

Christian, and a faithful or constant friend to godliness, who is so easily brought to quarrel with it? Or is so easily turned from it, or hindered in it? Some peevish, childish persons are like sick stomachs, that no meat can please; you cannot dress it so curiously, but they complain that it is naught, or this aileth it, or that aileth it, when the fault is in themselves; or like children, or sick persons that can scarce be touched but they are hurt: do you think that this sickliness or curiosity in religion, is a credit to you? This is not the tenderness of conscience which God requi-
 reth, to be easily hurt by other men's differences and faults. As it is the shame of many ladies and gentlewomen, to be so curious and troublesomely neat, that no servant knoweth how to please them; so is it in religion, a sign of your childish folly, and worse, to be guilty of such proud curiosity, that none can please you, who are not exactly of your mind and way. All men must follow your humours in gestures, fashions, opinions, formalities and modes, or else you are troubled, and offended, and scandalized; as if all the world were made to please and humour you! Or you were wise enough, and great and good enough, to be the rule of all about you! Desire and spare not, that yourselves and all men should please God as exactly as possible. But if the want of that exactness in doubtful things, or a difference in things disputable and doubtful among true Christians, do thereupon abate or hinder your love or estimation of your brethren, or communion with them, or any other Christian duty, or tempt you into censoriousness or contempt of your brethren, or to schism, persecution or any other sin; it is you that are the great offenders, and you that are like to be the sufferers; and have cause to lament that sinful aptness to be thus scandalized.

CHAPTER XIV.

Directions against Soul-murder, and partaking of other Men's Sins.

THE special Directions given Part iii. Chap. xxii., to parents and masters, will in this case be of great use to all others; but because it is here seasonable to speak of it fur-

ther, under the sixth commandment, and the matter is of the greatest consequence, I shall, 1. Tell you how men are guilty of soul-murder. 2. And then give you some general Directions for the furthering of men's salvation. 3. And next give you some special Directions for Christian exhortation and reproofs.

First, Men are guilty of soul-murder by all these ways. 1. By preaching false soul-murdering doctrine. Such as denieth any necessary point of faith, or holy living; such as is opposite to a holy life, or to any particular necessary duty: such as maketh sin to be no sin: which calls good evil, and evil good; which putteth darkness for light, and light for darkness.

2. By false application of true doctrine, indirectly reflecting upon, and disgracing that holiness of life, which in terms they preach for; by prevarication undermining that cause which their office is appointed to promote; as they do, who purposely so describe any vice, that the hearers may be drawn to think that strict and godly practices, are either that sin itself, or but a cloak to hide it.

3. By bringing the persons of the most religious into hatred, by such false applications, reflections, or secret insinuations, or open calumnies; making men believe that they are all but hypocrites, or schismatics, or seditious, or fanatical, self-conceited persons! Which is usually done either by impudent slanders raised against some particular men, and so reflected on the rest; or by the advantage of factions, controversies or civil wars; or by the falls of any professors, or the crimes of hypocrites: whereupon they would make the world believe that they are all alike; as if Christ's family were to be judged of by Peter's fall, or Judas's falsehood. And the odious representation of godly men doth greatly prevail to keep others from godliness, and is one of the devil's most successful means for the damnation of multitudes of souls.

4. The disgrace of the persons of the preachers of the Gospel, doth greatly further men's damnation. For when the people think their teachers to be hypocrites, covetous, proud, and secretly as bad as others, they are very like to think accordingly of their doctrine, and that all strict religion is but hypocrisy, or at least to refuse their help and

counsels. Even Plutarch noted, that, "It so comes to pass that we entertain not virtue, nor are rapt into a desire of imitating it, unless we highly honour and love the person in whom it is discerned." And if they see, or think the preacher to be himself of a loose, and careless and licentious life, they will think that the like is very excusable in themselves; and that his doctrine is but a form of speech, which his office bindeth him to say; but is no more to be regarded by them, than by himself.

Two ways is men's damnation thus promoted. 1. By the ill lives of hypocritical, ungodly preachers, who actually bring their own persons into disgrace, and thereby also the persons of others, and consequently their sacred work and function. 2. By wicked preachers and people, who through a malignant hatred of those that are abler and better than themselves, and an envy of their reputation, do labour to make the most zealous and faithful preachers of the Gospel, to be thought the most hypocritical, or erroneous, or factious and schismatical.

5. The neglect of ministerial duties is a common cause of sin, and of men's damnation. When they that take the charge of souls, are either unable or unwilling to do their office; when they teach them too seldom, or too unskillfully, in an unsuitable manner; not choosing that doctrine which they most need, or not opening it plainly and methodically in a fitness to their capacities, or not applying it with necessary seriousness and urgency to the hearers' state. When men preach to the ungodly who are near to damnation, in a formal pace, like a schoolboy saying his lesson, or in a drowsy, reading tone, as if they came to preach them all asleep, or were afraid of wakening them. When they speak of sin, and misery, and Christ, of heaven and hell, as if by the manner they came to contradict the matter, and to persuade men that there are no such things.

The same mischief followeth the neglect of private, personal inspection. When ministers think that they have done all, when they have said a sermon, and never make conscience of labouring personally to convince the ungodly, and reclaim offenders, and draw sinners to God, and confirm the weak. And the omission (much more the perversion) of sacred discipline, hath the like effects. When the

keys of the church are used to shut out the good, or not used when they ought, to rebuke or shut out the impenitent wicked ones; nor to difference between the precious and the vile, it hardeneth multitudes in their ungodliness, and persuadeth them that they are really of the same family of Christ, as the godly are, and have their sins forgiven, because they are partakers of the same holy sacraments. (Not knowing the difference between the church mystical and visible, nor between the judgment of ministers, and of Christ himself.)

6. Parents' neglect of instructing children, and other parts of holy education, is one of the greatest causes of the perdition of mankind, in all the world: but of this elsewhere.

7. Magistrates' persecution or opposition to religion, or discountenancing those that preach it, or most seriously practise it, tendeth to deceive some, who over-reverence the judgment of superiors, and to affright others from the obedience of God.

8. Yea, the negligence of magistrates, masters and other superiors, omitting the due rebuke of sinners, and due correction of the offenders, and the due encouragement of the good, is a great cause of the wickedness and damnation of the world.

9. But above all, when they make laws for sin, or for the contempt, or dishonour or suppression of religion, or the serious practice of it; this buildeth up satan's kingdom most effectually, and turneth God's ordinance against himself: thousands under infidel and ungodly princes, are conducted by obedience to damnation; and their rulers damn them as honourably as the physician killed his patients, who boasted that he did it 'secundum artem,' according to the rules of art.

10. The vulgar example of the multitude of the ungodly, is a great cause of men's impiety and damnation. They must be well resolved for God and holiness, who will not yield to the major vote, nor be carried down the common stream, nor run with the rabble to excess of riot. When Christianity is a sect which is every where spoken against*, it proveth so narrow a way that few have a mind to walk in

* Acts xxviii. 22.

it. Men think that they are at least excusable, for not being wiser and better than the multitude. Singularity in honour, or riches, or strength, or health, is accounted no crime; but singularity in godliness, is, at least, thought unnecessary. 'What! will you be wiser than all the town, or, than such and such superiors?' is thought a good reprehension of godliness, where it is rare; even by them who hereby conclude their superiors, or all the town to be wiser than God.

11. Also the vulgar's scorning and deriding godliness, is a common cause of murdering souls; because the devil knoweth, that there cannot one word of solid reason be brought against the reason of God, and so against a holy life; he therefore teacheth men to use such weapons as they have. A dog hath teeth, and an adder hath a sting, though they have not the weapons of a man. A fool can laugh, and jeer, and rail; and there is no great wit or learning necessary, to smile, or grin, or call a man a Puritan, or precision, or heretic, or schismatic, or any name which the malice of the age shall newly coin. Mr. Robert Bolton largely sheweth how much the malignity of his age, did vent itself against godliness, by the reproachful use of the word, 'Puritan.' When reason can be bribed to take the devil's part (either natural or literate reason) he will hire it at any rate; but when it cannot, he will make use of such as he can get. Barking or hissing may serve turn, where talking and disputing cannot be procured. Drum and trumpets in an army, serve the turn instead of oratory, to animate cowards, and drown the noise of dying men's complaints and groans. Thousands have been mocked out of their religion and salvation at once, and jeered into hell, who now know, whether a scorn, or the fire of hell, be the greater suffering. As tyrants think that the greatest, and ablest, and wisest men, must either be drawn over to their party or destroyed; so the tyrant of hell, who ruleth in the children of disobedience, doth think that if reason, learning and wit, cannot be hired to dispute for him against God, they are to be suppressed, silenced and disgraced; which the noise of rude clamours, and foolish jeers is fit enough to perform.

12. Also idle, senseless prating against religion as a needless thing, doth serve turn to deceive the simple: igno-

rant people, who converse with no wiser men, are ordinarily taken with the silly cavils of a drunken sot, who hath but a little more volubility or looseness of tongue than his companions. It would make one's head and heart ache, to hear with what reverend nonsense one of them will talk against the doctrines or practices of godliness, and how submissively the tractable herd receiveth, and consenteth to his documents!

13. Also it tendeth much to the helping of satan, and murdering of souls, to keep up the reputation of the most ungodly, and to keep down the reputation of the good. The devil knoweth that sin itself, is such a thing, as few men can love barefaced, or commend; and that goodness or holiness is such a thing, as few men can hate, or, at least condemn, in its proper name and colours. Therefore he seeketh to make the reputation of the persons serve, to promote or hinder the cause which he is for or against. He that is ashamed to say of drunkenness or whoredom, that they are good and honest practices, dare yet say of drunkards and whoremongers, 'They are very honest men:' and by their reputation take off some of the odiousness of the sin, and reconcile the hearers to it. And he that cannot for shame say of the forbearing of sin, and living a holy life, in heavenly contemplation, prayer and obedience, that, 'These are hypocrisy, schism, or sedition, covetousness, deceit and pride;' yet dare say of the person who practiseth them, that, 'He is as covetous, deceitful, proud, hypocritical, schismatical or seditious as any others who make no profession of religion.' And the devil knoweth, that though good doctrine hath no mixture of evil, nor Christ himself any blemish or spot, yet the best persons are so faulty or defectible, that an ill report is less incredible, there being too much matter to raise a suspicion on. And through their sides, it is easiest to wound the doctrine or holiness which they profess.

14. Also persuading sinners to do evil, and dissuading them from a godly life, is another way of murdering souls. The devil's temptations are most by instruments; he hath his preachers as well as Christ; and it were well if they did not overgo us in earnestness, frequency, and constancy. Where is there a poor soul that is moved by God to turn

and live, but the devil hath some at hand to drive them from it? By persuading them that it is needless, and that all is well with them, and telling them some dismal stories of a holy life.

15. Another way of soul murder, is by laying baits of deceit and sin before the sinner: as men destroy rats and mice by baits, and sweetened poison; or catch flies or birds by covering their death with something which they most love; so doth the devil and his instruments destroy souls: the baits of a pleasant cup, or pleasant company, or pleasant meats, or pleasant sports, or plays, or games; a feast, a tavern, an alehouse, a whore, a stage-play, a romance, a pair of cards or dice, can do the deed. If he can possibly, he will prove it a thing lawful; if he cannot, he will prove it a venial sin; if that cannot be, he will drown consideration, and stop the mouth of reason and conscience, and cry, 'Drive on.' Some have yet higher baits than these; lordships and lands, dominion and honour, to choak their souls.

16. Also an honest name for sin, and a dishonest name for duty to God, doth serve the turn for many men's perdition. To call drunkenness, good fellowship, or, to take a cup; and gluttony, good housekeeping; and voluptuousness, recreation or pastime; and pride, the maintaining of their honour; and worldliness, good husbandry; and prodigality, liberality: and lust, and whoredom, love, and having a mistress; and oppression, the seeking of their due; and perfidious dissimulation, courtship; and jeering, wittiness. These, and more such, are traps for souls. And of the same use is the calling of duties by names of vice, which tend to make them odious or contemptible.

17. Also the flattering of sinners, and praising them in their sin, is a soul-murdering encouragement to them in ill-doing; and great sinners seldom want such enemies.

18. An obedient readiness to all that wicked superiors command, is an encouragement to them to proceed in mischief. If parents or masters command their inferiors to spend the Lord's day in dancing, or other unlawful exercises; or bid them steal, or lie, or forbid them to worship God; those that obey them, do harden them in their sin.

As Daniel and the three witnesses had done the king, if they had obeyed him ^b.

19. Also when those that have power to hinder sin, and further godliness, do not do it. When they either give men leave to sin, or forbear their duty when they should restrain it. He that stands by, and seeth his neighbour robbed or murdered, and doth not what he can to save him, is guilty of the sin, and the sufferer's hurt.

20. Silence, when we are obliged to reprove a sinner, or to instruct the ignorant, or exhort the obstinate, or any way speak for men's salvation, is injurious to their souls, and maketh us partakers of their sin. Soul-murder may be done by bare omissions.

21. Opposing magistrates, ministers, or any others, in the discharge of their duty for godliness, or against sin, is an act of hostility against God, and men's salvation.

22. An unnecessary occasioning of sin, or doing that needlessly, which we may foresee that by accident another will destroy himself by, is to be guilty of his sin and destruction: as he is that would sell poison to him, that he might foresee would kill himself with it; or lend fire to his neighbour, who he knoweth will burn his house with it. But of this before, in the Chapter of Scandal.

23. They that are guilty of schisms or church-divisions, are murderers of souls: by depriving them of that means (the concord and harmony of believers), which God hath appointed for men's conviction and salvation ^c: and by setting up before them the greatest scandal, to bring religion into contempt, and debilitate the godly.

24. Those also that mourn not for the sins of the times, and confess them not to God, and pray not against them, and pray not for the sinners when they ought, are thus guilty ^d.

25. And so are they that secretly rejoice in sin, or consent to it, or approve it when it is done; which if they manifest, it is pernicious to others also.

26. Lastly, A coldness or indifferency in the doing of our duty against sin, without just zeal, and pity to the sinner, and reverence to the truth, is a way of guilt, and hurteth others. To reprove sin, as Eli did his sons; or to speak

^b Dan. iii. vi. ^c John xvii. 21. 25. ^d Esck. ix. 4. Zeph. iii. 17, 18.

against it lightly as between jest and earnest, is the way to make the sinner think that it is a small or jesting matter. To persuade men to conversion or a godly life, without a melting love and pity to their souls, and without the reverence of God, and seriousness of mind, which the nature and weight of the thing requireth, is the way to harden them in their sin and misery. All these ways may a man be guilty, first, of the sin, and secondly, the perdition of another.

But here (on the negative part) take notice of these things following.

1. That properly no man doth partake of the same, formal, numerical sin, which is another's; 'noxa caput sequitur.' The sin is individuated and informed by the individual will of the offender. It is not possible that another man's sin should be properly and formally mine, unless I were individually and formally that same man, and not another. If two men set their hands to the same evil deed, they are distinct causes and subjects of the distinct formal guilt; though con-causes, and partial causes of the effect: so that it is only by multiplication that we make the guilt or sin of another to become the matter of sin to us, the form resulting from ourselves.

2. All men that are guilty of the sin and damnation of other men, are not equally guilty: not only as some are pardoned upon repentance, and some remain impenitent and unpardoned; but as some contribute wilfully to the mischief, and with delight, and in a greater measure; and some only in a small degree, by an oversight, or small omission, or weak performance of a duty, by mere infirmity or surprise.

3. All that do not hinder sin, or reprove it, are not guilty of it; no more than all that do not punish it; but those only that have power and opportunity, and so are called by God to do it.

4. If another man will sin, and destroy his soul, by the occasion of my necessary duty, I must not cease my duty to prevent such men's sin or hurt; else one or other will by their perverseness, excuse me from almost all the duty which I should do. I must not cease praying, hearing, sacraments, nor withdraw from church-communion, because another will turn it to his sin; else satan should use the

sin of others to frustrate all God's worship. Yet I must add, that many things cease to be a duty, when another will be so hurt by them.

5. I am not guilty of all men's sins, which are committed in my presence; no, though I know beforehand that they will sin. For my calling or duty may lead me into the presence of those, that I may foreknow will sin. Wicked men sin in all that they do, and yet it followeth not, that I must have nothing to do with them. Many a failing which is his sin, may a minister or church be guilty of, even in that public worship of God, which yet I am bound to be present at.

But of all these somewhat is said before, Chap. xii.

CHAPTER XV.

General Directions for the furthering of the Salvation of others.

THE great means which we must use for the salvation of our neighbours, are,

Direct. I. 'Sound doctrine: let those who are their instructors, inculcate the wholesome principles of godliness; which are, selfdenial, mortification, the love of God and man, the hopes of heaven, universal, absolute obedience to God; and all this by faith in Jesus Christ, according to the holy Scriptures.' Instead of novelties, or vain janglings, and perverse disputings, teach them these principles here briefly named, over and over an hundred times; open these plainly, till they are well understood. These are the necessary, saving things; this is the doctrine which is according to godliness, which will make sound Christians, of sound judgments, sound hearts, sound conversations, and sound consciences! God sanctifieth his chosen ones by these truths.

Direct. II. 'Therefore do your best to help others to the benefit of able and faithful pastors, and instructors.' A fruitful soil is not better for your seed; nor a good pasture for your horse or cattle; nor wholesome diet for yourselves, than such instructors are for your neighbours' souls. If