

DIRECTIONS TO JUSTICES OF PEACE,
 ESPECIALLY IN
 CORPORATIONS,
 FOR THE DISCHARGE OF THEIR DUTY TO GOD.

Written at the request of a Magistrate, and published for the use of others that need it, by RICHARD BAXTER; impelled by the love of God and Men, to become their submissive Monitor.

I SHALL suppose that you begin with God, in public hearing his Word for your direction, and by fasting and prayer, to beg his blessing on your endeavours; and I must suppose, that you are resolved to do God's will when you know it. Yet be very jealous of your own heart, lest there be any latent reserves; for in this is your greatest danger. Read Jer. xlii. 1—5, with Jer. xliii. 1—4.

Direct. 1. Remember the original and nature of authority: It is a beam from the sovereign authority of God; it can have no lower spring; as there can be no being but from God's being. (Rom. xiii. 1, 2. 4. 6.) You are all God's officers. The sense of this will teach you, 1. Whose work you have to do, and to abhor the doctrine that would make you so human, as to have nothing to do in matters of religion, or of soul-concernment. 2. And whose will you must consult. 3. And to take heed of abusing so divine a thing, by negligence or misemployment. 4. And to use your authority reverently and religiously, and not carelessly as a common thing. As ministers must speak with reverence, because they are God's messengers, so must you rule with pious reverence, as being God's officers. 5. Nor must others be suffered to despise your authority, because it is of God, and necessary to the common good. 6. And this will teach you to look to God, for protection, approbation, encouragement, and reward.

Direct. 2. Be sure that it be not self but God, that is your ultimate end, and next to that, the public good. Let the pleasing and honouring God, and the benefit of men, be

the very thing that you intend and seek ; and not any carnal content in your own exaltation, or power, or honour. If you do the best works for self, and not for God, you debase them and lose them ; and make them sins, and serve yourselves, and not God in them ; and your reward will be accordingly. Be exceeding jealous of your hearts in this ; for selfishness is deep rooted, and it is the common cause of men's perdition, and the sin that overturneth the governments of the earth, and destroyeth the governors. Look not at sin only as a troubler of the nation, and wrong to men, but as an offence to God, and a cause of damnation. Do all your work with respect to God and everlasting life. It is the Pope's device to make men believe, that magistrates have nothing to do but for men's bodies, and temporal affairs, except as executioners of his decrees ! If that were generally believed, how base would the magistracy seem in comparison of the ministry, to all men that believe a life to come ? They that count all dung for Christ, would be tempted to count the magistrate no better, if his office no more respected Christ and salvation, than some imagine. (2 Chron. xix. 6 ; Prov. viii. 15, 16 ; Matt. xxviii. 18 ; John ix. 11 ; Rom. xii. 6. 4 ; xi. 36 ; 1 Cor. x. 31.)

Direct. 3. That your ends and actions may be right, remember the labour, the difficulties, and danger of your place, and that the honour is but the clothing of your office, and as sugar to tice down that labour and suffering, which is bitter to your flesh. Look upon greatness and government as that which in patience you must submit to undergo, when it is for God and the common good, but not as a thing that a wise man should be ambitious of. He is unlikely to rule for God, that proudly seeks the power for himself.

Direct. 4. Forget not the two great summaries of your work : to encourage good, and be a terror and avenger to the evil. (Rom. xiii.) And therefore be not the same to persons that are not the same ; but be a lamb to the lambs, and a lion to the wolves. (Psal. xviii. 25, 26.) God that is no respecter of persons, is yet the greatest distinguisher of persons. Many actions and accusations may come before you, which are indited by mere malignant enmity against the fear of God ; and if the enemies of a holy life can find but magistrates that will fit their turns, they will make your power but an engine to do the devil's work ; and will never

want pretences and covers for their malice: See Dan. vi. 5. The godly and sober you must put in your bosom, and honour them that fear the Lord, or else you are no Christians. (Psal. xv. 4; 1 John iii. 14.) But a vile person you must contemn, and the wicked you must cast out as dross. (Psal. xv. 4; Prov. xxv. 4; Psal. cxix. 119.) A ruler that is himself ungodly, and distasteth holiness, will make but a churlish nursing father to the Church. (Isa. xlix. 23.)

Direct. 5. Never make the law an instrument of evil: set not the letter against the sense; interpret not the sense to be against the end. As the sense is the law, so the end informs the means, and is above it. The law of the land may restrain you from doing some good, that the law of God commandeth to the sovereign rulers, but it cannot warrant you to do any evil. There is no power but from God, and God gives none against himself. (Rom. xiii. 4.)

Direct. 6. See that you be such yourselves, as you would have others be. Be examples of holiness, temperance and righteousness to all the people. 1. Let your practice commend a holy life, and all God's ordinances, public and private to them. Order your families, as they should do theirs. As ministers must preach by their lives, so you must govern by your lives. If you neglect holy worship, despise discipline, or have profane and prayerless families, the people take it for a licence to be profane. 2. Avoid the sins which you would have them avoid; especially be as little as may be in alehouses, or unlawful sports. Honour godliness, and disgrace all sin, by your daily speeches and examples. If you will disobey God and the laws, how can you expect obedience yourselves?

Direct. 7. Set yourselves to do good with all your skill, and care, and industry. Have no restriction, but disability. Study it and make it your daily work to do all the good you can: you have an office to discharge, and not a work on the by to do. Abhor the principles and spirit, that entice magistrates to shift off all the displeasing and troublesome work, and to do no more than is thrust upon them; and they know not how with honour to avoid. If you know of unlicensed or abusive alehouses, or other wickedness that calls for redress; stay not till you are urged, and conviction is offered you; but make inquiry, and procure them convicted, and think it not below you, or too much to seek

after vice, and do all that you are able to suppress it. If the law of the land oblige you not to this, God's law doth, by which you shall be judged. 1. Is not sin God's enemy? 2. Have you not taken up arms against it by a double engagement, as Christians, and as magistrates? 3. Doth it not bring down judgments, and is it not the fire in our thatch, and the plague of the commonwealth? 4. Did it not kill the Lord Jesus? 5. Doth it not damn men to the everlasting misery? 6. Is it not fearful to draw on your own heads, the guilt of a thousand oaths, and of the drunkenness and other abominations which you connive at? 7. Your power is one of God's talents, of which he will require the improvement. 8. If your offices be good and necessary to the commonwealth, then make the best of them. If you do little in them, you teach men to esteem them little worth. 9. Every man is bound to do all the good he can in his place, and therefore so are you. 10. If negligent and scandalous ministers must be cast out, what must be done with negligent and scandalous magistrates? If you make your office more consistent with sin than ours, you so far vilify it. If magistrates were but dealt with, as ministers be, by the sequestering act, what work would be made? 11. Can a man do too much for such a God, such a reward, such an end, and in such a cause? You have more from God than others, in honour and greatness, and therefore you should be more diligent than others. (Luke xii. 48.) 12. When you have done your best, you shall find that sin will be too hard for you, and the devil too cunning for you. Sin is so strong, its friends so many and violent, its enemies so few, despised, discouraged and weak; and their impediments so very many and great, that when you have all done your best, it will be too little. Never were there stricter laws and endeavours, and yet drunkenness and wickedness rage in our streets, as if it were to scorn or dare the magistrate; and many honest people are so tired in the costly and fruitless prosecution, that they are tempted to sit down, and meddle no more, and to entertain unworthy thoughts of magistracy (Deut. xiii. 14.) If there were but a fame of a seducing idolater, they were to inquire and make search, and ask diligently whether it were true or not. See what work Nehemiah made with the Sabbath-breakers. (Neh. xiii.) Job saith, (xxix. 16.) "I was a father to the poor, and the cause

which I knew not, I searched out." And if in wrongs against men you must search, much more when against God. And if magistrates be not bound to search after sin, no body is: for why should poor private men do it more than you? Read Psal. ci.

Direct. 8. Think not of a conscionable discharge of your duty, without many temptations to take you off. See therefore that you be fortified with self-denial and resolution: those that smart by you will complain, scarce a sinner but will have a friend to solicit you for his impunity: your own selfishness will be tempting you to be partial to your friends, to gentlemen, and such as may do you a pleasure, or a displeasure. If you cannot deny both self and all for Christ, you cannot be true to him. (Luke xiv. 26. 33.) Be at a point with all the world, as one that is resolved that God must be pleased, if all be displeased. You are captains in Christ's army against sin and Satan, and therefore must excel in courage. (Josh. i. 7; 1 Chron. xxii. 12; xxviii. 10. 20; 2 Chron. xv. 7; xix. 6, 7.) He that cannot deny his friend, or self, will deny God. See 1 Sam. ii. 29, 30. Pity more the nation and men's souls, than the body of a sinner; see Prov. xix. 18. and xxiii. 13, 14. If punishment will do the sinner no good, it will restrain many others, and so is a due to the commonwealth.

Direct. 9. Remember still that your opportunity will be short, both of office and life; and therefore be up and doing, lest you give a dreadful account of your stewardship; as an unprofitable servant that hath borne the sword in vain, and only rubbed out the time in sitting in the seat, and wearing the clothes of a magistrate: Keep you a daily reckoning with yourself; and call yourself to an account: what good have you done this day, this week, with your power? And lament it if any opportunity hath been lost. (Rom. iii. 6. 4.)

Direct. 10. Be especially careful to suppress unnecessary abusive alehouses, for there is the devil's shop; where drunkenness, dissention, ribaldry, whoredom, swearing, cursing, mocking at godliness, and a world of wickedness is committed. O, how much is God abused in alehouses in one day! And hitherto they have stood as in despite of all that we can do. If constables be not driven on, and clerks be not watched, and profane gentlemen that uphold sin well checked; and if honest men be not much encouraged against

the malice of the ungodly, that count them but busy, troublesome fellows, for seeking to suppress this and other sins, (Gen. xix. 9,) wickedness will still reign, and the laws be as ciphers to the ruin of souls and families, the guilt and shame of negligent magistrates, the grief of the upright, and the reproach and danger of the commonweal th.

Direct. 11. Defraud not the poor, of any thing that the law hath made their due. If the mulcts of unlicensed and abusive ale-sellers, and of swearers, drunkards, &c. be their due, how dare you deprive them of it? I doubt at judgment, abundance of magistrates will have so many pounds to answer for, of which the poor have been defrauded, that the sums charged on highway robbers, will come far short of theirs. Usurp not a power that is not given you, to dispense with the laws, which you are bound to obey and execute.

Direct. 12. Let zeal and prudence go together. Hearken not to the impious that would destroy your zeal, and plunge you into mortal guilt, on pretence of prudence and moderation: nor yet to any that would draw you to rash, imprudent actions, on pretences of piety or zeal. In cases where your duty lies plain before you, go through with it, whatever it cost you: but in cases that are too hard for you, if it be a law difficulty, consult with the skilful in the law, (lest the malicious take advantage of your mistakes:) and if it be a doubt about the laws of God, advise with some judicious ministers of Christ, whose office it is to teach you, and rule by God's word, as it is yours to command and rule them by the sword. It is never well, but where magistrates and ministers go together, each knowing his proper place and work; (Mal. ii. 6. 7; Deut. xvii. 8, 9. 12; 1 Cor. iv. 1; 1 Thess. v. 12; Heb. xiii. 7. 17. 24.)

“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”
(Prov. xxix. 2.)

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END OF THE FIFTEENTH VOLUME.