necessary to his safety or preferments, shall take any encouragement from what I have here said, to debauch his conscience, and sell his soul, and then call all those furious zealots that will not be as false to God as he; let that man know, that I have given him no cloak for so odious a sin, nor will he find a cover for it at the bar of God, though he may delude his conscience, and bear it out by his carnal advantages before the world.

Direct. XIII. ‘Know that true godliness is the best life upon earth, and the only way to perfect happiness. Still apprehend it therefore, and use it as the best: and with great diligence resist those temptations which would make it seem to you a confounding, grievous, or unpleasant thing.’

There are all things concurrent in a holy life, to make it the most delectable life on earth, to a rational, purified mind, that is not captivated to the flesh, and liveth not on air or dung. The object of it is the eternal God himself; the infallible Truth, the only satisfactory good; and all these condescending and appearing to us, in the mysterious, but suitable glass of a Mediator; redeeming, reconciling, teaching, governing, sanctifying, justifying and glorifying all that are his own. The end of it is the pleasing and glorifying our Maker, Redeemer and Sanctifier; and the everlasting happiness of ourselves and others. The rule of it is the infallible Revelation of God, delivered to the church by his Prophets, and his Son, and his Apostles, and comprised in the Holy Scriptures, and sealed by the miracles and operations of the Holy Ghost that did indite them. The work of godliness is a living unto God, and preparing for everlasting life, by foreseeing, foretasting, seeking, and rejoicing

^a 1 Tim. iii. 3—6.

^b 1 Tim. i. 4, 5.

in that endless happiness which we shall have with God ; and by walking after the Spirit, and avoiding the filthiness, delusions and vexations of the world and the flesh. The nature of man is not capable of a more noble, profitable and delectable life, than this which God hath called us to by his Son. And if we did but rightly know it, we should follow it with continual alacrity and delight. Be sure, therefore, to conceive of godliness as it is, and not as it is misrepresented by the devil and the ungodly. Read what I have written of this in my "A Saint or a Brute."

As long as a man conceiveth of religion as it is, even the most sweet and delectable life, so long he will follow it willingly and with his heart, and despise the temptations and avocations of fleshly gain and pleasure. He will be sincere, as not being only drawn by other men, or outward advantages, nor frightened into it by a passion of fearfulness, but loving religion for itself, and for its excellent ends ; and then he will be cheerful in all the duties of it ; and he will be most likely to persevere unto the end. We cannot expect that the heart or will should be any more for God and godliness, than the understanding practically apprehendeth them as good. Nay, we must always perceive in them a transcendant goodness, above all that is to be found in a worldly life ; or else the appearing goodness of the creature, will divert us, and carry away our minds. We may see in the very brutes, what a power apprehension hath upon their actions. If your horse be but going to his home or pasture, how freely will he go through thick and thin ! But if he go unwillingly, his travel is troublesome and slow, and you have much ado to get him on. It will be so with you in your way to heaven.

It is therefore the principal design of the devil, to hide the goodness and pleasantness of religion from you ; and to make it appear to you as a terrible or tedious life. By this means it is that he keeps men from it : and by this means he is still endeavouring to draw you back again, and frustrate your good beginnings and your hopes. If he can thus misrepresent religion to your understandings, he will suddenly alienate your will and corrupt your lives, and make you turn to the world again, and seek for pleasure somewhere else, and only take up with some heartless lip-service,

to keep up some deceitful hope of being saved. And the means which satan useth to these ends are such as these :

1. He will do his worst to overwhelm you with appearing doubts and difficulties, and bring you to a loss, and to make religion seem to you a confounding, and not a satisfying thing. This is one of his most dangerous assaults upon the weak and young beginners. Difficulties and passions are the things which he makes use of to confound you, and put you out of a regular, cheerful seeking of salvation. When you read the Scriptures, he will mind you of abundance of difficulties in all you read or hear. He will shew you seeming contradictions ; and tell you that you will never be able to understand these things. He will cast in thoughts of unbelief and blasphemy, and cause you, if he can, to roll them in your mind. If you cast them not out with abhorrence, but dispute with the devil, he hopes to prove too hard, at least, for such children and unprovided soldiers as you : and if you do reject them, and refuse to dispute it with him, he will sometime tell you that your cause is naught, or else you need not be afraid to think of all that can be said against it ; and this way he gets advantage of you to draw you to unbelief : and if you escape better than so, at least he will molest and terrify you with the hideousness of his temptations ; and make you think that you are forsaken of God, because such blasphemous thoughts have been so often in your minds : and thus he will one while tempt you to blasphemy, and another while affright and torment you with the thoughts of such temptations.

So, also, in the study of other good books, he will tempt you to fix upon all that seems difficult to you, and there to confound and perplex yourselves : and in your meditations, he will seek to make all to tend, but to confound and overwhelm you ; keeping still either hard or fearful things before your eyes ; or breaking and scattering your thoughts in pieces, that you cannot reduce them to any order, nor set them together, nor make any thing of them, nor drive them to any desirable end. So in your prayers he would fain confound you, either with fears, or with doubtful or distracting thoughts about God, or your sins, or the matter or manner of your duty, or questioning whe-

ther your prayers will be heard. And so in your self-examination, he will still seek to puzzle you, and leave you more in darkness than you began, and make you afraid of looking homeward, or conversing with yourselves : like a man that is afraid to lie in his own house when he thinks it haunted with some apparitions. And thus the devil would make all your religion to be but like the unwinding of the bottom of yarn, or a skein of silk that is ravelled ; that you may cast it away in weariness and despair.

Your remedy against this dangerous temptation is, to remember that you are yet young in knowledge, and that ignorance is like darkness that will cause doubts, and difficulties, and fears ; and that all these will vanish as your light increaseth : and therefore you must wait in patience, till your riper knowledge fit you for satisfaction. And in the mean time, be sure that you take up your hearts most with the great, fundamental, necessary, plain and certain points, which your salvation is laid upon, and which are more suited to your state and strength. If you will be gnawing bones, when you should be sucking milk, and have not patience to stay till you are past your childhood, no marvel if you find them hard, and if they stick in your throats, or break your teeth. See that you live upon God in Christ, and love and practise what you know, and think of the excellency of so much as is already revealed to you. You know already what is the end that you must seek, and where your happiness consisteth ; and what Christ hath done to prepare it for you, and how you must be justified, and sanctified, and walk with God. Have you God, and Christ, and heaven to think on, and all the mercies of the Gospel to delight in ; and will you lay by these as common matters, or overlook them, and perplex yourselves about every difficulty in your way ? Make clean work before you as you go, and live in the joyful acknowledgment of the mercies which you have received, and in the practice of the things you know, and then the difficulties will vanish as you go on.

2. Another of satan's wiles is, to confound you with the noise of sectaries, and divers opinions in religion ; while the Popish sect tells you, that if you will be saved, you must be of their church ; and others say, you must be of

theirs : and when you find that the sects are many, and their reasonings such as you cannot answer, you will be in danger either to take up some of their deceits, or to be confounded among them all, not knowing which church and religion to choose.

But here consider, that there is but one universal church of Christians in the world, of which Christ is the only king and head, and every Christian is a member. You were sacramentally admitted into this catholic church by baptism, and spiritually by being "born of the Spirit." You have all the promises of the Gospel, that if you believe in Christ you shall be saved; and that all the living members of this church are loved by Christ as members of his body, and shall be presented unspotted to the Father, by him who is the Saviour of his body^c; "and that by one Spirit we are all baptized or entered into this one body^d." If then thou hast faith, and love, and the Spirit, thou art certainly a Christian, and a member of Christ, and of this universal church of Christians. And if there were any other church, but what are the parts of this one, then this were not universal, and Christ must have two bodies. Thou art not saved for being a member of the church of Rome, or Corinth, or Ephesus, or Philippi, or Thessalonica, or of any other such; but for being a member of the universal church or body of Christ; that is, a Christian. And as thou art a subject of the king, and a member of this kingdom, whatever corporation thou be a member of (perhaps sometime of one, and sometime of another); so thou art a subject of Christ, whatever particular church thou be of: for it is no church if they be not Christians, or subjects of Christ. For one sect then to say, Ours is the true church, and another to say, Nay, but ours is the true church, is as mad as to dispute whether your hall, or kitchen, or parlour, or coal-house is your house; and for one to say, This is the house, and another, Nay, but it is that: when a child can tell them, that the best is but a part, and the house containeth them all. And for the Papists that take on them to be the whole, and deny all others to be Christians and saved, except the subjects of the Pope of Rome, it is so irrational, antichristian a fiction and usurpation, and odious, cruel,

^c Ephes. v. 23—27,

^d 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

and groundless a damnation of the far greatest part of the body of Christ, that it is fitter for detestation than dispute. And if such a crack would frighten the world out of their wits, no doubt but other bishops also would make use of it, and say, All are damned that will not be subject to us. But if you would see the folly and mischief of Popery, both in this and other points, I refer you to my "Treatise of the Catholic Church;" my "Key for Catholics;" my "Safe Religion;" my "Disputations against Johnson;" and my "Winding-Sheet for Popery."

3. Another temptation to confound you in your religion, is, by filling your heads with practical scrupulosity; so that you cannot go on for doubting every step whether you go right: and when you should cheerfully serve your Master, you will do nothing but disquiet your minds with scruples, whether this or that be right or wrong. Your remedy here is, not by casting away all care of pleasing God, or fear of sinning, or by debauching conscience; but by a cheerful and quiet obedience to God, so far as you know his will, and an upright willingness and endeavour to understand it better, and a thankful receiving the Gospel pardon for your failings and infirmities. Be faithful in your obedience; but live still upon Christ, and think not of reaching to any such obedience, as shall set you above the need of his merits, and a daily pardon of your sins. Do the best you can to know the will of God and do it. But when you know the essentials of religion, and obey sincerely, let no remaining wants deprive you of the comfort of so great a mercy, as proves your right to life eternal. In your seeking further for more knowledge and obedience, let your care be such as tendeth to your profiting, and furthering you to your end, and as doth not hinder your joy and thanks for what you have received: but that which destroyeth your joy and thankfulness, and doth but perplex you, and not further you in your way, is but hurtful scrupulosity, and to be laid by. When you are right in the main, thank God for that, and be further solicitous so far as to help you on, but not to hinder you. If you send your servant on your message, you had rather he went on his way as well as he can, than stand scrupling every step whether he should set the right or left foot forward? and whether he should step so far, or so far, at a time, &c. Hindering scruples please not God.

4. Another way to confound you in your religion, is, by setting you upon overdoing by inventions of your own : when a poor soul is most desirous to please God, the devil will be religious, and set him upon some task of voluntary humility or will-worship, as the apostle speaks of, Col. ii. 18. 20—23., or set him upon some ensnaring, unnecessary vows or resolutions, or some Popish works of conceited supererogation, which is that which Solomon calleth being “righteous over-much.” Thus many have made duties to themselves, which God never made for them; and taken that for sin, which God never forbad them. The Popish religion is very much made up of such commandments of their own, and traditions of men. As if Christ had not made us work enough, men are forward to make much more for themselves. And some that should teach them the laws of Christ, do think that their office is in vain, unless they may also prescribe them laws of their own, and give them new principles of religion. Yea, some that are the bitterest enemies to the strict observance of the laws of God, as if it were a tedious, needless thing, must yet needs load us with abundance of unnecessary precepts of their own. And thus religion is made both wearisome and uncertain, and a door set open for men to enlarge it, and increase the burden at their pleasure. Indeed, Popery is fitted to delude and quiet sleepy consciences, and to torment with uncertainties the consciences that are awaked.

And there is something in the corrupted nature of man, that inclineth him to some additions and voluntary service of his own inventions, as an offering most acceptable unto God. Hence it is that many poor Christians do rashly entangle their consciences with vows, of circumstances and things unnecessary, as to give so much, to observe such days or hours, in fasting and prayer; not to do such or such a thing that in itself is lawful; with abundance of such things, which perhaps some change of providence may make accidentally their duty afterwards to do : or disable them to perform their vows : and then these snares are fetters on their perplexed consciences, perhaps, as long as they live. Yea, some of the Autonomians teach the people, that these things indifferent are the fittest matter of a vow ; as

to live single, to possess nothing, to live in solitude, and the like: indeed all things lawful, when they are vowed, must be performed: but it is unfit to be vowed if it be not first profitable and best, for ourselves or others; and that which is best is not indifferent, it being every man's duty to choose what is best. Vows are to bind us to the performance of that which God had bound us to be by his laws before: they are our expression of consent and resolution by a self-obligation to obey his will: and not to make new duties of religion to ourselves, which else would never have been our duty.

To escape these snares, it is necessary that you take heed of corrupting your religion by burdens and mixtures of your own devising. You are called to obey God's laws, and not to make laws for yourselves. You may be sure that his laws are just and good, but your's may be bad and foolish. When you obey him, you may expect your reward and encouragement from him: but when you will obey yourselves, you must reward yourselves. You may find it enough for you to keep his laws, without devising more work for yourselves; or feigning duties which he commanded not, or sins which he forbade not. Be not rash in making vows: let them reach but unto necessary duties; and let them have their due exceptions when they are about alterable things. Or, if you are entangled by them already, consult with the most judicious, able, impartial men, that you may come clearly off without a wound. There is a great deal of judgment and sincerity necessary in your counsellors, and a great deal of submission and self-denial in yourselves, to bring you safely out of such a snare. Avoid sin whatever you do: for sinning is not the way to your deliverance. And, for the time to come, be wiser, and lay no more snares for yourselves; and clog not yourselves with your own inventions, but cheerfully obey what God commandeth you, who hath wisdom and authority sufficient to make you perfect laws. Christ's "yoke is easy," and his "burden light," and "his commandments are not grievous." But if your mixtures and self-devised snares are grievous to you, blame not God, but yourselves that made them.

Another of satan's ways to make religion burdensome

¹ Matt. xi. 30.

² 1 John v. 3.

and grievous to you is, by overwhelming you with fear and sorrow. Partly, by persuading that religion consisteth in excess of sorrow, and so causing you to spend your time in striving to trouble and grieve yourselves unprofitably, as if it were the course most acceptable to God : and partly, by taking the advantage of a timorous, passionate nature ; and so making every thought of God, or serious exercise of religion, to be a torment to you, by raising some overwhelming fears : for " fear hath torment,"^b In some feminine, weak and melancholy persons, this temptation hath so much advantage in the body, that the holiest soul can do but little in resisting it ; so that though there be in such a sincere love to God, his ways and servants, yet fear so playeth the tyrant in them, that they perceive almost nothing else. And it is no wonder if religion be grievous and unpleasant to such as these.

But, alas ! it is you yourselves that are the causes of this, and bring the matter of your grievance with you. God hath commanded you a sweeter work. It is a life of love, and joy, and cheerful progress to eternal joy that he requireth of you ; and no more fear or grief, than is necessary to separate you from sin, and teach you to value and use the remedy. The Gospel presenteth to you such abundant matter of joy and peace, as would make these the very complexion and temperature of your souls, if you received them as they are propounded. Religious fears when they are inordinate and hurtful, are sinful, and indeed against religion ; and must be resisted as other hurtful passions. Be better acquainted with Christ and his promises, and you will find enough in him to pacify the soul, and give you confidence and holy boldness in your access to God^c. The spirit which he giveth is not the spirit of bondage, but the spirit of adoption, of love, and confidence^d.

6. Another thing that maketh religion seem grievous is, retaining unmortified, sensual desires. If you keep up your lusts, they will strive against the Gospel, and all the works of the Spirit will strive against them^e. And every duty will be so far unpleasant to you, as you are carnal, because it is against your carnal inclination and desire. Away, therefore,

^b 1 John iv. 18.

^c Heb. iv. 16. Ephes. iii. 12. Heb. x. 19.

^d Rom. viii. 15. Heb. ii. 15.

with your beloved sickness, and then both your food and your physician will be less grievous to you. "Mortify the flesh, and you will less disrelish the things of the Spirit. For the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to his law, nor can be."^m

7. Another cause of confounding and wearying is, the mixture of your actual sins, dealing unfaithfully with God, and wounding your consciences by renewed guilt, especially of sins against knowledge and consideration. If you thus keep the bone out of joint, and the wound unhealed, no marvel if you are loath to work or travel. But it is your sin and folly that should be grievous to you, and not that which is contrary to it, and would remove the cause of all your troubles. Resolutely forsake your wilful sinning, and come home by "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christⁿ," and then you will find, that when the thorn is out, your pain will cease; and that the cause of your trouble was not in God or religion, but in your sin.

8. Lastly, To make religion unpleasant to you, the tempter would keep the substance of the Gospel unknown to, or unobserved by you. He would hide the wonderful love of God revealed in our Redeemer, and all the riches of saving grace, and the great deliverance and privileges of believers, and the certain hopes of life eternal: and the kingdom of God, which consisteth in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, shall be represented to you as consisting in errors only, or in trifles; in shadows and shews, and bodily exercise, which profiteth little^o. If ever you would know the pleasures of faith and holiness, you must labour above all to know God, as revealed in his infinite love in the Mediator; and read the Gospel as God's act of oblivion, and the New Testament and Covenant of Christ, in which he giveth you life eternal. And in every duty draw near to God as a reconciled Father, the object of your everlasting love and joy. Know and use religion as it is, without mistaking or corrupting it, and it will not appear to you as a grievous, tedious, or confounding thing.

Direct. xiv. 'Be very diligent in mortifying the desires and pleasures of the flesh; and keep a continual watch upon your senses, appetite, and lusts; and cast not yourselves

^m Rom. vii. 7, 8.

ⁿ Acts ix. 21.

^o 1 Tim. iv. 8.

upon temptations, occasions, or opportunities of sinning, remembering that your salvation lieth on your success.'

The lusts of the flesh, and the pleasures of the world, are the common enemies of God and souls, and the damnation of those souls that perish. And there is no sort more liable to temptations of this kind, than those that are in the flower of their youth and strength. When all the senses are in their vigour, and lust and appetite are in their strength and fury, how great is the danger! and how great must your diligence be if you will escape! The appetite and lust of the weak and sick, are weak and sick as well as they; and therefore they are no great temptation or danger to them. The desire and pleasure of the senses do abate, as natural strength and vigour doth abate. To such there is much less need of watchfulness: and where nature hath mortified the flesh, there is somewhat the less for grace to do. There needs not much grace to keep the aged and weak from fornication, uncleanness, excessive sports, and carnal mirth: and gluttony and drunkenness also, are sins which youth is much more liable to. Especially some bodies that are not only young and strong, but have, in their temperature and complexion, a special inclination to some of these, as lust, or sport, or foolish mirth; there needeth a great deal of diligence, resolution, and watchfulness for their preservation. Lust is not like a corrupt opinion, that surpriseth us through a defect of reason, and vanisheth as soon as truth appeareth; but it is a brutish inclination, which, though reason must subdue and govern, yet the perfectest reason will not extirpate, but there it will still dwell. And, as it is constantly with you, it will be stirring, when objects are presented by the sense or fancy, to allure. And it is like a torrent or a head-strong horse, that must be kept in at first, and is hardly restrained if it once break loose and get the head. If you are bred up in temperance and modesty, where there are no great temptations to gluttony, drinking, sports, or wantonness, you may think awhile that your natures have little or none of this concupiscence, and so may walk without a guard; but when you come where baits of lust abound, where women, and plays, and feasts, and drunkards are the devil's snares, and tinder, and bellows, to inflame your lusts, you may then find to your sorrow, that you had need of watchfulness, and

that all is not mortified that is asleep, or quiet in you. As a man that goeth with a candle among gunpowder, or near thatch, should never be careless, because he goeth in continual danger; so you that are young, and have naturally eager appetites and lusts, should remember, that you carry fire and gunpowder still about you, and are never out of danger while you have such an enemy to watch.

And if once you suffer the fire to kindle, alas! what work may it make, ere you are aware! "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Little knoweth the fish, when he is catching, or nibbling at the bait, that he is swallowing the hook which will lay him presently on the bank. When you are looking on the cup, or gazing on alluring beauty, or wantonly dallying and pleasing your senses with things unsafe, you little know how far beyond your intentions you may be drawn, and how deep the wound may prove, how great the smart, or how long and difficult the cure. As you love your souls, observe Paul's counsel, "Flee youthful lusts?" Keep at a full distance: come not near the bait. If you get a wound in your consciences, by any wilful, heinous sin, O what a case will you be in! How heartless unto secret duty! afraid of God, that should be your joy; deprived of the comforts of his presence, and all the pleasure of his ways! How miserably will you be tormented, between the tyranny of your own concupiscence, the sting of sin, the gripes of conscience, and the terrors of the Lord! How much of the life of faith, and love, and heavenly zeal, will be quenched in a moment! I am to speak more afterwards of this; and therefore shall only say, at present, to all young converts that care for their salvation; "Mortify the flesh," and "always watch, and avoid temptations."

Direct. xv. 'Be exceeding wary, not only what teachers you commit the guidance of your souls unto, but also with what company you familiarly converse; that they be neither such as would corrupt your minds with error, or your hearts with viciousness, profaneness, lukewarmness, or with a feverish, factious zeal: but choose, if possible, judicious,

P James i. 14, 15.

* 2 Tim. ii. 22.

holy, heavenly, humble, unblamable, self-denying persons, to be your ordinary companions, and familiars; but especially for your near relations.'

It is a matter of very great importance, what teachers you choose, in order to your salvation. In this the free grace of God much differenceth some from others: for, as poor heathens and infidels have none that know more, than what the book of nature teacheth (if so much); so in the several nations of Christians, it is hard for the people to have any, but such as the sword of the magistrate forceth on them, or the stream of their country's custom recommendeth to them. And it is a wonder, if pure truth and holiness be countenanced by either of these. But, when and where his mercy pleaseth, God sendeth wise and holy teachers, with compassion and diligence to seek the saving of men's souls; so that none but the malignant and obstinate are deprived of their help.

Ambitious, proud, covetous, licentious, ungodly men, are not to be chosen for your teachers, if you have your choice. In a nation where true religion is in credit, and hath the magistrate's countenance, or the major vote, some graceless men may join with better, in preaching and defending the purity of doctrine, and holiness of life: and they may be very serviceable to the church herein; especially in expounding and disputing for the truth. But even there, more experienced, spiritual teachers are much more desirable: they will speak most feelingly, who feel what they speak: and they are fittest to bring others to faith and love, who believe, and love God and holiness themselves. They that have life, will speak more lively than the dead. And in most places of the world, the ungodliness of such teachers makes them enemies to the truth, which is according to godliness: their natures are at enmity to the life and power of the doctrine, which they should preach: and they will do their worst to corrupt the magistrates, and make them of their mind: and, if they can but get the sword to favour them, they are, usually, the cruellest persecutors of the sincere. As it is notorious among the Papists, that the baits of power, and honour, and wealth, have so vitiated the body of their clergy, that they conspire to uphold a worldly government and religion; and, in express contra-

diction to sense and reason, and to antiquity, and the judgment of the church, and to the Holy Scriptures, they captivate the ignorant and sensual, to their tyranny and false worship, and use the seduced magistrates and multitude, to the persecuting of those that will not follow them, to sin and to perdition. Take heed of proud and worldly guides.

And yet it is not every one that pretendeth piety and zeal, that is to be heard, or taken for a teacher. But I. Such as preach, ordinarily, the substantial truths which all Christians are agreed in. 2. Such as make it the drift of their preaching, to raise your souls to the love of God, and to a holy, heavenly life, and are zealous against confessed sins. 3. Such as contradict not the essential truths, by errors of their own: nor the doctrine of godliness, by wicked, malicious applications. 4. Such as drive not on any ambitious, tyrannical designs of their own, but deny themselves, and aim at your salvation. 5. Such as are not too hot in proselyting you to any singular opinion of their own: it being the prediction of Paul to the Ephesians, "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them". 6. Such as are judicious with holy zeal, and zealous with judgment. 7. Such as are of experience in the things of God, and not young beginners, or novices in religion. 8. Such as bear reverence to the judgments of the generality of wise and godly men, and are tender of the unity of the church; and not such as would draw you into a sect or party, to the contempt of other Christians; no, not to a party that hath the favour of rulers and the people, to promote them. 9. Such as are gentle, peaceable, and charitable; and not such as burn with hellish malice against their brethren, nor with an ungodly, or cruel, consuming zeal. 10. Such as live not sensually and wickedly, contrary to the doctrines which they preach; but shew by their lives, that they believe what they say, and feel the power of the truths which they preach.

And your familiar companions have great advantage to help or hinder your salvation, as well as your teachers*.

* Acts xx. 30.

• *Magnum virtutis presidium societas bonorum, socius exemplo excitat, sermone recreat, consilio instruit, orationibus adjuvat, autoritate continet, quæ omnia solitudini desunt.* Jos. Acosta, lib. iv. c. 13. Dicunt Stoici Amicitiam solos inter bonos, quos sibi

The matter is not so great, whom you meet by the way, or travel with, or trade, and buy and sell with, as whom you make your intimate, or familiar friends. For such have both the advantage of their interest in your affections, and also the advantage of their nearness and familiarity; and, if they have but also the advantage of higher abilities than you, they may be powerful instruments of your good or hurt. If you have a familiar friend, that will defend you from error, and help you against temptations, and lovingly reprove your sin, and feelingly speak of God, and the life to come, inditing his discourse from the inward power of faith, and holy experience; the benefit of such a friend may be more to you, than of the learnedest or greatest in the world. How sweetly will their speeches relish of the Spirit from which they come! How deeply may they pierce a careless heart! How powerfully may they kindle in you, a love and zeal to God and his commandments! How seasonably may they discover a temptation, prevent your fall, reprove an error, and recover your souls! How faithfully will they watch over you! How profitably will they provoke, and put you on; and pray with you fervently when you are cold; and mind you of the truth, and duty, and mercy, which you forget! It is a very great mercy to have a judicious, solid, and faithful companion in the way to heaven.

But if your ears are daily filled with froth and folly, with ribaldry, or idle stories, with oaths and curses, with furious words, or scorns and jeers against the godly, or with the sophistry of deceivers, is it likely this should leave a pleasant, or wholesome relish on your minds? Is it likely that the effect should not be seen, in your lean or leprous hearts and lives, as well as the effects of an infected, or unwholesome air or diet, will be seen upon your diseased bodies? He is ungodly, that liketh such company best: and he is proud and presumptuous, that will unnecessarily cast himself upon it, in confidence that he shall receive no hurt: and he is careless of himself, that will not cautiously avoid it: and few that long converse with such, come off without

Invicem studiorum similitudo conciliat, posse consistere. Porro amicitiam ipsam societatem quandam esse dicunt omnium, quæ sunt ad vitam necessaria, cum amicis ut nobis ipsis utamur: atque propter seipsum amicum eligendum pronuntiant, amicorumque multitudinem inter expetenda ponant: inter malos non posse constare amicitiam. Laert. in Zenone, lib. vii. segm. 124. p. 443.

some notable loss ; except when we live with such, as Lot did in Sodom, grieving for their sin and misery ; or, as Christ conversed with publicans and sinners, with a holy zeal and diligence to convert and save them ; or, as those that have not liberty, who bear that which they have not power to avoid.

Among the rest, your danger is not least from them that are eager to proselyte you to some party, or unsound opinion. That they think they are in the right, and that they do it in love, and that they think it necessary to your salvation, and that truth and godliness are the things which they profess,—all this makes the danger much greater to you, if it be not truth and godliness indeed, which they propose and plead for. And none are in more danger than the ungrounded and unexperienced, that yet are so wise in their own esteem, as to be confident that they know truth from error, when they hear it, and are not afraid of any deceit, nor much suspicious of their own understandings. But of this before.

The like danger there is of the familiar company of lukewarm ones, or the profane. At first, you may be troubled at their sinful or unsavoury discourse, and make some resistance against the infection ; but, before you are aware, it may so cool and damp your graces, as will make your decay discernible to others ! First, you will hear them with less offence ; and then, you will grow indifferent what company you are in ; and then, you will laugh at their sin and folly ; and then, you will begin to speak as they ; and then, you will grow cold and seldomer in prayer, and other holy duties ; and, if God prevent it not, at last, your judgments will grow blind, and you will think all this allowable.

But of all bad company, the nearest is the worst. If you choose such into your families, or into your nearest, conjugal relations, you cast water upon the fire ; you imprison yourselves in such fetters, as will gall and grieve you, if they do not stop you ; you choose a life of constant, close, and great temptations : whereas, your grace, and comfort, and salvation, might be much promoted, by the society of such as are wise, and gracious, and suitable to your state. To have a constant companion to open your heart to, and join with in prayer, and edifying conference, and faithfully

help you against your sins, and yet to be patient with you in your frailties, is a mercy, which worldlings neither deserve nor value.

Direct. xvi. 'Make careful choice of the books which you read. Let the Holy Scriptures ever have the pre-eminence, and next them, the solid, lively, heavenly treatises, which best expound and apply the Scriptures; and next those, the credible histories, especially of the church, and tractates upon inferior sciences and arts: but take heed of the poison of the writings of false teachers, which would corrupt your understandings: and of vain romances, play-books, and false stories, which may bewitch your fantasies, and corrupt your hearts.'

As there is a more excellent appearance of the Spirit of God in the Holy Scriptures, than in any other book whatever, so it hath more power and fitness to convey the Spirit, and make us spiritual, by imprinting itself upon our hearts. As there is more of God in it, so it will acquaint us more with God, and bring us nearer him, and make the reader more reverent, serious, and divine. Let Scripture be first and most in your hearts and hands, and other books be used as subservient to it. The endeavours of the devil and Papists to keep it from you, doth shew that it is most necessary and desirable to you. And when they tell you, that all heretics plead the Scripture, they do but tell you, that it is the common rule or law of Christians, which, therefore, all are fain to pretend: as all lawyers and wranglers plead the laws of the land, be their cause never so bad, and yet the laws must not be therefore concealed or cast aside: and they do but tell you, that, in their concealment or dishonouring the Scriptures, they are worse than any of those heretics. When they tell you, that the Scriptures are misunderstood, and abused, and perverted to maintain men's errors, they might also desire that the sun might be obscured, because the purblind do mistake, and murderers and robbers do wickedly by its light: and that the earth might be subverted, because it bears all evil doers: and highways stooped up, because men travel in them to do evil: and food prohibited, because it nourisheth men's diseases. And when they have told you truly of a law or rule (whether made by pope or council), which bad men cannot misunderstand or

break, or abuse and misapply, then hearken to them, and prefer that law, as that which preventeth the need of any judgment.

The writings of Divines are nothing else but a preaching the Gospel to the eye, as the voice preacheth it to the ear. Vocal preaching hath the pre-eminence in moving the affections, and being diversified according to the state of the congregations which attend it: this way the milk cometh warmest from the breast. But books have the advantage in many other respects: you may read an able preacher, when you have but a mean one to hear. Every congregation cannot hear the most judicious or powerful preachers; but every single person may read the books of the most powerful and judicious. Preachers may be silenced or banished, when books may be at hand: books may be kept at a smaller charge than preachers: we may choose books which treat of that very subject which we desire to hear of; but we cannot choose what subject the preacher shall treat of. Books we may have at hand every day and hour; when we can have sermons but seldom, and at set times. If sermons be forgotten, they are gone. But a book we may read over and over until we remember it; and, if we forget it, may again peruse it at our pleasure, or at our leisure. So that good books are a very great mercy to the world. The Holy Ghost chose the way of writing, to preserve his doctrine and laws to the church, as knowing how easy and sure a way it is of keeping it safe to all generations, in comparison of mere verbal tradition, which might have made as many controversies about the very terms, as there be memories or persons to be the preservers and reporters.

Books are (if well chosen) domestic, present, constant, judicious, pertinent, yea, and powerful sermons: and always of very great use to your salvation: but especially when vocal preaching faileth, and preachers are ignorant, ungodly, or dull, or when they are persecuted, and forbid to preach.

You have need of a judicious teacher at hand, to direct you what books to use or to refuse. For among good books there are some very good that are sound and lively: and some are good, but mean, and weak, and somewhat dull: and some are very good in part, but have mixtures of error, or else of

incautious, injudicious expressions, fitter to puzzle than edify the weak. I am loath to name any of these latter sorts (of which abundance have come forth of late): but to the young beginner in religion, I may be bold to recommend (next to a sound catechism) Mr. Rutherford's Letters;—Mr. Robert Bolton's Works;—Mr. Perkins's;—Mr. Whateley's;—Mr. Ball, of Faith;—Dr. Preston's;—Dr. Sibbs's;—Mr. Hildersham's:—Mr. Pink's Sermons;—Mr. Jos. Rogers's;—Mr. Rich. Allen's;—Mr. Gurnall's;—Mr. Swinnock's;—Mr. Jos. Simonds's. And to establish you against Popery, Dr. Challoner's Codex Credo Eccles. Cathol.;—Dr. Field, of the Church;—Dr. White's Way to the Church, with the Defence;—Bishop Usher's Answer to the Jesuit; and Chillingworth, with Drelincourt's Summary. And for right principles about Redemption, &c. Mr. Truman's Great Propitiation; and of Natural and Moral Impotency;—and Mr. William Fenner, of Wilful Impenitency;—Mr. Hotchkis, of Forgiveness of Sin. To pass by many other excellent ones, that I may not name too many.

To a very judicious, able reader, who is fit to censure all he reads, there is no great danger in reading the books of any seducers: it doth but shew him how little and thin a cloak is used to cover a bad cause. But, alas! young soldiers, not used to such wars, are startled at a very sophism; or at a terrible threatening of damnation to dissenters (which every censorious sect can use), or at every confident, triumphant boast, or at every thing that hath a fair pretence of truth or godliness. Injudicious persons can answer almost no deceiver which they hear: and when they cannot answer them they think they must yield, as if the fault were not in them but in the cause, and as if Christ had no wiser followers, or better defenders of his truth than they. Meddle not, therefore, with poison, till you better know how to use it, and may do it with less danger, as long as you have no need.

As for play-books, and romances, and idle tales, I have already shewed in my "Book of Self-Denial," how pernicious they are, especially to youth, and to frothy, empty, idle wits, that know not what a man is, nor what he hath to do in the world. They are powerful baits of the devil, to keep more necessary things out of their minds, and better

books out of their hands, and to poison the mind so much the more dangerously, as they are read with more delight and pleasure: and to fill the minds of sensual people with such idle fumes, and intoxicating fancies, as may divert them from the serious thoughts of their salvation: and (which is no small loss) to rob them of abundance of that precious time, which was given them for more important business; and which they will wish and wish again at last that they had spent more wisely. I know the fantastics will say, that these things are innocent, and may teach men much good (like him that must go to a whore-house to learn to hate uncleanness; and him that would go out with robbers to learn to hate thievery): but I shall now only ask them as in the presence of God, 1. Whether they should spend that time no better? 2. Whether better books and practices would not edify them more. 3. Whether the greatest lovers of romances and plays be the greatest lovers of the book of God, and of a holy life? 4. Whether they feel in themselves that the love of these vanities, doth increase their love to the Word of God, and kill their sin, and prepare them for the life to come? or clean contrary? And I would desire men not to prate against their own experience and reason, nor to dispute themselves into damnable impenitency, nor to befool their souls by a few silly words, which any but a sensualist may perceive to be mere deceit and falsehood. If this will not serve, they shall be shortly convinced and answered in another manner.

Direct. xvii. 'Take heed that you receive not a doctrine of libertinism as from the Gospel; nor conceive of Christ as an encourager of sin: nor pretend free grace for your carnal security or sloth: for this is but to set up another Gospel, and another Christ, or rather the doctrine and works of the devil against Christ and the Gospel, and to turn the grace of God into wantonness.'

Because the devil knoweth that you will not receive his doctrine in his own name, his usual method is, to propound and preach it in the name of Christ, which he knoweth you reverence and regard. For, if satan concealed not his own name and hand in every temptation, it would spoil his game, and the more excellent and splendid is his pretence, the more powerful the temptation is¹. They that gave heed to

¹ Ego, si qui, judices, hoc robere animi, atque hac indole virtutis ac continentie

seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, no doubt thought better of the spirits and the doctrines, especially seeming strict (for the devil hath his strictnesses), "as forbidding to marry, and abstinence from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving." But the strictnesses of the devil are always intended to make men loose. They shall be strict as the Pharisees in traditions and vain ceremonies, and building the tombs of the prophets, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous, that they may hate and murder the living saints that worship God in spirit and in truth. Licentiousness is the proper doctrine of the devil, which all his strictness tendeth to promote. To receive such principles is pernicious: but to father them upon Christ and the Gospel is blasphemous.

The Libertines, Antinomians, and Autonomians of this age, have gathered you too many instances. The Libertine saith, "The heart is the man; therefore you may deny the truth with your tongue, you may be present at false worship, (as at the Mass,) you need not suffer to avoid the speaking of a word, or subscribing to an untruth or error, or doing some little thing; but, so long as you keep your hearts to God, and mean well, or have an honest mental reservation, and are forced to it by others, rather than suffer, you may say, or subscribe, or swear any thing which you can yourselves put a lawful sense upon in your own minds, or comply with any outward actions or customs to avoid offence and save yourselves."

The Antinomians tell you, that "The moral law is abrogated, and that the Gospel is no law; (and if there be no law, there is no governor or government, no duty, no sin, no judgment, no punishment, no reward;) that the elect are justified before they are born, or repent, or believe; that their sin is pardoned before it is committed, that God took them as suffering and fulfilling all the law in Christ, as if it had been they that did it in him: that we are justified by faith only in our consciences: that justifying faith is but

fruit, ut respueret omnes voluptates, omnemque vitæ suæ cursum conficeret: quem non quies, non remissio, non sequalium studia, non ludi, non convivia delectarent; nihil in vita expetendum putaret, nisi quod esset cum lande et cum dignitate conjunctum: hunc mea sententia divinis quibusdam bonis instructum atque ornatum post Cic. pro M. Cœl. 39. Op. vol. III. p. 1054.

^u 1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.

the believing that we are justified : that every man must believe that he is pardoned, that he may be pardoned in his conscience ; and this he is to do by a Divine faith, and that this is the sense of the article, ' I believe the forgiveness of sins,' that is, that my sins are forgiven ; and that all are forgiven that believe it : that it is legal and sinful to work or do any thing for salvation : that sin once pardoned need not be confessed and lamented, or at least we need not ask pardon of sin daily, or of one sin oft : that castigations are no punishments ; and yet no other punishment is threatened to believers for their sins ; and, consequently, that Christ hath not procured them a pardon of any sin after believing, but prevented all necessity of pardon : and therefore they must not ask pardon of them, nor do any thing to obtain it : that fear of hell must have no hand in our obedience, or restraint from sin. And some add, that he that cannot repent or believe, must comfort himself that Christ repented and believed for him : (a contradiction.)" Many such doctrines of licentiousness the abusers of grace have brought forth*.

And the sect which imitateth the father of pride in affecting to be from under the government of God, and to be the law-givers and rulers of themselves and all others (which I therefore call the Autonomians), are licentious and much more. They equally contend against Christ's government, and for their own. They fill the world with wars and bloodshed, oppression, and cruelty ; and the ears of God with the cries of the martyrs and oppressed ones ; and all that the spiritual and holy discipline of Christ may be suppressed, and seriousness in religion made odious, or banished from the earth, and that themselves may be taken for the center, and pillars, and law-givers of the church, and the consciences of all men may be taught to cast off all scruples or fears of offending God, in comparison of offending them ; and may absolutely submit to them ; and never stick at any feared disobedience to Christ. They are the scorers and persecutors of strict obedience to the laws of God, and take those that fear his judgments to be men affrighted out of their wits ; and that to obey him exactly (which, alas ! who

* For sound principles in these points, read Mr. Gibbon's Sermon on Justification, in the Morning Exercises at St. Giles's ; and Mr. Truman's two books before named, and Le Blanc's Theses in Latin, with Thea. Salmuriens, &c.

can do that doeth his best) is but to be hypocritical or too precise : but to question their domination, or break their laws (imposed on the world, even on kings and states without any authority), this must be taken for heresy, schism, or a rebellion like that of Corah and his company. This luciferian spirit of the proud Autonomians hath filled the Christian world with bloodshed, and been the greatest means of the miseries of the earth, and especially of hindering and persecuting the Gospel, and setting up a Phariasaical religion in the world : it hath fought against the Gospel, and filled with blood, the countries of France, Savoy, Rhætia, Bohemia, Belgia, Helvetia, Polonia, Hungary, Germany, and many more : that it may appear how much of the satanical nature they have, and how punctually they fulfil his will.

And natural corruption containeth in it, the seeds of all these damnable heresies : nothing more natural to lapsed man, than to shake off the government of God, and to become a lawgiver to himself, and as many others as he can ; and to turn the grace of God into wantonness. Therefore the profane, that never heard it from any heretics but themselves, do make themselves such a creed as this ; that “ God is merciful, and, therefore, we need not fear his threatenings, for he will be better than his word : it belongeth to him to save us, and not to us, and, therefore, we may cast our souls upon his care, though we care not for them ourselves. If he hath predestinated us to salvation, we shall be saved ; and if he have not, we shall not, whatever we do, or how well soever we live. Christ died for sinners, and therefore, though we are sinners, he will save us. God is stronger than the devil, and, therefore, the devil shall not have the most. That which pleaseth the flesh, and doth God no harm, can never be so great a matter, or so much offend him, as to procure our damnation. What need of so much ado to be saved, or so much haste to turn to God, when any one that at last doth but repent, and cry God mercy, and believe that Christ died for him, shall be saved ? Christ is the Saviour of the world, and his grace is very great and free ; and, therefore, God forbid that none should be saved but those few that are of strict and holy lives, and make so much ado for heaven. No man can know who shall be saved, and who shall not ;

and, therefore, it is the wisest way, to do nobody any harm, and to live merrily, and trust God with our souls, and put our salvation upon the venture; nobody is saved for his own works or deservings; and, therefore, our lives may serve the turn as well, as if they were more strict and holy." This is the creed of the ungodly; by which you may see how natural it is to them, to abuse the Gospel, and plead God's grace, to quiet and strengthen them in their sin, and to embolden themselves on Christ to disobey him.

But this is but to set Christ against himself: even his merits and mercies, against his government and Spirit: and to set his death, against the ends of his death: and to set our Saviour against our salvation: and to run from God and rebel against him, because Christ died to recover us to God, and to give us repentance unto life: and to sin, because he died to save his people from their sins, "and to purify a peculiar people to himself, zealous of good works^a." "He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil^b."

Direct. xviii. 'Watch diligently, both against the more discernible decays of grace, and against the degenerating of it into some carnal affections, or something counterfeit, and of another kind. And so also of religious duties.'

We are no sooner warmed with the celestial flames, but natural corruption is inclining us to grow cold: like hot water, which loseth its heat by degrees, unless the fire be continually kept under it. Who feeleth not that as soon as in a sermon, or prayer, or holy meditation, his heart hath got a little heat, as soon as it is gone, it is prone to its former earthly temper, and by a little remissness in our duty, or thoughts, or business about the world, we presently grow cold and dull again. Be watchful, therefore, lest it decline too far. Be frequent in the means that must preserve you from declining: when faintness telleth you that your stomach is emptied of the former meat, supply it with another, lest strength abate. You are rowing against the stream of fleshly interest and inclinations; and, therefore, intermit not too long, lest you go faster down by your ease, than you get up by your labour.

^a Matt. i. 21. Tit. ii. 14.

^b 1 John iii. 8. John viii. 44.

The degenerating of grace, is a way of backsliding, very common, and too little observed. It is, when good affections do not directly cool, but turn into some carnal affections somewhat like them, but of another kind. As, if the body of a man instead of dying, should receive the life or soul of a beast, instead of the reasonable, human soul. For instance: (1.) Have you believed in God, and in Jesus Christ, and loved them accordingly? You shall seem to do so still as much as formerly, when your corrupted minds have received some false representation of them; and so it is indeed another thing that you thus corruptly believe and love. (2.) Have you been fervent in prayer? You shall be fervent still. If satan can but corrupt your prayers, by corrupting your judgments or affections, and get you to think that to be the cause of God which is against him; and that to be against him, which he commandeth; and those to be the troublers of the church, which are its best and faithful members: turn but your prayers against the cause and people of God, by your mistake, and you may pray as fervently against them as you will. The same I may say of preaching, and conference, and zeal: corrupt them once, and turn them against God, and satan will join with you for zealous and frequent preaching, or conference, or disputes. (3.) Have you a confidence in Christ and his promise, for your salvation? Take heed lest it turn into carnal security, and a persuasion of your good estate, upon ill grounds, or you know not why. (4.) Have you the hope of glory? Take heed lest it turn into a careless venturousness of your soul, or the mere laying aside of fear, and cautious suspicion of yourselves. (5.) Have you a love to them that fear the Lord? Watch your hearts, lest it degenerate into a carnal, or a partial love. Many unheedful young persons, of different sexes, at first love each other with an honest, chaste, and pious love; but imprudently using too much familiarity, before they were well aware, it hath turned into a fleshly love, which hath proved their snare, and drawn them further into sin and trouble. Many have honoured them that fear the Lord, who insensibly have declined to honour only those of them that were eminent in wealth and worldly honour, or that were esteemed for their parts, or places by others, and little honoured the humble, poor, obscure Christians, who

were at least as good as they. Forgetting that the "things that are highly esteemed among men, are abomination in the sight of God;" and that God valueth not men by their places and dignities in the world; but by their graces and holiness of life. Abundance that at first did seem to love all Christians, as such, as far as any thing of Christ appeared in them, have first fallen into some sect, and over-admiring their party, and have set light by others as good as they, and censured them as unsound, and then withdrawn their special love, and confined it to their party, or to some few; and yet thought that they loved the godly as much as ever, when it was degenerate into a factious love. (6.) Are you zealous for God, and truth, and holiness, and against the sins and errors of others? Take heed lest you lose it, while you think it doth increase in you. Nothing is more apt to degenerate than zeal. In how many thousands hath it turned from an innocent, charitable, peaceable, tractable, healing, profitable, heavenly zeal, into a partial zeal for some party or opinions of their own? and into a fierce, censorious, uncharitable, scandalous, turbulent, disobedient, unruly, hurting and destroying zeal, ready to wish for fire from heaven, and kindling contention, confusion, and every evil work. Read well James iii. (7.) So, if you are meek or patient, take heed lest it degenerate into stupidity or contempt of those you suffer by. To be patient is not to be merely insensible of the affliction; but by the power of faith to bear the sense of it, as overruled by things of greater moment.

How apt men are to corrupt and debase all duties of religion, is too visible in the face of the far greatest part of the Christian world. Throughout both the Eastern and the Western churches, the Papists, the Greeks, the Armenians, the Abassines, and too many others, (though the essentials of religion through God's mercy are retained, yet) how much is the face of religion altered, from what it was in the days of the apostles! The ancient simplicity of doctrine, is turned into abundance of new or private opinions, introduced as necessary articles of religion, and alas, how many of them false! So that Christians being too proud to accept of the ancient test of Christianity, cannot now agree among themselves what a Christian is, and who is to be esteemed a

Christian; and so they deny one another to be Christians, and destroy their charity to each other, and divide the church, and make themselves a scorn by their divisions, to the infidel world; and thus the primitive unity, charity and peace, is partly destroyed, and partly degenerate into the unity, charity, and peace, of several sects among themselves. The primitive simplicity in government and discipline, is with most, turned into a forcible, secular government, exercised to advance one man above others, and to satisfy his will and lusts, and make him the rule of other men's lives, and to suppress the power and spirituality of religion in the world. The primitive simplicity of worship, is turned into such a mask of ceremony, and such a task of formalities and bodily exercise, that, if one of the apostolical Christians should come among them, he would scarce think that this is the same employment which formerly the church was exercised in, or scarce know religion, in this antic dress. So that the amiable, glorious face of Christianity, is so spotted and defiled, that it is hidden from the unbelieving world, and they laugh at it, as irrational, or think it to be but like their own. And the principal hindrance of the conversion of heathens, Mahometans, and other unbelievers is, the corruption and deformity of the churches that are near them, or should be the instruments of their conversion. And the most probable way to the conversion of those nations is, the true reformation of the churches both in East and West: which, if they were restored to the ancient spirituality, rationality, and simplicity of doctrine, discipline, and worship, and lived in charity, humility, and holiness, as those, whose hearts and conversations are in heaven, with all worldly glory and honour as under their feet; they would then be so illustrious and amiable in the eyes, even of heathens and other infidels, that many would flock into the church of Christ, and desire to be such as they: and their light would so shine before these men, that they would see their good works, and glorify their heavenly Father, and embrace their faith.

The commonest way of the degenerating of all religious duties, is into this dead formality, or lifeless image of religion. If the devil can but get you to cast off the spirituality and life of duty, he will give you leave to seem very devout,

and make much ado with outward actions, words and beads; and you shall have as much zeal for a dead religion, or the corpse of worship as will make you think that it is indeed alive. By all means take heed of this turning the worship of God into lip-service. The commonest cause of it is, a carnality of mind (fleshly men will think best of the most fleshly religion): or else a slothfulness in duty, which will make you sit down with the easiest part: it is the work of a saint, and a diligent saint, to keep the soul itself both regularly and vigorously employed with God. But to say over certain words by rote, and to lift up the hands and eyes is easy: and hypocrites that are conscious that they are void of the life and spirituality of worship, do think to make all up with this formality, and quiet their consciences and delude their souls with a handsome image. Of this I have spoken more largely, in a book called, "The Vain Religion of the Formal Hypocrite."

Yet run not here into the contrary extreme, as to think that the body must not worship God as well as the soul, or that the decent and edifying determination of the outward circumstances of religion, and the right ordering of worship, is a needless thing, or sinful; or that a form of prayer in itself, or when imposed, is unlawful; but let the soul and body of religion go together, and the alterable adjuncts be used, as things alterable, while the life of holiness is still kept up.

Direct. XIX. 'Promise not yourselves long life, or prosperity and great matters in the world, lest it entangle your hearts with transitory things, and engage you in ambitious or covetous designs, and steal away your hearts from God, and destroy all your serious apprehensions of eternity.'

Our own experience, and the alterations which the approach of death makes upon the most, do sensibly prove that the expectation of a speedy change, and reckoning upon a short life, do greatly help us in all our preparation; and in all the work of holiness through our lives. Come to a man that lieth on his death-bed, or a prisoner that is to die to-morrow, and try him with discourse of riches, or honours, or temptations to lust, or drunkenness, or excess; and he will think you are mad, or very impertinent, to tell him of such things. If he be but a man of common reason,

you shall see that he will more easily vilify such temptations, than many religious persons will do, in their prosperity and health. O how serious are we in repenting and perusing our former lives, and casting up our accounts, and asking, what we shall do to be saved, when we see that death is indeed at hand, and time is at an end, and we must away! Every sentence of Scripture hath then some life and power in it; every word of exhortation is savoury to us; every reproof of our negligence and sin, is then well taken; every thought of sin, or Christ, or grace, or eternity, goes then to the quick; Then time seems precious, and if you ask a man whether it be better spent in cards, and dice, and plays, and feasting, and needless recreations, and idleness, or in prayer, and holy conference, and reading and meditating on the Word of God and the life to come, and the holy use of our lawful labours! how easily will he be satisfied of the truth, and confute the cavils of voluptuous time-wasters! Then his judgment will more easily be in the right, than learning or arguments before could make it. In a word, the expectation of the speedy approach of the soul into the presence of the eternal God, and of our entering into an unchangeable, endless life of joy or torment, hath so much in it to awaken all the powers of the soul, that if ever we will be serious, it will make us serious, in every thought, and speech, and duty. And therefore as it is a great mercy of God, that this life, which is so short, should be as uncertain, and that frequent dangers and sicknesses call to us to look about us, and be ready for our change; so, usually, the sickly that look for death, are most considerate: and it is a great part of the duty of those that are in youth and health, to consider their frailty, and the shortness and uncertainty of their lives, and always live as those that wait for the coming of their Lord. And we have great reason for it, when we are certain it will be ere long; and when we have so many perils and weaknesses to warn us; and when we are never sure to see another hour; and when time is so swift, so quickly gone, so unrecoverable, and nothing when it is past. Common reason requireth such to live in a constant readiness to die.^d

^d *Quamquam, O Dii boni! Quid est in hominis vita diu? da enim supremum tempus: expectemus Tartessorum regis ætatem: fuit enim (ut scriptum video). Arganthonius quidam Gadibus, qui octoginta regnavit annos, centum et viginti vixit:*

But, if youth or health do once make you reckon of living long; and make you put away the day of your departure, as if it were far off; this will do much to deceive and dull the best, and take away the power of every truth, and the life of every good thought and duty, and all will be apt to dwindle into customariness and form. You will hardly keep the faculties of the soul awake, if you do not think still of death and judgment, as near at hand. The greatest certainty of thy greatest change, and the greatest joy or misery for ever, will not keep our stupid hearts awake, unless we look at all as near, as well as certain! This is plain, in the common difference that we find among all men, between their thoughts of death, in health, and when they see indeed that they must presently die. They that in health could think and talk of death with laughter, or lightly, without any awakening of soul, when they come to die are oftentimes as much altered, as if they had never heard before that they are mortal. By which it is plain, that to live in the house of mirth is more dangerous, than to live in the house of mourning; and that the expectation of long life, is a grievous enemy to the operations of grace, and the safety of the soul. And it is one of the greatest strengtheners of your temptations to luxury, ambition, worldliness, and almost every sin. When men think that they shall have many years leisure to repent, they are apt the more boldly to transgress: when they think that they have yet many years to live, it tempteth them to pass away time in idleness, and to loiter in their race, and trifle in all their work, and to overvalue all the pleasures, and honours, and shadows of felicity that are here below. He that hath his life in his house or land, or hath it for inheritance, will set more by it, and bestow more upon it, than if he thought he must go out of it the next year. To a man that thinks of living many years, the favour of great ones, the raising of his estate, and name, and family, and the accommodations and pleasings of his flesh, will seem great matters to him, and will do much with him, and will make self-denial a very hard work.

sed nihil ne diuturnum quidem quidquam videtur, in quo est aliquid extremum: Cum enim id advenit; tunc illud quod præterit, effluit: tantum remanet, quod virtute, et recte factis consecutus sis. Hæc quidem cedunt, et dies, et menses, et anni: nec præteritum tempus umquam revertitur, nec quid sequatur, sciri potest. Cic. Sen. 69. vol. vii. p. 813.

Therefore, though health be a wonderful great mercy, as enabling him to duty that hath a heart to use it to that end ; yet it is by accident a very great danger and snare to the heart itself, to turn it from the way of duty. The best life for the soul is, that which least endangereth it by being overpleasing to the body, and in which the flesh hath the smallest interest to set up and plead against the Spirit. Not but that the largest stock must be accepted, and used for God, when he trusteth us with it ; for when he setteth us the hardest work, we may expect his greatest help. But a dwelling as in tents, in a constant unsettledness, in a moveable condition, having little, and needing little, never feeling any thing in the creature to tempt us to say, "Soul take thy rest ;" this is, to most, the safest life, which giveth us the freest advantages for heaven.

Take heed, therefore, as you love your souls, of falling into the snare of worldly hopes, and laying designs for rising, and riches, and pleasing yourselves in the thoughts and prosecution of these things, for then you are in the readiest way to perdition ; even to idolatrous worldliness, and apostasy of heart from God, and opening a door to every sin, that seems but necessary to your worldly ends ; and to odious hypocrisy for a cloak to all this, and to quiet your guilty minds with something that is like religion. When once you are saying with worldly security, as he, Luke xii. 18, 19. "I will pull down my barns, and build greater ; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry : " you are then befooling yourselves, and near being called away, as fools, by death, verses 20, 21. And when, without a sense of the uncertainty of your lives, you are saying, as those in James iv. 13, 14. "To-day, or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain ; whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow : " You forget what your lives are, that they are "a vapour, appearing a little while, and then vanishing away," verse 14. "Boast not thyself therefore of to-morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Direct. xx. ' See that your religion be purely divine,

• Prov. xxvii. 1.

and animated all by God, as the beginning, the way, and the end ; and that first upon thy soul, and then upon all that thou hast or dost, there be written " **HOLINESS TO THE LORD :**" and that thou corrupt not all with an inordinate, hypocritical respect to man^c."

To be holy, is to be divine, or devoted to God, and appropriated to him, and his will, and use ; and that our hearts and lives be not common and unclean. To be godly, is to live to God ; as those that from their hearts believe, that he is God indeed, and that " he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," that he is " our God all-sufficient, our shield and exceeding great reward^a." " And that of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things^b," that all may give the glory for ever unto him. As God is infinitely above all creatures, so living upon God and unto God, must needs advance us above the highest sensual life : and therefore religion is transcendently above all sciences or arts. So much of God as is in you and upon you, so much you are more excellent than the highest worldly perfection can advance you to. God should be the first, and last, and all in the mind, and mouth, and life of a believer. God must be the principal matter of your religion. The understanding and will must be exercised upon him. When you awake you should be still with him^d. Your meditations of him should be sweet, and you should be glad in the Lord. Yet, creatures under him, may be the frequent, less principal matter of your religion ; but still as referred unto him. God must be the author of your religion : God must institute it, if you expect he should accept it and reward it. God must be the rule of your religion, as revealing his will concerning it in his Word. God must be the ultimate end of your religion : it must be intended to please and glorify him. God must be the continual motive and reason of your religion, and of all you do : you must be able truly to fetch your reason

^a De bonis et malis ita disserebat Plato : Finem esse, Deo similem fieri. Virtutem sufficere quidem ad bene beateque vivendum : cæterum instrumentis indigere, corporis bonis ; robore, sanitate, integritate sensuum, et cæteris id genus. Exterioribus item, puta opibus, generis claritate, gloria. Ea et si non affuerint, nihilominus tamen beatum fore sapientem. Arbitratur et Deos humana cernere atque curare, et demones esse. Porro in dialogis justitiam divinam legem arbitratus est, ut ad juste agendum potentius persuaderet, nè post mortem pœnas improbi lucrent. Laert. in Plat. lib. iii. sect. 78, 79. pp. 213, 214.

^b Heb. xi. 6. Gen. xv. 1. xvii. 1.

^c Rom. xi. 36.

^d Psal. cxxix. 18.

from heaven, and to say, 'I do it because it is his will; I do it to please, and glorify, and enjoy him.' God must be taken as the sovereign Judge of your religion, and of you, and of all you do: and you must wholly look to his justification and approbation, and avoid whatever he condemneth. Can you take God for your Owner, your Sovereign, your Saviour, your sufficient Protector, your Portion, your all? If not, you cannot be godly, nor be saved. If his authority have not more power upon you, than the authority of the greatest upon earth; you are atheistical hypocrites, and not truly religious, whatever you pretend. If "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," be written upon you, and all that is your's, you are devoted to him, as his own peculiar ones. If your names be set upon your sheep, or plate, or clothes, you will say, if another should take them, 'They are mine; do you not see my mark upon them?' Slavery to the flesh, the world, and the devil, is the mark that is written upon the ungodly (upon the foreheads of the profane, and upon the hearts of hypocrites and all): and satan, the world, and the flesh have their service. If you are consecrated to God, and bear his name and mark upon you, tell every one that would lay claim to you, that you are his, and resolved to live to him, to love him, to trust him, and to stand or fall to him alone. Let God be the very life, and sense, and end of all you do.

When once man hath too much of your regard and observation, that you set too much by his favour and esteem, or eye him too much in your profession and practice; when man's approbation too much comforteth you, and man's displeasure or dispraise doth too much trouble you; when your fear, and love, and care, and obedience are too much taken up for man; you so far withdraw yourselves from God, and are becoming the servants of men, and friends of the world, and turning back to bondage, and forsaking your Rock and Portion, and your excellency: the soul of religion is departing from you, and it is dying and returning to the dust. And if once man get the pre-eminence of God, and be preferred and set above him, in your hearts or lives, and feared, trusted, and obeyed before him, you are then dead to God, and alive to the world; and, as men are taken for your gods, you must take up with such a salvation as they can give you. If your alms and prayers are done to be seen

of men, and to procure their good thoughts and words; if you get them, make your best of them; "for, verily," your Judge hath "said unto you, you have your reward!"

Not that man is absolutely to be contemned or disregarded. No; under God, your superiors must be obeyed; you must do wrong to none, and do good to all, as far as in you lieth; you must avoid offence, and give good example, and, under God, have so much regard to men, as to "become all things to all men, for their salvation." But if once you set them above their rank, and turn yourselves to an inordinate dependance on them, and make too great a matter of their opinion or words concerning you, you are losing your godliness or divine disposition; and turning it into man-pleasing and hypocrisy^m. When man stands in competition with God, for your first and chief regard, or in opposition to him, or a sharer in co-ordination with him, and not purely in subordination to him, he is to be numbered with things to be forsaken. Even good men, whom you must love and honour, and whose communion and help you must highly value, yet may be made the object of your sin, and may become your snare. Your honouring of them, or love to them, must not entice you to desire inordinately to be honoured by them, nor cause you to set too much by their approbation. If you do, you will find that, while you are too much eyeing man, you are losing God, and corrupting your religion at the very heart. And you may fall among those, that, how holy soever, may have great mistakes in matters of religion, tending to much sin, and may be somewhat censorious against those that are not of their mind; and so the retaining of their esteem, and the avoiding of their censures, may become one of the greatest temptations of your lives. And you will find, that man-pleasing is a very difficult, and yet unprofitable task. Love Christ, as he appeareth in any of his servants, and be followers of them, as they are followers of Christ, and regard their approbation as it agreeth with Christ's: but O! see that you

^l Matt. vi. 1—3.

^m Igitur alio spectare si voles, atque hanc sedem, et eternam domum contueri: neque te sermonibus vulgi dederis, nec in premiis humanis spem posueris rerum tuarum: sis te oportet illecebris ipsa virtus trahat ad verum decus. Cic. Somn. Scip. 7. op. vol. vii. p. 918. Hanc celestia semper spectato: illa humana contemnit. Id. Ibid. p. 917.

are able to live upon the favour of God alone, and to be quieted in his acceptance, though man despise you; and to be pleased, so far as God is pleased, though man be displeased with you; and to rejoice in his justification, though men condemn you with the most odious slanders, and the greatest infamy, and cast out your names as evil doers. See that God be taken as enough for you, or else you take him not as God: even as enough without man, and enough against man; that you may be able to say, "If God be for us, who can be against us? Who is he that condemneth? it is God that justifieth^a." "Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of Christ^b." "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh.—Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit^c." "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of^d?"

Having given you these Directions, I must tell you in the conclusion, that they are like food, that will not nourish you by standing on your table; or, like physic, that will not cure you by standing in the box: they must be taken and digested, or you will find none of the benefit. It is not the reading of them, that will serve the turn to so great use, as the safe proceeding and confirmation of beginners, or novices in religion: it will require humility to perceive the need of them; and labour to learn, digest, and practice them. Those slothful souls, that will refuse the labour, must bear the sad effects of their negligence: there is not one of all these Directions, as to the matter of them, which can be spared. Study them, understand them, and remember them, as things that must be done. If either a senselessness of your necessity, or a conceit that the Spirit must

^a Rom. viii. 31. 33, 34.

^b Gal. i. 10.

^c Jer. xvii. 5—8.

^d Isa. ii. 22.

do it, without so much labour and diligence of your own, do prevail with you, to put off all these with a mere approbation, the consequent may be sadder than you can yet foresee. Though I suppose you to have some beginnings of grace; I must tell you, that it will be, comparatively, a sad kind of life, to be erroneous, and scandalous, and troublesome to the church, or full of doubts, and fears, and passions, and to be burdensome to others and yourselves! Yea, it is reason that you be very suspicious of your sincerity, if you desire not to increase in grace, and be not willing to use the means, which are necessary to your increase. He is not sincere, that desireth not to be perfect: and he desireth not sincerely, who is not willing to be at the labour and cost, which is necessary to the obtaining of the thing desired. I beseech you, therefore, as you love the happiness of prudent, strong, and comfortable Christians, and would escape the misery of those grievous diseases, which would turn your lives into languishing, unserviceableness, and pain; that you seriously study these Directions, and get them into your minds, and memories, and hearts; and let the faithful practice of them be your greatest care, and the constant employment of your lives.

CHAPTER III.

The General Grand Directions for Walking with God, in a Life of Faith and Holiness: containing the Essentials of Godliness and Christianity.

I AM next to direct you in that exercise of grace, which is common to all Christians. Habits are for use: grace is given you, not only that you may have it, but also that you may use it. And it is fit that we direct you how to use it, before we direct you how to know that you have it; because it is grace in exercise that you must discern; and habits are not perceived in themselves, but by their acts: and the more lively and powerful the exercise is, the more easily is grace perceived: so that this is the nearest and surest way