

I, or the persecuted party; neither your opinion shall be judge nor mine; but the opinion and language of historians, and of the wisest men, who are the masters of fame. Certainly that report of Holy Scripture and history which hath prevailed, will still prevail; and while there are wise, and good, and merciful men in the world, the names and manners of the foolish, and wicked, and cruel will be odious, as they continue at this day.

I have wrote these Directions to discharge my duty, for those that are willing to escape the guilt of so desperate a sin; but not with any expectation at all, that it should do much good with any considerable number of persecutors; for they will not read such things as these; and God seldom giveth professed Christians over to this sin, till they have grievously blinded their minds, and hardened their hearts, and by malignity and obstinacy are prepared for his sorest judgments; and I know that whoever will live godly in Christ Jesus (it is not said, "who professeth to believe in Christ Jesus," but, "to live godly") shall suffer persecution, and that the cross must still be the passage to the crown^h.

CHAPTER XII.

Directions against Scandal as given.

SCANDAL being a murdering of souls, is a violation of the general law of charity, and of the sixth commandment in particular. In handling this subject, I shall 1. Shew you what is true scandal given to another. 2. What things go under the name of scandal, which are not it, but are falsely so named. 3. What are the particular ways and sorts of scandal. 4. The greatness of this sin. 5. Directions to avoid it.

I. I shall not need to stand upon the etymology of the word 'scandal;' whether it come from 'σκάλω,' 'claudico,' as Erasmus thought, or from 'σκάμβον,' 'curvum,' &c. Martinus, Stephanus, Lyserus, &c. have sufficiently done it, whither I refer you; as for the sense of the word it is past doubt, that the ordinary use of it in Scripture is for a stum-

^h 2 Tim. iii. 11, 12. Matt. v. 11, 12. Luke xiv. 26. 33.

bling-block, for a man to fall upon, or a trap to ensnare a man; and in the Old Testament it is oft used for a stumbling-stone, on which a man may fall into any corporal calamity, or a snare to hurt or ruin a man in the world; (as Exod. x. 7. 1 Sam. xviii. 21. xxv. 31. Psalm cxix. 165. Ezek. vii. 19. Sept.) But in the New Testament, (which speaketh more of spiritual hurts) it is taken for a stumbling-block or temptation, by which a man is in danger of falling into sin, or spiritual loss, or ruin, or dislike of godliness, or any way to be turned from God, or hindered in a religious, holy way; (and if sometimes it be taken for grieving or troubling, it is as it hereby thus hindereth or ensnareth;) so that to scandalize, is sometimes taken for the doing of a blameless action, from which another unjustly taketh occasion to fall, or sin, or be perverted: but when it signifieth a sin (as we take it in this place) then to scandalize is, By something unlawful of itself, or at least unnecessary, which may occasion the spiritual hurt or ruin of another. 1. The matter is either something that is simply sinful (and then it is a double sin) or something indifferent or unnecessary, and then it is simply the sin of scandal. 2. It must be that which may occasion another's fall, I say, occasion; for no man can forcibly cause another man to sin, but only occasion it, or tempt him to it, as a moral cause.

II. By this you may see, 1. That to scandalize, is not merely to displease, or grieve another; for many a man is displeased through his folly and vice, by that which tendeth to his good; and many a man is tempted (that is, scandalized) by that which pleaseth him; when Christ saith, "If thy right eye or hand offend, (or scandalize thee) pluck it out, or cut it off;" &c. he doth not by 'offending,' mean 'displeasing,' or 'grieving;' for by so offending it may profit us; but he plainly meaneth, 'If it draw thee to sin;' or else he had never added, "That it is better to enter maimed into life, than having two hands or eyes to be cast into hell!" That is, in a word, Thy damnation is a greater hurt than the loss of hand or eye, and therefore if there were no other way to avoid it, this would be a very cheap way. So 'pedem offendere in lapidem,' is to stumble upon a stone. The most censorious and humourous sort of men, have got

* Matt. v.

a notion, that whatever offendeth or displeaseth them is scandalous! And they think that no man must do anything which grieveth or displeaseth them, lest he be guilty of scandal; and by this trick whoever can purchase impatience and peevishness enough, to be always displeased with the actions of others, shall rule the world. But the truth is, the ordinary way of scandalizing these men, is by pleasing them.

I will give you one instance of scandal in Scripture, which may help this sort of people better to understand it, Gal. ii. 10—16. Peter there giveth true scandal to the Jews and Gentiles; he walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, but laid a stumbling-block before the Jews and Gentiles; and this was not by displeasing the Jews, but by pleasing them. The Jews thought it a sin to eat with the Gentiles, and to have communion with uncircumcised men. Peter knew the contrary, but for fear of them of the circumcision, lest they should be offended at him as a sinner, he “withdrew and separated himself.” This scandal tended to harden the Jews in their sinful separation, and to seduce the Gentiles into a conceit of the necessity of circumcision; and Barnabas was carried away with the dissimulation. Here you may see, that if any think it a sin in us to have communion in such or such congregations, with such persons, in such worship, which God alloweth us not to separate from, it is a sin of scandal in us to separate to avoid these men’s offence. We scandalize them and others, even by pleasing them, and by avoiding that which they falsely called scandalous. And if we would not scandalize them, we must do that which is just, and not by our practice hide the sound doctrine, which is contrary to their separating error.

2. And it is as apparent that to scandalize another, is not (as is vulgarly imagined by the ignorant) to do that which is commonly reputed sinful, or which hath the appearance of a sin, or which will make a man evil thought of, or spoken of by others; yet commonly when men say, ‘This is a scandalous action,’ they mean, it is an action which is reproachful or of evil report as a sin. And therefore in our English speech it is common to say of one that slandereth another, that he raised a scandal of him. But this is not the meaning of the word in Scripture; materially indeed

scandal may consist in any such thing which may be a stumbling-block to another; but formally it is the tempting of another, or occasioning his fall, or ruin, or hurt, which is the nature of scandalizing. And this is done more seldom by committing open, disgraceful sins, and doing that which will make the doer evil spoken of; for by that means others are the more assisted against the temptation of imitating him; but scandal is most commonly found in those actions, which are under the least reproach among men, or which have the most plausible appearance of good in them, when they are evil! For these are more apt to deceive and overthrow another.

3. And it is also apparent, that it is no sinful scandalizing to do a duty or necessary action, which I have not power to forbear, though I know that another will be offended, or fall by it into sin. If God have made it my duty, even at this time, I must not disobey him, and omit my duty, because another will make it an occasion of his sin. It must be either a sinful or an indifferent action, that is, scandal, or something that is in my power to do, or to forbear: yet this must be added, that affirmatives binding not 'ad semper,' to all times, and no duty being a duty at every moment, it may oft fall out, that that which else would have been my duty at this time, may become at this time no duty but a sin, by the evil consequents which I may foresee, as if another man will make it an occasion of his fall. So that this may oblige me to defer a duty to a fitter time and place. For all such duties as have the nature of a means, are never duties when they cross the interest of their chief ends, and make against that which they are used to effect. And therefore here Christian prudence, foreseeing consequents, and weighing the good and evil together, is necessary to him that will know a duty from a sin, and a scandal from no scandal.

III. The several ways of scandalizing are these following: 1. Scandal is either intended or not intended, either that which is done maliciously of set purpose, or that which is done through negligence, carelessness or contempt. Some men do purposely contrive the fall or ruin of another, and this is a devilish aggravation of the sin: and some do hurt to others while they intend it not; yet this is far from

excusing them from sin ; for it is voluntary as an omission of the will, though not as its positive choice ; that is called voluntary which the will is chargeable with, or culpable of ; and it is chargeable with its omissions, and sluggish neglects of the duty which it should do. Those that are careless of the consequent of their actions, and contemn the souls of other men, and will go their own way, come of it what will, and say, Let other men look to themselves, are the most common sort of scandalizers ; and are as culpable, as a servant that would leave hot water or fire when the children are like to fall into it ; or that would leave straw or gunpowder near the fire, or would leave open the doors, though not of purpose to let in the thieves.

2. Scandal is that which tendeth to another's fall, either directly or indirectly, immediately or remotely. The former may easily be foreseen ; but the latter requireth a large foreseeing, comparing understanding ; yet this sort of scandal also must be avoided ; and wise men that would not undo men's souls while they think no harm, must look far before them, and foresee what is like to be the consequent of their actions at the greatest distance and at many removes.

3. Scandals also are aptitudinal or actual ; many things are apt to tempt and occasion the ruin of another ; which yet never attain so bad an end, because God disappointeth them ; but that is no thanks to them that give the scandal.

4. Scandal also as to the means of it, is of several sorts. 1. By doctrine. 2. By persuasion. 3. By alluring promises. 4. By threats. 5. By violence. 6. By gifts. 7. By example. 8. By omission of duties, and by silence ; by all these ways you may scandalize.

1. False doctrine is directly scandalous ; for it seduceth the judgment, which then misguideth the will, which then misruleth the rest of the faculties. False doctrine, if it be in weighty, practical points, is the pernicious plague of souls and nations.

2. Also the solicitations of seducers and of tempting people are scandalous, and tend to the ruin of souls ; when people have no reason to draw a man to sin, they weary him out by tedious importunity. And many an one yields to the earnestness, or importunity, or tediousness of a persuasion, who could easily resist it if it came only with pretence of reason.

3. Alluring promises of some gain or pleasure that shall come by sin, is another scandal which doth cause the fall of many. The course that satan tried with Christ, "All this will I give thee," was but the same which he found most successful with sinners in the world. This is a bait which sinners will themselves hunt after, if it be not offered them. Judas will go to the Pharisees with a "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" Peter saith of the scandalous heretics of his time, "They allure through the lust of the flesh, through much wantonness those that were clean escaped from them who live in error; while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption^a."

4. Threatenings also and scorns are scandals, which frighten unbelieving souls into sin; thus Rabshakeh thought to prevail with Hezekiah. Thus Nebuchadnezzar^b, thought to have drawn those three worthies to idolatry. Thus the Pharisees thought to have frightened the apostles, from preaching any more in the name of Christ^c. Thus Saul thought to have perverted the disciples, by breathing out threatenings against them^d.

5. And what words will not do, the ungodly think to do by force; and it enrageth them, that they should resist their wills, and that their force is patiently endured. What cruel torments! what various sorts of heavy sufferings have the devil and his instruments devised, to be stumbling-blocks to the weak, to affright them into sin!

6. Gifts also have blinded the eyes of some who seemed wise: "As oppression maketh a wise man mad, so a gift destroyeth the heart^e." What scandals have preferments proved to the world, and how many have they ruined! Few are able to esteem the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of the world.

7. And evil examples are the most common sort of scandals^f: not as they offend, or grieve, or are apparently sinful; but as they seem good, and therefore are temptations to the weak to imitate them. So apt are men to imitation, especially in evil, that they will do what they see another do, without examining whether it be justifiable or not. Es-

^a 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19.

^b Dan. iii.

^c Acts iv. 17. 21

^d Acts ix. 1.

^e Exod. xxiii. 8.

^f Heb. xi. 26.

pecially if it be the example either of great men, or of learned men, or of men reputed eminently godly, or of a multitude, any of these the people are apt to imitate : this therefore is the common way of scandal. When people do that which is evil as if it were good, and thereby draw the ignorant to think it good, and so imitate them. Or else when they do that which is lawful itself, in such a manner as tendeth to deceive another, and draw him to that which is indeed unlawful ; or to hinder him in any thing that is good.

8. Lastly, Even silence and omissions also may be scandalous, and draw another into error and sin. If by silence you seem to consent to false doctrine, or to wicked works, when you have opportunity to control them, hereby you draw others to consent also to the sin : or if you omit those public or private duties, which others may be witnesses of, you tempt them to the like omission, and to think they are no duties, but indifferent things : for in evil they will easily rest in your judgment, and say that you are wiser than they ; but they are not so ductile and flexible to good.

5. Scandals also are distinguishable by the effects ; which are such as these :

1. Some scandals do tempt men to actual infidelity, and to deny or doubt of the truth of the Gospel.

2. Some scandals would draw men but into some particular error, and from some particular truth, while he holds the rest.

3. Some scandals draw men to dislike and distaste the way of godliness ; and some to dislike the servants of God.

4. Some scandals tend to confound men, and bring them to utter uncertainties in religion.

5. Some tend to terrify men from the way of godliness.

6. Some only stop them for a time, and discourage or hinder them in their way.

7. Some tend to draw them to some particular sin.

8. And some to draw them from some particular duty.

9. And some tend to break and weaken their spirits, by grief or perplexity of mind.

10. And as the word is taken in the Old Testament, the snares that malicious men lay to entrap others in their

lives, or liberties, or estates, or names, are called scandals. And all these ways a man may sinfully scandalize another.

And that you may see that the scandal forbidden in the New Testament, is always of this nature, let us take notice of the particular texts where the word is used. And first, to scandalize is used actively in these following texts: in Matt. v. before cited, and in the other evangelists citing the same words, the sense is clear; that the offending of a hand or eye, is not displeasing, nor seeking of ill report; but hindering our salvation by drawing us to sin. So in Matt. xviii. 8. and Mark ix. 42, 43. where the sense is the same. In Matt. xvii. 27. "Lest we should offend them, &c." is not only, lest we displease them, but lest we give them occasion to dislike religion, or think hardly of the Gospel, and so lay a stumbling-block to the danger of their souls. So Matt. xviii. 6. and Mark ix. "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, &c." that is, not who shall displease them, but whoso by threats, persecutions, cruelties, or any other means, shall go about to turn them from the faith of Christ, or stop them in their way to heaven, or hinder them in a holy life: though these two texts seem nearest to the denied sense, yet that is not indeed their meaning. So in Job vi. 6. "Doth this offend you?" that is, doth this seem incredible to you, or hard to be believed, or digested? Doth it stop your faith, and make you distaste my doctrine? So 1 Cor. viii. 13. "If meat scandalize my brother;" our translators have turned it, "If meat make my brother to offend." So it was not displeasing him only, but tempting him to sin which is the scandalizing here re-proved.

View also the places where the word 'Scandal' is used. Matt. xiii. 41. 'Πάντα τὰ σκάνδαλα,' 'All scandals,' translated 'All things that offend,' doth not signify, All that is displeasing; but all temptations to sin, and hindrances or stumbling-blocks that would have stopped men in the ways to heaven. So in Matt. xvi. 23. (a text as like as any to be near the denied sense; yet indeed) "Thou art a scandal to me," (translated an offence) doth not only signify, 'Thou displeasest me,' but 'Thou goest about to hinder me in my undertaken office, from suffering for the redemption of the

world: it was an aptitudinal scandal, though not effectual. So Matt. xviii. 7. "It must be that scandals come;" (translated offences,) that is, that there be many stumbling-blocks set before men in their way to heaven. So Luke xvii. 1. to the same sense. And Rom. ix. 33. "I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone, and a rock of scandal," (translated offence); that is, such as will not only be displeasing, but an occasion of utter ruin to the unbelieving, persecuting Jews; according to that of Simeon, Luke ii. 34. "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." Rom. xi. 9. "Let their table be made a snare, a trap, and a stumbling-block." The Greek word 'εἰς σκάνδαλον' doth not signify a displeasure only, but an occasion of ruin. So Rom. xiv. 13. expoundeth itself, "That no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall into his brother's way." The Greek word is, 'or a scandal.' This is the just exposition of the word in its ordinary use in the New Testament^s. So Rom. xvi. 17. "Mark them which cause divisions and scandals," (translated offences); that is, which lay stumbling-blocks in the way of Christians, and would trouble them in it, or turn them from it. So 1 Cor. i. 23. "To the Jews a stumbling-block," that is, a scandal, (as the Greek word is,) as before expounded. So Gal. v. 11. "The scandal of the cross," translated the offence, doth signify not the bare reproach, but the reproach as it is the trial and stumbling-block of the world, that maketh believing difficult. So 1 John ii. 10. "There is no scandal in him," translated 'No occasion of stumbling.' These are all the places that I remember where the word is used.

The passive verb 'σκανδαλιζομαι,' 'to be scandalized,' is often used. As Matt. xi. 6. "Blessed is he that is not scandalized," (translated, offended in me); that is, who is not distasted with my person and doctrine through carnal prejudices; and so kept in unbelief: there were many things in the person, life, and doctrine of Christ, which were unsuitable to carnal reason and expectation. These men thought them to be hard and strange, and could not digest them, and so were hindered by them from believing: and this was

^s So Rev. ii. 14. Balaam did 'βαλεῖν σκάνδαλον,' 'lay a scandal,' or stumbling-block before the Israelites; that is, a temptation to sin.

^h Luke vii. 23.

being offended in Christ. So in Matt. xiii. 57. and Mark vi. 3. "They were offended in, or at him;" that is, took a dislike or distaste to him for his words. And Matt. xiii. 21. "When persecution ariseth, by and by they are offended¹;" that is, they stumble and fall away: and Matt. xv. 12. "The Pharisees were offended," (or scandalized²); that is, so offended as to be more in dislike of Christ. And Matt. xxiv. 10. "Then shall many be offended," (or scandalized); that is, shall draw back and fall away from Christ. And Matt. xxvi. 31. 33. Mark xiv. 27. 29. "All ye shall be offended because of me, &c." "Though all men shall be offended (or scandalized) yet will I never be scandalized;" that is, brought to doubt of Christ, or to forsake him, or deny him, or be hindered from owning their relation to him. So John xvi. 1. "These things I have spoken that ye should not be offended;" that is, that when the time cometh, the unexpected trouble may not so surprise you, as to turn you from the faith, or stagger you in your obedience or hope. Rom. xiv. 21. doth exactly expound it: "It is good neither to eat flesh, or drink wine, or any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is scandalized, (or offended,) or made weak;" it is a making weak. So 2 Cor. xi. 29. "Who is offended;" that is, stumbled, or hindered, or ready to apostatize. So much for the nature and sorts of scandal.

IV. You are next to observe the aggravations of this sin. Which briefly are such as these:

1. Scandal is a murdering of souls; it is a hindering of men's salvation, and an enticing or driving them towards hell. And therefore in some respect worse than murder, as the soul is better than the body.

2. Scandal is a fighting against Jesus Christ, in his work of man's salvation. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost;" and the scandalizer seeketh to lose and destroy that which Christ would seek and save.

3. Scandal robbeth God of the hearts and service of his creatures; for it is a raising in them a distaste of his people, and word, and ways, and of himself; and a turning from him the hearts of those that should adhere unto him.

4. Scandal is a serving of the devil, in his proper work of enmity to Christ, and perdition of souls; scandalizers do.

¹ Mark vi 3.

² Mark iv. 17.

his work in the world, and propagate his cause and kingdom.

V. The means of avoiding the guilt of scandal, are as followeth.

Direct. 1. 'Mistake not (with the vulgar) the nature of scandal, as if it lay in that offending men, which is nothing but grieving or displeasing them; or in making yourselves to be of evil report; but remember that scandal is that offending men, which tempteth them into sin from God and godliness, and maketh them stumble and fall, or occasioneth them to think evil of a holy life.' It is a pitiful thing to hear religious persons plead for the sin of man-pleasing, under the name of avoiding scandal; yea, to hear them set up an usurped dominion over the lives of other men, and all by the advantage of the word 'scandal' misunderstood. So that all men must avoid whatever a censorious person will call scandalous, when he meaneth nothing else himself by scandal, than a thing that is of evil report, with such as he. Yea, pride itself is often pleaded for by this misunderstanding of scandal; and men are taught to overvalue their reputations, and to strain their consciences to keep up their esteem, and all under pretence of avoiding scandal; and in the mean time they are really scandalous, even in that action, by which they think they are avoiding it. I need no other instance, than the case of unwarrantable separation. Some will hold communion with none but the rebaptized; some think an imposed liturgy is enough to prove communion with such a church unlawful (at least in the use of it); and almost every sect do make their differences a reason for their separating from other churches. And if any one would hold communion with those that they separate from, they presently say, 'That it is scandalous to do so, and to join in any worship which they think unlawful:' and by scandal they mean no more, but that it is among them of evil report, and is offensive or displeasing to them. Whereas indeed the argument from scandal should move men to use such communion, which erroneous, uncharitable, dividing men do hold unlawful. For else by avoiding that communion I shall lay a stumbling-block in the way of the weak; I shall tempt him to think that a duty is a sin, and weaken his charity, and draw him into a sinful separation, or the neglect of

some ordinances of God, or opportunities of getting good. And it is this temptation which is indeed the scandal. This is before proved in the instance of Peter, Gal. ii. who scandalized or hardened the Jews, by yielding to a sinful separation from the Gentiles, and fearing the censoriousness of the Jews, whom he sought to please; and the offending of whom he was avoiding, when he really offended them, that is, was a scandal, or temptation to them.

Direct. II. 'He that will escape the guilt of scandal, must be no contemner of the souls of others, but must be truly charitable, and have a tender love to souls.' That which a man highly valueth, and dearly loveth, he will be careful to preserve, and loath to hurt. Such a man will easily part with his own rights, or submit to losses, injuries, or disgrace, to preserve his neighbour's soul from sin. Whereas a despiser of souls, will insist upon his own power, and right and honour, and will entrap and damn a hundred souls, rather than he will abate a word, or a ceremony which he thinks his interest requireth him to exact. Tell him that it will ensnare men's souls in sin, and he is ready to say as the Pharisees to Judas, "What is that to us? See thou to that." A dog hath as much pity on a hare, or a hawk on a partridge, as a carnal, worldly, ambitious Diotrophes, or an Elymas hath of souls. Tell him that it will occasion men to sin, to wound their consciences, to offend their God, it moveth him no more than to tell him of the smallest incommodity to himself: he will do more to save a horse, or a dog of his own, than to save another's soul from sin. To lay snares in their way, or to deprive them of the preaching of the Gospel, or other means of their salvation, is a thing which they may be induced to, by the smallest interest of their own; yea, though it be but a point of seeming honour. And therefore when carnal, worldly men do become the disposers of matters of religion, it is easy to see what measure and usage men must expect: yea, though they assume the office and name of pastors, who should have the most tender, fatherly care of the souls of all the flocks, yet will their carnal inclinations and interests, engage them in the work of wolves, to entrap, or famish, or destroy Christ's sheep.

Direct. III. 'Also you must be persons who value your own souls, and are diligently exercised in saving them from

temptations; or else you are very like to be scandalizers and tempters of the souls of others.' And therefore when such a man is made a church-governor as is unacquainted with the renewing work of grace, and with the inward government of Christ in the soul, what devilish work is he like to make among the sheep of Christ, under the name of government! What corrupting of the doctrine, worship, or discipline of Christ! What inventions of his own to ensnare men's consciences! And driving them on, by armed force, to do that which, at least to them, is sin, and which can never countervail the loss, either of their souls, or of the church, by such disturbances! How merciless will he be, when a poor member of Christ, shall beg of him but to have pity on his soul! And tell him, 'I cannot do this or swear this, or subscribe this, without the guilt of a deliberate sin; and I cannot sin without displeasing God, and hindering my salvation.' He that dare wilfully sin himself, and make it his deliberate choice, and dare play away his own salvation, at the poorest game that the devil will invite him to, and will sell his own soul at the basest price, even for a little pelf, or pleasure, or high titles for so short a time, certainly this man is unlike to be very tender of the souls of others, or to stick at scandalizing and ensnaring them, or to care any more to murder souls, than a butcher doth to kill a hog: Judas's heart will make them sell their Lord, or his flock, at Judas's price; and prepare themselves for Judas's reward. And hence it is, that the carnal seed even within the church, hath ordinarily persecuted the spiritual seed. For saith Paul, "As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now¹."

Direct. iv. 'To be well acquainted with the methods of satan, and the way of particular temptations, is a great help against your scandalizing others.' He that seeth the devil as the principal in each temptation, and knoweth in what manner he engageth his instruments to carry on his work, and whither all this tendeth at the last, will scarce be willing to serve such a master in so bad a work. Remember that scandalizers and tempters of others, and hinderers of men's salvation, are the servants of the devil, and are ex-

¹ Gal. iv. 29.

ecuting his malice, for the damnation of their brethren's souls. And what reward can they expect for such a work from such a master? The devil useth them but as men do ferrets, whose mouths are sealed, because they must not partake of the prey; but only bring it to their master's hand. Live in a constant watchful resistance of temptations yourselves, and you will have no mind to the drudgery of tempting others.

Direct. v. 'Set not yourselves upon any worldly, ambitious design.' For the love of the riches and honours of the world, will not only engage you in a course of sinning, but also make it seem your interest, to make others as bad and miserable as yourselves, and to drive them on to serve your interests by their sin.

Direct. vi. 'Take heed lest a fleshly inclination do draw you to the love of fleshly pleasures.' And that your minds be not set upon the pleasing of your fancies, sense, or appetite; either in meat, or drink, or clothes, or dwellings, or recreations, or any such delights: if once the love of these grow strong, it will conquer your reason, and seduce it into libertinism, and make you think that a voluptuous, flesh-pleasing life, (so it be not by gross disgraced sins) is but the lawful use of the creature, which Christ hath purchased not only for our necessity, but for our delight; and that the contrary opinion is but the too much rigor of such as understand not their Christian liberty.

Direct. vii. 'Be not rashly and ignorantly zealous in soliciting and importuning others to your private opinions, before you are certain that they are of God.' O what abundance of zeal and labour hath many a man laid out, to make others of his mind, in the points of Antinomianism, Anabaptism, Separation, Popery, &c., thinking that the saving of their souls had lain upon it; and at last they find, that as they erred themselves, so all their labour was but to scandalize the weak, and lay a stumbling-block in their way to heaven!

Direct. viii. 'Never persuade any man (much less compel him) to any thing unnecessary, which he taketh to be a sin' (whatever you take it for yourselves). For if he judge it a sin, it is a sin to him. No man can innocently do that which he thinketh is forbidden him of God. And shall a

thing unnecessary be preferred before the saving of a soul? Yea, before the souls of thousands, as by many merciless men it is? Indeed, if there be an antecedent necessity (as well as a lawfulness in the thing), and such a necessity as is not in your power to take away, then the doing it will be his sin, and the not doing it his greater sin; and the greater sin, is most to be avoided (but by convenient means).

Direct. ix. ‘Remember the charge which you have of the souls of one another.’ Though you be not magistrates or pastors: (for their care of souls is so unquestionable and so great, that scandal in them is like parents murdering their own children.) Yet no private man must say as Cain, “Am I my brother’s keeper.” Every man is bound to do his best for the saving of his neighbour; much more to forbear infecting, seducing, scandalizing, and destroying him.

Direct. x. ‘Keep up a special tenderness of the weak. So doth God himself, and so must we.’ “He gathereth the lambs with his arms, &c.^m” If his infants cry he doth not therefore knock out their brains, or turn them out of doors. Nor doth he say, they are not his children, for every ignorance or peevish passion which they are guilty of. Christ doth not turn men out of his school, because they want knowledge. For why then will he have little children come? And what do they come for, but to learn? He doth not hate his new born babes, but feedeth and nurseth them with a special tenderness: and he hath commanded and communicated the like tenderness to his ministers; who must not be weak with the weak, and froward with the froward; but in meekness and patience must bear with the weak, and endure their most bitter censures and requitals. “For the servants of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves”, &c.” And if they are long learning before they come to a knowledge of the truth, they are not therefore to be cast off. He that can read, Rom. xiv. and xv. 1 Cor. xii. 12. viii. Gal. vi.; and yet can be so merciless and cruel, as to cast men out of the ministry or church, or to ruin them, for tolerable weakness, which God hath so earnestly charged us to bear with in our brethren,

^m Isa. xl. 11.

ⁿ 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

either he doth not understand what he readeth, or not believe it, or hath somewhat else which he more regardeth at his heart, than the authority or love of God.

Direct. XI. 'Do not censure every man to be wilful or obstinate, who is not of your opinion, when he hath heard your reasons, how clear soever they may seem to you.' Alas! how many things are there besides wilful obstinacy, to hinder one man from being as wise as another. If a few times repeating over the reasons of an opinion, is enough to implant it in all the hearers, why do your children go so long to school, and after that to the universities? And why are you so long preaching to all your parishioners? Sure you preach not novelties to them as long as you live! And yet thirty or forty years painful preaching, even of the same fundamentals of religion, shall leave many ignorant of them in the best parishes in the land. There must be a right and ripe disposition in the hearers, or else the clearest reasoning may be ineffectual. A disused or unfurnished mind, that hath not received all the truths which are presupposed to those which you deliver, or hath not digested them into a clear understanding, may long hear the truest reasons, and never apprehend their weight. There is need of more ado than a bare unfolding of the truth, to make a man receive it in its proper evidence. Perhaps he hath been long prepossessed with contrary opinions, which are not easily rooted out. Or if he be but confident of the truth of some one opinion, which is inconsistent with yours, no wonder if he cannot receive that which is contrary, to what he so verily believeth to be the truth. There is a marvellous variety of men's apprehensions, of the same opinions or reasons, as they are variously represented to men, and variously pondered, and as the natural capacity of men is various, and as the whole course of their lives, their education, company, and conversation, have variously formed their minds. It is like the setting together all the parts of a watch when it is in pieces; if any one part of many be misplaced, it may necessitate the misplacing of those that follow, without any wilful obstinacy in him that doth it. If in the whole frame of sacred truth, there be but some one misunderstood, it may bring in other mistakes, and keep out many truths, even from an honest, willing mind. And who is there that can

say, he is free from error? Have not you perceived in yourselves, that the truths which you heard a hundred times over, to little purpose, when you were children, were received more convincingly and satisfyingly when you were men. And that you have found a delightful clearness in some points on a sudden, which before you either resisted, or held with little observation or regard? And yet it is common with the scandalizers of souls, to cry out against all that conform not to their opinions and will, as soon as they have heard their reasons, that they are stubborn, and refractory, and wilful, and factious, and so turn from arguments to clubs; as if they had never known themselves or others, nor how weak and dark the understandings of almost all men are. But they shall have judgment without mercy, who shew no mercy. And when their own errors shall all be opened to them by the Lord, they will be loath they should all be imputed to their wilful obstinacy. And perhaps these very censorious men, may prove themselves to have been on the wrong side; for pride and uncharitableness are usually erroneous.

Direct. XII. 'Engage not yourselves in an evil cause.' For if you do, it will engage you to draw in others; you will expect your friends should take your part, and think as you think, and say as you say; though it be never so much against truth or righteousness.

Direct. XIII. 'Speak not rashly against any cause or persons before you are acquainted with them; or have well considered what you say. Especially take heed how you believe what a man of any sect in religion doth speak or write against his adversaries of a contrary sect.' If experience had not proved it in our days, beyond contradiction, it would seem incredible how little men are to be believed in this case^o, and how the falsest reports will run among the people of the sect, against those whom the interest of their opinion and party, engageth them to misrepresent^p! Think not that you are excusable for receiving or venting an ill report, because you can say, 'He was an honest man that spoke it:' for many that are otherwise honest, do make it a

^o Psal. cxix. 69.

^p Vix equidem credar. Sed cum sint præmia falsi
Nulla; ratam debet testis habere fidem. Ovid.

part of their honesty to be dishonest in this. They think they are not zealous enough for those opinions which they call their religion; unless they are easy in believing and speaking evil of those that are the adversaries of it. When it may be upon a just trial, all proveth false; and then all the words which you ignorantly utter against the truth, or those that follow it, are scandals or stumbling-blocks to the hearers, to turn them from it, and make them hate it⁹. I am not speaking against a just credulity: there must be human belief, or else there can be no human converse; but ever suspect partiality in a party. For the interest of their religion is a more powerful charm to the consciences of evil speakers, than personal interest or bribes would be. How many legends tell us this, how easily some men counted godly, have been prevailed with to lie for God?

Direct. xiv. 'Take heed of mocking at a religious life; yea, or of breaking any jests or scorns at the weaknesses of any in religious exercises, which may possibly reflect upon the exercises themselves.' Many a thousand souls have been kept from a holy life, by the scorns of the vulgar, that speak of it as a matter of derision or sport. Reading the Scriptures, and holy conference, and prayer, and instructing our families, and the holy observation of the Lord's day, and church-discipline, are commonly the derision of ungodly persons, who can scorn that which they can neither confute nor learn: and weak people are greatly moved by such senseless means. A mock or jeer doth more with them than an argument; they cannot endure to be made a laughing-stock. Thus was the name of a crucified God, the derision of the heathens, and the scandal of the world, both Jews and Gentiles. And there is scarce a greater scandal or stumbling-block at this day, which keepeth multitudes from heaven, than when the devil can make it either a matter of danger or of shame to be a Christian, or to live a holy, mortified life. Persecution and derision are the great successful scandals of the world. And therefore seeing men are so apt to be turned off from Christ and godliness, never speak unreverently or disrespectfully of them. It is a profane and scandalous course of some, that if a preacher have but an unhandsome tone or gesture they make a jest of it,

⁹ Rom. lii. 7, 8. James iii. 14. Job xlii. 7, 8.

and say, 'He whined, or he spoke through the nose,' or some such scorn they cast upon him; which the hearers quickly apply to all others, and turn to a scorn of preaching, or prayer, or religion itself: or if men differ from each other in opinion in matters of religion, they are presently inclined to deride them for something in their worshipping of God! And while they deride a man as an Anabaptist, as an Independent, as a Presbyterian, as Prelatical, they little know what a malignant tincture it may leave upon the hearer's mind, and teach carnal persons to make a jest of all alike.

Direct. xv. 'Impute not the faults of men to Christ, and blame not religion for the faults of them that sin against it.' This is the malignant trick of satan, and his blinded instruments: if an hypocrite miscarry, or if a man that in all things else hath walked uprightly, be overthrown by a temptation in some odious sin, they presently cry out, 'These are your professors! your religious people! that are so precise, and pure, and strict! Try them, and they will appear as bad as others!' If a Noah be once drunk, or a Lot be overthrown thereby, or a David commit adultery and murder, or a Peter deny his master, or a Judas betray him, they presently cry out, 'They are all alike!' And turn it to the scorn of godliness itself. Unworthy beasts! As if Christ's laws were therefore to be scorned, because men break them! And obedience to God were bad, because some are disobedient! Hath Christ forbidden the sins which you blame, or hath he not? If he have not, blame them not, for they are no sins; if he have, commend the justness and holiness of his laws. Either the offenders you blame, did well or ill. If they did well, why do you blame them? If they did ill, why do you not commend religion, and the Scripture which condemneth them? Either it is best for all men to live in such sins as those which these lapsed persons or hypocrites committed, or it is not. If it be, why are you offended with them for that which you allow? If it be not, why do you soothe up the wicked in their sins, and excuse an ungodly life, because of the falls of such as seem religious? There is no common ingenuity in this, but malicious spite against God and holiness, (of which, more in the next Chapter).

Direct. xvi. 'Make not use of civil quarrels to lay an

odium upon religion.' It is ordinary with ungodly, malicious men, to labour to turn the displeasure of rulers, against men of integrity; and if there be any broils or civil wars, to snatch any pretence, how false soever, to call them traitors and enemies to government. If it be but because they are against an usurper, or because some fanatic persons (whom they oppose) have behaved themselves rebelliously or disobediently; a holy life (which is the greatest friend to loyalty) must be blamed for all. And all is but to gratify the devil in driving poor souls from God and holiness.

Direct. xvii. 'When you think it your duty to speak of the faults of men that profess a godly life, lay the blame only on the person, but speak as much and more in commendations of godliness itself; and commend that which is good in them, while you discommend that which is evil.' Is their praying bad? Is their instructing their families, and sanctifying the Lord's day, bad? Is their fearing sin, and obeying God, bad? If not, why do you not say as much to commend them for these, or at least to commend these in themselves, as you do to discommend them for their faults? Why do you not fear lest the hearers should be drawn to dislike a godly life by your disgracing persons accounted godly? And therefore warn them to think never the worse of godliness for this? You that give the poison, should in reason give an antidote, if it be not your design to poison souls. Is it really your design by speaking against men accounted godly, to draw the hearers to the hatred of godliness, or is it not? If it be, you are incarnate devils: if it be not, why do you endeavour it, by making odious the persons, under the name of professors and godly men? And why do you not speak more to draw people to a godly life? And to imitate them in that which is good, while they disclaim them in that which is evil?

Direct. xviii. 'Be especially tender of the reputation of those, that the souls of men have most dependance on: as the preachers of the Gospel, and the most eminent men of knowledge and religiousness.' Not that I desire that sin

^r Ita comparatum est ut virtutem non suspiciamus, neque ejus imitandæ studio corripimur, nisi eum in quo ea conspicitur, summo honore et amore prosequamur. Plutarch. in Cat. Utic.

should be the better thought of for being theirs, or that evil should be called good in any; but experience hath told the world since God and the devil had their several ways and servants upon earth, that it hath been the devil's most usual successful course, to wound religion through the sides of the religious, and to blame the persons, when he would turn men from the way! For he knoweth that religious persons have their faults, and in them his malice may find somewhat to fasten on; but religion hath no fault, and malice itself is seldom so impudent, as to speak directly against a holy, heavenly life. But the way is to make those disgraceful and odious, who are noted to lead such a life; and then secretly to infer, 'If those that seem godly be no better, you need not be godly, you are as well as you are. This religion is but a fantasy; a needless, if not a troublesome, hurtful thing.' Seeing therefore that the devil hath no blow at religion, so fair as by striking at the persons of the preachers and professors of it, every friend of Christ must be acquainted with his design, and must not serve him in it, but counter-work him, and preserve the reputation even of the persons of the religious: not so much in charity to them, but for the people's souls, and the honour of Christ.

Direct. xix. 'Let all that preach and profess the Gospel, and a godly life, be sure that they live according to their profession.' That the name of God be not evil spoken of among the wicked through their misdoings*. It was the aggravation of David's sin which God would not quite forgive, that he made the enemies of the Lord blaspheme†. "Servants must count their masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed‡." The duties of good women are particularly named by the apostle§: with this motive to the practice of them, "That the Word of God be not blasphemed." Obedience to government is commanded with this motive, "For so is the will of God, that with well-doing, you may put to silence, the ignorance of foolish men¶." And, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul: having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak

* Rom. ii.

† 2 Sam. xii. 14.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 1. Rom. ii. 24.

§ Tit. ii. 3—5.

¶ 1 Pet. ii. 15.

against you as evil doers, they may by your works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation^a." And it was the aggravation of the heretics' sin, that "many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of^a." O then how carefully should ministers and all that are godly walk! The blind world cannot read the Gospel in itself, but only as it is exemplified by the lives of men: they judge not of the actions of men by the law, but of the law of God by men's actions! Therefore the saving or damning of men's souls, doth lie much upon the lives of the professors of religion: because their liking or disliking a holy life doth depend upon them. Saith Paul of young women, "I will that— they give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully; for some are already turned aside after satan^b." Hence it is that even the appearance of evil is so carefully to be avoided, by all that fear God, lest others be drawn by it to speak evil of godliness. Every scandal (truly so called) is a stab to the soul of him that is scandalized, and a reproachful blot to the Christian cause. I may say of the faults of Christians, as Plutarch doth of the faults of princes. 'A wart or blemish in the face, is more conspicuous and disgraceful than in other parts.'

Direct. xx. 'Let no pretence of the evil of hypocrisy make you so contented with your secret innocency, as to neglect the edification and satisfaction of your neighbours.' When it is only your own interest that is concerned in the business, then it is no matter whether any man be acquainted with any good that you do; and it is a very small matter how they judge, or what they say of you; the approbation of God alone is enough. No matter who condemneth you, if he justify you. But when the vindication of your innocency, or the manifestation of your virtue, is necessary to the good of your neighbours' souls, or to the honour of your sacred profession: the neglect of it is not sincerity, but cruelty.

^a 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12.^a 2 Pet. ii. 2.^b 1 Tim. v. 14, 15.