

## CHAPTER VII.

*Directions for Soldiers, about their Duty in point of Conscience.*

THOUGH it is likely that few soldiers will read what I shall write for them, yet for the sake of those few that will, I will do as John Baptist did, and give them some few necessary Directions, and not omit them as some do, as if they were a hopeless sort of men.

*Direct.* 1. 'Be careful to make your peace with God, and live in a continual readiness to die.' This being the great duty of every rational man, you cannot deny it to be especially yours, whose calling setteth you so frequently in the face of death. Though some garrison soldiers are so seldom, if ever, put to fight, that they live more securely than most other men, yet a soldier as such, being by his place engaged to fight, I must fit my Directions to the ordinary condition and expectation of men in that employment. It is a most irrational and worse than beastly negligence, for any man to live carelessly in an unpreparedness for death, considering how certain it is, and how uncertain the time, and how inconceivably great is the change which it inferreth: but for a soldier to be unready to die, who hath such special reason to expect it, and who listeth himself into a state that is so near it, this is to live and fight like beasts, and to be soldiers before you understand what it is to be a Christian and a man. First therefore, make sure that your souls are regenerate and reconciled unto God by Christ; and that when you die, you have a part in heaven; and that you are not yet in the state of sin and nature: an unrenewed, unsanctified soul is sure to go to hell, by what death, or in what cause soever he dieth. If such a man be a soldier, he must be a coward or a madman; if he will run upon death, when he knoweth not whether it will send him, yea, when hell is certainly the next step, he is worse than mad: but if he know and consider the terribleness of such a change, it must needs make him tremble when he thinks of dying. He can be no good soldier that dare not die: and who can expect that he should dare to die, who must be damned when he dieth? Reason may command a man to venture upon death; but no reason will

allow him to venture upon hell. I never knew but two sorts of valiant soldiers: the one was boys, and brutish, ignorant sots, who had no sense of the concernments of their souls; and the other (who only were truly valiant) were those that had made such preparations for eternity, as, at least, persuaded them that it should go well with them when they died. And many a debauched soldier I have known, whose conscience hath made them cowards, and shift or run away when they should venture upon death, because they knew they were unready to die, and were more afraid of hell, than of the enemy. He that is fit to be a martyr, is the fittest man to be a soldier; he that is regenerate, and hath laid up his treasure and his hopes in heaven, and so hath overcome the fears of death, may be bold as a lion, and ready for anything, and fearless in the greatest perils. For what should he fear, who hath escaped hell, and God's displeasure, and hath conquered the king of terrors? But fear is the duty and most rational temper of a guilty soul; and the more fearless such are, the more foolish and more miserable.

*Direct.* II. 'Be sure you have a warrantable cause and call.' In a bad cause it is a dreadful thing to conquer, or to be conquered. If you conquer, you are a murderer of all that you kill; if you are conquered and die in the prosecution of your sin, I need not tell you what you may expect. I know we are here upon a difficulty which must be tenderly handled; if we make the sovereign power, to be the absolute and only judge, whether the soldier's cause and call be good; then it would follow, that it is the duty of all the Christian subjects of the Turk, to fight against Christianity as such, and to destroy all Christians when the Turk commandeth it; and that all the subjects of other lands, are bound to invade this or other such Christian kingdoms, and destroy their kings, whenever their Popish, or malicious princes or states shall command them; which being intolerable consequences, prove the antecedent to be intolerable. And yet on the other side, if subjects must be the judges of their cause and call, the prince shall not be served, nor the common good secured, till the interest of the subjects will allow them to discern the goodness of the cause. Between these two intolerable consequents, it is hard to meet with a just discovery of the mean. Most run into one of the extremes,

which they take to be the less, and think that there is no other avoiding of the other. The grand errors in this, and an hundred like cases, come from not distinguishing aright the case 'de esse,' from the case 'de apparere,' or 'cognoscere,' and not first determining the former, as it ought, before the latter be determined. Either the cause which the subjects are commanded to fight in, is really lawful to them, or it is not. (Say not here importunately, Who shall judge? For we are now but upon the question 'de esse.') If it be not lawful in itself, but be mere robbery or murder, then come to the case of evidence; either this evil is to the subject discernible by just means, or not: if it be, I am not able for my part to justify him from the sin, if he do it, no more than to have justified the three witnesses<sup>a</sup>. If they had bowed down to the golden calf, or if he had forborne prayer<sup>b</sup>, or the apostles, if they had forborne preaching, or the soldiers for apprehending and crucifying Christ, when their superiors commanded them. For God is first to be obeyed and feared. But if the evil of the cause be such, as the subject cannot by just and ordinary means discern, then must he come next to examine his call; and a volunteer unnecessarily he may not be in a doubtful cause: it is so heinous a sin to murder men, that no man should unnecessarily venture upon that which may prove to be murder for aught he knoweth. But if you ask what call may make such a doubtful action necessary, I answer, It must be such as warranteth it, either from the end of the action, or from the authority of the commander, or both. And from the end of the action, the case may be made clear, That if a king should do wrong to a foreign enemy, and should have the worse cause, yet if the revenge which that enemy seeketh, would be the destruction of the king and country, or religion; it is lawful, and a duty to fight in the defence of them. And if the king should be the assailant, or beginner, that which is an offensive war in him (for which he himself must answer) may be but a defensive war in the commanded subjects, and they be innocent; even on the highway, if I see a stranger provoke another by giving him the first blow, yet I may be bound to save his life from the fury of the avenging party. But whether, or how far, the bare command of a sovereign

<sup>a</sup> Dan. iii.<sup>b</sup> Dan. vi.

may warrant the subjects to venture in a doubtful cause, (supposing the thing lawful in itself, though they are doubtful) requireth so much to be said to it, which civil governors may possibly think me too bold to meddle with, that I think it safest to pass it by; only saying, that there are some cases in which the ruler is the only competent judge, and the doubts of the subject are so unreasonable, that they will not excuse the sin of his disobedience; and also, that the degree of the doubt is oft very considerable in the case. But suppose the cause of the war be really lawful in itself, and yet the subject is in doubt of it, yea, or thinketh otherwise; then is he in the case, as other erroneous consciences are, that is, entangled in a necessity of sinning, till he be undeceived, in case his rulers command his service. But which would be the greater sin, to do it or not, the ends and circumstances may do much to determine; but doubtless in true necessity to save the king and state, subjects may be compelled to fight in a just cause, notwithstanding, that they mistake it for unjust; and if the subject have a private discerning judgment, so far as he is a voluntary agent, yet the sovereign hath a public determining judgment, when a neglecter is to be forced to his duty. Even as a man that thinketh it unlawful to maintain his wife and children, may be compelled lawfully to do it.

So that it is apparent, that sometimes the sovereign's cause, may be good, and yet an erroneous conscience may make the soldier's cause bad, if they are volunteers, who run unnecessarily upon that which they take for robbery and murder; and yet that the higher powers may force even such mistakers to defend their country, and their governors, in a case of true necessity. And it is manifest that sometimes the cause of a ruler may be bad; and yet the cause of the soldier good; and that sometimes the cause may be bad and sinful to them both; and sometimes good and lawful to them both.

*Direct.* 111. 'When you are doubtful, whether your cause and call be good, it is (ordinarily) safest to sit still, and not to venture in so dangerous a case, without great deliberation and sufficient evidence to satisfy your consciences.' Neander might well say of Solou's law, which punished them that took not one part or other in a civil war or sedition,

“Admirabilis autem illa atque plane incredibilis, quæ honoribus abdicat cum, qui orta seditione nullam factionem secutus sit<sup>c</sup>.” No doubt, he is a culpable neuter that will not defend his governors and his country, when he hath a call: but it is so dreadful a thing to be guilty of the blood, and calamities of an unjust war, that a wise man will rather be abused as a neuter, than run himself into the danger of such a case.

*Direct.* iv. ‘When necessity forceth you to go forth in a just war, do it with such humiliation and unwillingness as beseemeth one that is a patient, a spectator, and an actor, in one of the sorest of God’s temporal judgments.’ Go not to kill men, as if you went to a cock-fight, or a bear-baiting. Make not a sport of a common calamity; be not insensible of the displeasure of God, expressed in so great a judgment. What a sad condition is it to yourselves, to be employed in destroying others. If they be good, how sad a thought is it, that you must kill them! If they are wicked, how sad is it that by killing them you cut off all their hopes of mercy, and send them suddenly to hell! How sad an employment is it, to spoil and undo the poor inhabitants where you come! to cast them into terrors, to deprive them of that which they have long been labouring for! to prepare for famine, and be like a consuming pestilence where you come! Were it but to see such desolations, it should melt you into compassion; much more to be the executioners yourselves. How unsuitable a work is it to the grace of love. Though I doubt not but it is a service which the love of God, our country, and our rulers, may sometimes justify and command, yet (as to the rulers and masters of the business) it must be a very clear and great necessity that can warrant a war. And, as to the soldiers, they must needs go with great regret, to kill men by thousands, whom they love as themselves. He that loveth his neighbour as himself, and blesseth, and doth good to his persecuting enemy, will take it heavily to be employed in killing him, even when necessity maketh it his duty. But the greatest calamity of war is the perniciousness of it to men’s souls. Armies are commonly that to the soul, as a city infected with the plague is to the body. The very nurseries and academies of pride, and

<sup>c</sup> Neander in Chron. p. 104.

cruelty, and drunkenness, and whoredom, and robbery, and licentiousness; and the bane of piety, and common civility, and humanity. Not that every soldier cometh to this pass; the hottest pestilence killeth not all; but O how hard is it to keep up a life of faith and godliness, in an army! The greatness of their business, and of their fears and cares, doth so wholly take up their minds and talk, that there is scarce any room found for the matters of their souls, though unspeakably greater. They have seldom leisure to hear a sermon, and less to pray. The Lord's day is usually taken up in matters that concern their lives, and therefore can pretend necessity: so that it must be a very resolute, confirmed, vigilant person, that is not alienated from God. And then it is a course of life, which giveth great opportunity to the tempter, and advantage to temptations, both to errors in judgment, and viciousness of heart and life: he that never tried it can hardly conceive how difficult it is to keep up piety and innocency in an army. If you will suppose that there is no difference in the cause, or the ends and accidents, I take it to be much more desirable to serve God in a prison, than in an army; and that the condition of a prisoner hath far less in it to tempt the foolish, or to afflict the wise, than a military. (Excepting those whose life in garrisons and lingering wars, doth little differ from a state of peace.) I am not simply against the lawfulness of war; (nor as I conceive, Erasmus himself, though he saw the sinfulness of that sort of men; and use to speak truly of the horrid wickedness and misery of them that thirst for blood, or rush on wars without necessity;) but it must be a very extraordinary army, that is not constituted of wolves and tigers, and is not unto common honesty and piety, the same that a stews or whorehouse is to chastity. And O how much sweeter is the work of an honest physician that saveth men's lives, than of a soldier, whose virtue is shown in destroying them! Or a carpenter's, or mason's, that adorneth cities with comely buildings, than a soldier's that consumeth them by fire?\*

\* And though I ignore not that it is a much more fashionable and celebrated practice in young gentlemen to kill men, than to cure them; and that mistaken mortals think it to be the noblest exercise of virtue, to destroy the noblest workmanship of nature, (and indeed in some few cases, the requisiteness and danger of destructive valor, may make its actions become a virtuous patriot) yet when I consider the cha-

*Direct. v.* ‘ Be sure first that your cause be better than your lives, and then resolve to venture your lives for them.’ It is the hazarding of your lives, which in your calling you undertake: and therefore be not unprepared for it; but reckon upon the worst, and be ready to undergo whatever you undertake. A soldier’s life is unfit for one that dare not die. A coward is one of the most pernicious murderers: he verifieth Christ’s saying in another sense, “ he that saveth his life shall lose it.” While men stand to it, it is usually but few that die; because they quickly daunt the enemy, and keep him on the defensive part; but when once they rout, and run away, they are slain on heaps, and fall like leaves in a windy autumn. Every coward that pursueth them is emboldened by their fear, and dare run them through, or shoot them behind, that durst not so near have looked them in the face, and maketh it his sport to kill a fugitive, or one that layeth down his weapons, that would fly himself from a daring presence. Your cowardly fear betrayeth the cause of your king and country; it betrayeth the lives of your fellow soldiers, while the running of a few affrighted dastards, lets in ruin upon all the rest; and it casteth away your own lives, which you think to save. If you will be soldiers, resolve to conquer or to die. It is not so much skill or strength that conquereth, as boldness. It is fear that loseth the day, and fearlessness that winneth it. The army that standeth to it, getteth the victory, though they fight never so weakly: for if you will not run, the enemy will. And if the lives of a few be lost by courage, it usually saveth the lives of many; (though wisdom is still needful in the conduct). And if the cause be not worth your lives, you should not meddle with it.

*Direct. vi.* ‘ Resolve upon an absolute obedience to your commanders, in all things consistent with your obedience to God, and the sovereign power.’ Disobedience is no where more intolerable than in an army; where it is often unfit for a soldier to know the reason of his commands; and where self-conceitedness and wilfulness are inconsistent with their common safety, and the lives of many may pay

racter given of our great Master and Exemplar, that he went about doing good, and healing all manner of sicknesses.—I cannot but think such an employment worthy of the very noblest of his disciples. Mr. Boyle’s Experiment Philos. pp. 303, 304.

for the disobedience of a few. If you cannot obey, undertake not to be soldiers.

*Direct.* VII. 'Especially detest all murmurings, mutinies, sidings, and rebellions.' For these are to an army, like violent fevers to the body, or like a fire in a city; and would make an army the greatest plague to their king and country. How many emperors, kings, and commanders have lost their dignities and lives, by the fury of mutinous, enraged soldiers! And how many kingdoms and other commonwealths have been thus overthrown, and betrayed into the enemy's hands! And how many thousands and millions of soldiers have thereby lost their lives! In your discontents and murmuring passions, you may quickly set the house on fire over your heads, and when you feel your misery repent too late. Passion may begin that which fruitless penitence must end. The leaders of mutinies may easily have many fair pretences to inflame an army into discontents: they may aggravate many seeming injuries; they may represent their commanders as odious and unworthy, by putting an ill appearance on their actions: but in the end it will appear, that it was their own advancement which they secretly aimed at, and the destruction of the present government, or the soldiers' ruin which is like to be the effect. A mutinous army is most like hell of any thing I know among God's creatures, and next hell, there is scarce a worse place for their commanders to be in.

*Direct.* VIII. 'Use not your power or liberty to the robbing, or oppressing, or injuring of any.' Though military thieves and oppressors, may escape the gallows, more than others; they shall come as soon to hell as any. If you plunder, and spoil, and tyrannize over the poor people, under pretence of supplying your own wants, there is a God in heaven that will hear their cries, and will avenge them speedily, though you seem to go scot-free for a time. You may take a pride in domineering over others, and making yourselves lords by violence of other men's estates, and when you see none that will question you for it, you may take that which you have most mind to. But the poor and oppressed have a just defender, who hath a severer punishment for you than the sword or gallows! And though he take



you not in the very fact, and his sentence is not presently executed, yet be certain of it, that your day is coming.

*Direct. ix.* 'Take heed lest custom, and the frequency of God's judgments, do harden your hearts into a reprobate stupidity.' Many a man that formerly by the sight of a corpse, or the groanings of the sick, was awakened to serious thoughts of his latter end, when he cometh into an army, and hath often seen the dead lie scattered on the earth, and hath often escaped death himself, groweth utterly senseless, and taketh blockishness to be valour, and custom maketh such warnings to be of no effect. You can scarce name a more strange and lamentable proof of the maddening and hardening nature of sin! That men should be most senseless, when they are in the greatest danger! And least fear God, when they are among his dreadful judgments! And least hear his voice, when his calls are loudest! And live as if they should not die, when they look death so often in the face, and see so many dead before them! That they should be most regardless of their endless life, when they are nearest it; and sense itself hath such notable advantage to tell them of all this! What a monstrous kind of sottish stupidity is this! Think whither the soul is gone, when you see the carcase on the earth; and think where your own must be for ever.

*Direct. x.* 'Take heed of falling into drunkenness and sensuality, though temptations and liberty be never so great.' It is too common with soldiers, because they are oft put to thirst and wants, to think they may lawfully pour it in, when they come at it, without moderation and restraint: even as many poor men take a gluttonous meal for no sin, because they have so many days of hunger; so is it with such soldiers in their drink: till drunkenness first have wounded their consciences, and afterwards grow common, till it have debauched and seared them; and then they have drowned religion and reason, and are turned sottish, miserable brutes.

*Direct. xi.* 'If necessity deprive you of the benefits of God's public or stated worship, see that you labour to repair that loss, by double diligence in those spiritual duties, which yet you have opportunity for.' If you must march or watch on the Lord's days, redeem your other time the more. If you cannot hear sermons, be not without some

profitable book, and often read it; and let your meditations be holy, and your discourses edifying. For these you have opportunities, if you have hearts.

*Direct. xii.* 'Take heed that command or successes do not puff you up, and make you overvalue yourselves, and incline you to rebel against your governors.' What lamentable effects hath England lately seen of this! A silly, half-witted soldier, if he be but made a captain, doth carry it as if he were wiser than the preachers, or the judge! As if his dignity had added to his wit! When victories have laid the power at men's feet, and they think now that none is able to control them, how few are they that abuse not such success to their own undoing, and are not conquered by the pride of their own hearts, when they have conquered others! How ordinarily do they mis-expound the providence of God, and think he hath put the government into their hands, because they have the strength; and from the histories of former successful rebels, and the fairness of their opportunity, encourage themselves to rebel, and think they do but what is their duty! How easily do they justify themselves in those unlawful deeds, which impartial bye-standers see the evil of! And how easily do they quiet their consciences, when they have but power enough to raise up flatterers, and to stop the mouth of wholesome reprehension! How lamentably doth prosperity make them drunk, and sudden advancement overturn their brains! And their greatness, together with their pride and fury, preserveth them from the accesses of wisdom, and of sober men, that so their malady may have no remedy: and there like a drunken man, they rave awhile, and speak big words, and lay about them, and glory in the honour of a pestilence, that they can kill men; and we must not speak to them, till their heads are settled, and they come to themselves, and that is not usually till the hand of God have laid them lower than it found them, and then perhaps they will again hear reason; unless pride hath left their souls as desperate, as at last it doth their bodies or estates. The experience of this age may stand on record, as a teacher to future generations, what power there is in great successes, to conquer both reason, religion, righteousness, professions, vows, and all obligations

to God and man, by puffing up the heart with pride, and thereby making the understanding drunken.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### *Tit. 1. Directions against Murder.*

THOUGH murder be a sin which human nature and interest do so powerfully rise up against, that one would think besides the laws of nature, and the fear of temporal punishment, there should need no other argument against: and though it be a sin which is not frequently committed, except by soldiers, yet because man's corrupted heart is liable to it, and because one sin of such a heinous nature may be more mischievous than many small infirmities, I shall not wholly pass by this sin, which falls in order here before me. I shall give men no other advice against it, than only to open to them, 1. The Causes; 2. The Greatness; and 3. The Consequents of the sin.

I. The causes of murder, are either the nearest, or the more radical and remote. The opening of the nearest sort of causes, will be but to tell you, how many ways of murdering the world is used to! And when you know the cause the contrary to it is the prevention. Avoid those causes, and you avoid the sin.

1. The greatest cause of the cruellest murders is unlawful wars. All that a man killeth in an unlawful war, he murdereth; and all that the army killeth, he that setteth them at work by command or counsel, is guilty of himself. And therefore, how dreadful a thing is an unrighteous war? And how much have men need to look about them, and try every other lawful way, and suffer long, before they venture upon war! It is the skill and glory of a soldier, when he can kill more than other men. He studieth it; he maketh it the matter of his greatest care, and valour, and endeavour; he goeth through very great difficulties to accomplish it; this is not like a sudden and involuntary act. Thieves and robbers kill single persons; but soldiers murder thousands at a time: and because there is none at present to judge them