

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

you love them, you should be more desirous to help them to good teachers; or plant them under a sound and powerful ministry, than to procure them any worldly benefits. One time or other the Word may prevail with them. It is hopeful to be still in mercy's way.

Direct. III. 'The concord of their teachers among themselves, is a great help to the saving of the flock.' "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Concord much furthereth reverence and belief; and consequently men's salvation (so it be a holy concord).

Direct. IV. 'The concord also of godly, private Christians hath the same effect.' When the ignorant see here a sect, and there a sect, and hear them condemning one another, it teacheth them to contemn them all, and think contemptibly of piety itself; but concord layeth an awe upon them.

Direct. V. 'The blameless, humble, loving, heavenly lives of Christians, is a powerful means of winning souls.' Preach therefore every one of you, by such a conversation to all your neighbours, whom you desire to save.

Direct. VI. 'Keep those whom you would save in a humble, patient, learning posture; and keep them from proud wranglings, and running after novelties and sects.' The humble learner takes root downward, and silently groweth up to wisdom; but if once they grow self-conceited, they turn to wranglings, and place their religion in espoused, singular opinions, and in being on this or that side, or church; and fall into divided congregations, where the business is to build up souls by destroying charity, and teaching sectaries to overvalue themselves, and despise dissenters. Till at last they run themselves out of breath, and perhaps fall out with all true religion.

Direct. VII. 'Do what you can to place them in good families, and when they are to be married, to join them to such as are fit to be their helpers.' In families and relations of that sort, people are so near together, and in such constant converse, that it will be very much of the help or hindrance of their salvation.

* John xvii. 21. 25.

Direct. viii. 'Keep them also as much as is possible in good company, and out of bad, seducing company; especially those that are to be their familiars.' The world's experience telleth us what power company hath, to make men better or worse: and what a great advantage it is to work any thing on men's minds, to have interest in them, and intimacy with them; especially with those that are yet to receive their deepest impressions.

Direct. ix. 'Keep them from the most dangerous baits, opportunities, and temptations to sensuality.' Withdraw the tinder and gunpowder from the fire. There is no curing a drunkard ordinarily in an alehouse or tavern, or a fornicator, while he is near the objects of his lust, nor a glutton, at a full, enticing table. Set them at a farther distance from the danger, if you would have them safe. 'Nemo diu tutus periculo proximus'.

Direct. x. 'Take the advantage of their personal afflictions, or any other notable warnings that are near them. Keep them oft in the house of mourning, where death may be as in their sight; and keep them out of the house of foolish mirth.' The time of sickness is an awakening time, and powerfully openeth the ear to counsel. The sight of the dead or dying persons, the hearing of sick men's wishes and complaints, the sight of graves, and dead men's bones (if not too oft to make it customary) doth often force the most foolish and obstinate, to some manlike, profitable thoughts. When the noise of foolish mirth and sports, at rabble-meetings, stage-plays, and May-games, riotings, or immoderate, rude, or tempting plays, do kill all sober, saving motions, and indispose the mind to all that is good. Though seasonable and useful delights are lawful, yet such as are unseasonable, immoderate, ensnaring, scandalous, or unprofitable, are pernicious or poison to the soul.

Direct. xi. 'Engage them in the reading of the holy Scriptures, and of such books of practical divinity, as do at once most plainly acquaint them with the principles of religion, and piercingly set them home upon the conscience; that judgment and affection, head and heart may be edified at once. Such suitable books may be daily their companions; and it is a great advantage to them, that they may have a powerful sermon when they please, and read over

* Seneca.

the same things as oft as the frailty of their memories do require. Such private, innocent companions have saved many a soul.

Direct. XII. 'Engage them in a constant course of prayer, (whether it be with a book, or form, or without, according to the parts and condition of the person).' For the often approaching to God in so holy a work, will affright or shame a man from sin, and stir him up to serious thoughts of his salvation, and engage him to a godly life.

Direct. XIII. 'If you would have all these means effectual to men's conversion and salvation, shew them all hearty love and kindness, and do them all the good you can.' Men are naturally more easily sensible of the good of their bodies, than of their souls; and a kindness to the body is thankfully received, and may prepare them to receive a greater benefit. What you are unable to do for them yourselves, solicit those that are able to do; or, if you cannot do that either, at least shew your pity and good-will. Love is the most powerful preacher in the world.

Direct. XIV. 'Be sure that you have no fallings out, or quarrels with any that you would do good upon. And to that end, usually it is the best way, to have as little to do with them in buying and selling, or any worldly matters, where mine and thine may come into competition, as possibly you can: or, if you cannot avoid it, you must be content to part with somewhat of your right, and suffer some wrongs for fear of hurt to your neighbour's soul.' Even godly persons, yea, parents and children, brethren and sisters, usually fall out about mine and thine. And when self-interest hath bred the quarrel, they usually think ill of the person who is supposed to injure them; and then they are made incapable of receiving any spiritual good by him, and if he seem religious, they are oft alienated from religion for his sake. And all unconverted persons are selfish, and usually look that you should fulfil their desires, and suit yourselves to their interest, without respect to right or wrong, or to your own sufferings! Yet such as these must be pitied and helped; and therefore it is usually best to avoid all chaffering or worldly dealings with them, lest you lose them. And when that cannot be, you must judge a

little departing from your own right, to be a very cheap price to procure the good of a neighbour's soul.

Direct. xv. ' See that in matters of religion you neither run too far from such men in things lawful, nor yet do any thing sinful in compliance with them.' By concurring with them in any sin, you will harden them, and hinder their conversion; and so you will by singular or violent opposition in things indifferent. Those persons are quite mistaken, who think that godly men must go as far from the ungodly as ever they can, in lawful things; and say, 'The ungodly do thus, and therefore we must do otherwise.' Paul was of another mind and practice, when he circumcised Timothy, and "became all things to all men, to save some." To place religion in things indifferent, and to cry out against lawful things as sinful, or to fly from others by needless singularities, is a great cause of the hardening and perdition of multitudes, turning their hearts against religion, and making them think that it is but unnecessary scruple, and that religious persons are but self-conceited, brain-sick people, that make to themselves a duty of their superstition, and condemn all that be not as humourous as they. Lay not such stumbling-blocks before any whose souls you desire to save.

CHAPTER XVI.

Special Directions for Christian Conference, Exhortation, and Reproof.

Tit. 1. Motives to Christian Conference and Exhortation.

THE right use of speech being a duty of such plain importance, as I have before shewed about the government of the tongue; and it being a way of communication, by which we are all obliged to exercise our love to one another, even in the greatest matter, the saving of souls, I shall first endeavour to persuade them to this duty, who make too little conscience of it; and that by these following considerations.

Mot. 1. ' Consider that it is the exercise of our humanity :