

5. It is the great cause of our afflictions: for God will not spare that idol which is set up against him: flesh rebelleth, and flesh shall suffer.

6. And when it hath brought affliction, it is most impatient under it, and maketh it seem intolerable. A flesh-pleaser thinks he is undone, when affliction depriveth him of his pleasure.

7. Lastly, it exceedingly unfitteth men for death: for then flesh must be cast into the dust, and all its pleasure be at an end. O doleful day to those that had their good things here, and their portion in this life! When all is gone that ever they valued and sought; and all the true felicity lost, which they brutishly contemned! If you would joyfully then bear the dissolution and ruin of your flesh, O master it and mortify it now. Seek not the ease and pleasure of a little walking, breathing clay, when you should be seeking and foretasting the everlasting pleasure. Here lieth your danger and your work. Strive more against your own flesh, than against all your enemies in earth and hell: if you be saved from this, you are saved from them all. Christ suffered in the flesh, to tell you that it is not pampering, but suffering that your flesh must expect, if you will reign with him.

CHAPTER V.

Further Subordinate Directions, for the next great Duties of Religion; necessary to the right performance of the former.¹

Directions for Redeeming or well improving Time.

TIME being man's opportunity for all those works for which he liveth, and which his Creator doth expect from him, and on which his endless life dependeth: the redeeming or well improving of it, must needs be of most high importance to him: and therefore it is well made by holy Paul, the great mark to distinguish the wise from fools. "See then that you walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise, re-

¹ See the Directions how to spend every day, part ii. chap. 17.

deeming the time ^a." I shall therefore give you special Directions for it, when I have first opened the nature of the duty to you, and told you what is meant by Time, and what by Redeeming it.

Time, in its most common acception, is taken generally for all that space of this present life, which is our opportunity for all the works of life, and the measure of them. Time is often taken more strictly, for some special opportunity which is fitted to a special work; which we call the season or the fittest time: in both these senses time must be redeemed.

As every work hath its season which must be taken ^a, so have the greatest works assigned us for God and our souls, some special seasons besides our common time. 1. Some times God hath fitted by nature for his service. So the time of youth, and health, and strength is specially fit for holy work. 2. Some time is made specially fit by God's institution; as the Lord's day above all other days. 3. Some time is made fit by governors' appointment: as the hour of public meeting for God's worship; and lecture-days; and the hour for family worship, which every master of a family may appoint to his own household. 4. Some time is made fit by the temper of men's bodies: the morning hours are best to most, and to some rather the evening; and to all, the time when the body is freest from pain and disabling weaknesses. 5. Some time is made fit by the course of our necessary, natural, or civil business; as the day is fitter than the sleeping time of the night, and as that hour is the fittest wherein our other employments will least disturb us. 6. Some time is made fit by a special shower of mercy, public or private: as when we dwell in godly families, among the most exemplary, helpful company, under the most lively, excellent means, the most faithful pastors, the most profitable teachers, the best masters or parents, and with faithful friends. 7. Some time is made fit by particular acts of providence: as a funeral sermon at the death of any near us; as the presence of some able minister or private Christian, whose company we cannot ordinarily have: or a special leisure, as the Eunuch had to read the Scripture in his chariot ^o. And some time is made specially

^a Ephes. v. 15, 16.

^a Eccles. iii. 1.

^o Acts viii.

fit, by the special workings of God's Spirit upon the heart; when he more than ordinarily illuminateth, teacheth, quickeneth, softeneth, humbleth, comforteth, exciteth, or confirmeth. As time in general, so especially these seasons must be particularly improved for their several works: we must take the wind and tide while we may have it, and be sure to strike while the iron is hot. 9. And some time is made fit by others' necessities, and the call of God: as it is the time to relieve the poor when they ask, or when they are most in want; or help our neighbour when it will do him most good: to visit the sick, the imprisoned, and afflicted, in the needful season^p. Thus are the godly like trees planted by the river side, which bring forth fruit in their season^q. So to speak in season to the ignorant or ungodly for their conversion, or to be sorrowful for their consolation^r. 10. Our own necessity also maketh our seasons: so the time of age and sickness is made by necessity the season of our special repentance and preparation for death and judgment. 11. The present time is commonly made our season, through the uncertainty of a fitter, or of any more. "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee^s." "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth^t." "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth^u." "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men; especially to them who are of the household of faith^v." These are our special seasons.

To Redeem Time supposeth, 1. That we know what we have to do with time, and on what we ought to lay it out, and of how great worth the things are, for which we must redeem it. 2. That we highly value time in order to this necessary work. 3. That we are sensible of the greatness of our sin and loss, in our negligent and wilful losing so much as we have done already. 4. That we know the particular season of each duty. 5. And that we set less by all that which we must part with in our redeeming time, than

^p Matt. xxv.^q Psal. i. 3.^r Isa. i. 4.^s Prov. iii. 27.^t Eccles. xi. 2.^u Prov. xxvii. 1.^v Gal. vi. 10.

we do by time itself, and its due ends: or else we will not make the bargain.

And as these five things are presupposed, so these following are contained in our redeeming-time. 1. To redeem time is to see that we cast none of it away in vain; but use every minute of it as a most precious thing, and spend it wholly in the way of duty. 2. That we be not only doing good, but doing the best and greatest good which we are able and have a call to do. 3. That we do not only the best things, but do them in the best manner and in the greatest measure, and do as much good as possibly we can. 4. That we watch for special opportunities. 5. That we presently take them when they fall, and improve them when we take them. 6. That we part with all that is to be parted with, to save our time. 7. And that we forecast the preventing of impediments, and the removal of our clogs, and the obtaining of all the helps to expedition and success in duty. This is the true redeeming of our time.

The Ends and Uses which time must be redeemed for are these. 1. In general, and ultimately, it must be all for God. Though not all employed directly upon God, in meditating of him, or praying to him; yet all must be laid out for him, immediately or mediately: that is, either in serving him, or in preparing for his service; in mowing, or in whetting; in travelling, or in baiting to fit us for travel. And so our time of sleeping, and feeding, and needful recreation is laid out for God. 2. Time must be redeemed especially for works of public benefit: for the church and state: for the souls of many: especially by magistrates and ministers, who have special charge and opportunity; who "must spend and be spent" for the peoples' sakes, though rewarded with ingratitude and contempt. 3. For your own souls, and your everlasting life: for speedy conversion without delay, if you be yet unconverted: for the killing of every soul-endangering sin, without delay: for the exercise and increase of young and unconfirmed grace, and the growth of knowledge: for the making sure our calling and election: and for the storing up provisions of faith, and hope, and love, and comfort, against the hour of suffering and of death. 4. We must redeem time for the souls of every particular person that we have

opportunity to do good to; especially for children, and servants, and others whom God hath committed to our trust. 5. For the welfare of our own bodies, that they may be serviceable to our souls, 6. And, lastly, for the bodily welfare of others. And this is the order in which those works lie, for which and in which our time must be redeemed.

The Price that time must be redeemed with, is, 1. Above all, by our utmost diligence: that we be still doing, and put forth all our strength, and run as for our lives; and whatever our hand shall find to do, that we do it with our might, remembering that there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither we go. Our sluggish ease is an easy price to be parted with for precious time. To redeem it, is not to call back time past; nor to stop time in its hasty passage; nor to procure a long life on earth: but to save it, as it passeth, from being devoured and lost, by sluggishness and sin, 2. Time must be redeemed from the hands, and by the loss of sinful pleasures, sports and revellings, and all that is of itself, or by accident unlawful: from wantonness, and licentiousness, and vanity. Both these are set together. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." 3. Time must be redeemed from things indifferent and lawful at another time, when things necessary do require it. He that should save men's lives, or quench a fire in his house, or provide for his family, or do his master's work, will not be excused if he neglect it, by saying, that he was about an indifferent or a lawful business. Natural rest and sleep must be parted with for time, when necessary things require it. Paul preached till midnight, being to depart on the morrow*. The lamenting

* Rom. xiii. 11—14.

* Acts xx. 7.

church, calling out for prayer, saith, "Arise: cry out in the night, in the beginning of the watches pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord^b." Cleanthes' lamp must be used by such, whose sun-light must be otherwise employed. 4. Time must be redeemed from worldly business and commodity, when matters of greater weight and commodity do require it. Trades, and plough, and profit must stand by, when God calls us (by necessity or otherwise) to greater things. Martha should not so much as trouble herself in providing meat for Christ and his followers to eat, when Christ is offering her food for her soul, and she should with Mary have been hearing at his feet^c. Worldlings are thus called by him. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness^d." 5. Time must be redeemed from smaller duties, which in their season must be done, as being no duties, when they hinder greater duty which should then take place. It is a duty in its time and place to shew respect to neighbours and superiors, and to those about us, and to look to our family affairs: but not when we should be at prayer to God, or when a minister should be preaching, or at his necessary studies: private prayer and meditation, and visiting the sick, are duties: but not when we should be at church, or about any greater duty which they hinder.

Tit. 1. The Directions contemplative for redeeming Time.

Direct. 1. 'Still keep upon thy heart, by faith and consideration, the lively sense of the greatness and absolute necessity of that work, which must command thy time; remembering who setteth thee on work, and on what a work he sets thee, and on what terms, and what will be the end.' It is God that calleth thee to labour: and wilt thou stand still or be doing other things, when God expecteth duty from thee? Moses must go to Pharaoh when God

^b Lam. ii. 19.

^c Luke x. 42.

^d Isa. lv. 1—3.

bids him go : Jonas must go to Nineveh when God bids him go : yea, Abraham must go to sacrifice his son when God bids him go. And may you go about your fleshly pleasures, when God commandeth you to his service? He hath appointed you a work that is worth your time and all your labour; to know him, and serve him, and obey him, and to seek everlasting life! How diligently should so excellent a work be done! and so blessed and glorious a master be served! especially considering the unutterable importance of our diligence! we are in the race appointed us by our Maker, and are to run for an immortal crown. It is heaven that must be now won or lost : and have we time to spare in such a race? We are fighting against the enemies of our salvation; the question is now to be resolved, whether the flesh, the world and the devil, or we, shall win the day, and have the victory. And heaven or hell must be the issue of our warfare : and have we time to spare in the midst of such a fight? when our very loss of time, is no small part of the enemy's conquest? Our most wise omnipotent Creator hath been pleased to make this present life to be the trying preparation for another, resolving that it shall go with us all for ever, according to our preparations here : and can we play and loiter away our time, that have such a work as this to do? O miserable, senseless souls! do you believe indeed the life everlasting, and that all your lives are given you now, to resolve the question whether you must be in heaven or hell for ever? Do you believe this? Again I ask you, do you believe this? I beseech you, ask your consciences over and over, whether you do indeed believe it? Can you believe it, and yet have time to spare? What! find time to play away, and game away, and idle and prate away, and yet believe that this very time is given you to prepare for life eternal? and that salvation or damnation lieth on the race which now, even now, you have to run? Is not such a man a monster of stupidity? If you are asleep, or mad, it were the more excusable to be so senseless : but to do thus awake, and in your wits! O where are the brains of those men, and of what metal are their hardened hearts made, that can idle and play away that time, that little time, that only time, which is given them for the everlasting saving of their

souls! Verily sirs, if sin had not turned the ungodly part of the world into a bedlam, where it is no wonder to see a man out of his wits, people would run out with wonder into the streets to see such a monster as this, as they do to see madmen in the country where they are rare; and they would call to one another, come and see a man, that can trifle and sport away his time, as he is going to eternity, and is ready to enter into another world! Come and see a man that hath but a few days to win or lose his soul for ever in, and is playing it away at cards or dice, or wasting it in doing nothing! Come and see a man that hath hours to spare, and cast away upon trifles, with heaven and hell before his eyes. For thy soul's sake, consider and tell thyself, if thy estate in the world did lie upon the spending of this day or week, or if thy life lay on it, so that thou must live or die, or be poor or rich, sick or well as thou spendest it, wouldst thou then waste it in dressings, or compliment, or play? and wouldst thou find any to spare upon impertinent triflings? Or rather wouldst thou not be up betime, and about thy business, and turn by thy games, and thy diverting company, and disappoint thy idle visiters, and let them find that thou art not to be spoken with, nor at leisure to do nothing, but wilt rather seem uncivil and morose, than be undone! And wouldst thou do thus for a transitory prosperity or life, and doth not life eternal require much more? Will thy weighty business in the world resolve thee, to put thy friends, thy play-fellows and sports, and to shake off thy idleness? and should not the business of thy salvation do it? I would desire no more to confute the distracted time-wasters, when they are disputing for their idle sports and vanities, and asking, what harm is in cards and dice, and stage-plays, or tedious feasts or complimenting, adorning idleness, than if I could help them to one sight of heaven and hell, and make them well know what greater business they have to do, which is staying for them while they sleep or play. If I were just now in disputing the case with an idle lady, or a sensual belly-slave or gamester, and he were asking me scornfully, what hurt is in all this? if one did but knock at his door and tell him, the king is at the door and calls for you; it would make him to cast away his game and his dispute: or

if the house were on fire, or a child fallen into the fire or water, or thieves breaking in upon them, it would make the ladies cast by them the other lace or ribbon? Or if there were but a good bargain or a lordship to be got, they could be up and going, though sports and game and gaudery were cast off: and yet the forerunner of heaven and hell, though one of them is even at the door, will not do as much for them: because heaven is as nothing to an unbeliever, or an inconsiderate, senseless wretch; and as it is nothing to them when it should move them, it shall be nothing to them when they would enjoy it. Say not, recreation must be used in its season: I know that necessary whetting is no letting: but God and thy own conscience shall tell thee shortly, whether thy recreations, feastings, long dressings, and idleness, were a necessary whetting or refreshment of thy body, to fit it for that work which thou wast born and livest for; or whether they were the pastimes of a voluptuous fleshly brute, that lived in these pleasures for the love of pleasure. Verily, if I look but on this one unreasonable sin of time-wasting, it would help me to understand the meaning of Luke, *Ἐὶς ἑαυτὸν ἐλθὼν*, that the prodigal is said 'to come to himself;' and that conversion is the bringing a man to his wits.

Direct. 11. 'Be not a stranger to the condition of thy own soul, but look home till thou art acquainted what state it is in, and what it is in danger of, and what it wanteth, and how far thou art behindhand in thy provisions for immortality: and then be an idle time-waster if thou canst.' Could I but go down with thee into that dungeon heart of thine, and shew thee by the light of truth what is there! could I but let in one convincing beam from heaven, which might fully shew thee what a condition thou art in, and what thou hast to do with thy remaining time, I should have no need to dispute thee out of thy remaining fooleries, nor to bid thee, be up and doing for thy soul, any more than to bid thee stir if a bear were at thy back, or the house in a flame about thy ears. Alas, our ordinary time-wasters are such, as are yet unconverted, carnal wretches, and are all the while in the power of the devil, who is the chief master of the sport, and the greatest gainer. They are such as are utter strangers to the regenerating, sanctifying work of

the Holy Ghost; and are yet unjustified, and under the guilt of all their sins, and certain to be with devils in hell for ever, if they die thus before they are converted! (This is true, sinner, and thou wilt shortly find it so, by grace or vengeance, though thy blind and hardened heart now rise against the mention of it!) And is this a case for a man to sit at cards or dice in, or to sport and swagger in? The Lord have mercy on thee, and open thy eyes before it is too late, or else thy conscience will tell thee for ever in another manner than I am telling thee now, that thou hadst need to have better improved thy time, and hadst greater things to have spent it in. What, for a man in thy case! in an unrenewed, unsanctified, unpardoned state, to be thus casting away that little time, which all his hopes lie on! and in which, if ever, he must be recovered, and saved! O Lord, have mercy on such senseless souls, and bring them to themselves before it be too late! I tell thee, man, an enlightened person that understandeth what it is, and hath escaped it, would not for all the kingdoms of the world, be a week or a day in thy condition, for fear lest death cut off his hopes and shut him up in hell that very day. He durst not sleep quietly in thy condition a night, lest death should snatch him away to hell, and canst thou sport and play in it, and live securely in a sensual course? O what a thing it is to be hoodwinked in misery, and to be led asleep to hell? Who could persuade men to live thus awake, and go dancing to hell with their eyes open! O! if we should imagine a Peter or a Paul, or any of the blessed, to be again brought into such a case as one of these unsanctified sinners, and yet to know what now they know! What would they do? would they feast, and game, and play and trifle away their time in it? or would they not rather suddenly bewail their former misspent time, and all their sins, and cry day and night to God for mercy, and fly to Christ, and spend all their time in holiness and obedience to God! Alas, poor sinner, do but look into thy heart, and see there what thou hast to do (of greater weight than trimming and playing): I almost tremble to think and write what a case thou art in, and what thou hast to do, while thou livest as if thou hadst time to spare! If thou know not, I will tell thee, and the Lord make thee know it: thou hast a

hardened heart to be yet softened; and an unbelieving heart to be brought to a lively, powerful belief of the word of God and the unseen world: thou hast an unholy heart and life to be made holy, if ever thou wilt see the face of God. Thou hast a heart full of sins to be mortified and subdued: and an unreformed life to be reformed: (and what abundance of particulars do these generals contain!) Thou hast a pardon to procure through Jesus Christ, for all the sins that ever thou didst commit, and all the duties which ever thou didst omit: thou hast an offended God to be reconciled to, and for thy estranged soul to know as thy Father in Jesus Christ! What abundance of Scripture truths hast thou to learn which thou art ignorant of? How many holy duties, as prayer, meditation, holy conference, &c. to learn which thou art unskilful in? and to perform when thou hast learned them? How many works of justice and charity to men's souls and bodies hast thou to do? How many needy ones to relieve as thou art able? and the sick to visit, and the naked to clothe, and the sad to comfort, and the ignorant to instruct, and the ungodly to exhort? What abundance of duty hast thou to perform in thy relations? to parents or children, to husband or wife, as a master or a servant, and the rest? Thou little knowest what sufferings thou hast to prepare for! Thou hast faith, and love, and repentance, and patience, and all God's graces, to get and to exercise daily, and to increase! Thou hast thy accounts to prepare, and assurance of salvation to obtain, and death and judgment to prepare for: what thinks thy heart of all this work? Put it off as lightly as thou wilt, it is God himself that hath laid it on thee, and it *must* be done in time, or thou must be undone for ever! And yet it must not be thy toil, but thy delight: this is appointed thee for thy chiefest recreation. Look into the Scripture and into thy heart, and thou wilt find that all this is to be done. And dost thou think in thy conscience, that this is not greater business than thy gaudy dressings, thy idle visits, or thy needless sports? which is more worthy of thy time?

Direct. 111. 'Remember how gainful the redeeming of time is, and how exceeding comfortable in the review?'

• Heb. iii. 13. x. 25. Ephes. iv. 29.

In merchandise, or any trading, in husbandry, or any gaining course, we use to say of a man that hath grown rich by it, that he hath made use of his time! But when heaven, and communion with God in the way, and a life of holy strength and comfort, and a death full of joy and hope is to be the gain, how cheerfully should time be redeemed for these? If it be pleasant for a man to find himself thrive and prosper in any rising or pleasing employment, how pleasant it must be continually to us, to find that in redeeming time the work of God and our souls do prosper? Look back now on the time that is past, and tell me which part is sweetest to thy thoughts? However it be now, I can tell thee, at death, it will be an unspeakable comfort, to look back on a wellspent life; and to be able to say in humble sincerity, my time was not cast away on worldliness, ambition, idleness, or fleshly vanities or pleasures; but spent in the sincere and laborious service of my God, and making my calling and election sure, and doing all the good to men's souls and bodies that I could do in the world: it was entirely devoted to God and his church, and the good of others and my soul! What a joy is it when going out of the world, we can in our place and measure say with our blessed Lord and pattern, "I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do: and now, O Father, glorify me with thyself." Or as Paul, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give." And, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, we have had our conversation in the world^b." It is a great comfort in sickness to be able to say with Hezekiah, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee, in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight!" O! time well spent is a precious cordial to a soul that is going to its final sentence, and is making up its last and general accounts: yea, the reviews of it will be joyful in heaven: which is given, though most

^f John xvii. 4, 5.^e 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.^b 2 Cor. i. 12.^f Isa. xxxviii. 3.

freely by the covenant antecedently, yet as a reward by our most righteous Judge, when he comes to sentence men according to that covenant.

Direct. 17. 'Consider on the contrary how sad the review of illspent time is, and how you will wish you had spent it when it is gone.' Hast thou now any comfort in looking back on thy despised hours? I will not so far wrong thy understanding, as to question whether thou dost know that thou must die. But thy sin alloweth me to ask thee, whether at thy dying hour it will be any comfort to thee to remember thy pastimes? And whether it will then better please thee, to find upon thy account, so many hours spent in doing good to others, and so many in prayer, and studying the Scriptures and thy heart, and in preparing for death and the life to come; so many in thy calling obediently managed in order to eternity? or to hear, so many hours spent in idleness, and so many in needless sports and plays, hawking and hunting, courting and wantonness; and so many in gathering and providing for the flesh, and so many in satisfying its greedy lusts. Which reckoning doth thy conscience think would be most comfortable to thee at the last? I put it to thy own conscience, if thou wert to die to-morrow, how thou wouldst spend this present day? Wouldst thou spend it in idleness and vain pastimes? Or if thou wert to die this day, where wouldst thou be found, and about what exercises? Hadst thou rather death find thee in a playhouse, gaminghouse, an alehouse, in thy fleshly jollity and pleasure? Or in a holy walking with thy God, and serious preparing for the life to come? Perhaps you will say, that, 'If you had but a day to live, you would lay by the labours of your calling, and yet that doth not prove them sinful.' But, I answer, there is a great difference between an evil, and a small unseasonable good. If death found thee in thy honest calling, holily managed, conscience would not trouble thee for it as a sin: and if thou rather choose to die in prayer, it is but to choose a greater duty in its season: but sure thou wouldst be loath on another account to be found in thy time-wasting pleasures! And conscience, if thou have a conscience, would make thee dread it as a sin. Thou wilt not wish at death that thou hadst never laboured in thy lawful calling,

though thou wouldst be found in a more seasonable work : but thou wilt wish then, if thou understand thyself, that thou hadst never lost one minute's time, and never known those sinful vanities and temptations which did occasion it. O spend thy time as thou wouldst review it!

Direct. v. 'Go hear and mark how other men at death do set by time, and how they wish then that they had spent it.' It is hardly possible for men in health, especially in prosperity and security, to imagine how precious time appeareth to an awakened, dying man! Ask them then whether life be too long, and men have any time to spare? Ask them then whether slugging or working, playing or praying be the better spending of our time? Both good and bad, saints and sensualists, do use then to be high esteemers of time. O! then what would an ungodly, unprepared sinner give for some of the time which he used before as nothing worth? Then the most holy servants of Christ are sensible how they sinned, in losing any of their time! O! then how earnestly do they wish, that they had made much of every minute! And they that did most for God and their souls, that they had done much more! Now if they were to pray over their prayers again, how earnestly would they beg! And how much more good would they do, if time and talents were restored! I knew familiarly a most holy, grave and reverend divine, who was so affected with the words of a godly woman, who at her death, did often and vehemently cry out, 'O call time again! O call time again!' that the sense of it seemed to remain on his heart, and appear in his praying, preaching and conversation to his death. Now you have time to cast away upon every nothing: but then you will say with David, "Remember how short my time is^k!" And as "Hagar sat down and wept when her water was spent^l," so then you will lament when time is gone or just at an end, that you set no more by it, while you had it! O sleepy sinner! thy heart cannot now conceive how thou wilt set by time, when thou hearest the physicians say, 'You are a dead man!' And the divine say, 'You must prepare now for another world!' When thy heart saith, 'All my days are gone! I must live on earth no more! All my preparing time is at an end! Now what is undone

^k Psalm lxxxix. 47.

^l Gen. xxi. 15, 16.

must be undone for ever!' O that thou hadst now but the esteem of time, which thou wilt have then, or immediately after! Then, 'O pray for me, that God will recover me and try me once again! O then how I would spend my time!' And is it not a most incongruous thing to see the same persons, now idle and toy away their time, and perhaps think that they do no harm, who know that shortly they must cry to God, 'O for a little more time, Lord, to do the great work that is yet undone: a little more time to make sure of my salvation!' May not God then tell you, you had time till you knew not what to do with it. You had so much time that you had many and many an hour to spare for idleness and vanity, and that which you were not ashamed to call pastime.

Direct. VI. 'Remember also that when judgment comes, God will call you to account, both for every hour of your misspent time, and for all the good which you should have done in all that time, and did it not.' If you must give account for every idle word, then sure for every idle hour^m. And if we must be judged according to all the talents we have received, and the improvement of them required of us, then certainly for so precious a talent as our time. And how should that man spend his time that believeth he must give such account of all? Even to the most just and holy God, who will judge all men according to their works; and cause them all to reap as they have sowed. O spend your time as you would hear of it in judgment!

Direct. VII. 'Remember how much time you have lost already: and therefore if you are not impenitent, and insensible of your loss, it will provoke you to redeem with the greater diligence, the remnant which mercy shall vouchsafe you.' How much lost you in childhood, youth and riper age? How much have you lost in ignorance? How much in negligence? How much in fleshly pleasure and vanity? How much in worldliness, and many other sins? O that you knew but what a loss it was, if it had been but one year, or week, or day! Do you think you have spent your time as you should have done: and as beseemed those that had such work to do? If not, do you repent of it, or do you not? If you do not, you have no hope to be for-

^m Matt. xii. 36.

given. If you do repent, you will not sure go on to do the same. Who will believe that he repents of gaming, reveling, or other idle loss of time, who doth so still while he professeth to repent? He that hath lost the beginning of the day, must go the faster in the end, if he will perform so great a journey. Can you remember the hours and years that you have misspent, in the follies of childhood, and the vanities of inconsiderate youth, and yet still trifle, and not be provoked by penitent shame and fear, to diligence? Have you not yet cast away enough of such a precious treasure, but you will vilify also the little which remains?

Direct. VIII. 'Remember the swift and constant motion of your neglected time.' What haste it makes! And never stays! That which was here while you spake the last word, is gone before you can speak the next! Whatever you are doing, or saying, or thinking of, it is passing on without delay! It stayeth not while you sleep! Whether you remember, and observe it, and make use of it, or not, it glides away! It stayeth not your leisure! It hasteth as fast while you play, as while you work; while you sin, as when you repent! No monarch so potent as to command it a moment to attend his will! We have no more Joshuas to stop the sun. It is above the jurisdiction of the princes of the earth; it will not hear them if they command or request it to delay its haste, but the smallest moment! Crowns and kingdoms would be no price, to hire it to loiter but while you draw another breath! Your lives are not like the clothes of the Israelites in the wilderness, that wax not old; but like the provisions of the Gibeonites, worn and wasted while you are passing but a little way! And is time so swift, and you so slow? Will you stand still and see it pass away, as if you had no use for it; no work to do; nor any account to give?

Direct. IX. 'Consider also, how irrecoverable time is when it is past.' Take it now, or it is lost for ever. All the men on earth, with all their power, and all their wit, are not able to recal one minute that is gone! All the riches in this world cannot redeem it, by reversing one of those hours or moments, which you so prodigally cast away for nothing. If you would cry and call after it till you tear your hearts, it will not return. Many a thousand have tried this

by sad experience, and have cried out too late, 'O that we had now that time again which we made so light of!' But none of them did ever attain their wish! No more will you. Take it therefore while you have it. It is now as liberal to the poorest beggar as to the greatest prince! Time is as much yours as his. Though in your youth and folly you spend as out of the full heap, as if time would never have an end, you shall find it is not like the widow's oil, or the loaves and fishes, multiplied by a miracle; but the hour is at hand, when you will wish you had gathered the fragments and the smallest crumbs, that nothing of so precious a commodity had been lost; even the little minutes, which you thought you might neglect and be no losers. Try whether you can stop the present moment, or recal that which is gone by already, before you vilify or loiter away any more; lest you repent too late.

Direct. x. 'Think also how exceeding little time thou hast, and how near thou alway standest to eternity^m. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hirelingⁿ?" "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble: he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not^o." "Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away: they see no good: they are passed away as the swift ships, as the eagle that hasteth to the prey^p." O, what is this inch of hasty time! How quickly will it all be gone! Look back on all the time that is past: if you have lived threescore or fourscore years, what is it now? Doth it not seem as yesterday since thou wast a child? Do not days and nights wheel on apace? O man! how short is thy abode on earth! How small a time will leave thee in eternity! What a small and hasty moment will bring thee to the state, in which thou must remain for ever! Every night is as the death or end of one of the few that are here allotted thee. How little a while is it till thy mortal sickness!—till thou must lie under languishing decays and pain!—till thy vital powers shall give

^m Ex vitâ ita discedo, tanquam ex hospitio, non tanquam ex domo. Commo-
randi enim nobis, natura diversorium non habitandi locum dedit. Cic. Sen. 84.
vol. vii. p. 817.

ⁿ Job vii. 1.

^o Job xiv. 1, 2.

^p Job ix. 25, 26.

up their office, and thy pulse shall cease, and thy soul shall take its silent, undiscerned flight, and leave thy body to be hid in darkness, and carried by thy friends to the common earth! How short a time is it betwixt this and the digging of thy grave!—betwixt thy pleasures in the flesh, and thy sad farewell, when thou must say of all thy pleasures, ‘They are gone!’—betwixt thy cares and businesses for this world, and thy entrance into another world, where all these vanities are of no esteem! How short is the time between thy sin, and thy account in judgment!—between the pleasure and the pain!—and between the patient holiness of the godly, and their full reward of endless joys! And can you spare any part of so short a life? Hath God allotted you so little time, and can you spare the devil any of that little? Is it not all little enough for so great a work, as is necessary to your safe and comfortable death? O remember, when sloth or pleasure would have any, how little you have in all!—and out of how small a stock you spend!—how little you have for the one thing necessary!—the providing for eternal life!—and how unseasonable it is to be playing away time, so near the entrance into the endless world!

Direct. xi. ‘Remember also how uncertain that little time is, which you must have.’ As you know it will be short, so you know not how short. You never yet saw the day or hour, in which you were sure to see another. And is it a thing becoming the reason of a man, to slug or cast away that day or hour, which for ought he knows may be his last? You think that though you are not certain, yet you are likely to have more: but nothing that is hazardous should be admitted in a business of such moment. Yea, when the longest life is short; and when so frail a body, liable to so many hundred maladies and casualties, and so sinful a soul, do make it probable as well as possible, that the thread of thy life should be cut off ere long, even much before thy natural period: when so many score at younger years do come to the grave, for one that arriveth at the ripeness of old age; is not then the uncertainty of thy time a great aggravation of the sinfulness of thy not redeeming it? If you were sure you had but one year to live, it would perhaps make you so wise, as to see that you had no time to spare. And yet do you waste it, when you know not

that you shall live another day? Many a one is this week trifling away their time, who will be dead the next week; who yet would have spent it better if they had thought but to have died the next year! O man! what if death come before thou hast made thy necessary preparation? Where art thou then? When time is uncertain as well as short; hast thou not work enough of weight to spend it on? If Christ had set thee to attend and follow him in greatest holiness a thousand years, shouldst thou not have gladly done it? And yet canst thou not hold out for so short a life? Canst thou not watch with him one hour? He himself was provoked by the nearness of his death, to a speedy dispatch of the works of his life. And should not we? He sendeth to prepare his last communion-feast with his disciples, thus: "My time is at hand: I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples." And Luke xxii. 15. "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." So should you rather say, 'My time is short; my death is at hand; and therefore it concerneth me to live in the knowledge and communion of God, before I go hence into his presence;' especially when, as Eccles. ix. 12. "Man knoweth not his time." Many thousands would have done better in their preparations, if they had known the period of their time. "But know this, that if the good man of the house had known, in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up: therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is."

Direct. xii. 'Never forget what attendance thou hast whilst thou art idling or sinning away thy time: how the patience and mercy of God are staying for thee: and how sun and moon and all the creatures are all the while attending on thee.' And must God stand by, while thou art yet a little longer abusing and offending him? Must God stay till thy cards, and dice, and pride, and worldly, unnecessary cares will dismiss thee, and spare thee for his service? Must he wait on the devil, and the world, and the flesh; to take their leavings, and stay till they have done with thee? Canst thou marvel if he make thee pay for this? If he turn

† Matt. xxvi. 18.

† Matt. xxiv. 43.

† Matt. xiii. 33.

away, and leave thee to spend thy time in as much vanity and idleness as thou desirest? Must God and all his creatures wait on a careless sinner, while he is at his fleshly pleasures? Must life and time be continued to him, while he is doing nothing that is worthy of his life and time? "The longsuffering of God did wait on the disobedient in the days of Noah^t." But how dear did they pay for the contempt of this forbearance?

Direct. XIII. 'Consider soberly of the ends for which thy life and time are given thee by God.' God made not such a creature as man for nothing: he never gave thee an hour's time for nothing. The life and time of brutes and plants are given them to be serviceable to thee: but what is thine for? Dost thou think in thy conscience that any of thy time is given thee in vain? When thou art slugging, or idling, or playing it away, dost thou think in thy conscience that thou art wisely and honestly answering the ends of thy creation, and redemption, and hourly preservation? Dost thou think that God is so unwise, or disregarding of thy time and thee, as to give thee more than thou hast need of? Thou wilt blame thy tailor if he cut out more cloth than will make thy garments meet for thee, and agreeable to thy use: and thou wilt blame thy shoemaker, if he make thy shoes too big for thee: and dost thou think that God is so lavish of time, or so unskilful in his works of providence, as to cut thee out more time, than the work which he hath cut thee out requireth? He that will call thee to a reckoning for all, hath certainly given thee none in vain. If thou canst find an hour that thou hast nothing to do with, and must give no account for, let that be the hour of thy pastime. But if thou knewest thy need, thy danger, thy hopes, and thy work, thou wouldst never dream of having time to spare. For my own part, I must tell thee, if thou have time to spare, thy case is very much different from mine. It is the daily trouble and burden of my mind, to see how slowly my work goes on, and how hastily my time: and how much I am like to leave undone which I would fain dispatch! How great and important businesses are to be done, and how short that life is like to be, in which they must be done, if ever! Methinks if every day were as long as ten, it were

^t 1. Pet. iii. 20.

not too long for the work which is every day before me, though not incumbent on me as my present duty (for God requireth not impossibilities,) yet exceeding desirable to be done. It is the work that makes the time a mercy: the time is for the work. If my work were done, which the good of the church and my soul requireth, what cause had I to be glad of the ending of my time, and to say with Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Remember then that God never gave thee one minute to spend in vain; but thy very ease, and rest, and recreations must be but such and so much as fit thee for thy work; and as help it on, and do not hinder it. He redeemed and preserveth us, that we "might serve him in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives".

Direct. XIV. 'Remember still, that the time of this short, uncertain life is all that ever you shall have, for your preparation for your endless life.' When this is spent, whether well or ill, you shall have no more. God will not try those with another life on earth, that have cast away and misspent this^a. There is no returning hither from the dead, to mend that which here you did amiss. What good you will do, must now be done: and what grace you would get, must now be got: and what preparation for eternity you would ever make, must now be made! "Behold, now is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation^b." "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin^c." Have you but one life here to live, and will you lose that one, or any part of it? Your time is already measured out: the glass is turned upon you. "And the angel—lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time should be no longer^d." Therefore "whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest^e." What then remaineth, but that "the time being short, and the fashion of these things passing away," you

^a Luke i. 74, 75.

^c See my book called "Now or Never."

^b 2 Cor. vi. 2.

^d Heb. iii. 7. 13.

^e Rev. x. 5, 6.

^e Eccles. ix. 10.

use the world as if you used it not, and redeem this time for your eternal happiness ^c.

Direct. xv. ‘Remember still that sin and satan will lose no time: and therefore it concerneth you to lose none.’ “The devil your adversary goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour ^d.” “Be sober” therefore and “vigilant to resist him ^e.” If he be busy, and you be idle, if he be at work in spreading his nets, and laying his snares for you, and you be at play and do not mind him, it is easy to foretell you what will be the issue. If your enemies be fighting, while you sit still or sleep, it is easy to prognosticate who will have the victory. The weeds of corruption are continually growing: sin, like a constant spring, is still running: the world is still enticing: and the flesh is still inclining to its prohibited delights. None of these enemies will make a truce or a cessation with you, to sit still as long as you sit still. So far are they from forbearing you, while you are idle, or gratifying the flesh, that even this is the fruit and evidence of their industry and success. Lose no time then, and admit of no interruptions of your work, till you can persuade your enemies to do the like.

Direct. xvi. ‘Consider what a senseless contradiction it is of you, to overlove your lives, and yet to cast away your time.’ What is your time but the duration of your lives? You are loath to die, and loath your time should be at an end: and yet you can as prodigally cast it away, as if you were weary of it, or longed to be rid of it. Is it only the last hours that you are loath to lose? Are not the middle parts as precious, and to be spared and improved? Or is it only to have time, and not to use it, that you desire? No means are good for any thing, but to further the attainment of the end: it is not good to you, if it do you no good. To have food or raiment without any use of them, is as bad as not to have them. If you saw a man tremble with fear lest his purse be taken from him, and yet take out his money himself, and cast it away, or give it all for a straw or feather, what would you think of that man’s wit? And do not you do the like and worse, when you are afraid lest death should end your time, and yet you yourselves will idle it away, and play it away, and give it for a little worldly

^c 1 Cor. vii. 29.

^d 1 Pet. v. 8.

^e Ver. 7. 9.

pelf? But I know how it is with you : it is for the present pleasure of the flesh, and for the sweetness of life itself that you value life, and are so loath to die, and not for any higher ends : but this is to be brutish, and to unman yourselves, and simply to vilify your lives, while you idolize them. Such mad contradictions sin infers. You make your life your ultimate end, and desire to live but for life itself, or the pleasures of life, and so you make it instead of God and heaven, which should be intended as your proper end : and yet while you refer it not to these higher ends, and use it but for the present pleasure, you vilify yourselves and it, as if man did differ from a dog or other brute, but in some poor degree of present pleasure.

Direct. xvii. 'Consider that in your loss of time, you lose all the mercies of that time.' For time is pregnant with great, invaluable mercies. It is the cabinet that containeth the jewels. If you throw away the purse, you throw away the money that is in it. O what might you get in those precious hours which you cast away! How much better a treasure than money might you win? How much sweeter a pleasure than all your games and sports might you enjoy? You might be soliciting God for life eternal! You might be using and increasing grace! You might be viewing by faith the blessed place and company in which you may abide for ever. All this, and more, you are losing while you are losing time. You choose as a pleasure that heavy curse, "Your strength shall be spent in vain^f." Why do you not also take it for a pleasure, to cast away your gold or health? I tell you, a very little time is worth a great deal of gold and silver. You cast away a more precious commodity.

Direct. xviii. 'Think seriously how Christ, and his apostles, and holiest servants in all ages spent their time.' They spent it in praying, and preaching, and holy conference, and in doing good, and in the works of their outward callings in subserviency to these : but not in cards, or dice, or dancing, or stage-plays, or pampering the flesh, nor in the pursuit of the profits and honours of the world. I read where Christ was "all night in praying^g," but not where he spent an hour in playing. I know you will say, that you

^f Levit. xxvi. 20.

^g Luke vi. 12.

expect not to reach to their degree of holiness. But let me remember you, that he is not sincere that desireth not to be perfect. And that he is graceless, who wilfully keepeth any beloved sin, which he had not rather be delivered from; and that wilfully refuseth any duty, and had not rather perform it as he ought. And that you are the more needy, though Christ, and his apostles, and servants, were the more holy! And that the poor have more need to beg, and work, and be sparing of what they have, than the rich. And therefore, if Christ and his holiest servants were sparing of their time, and spent it in works of holiness and obedience, have not you greater need to do so than they? Have not you more need to pray, and learn God's Word, and prepare for death, than Christ and his apostles? Are you not more behindhand, as having lost much time? Let your wants instruct you.

Direct. XIX. 'Forget not that a spending time may come, when you will think all too little, that now you can provide, by the most diligent redeeming of your time.' If a garrison expect a siege, so sharp and so long as will spend up their provisions, they will prepare accordingly, that they perish not by famine. Temptations may be stronger, and then you will find that you should now have gathered strength to overcome them, and have bestirred you in the getting day, that you might be able to stand in the evil day. It is those that now loiter and lose their times, and gather not knowledge and strength of grace, who fall in trial: when sufferings for righteousness' sake, shall be as a siege to you, and when poverty, wrongs, provocations, sickness, and the face of death, shall be as a siege to you, then you will find all your faith, and hope, and love, and comfort to be too little; and then you will wish that you had now bestirred you, and laid in better provision, and "laid up a good foundation or treasure in store for the time to come^h."

Direct. XX. Lastly, 'Forget not how time is esteemed by the damned, whose time and hope are gone for ever; and how thou wilt value it thyself if thou sin thy soul into that woeful state.' What thinkest thou would those miserable creatures now give (if they had it) but for one day's time,

^h 1 Tim. vi. 19.

upon those terms of mercy which thou dost now enjoy it? Would they sleep it away, or be at their games and merriments, while God is offering them Christ and grace? Dost thou think they set not a higher price on time and mercy, than sinners upon earth? Doth it not tear their very hearts for ever, to think how madly they consumed their lives, and wasted the only time that was given them to prepare for their salvation? Do those in hell now think them wise, that are idling or playing away their time on earth? O no! Their feeling and experience sufficiently confuteth all that time-wasters now plead for their sottish prodigality. I do not believe that thou canst at once believe the Word of God, concerning the state of damned souls, and yet believe that thy idle and vain expence of time, would not vex thy conscience, and make thee even rage against thyself, if ever sin should bring thee thither! O then thou wouldst see, that thou hadst greater matters to have spent thy time in, and that it deserved a higher estimation and improvement. O man! beseech the Lord to prevent such a conviction, and give thee a heart to prize thy time before it is gone; and to know the worth of it, before thou know the want of it.

Tit. 2. Directions Contemplative for Redeeming Opportunity.

Opportunity or season is the flower of time. All time is precious; but the season is most precious. The present time is the season to works of present necessity; and for others, they have all their particular seasons, which must not be let slip^k.

Direct. 1. 'Remember that is the great difference between the happy saint and the unhappy world, that one is wise in time, and the other is wise too late.' The godly know when knowledge will do good; the wicked know when knowledge will but torment them. All those that you see now so exceedingly contrary in their judgment to the godly, will be of the very same opinion shortly, when it will do them no good. Bear with their difference and contra-

^l Mors terribilis est iis, quorum cum vita omnia extinguuntur. Cic. Par. II. vol. vii. p. 849.

^k See the many aggravations of sinful delay in my "Directions for Sound Conversion."

diction, for it will be but a very little while. There is not one man that now is the furious enemy of holiness, but will confess ere long that holiness was best. Do they now despise it as tedious, fantastical hypocrisy? They will shortly know that it was but the cure of a distracted mind, and the necessary duty to God, which religion and right reason do command. Do they now say of sin, What harm is in it? They will shortly know that it is the poison of the soul, and worse than any misery or death. They will think more highly of the worth of Christ, of the necessity of all possible diligence for our souls, of the preciousness of time, of the wisdom of the godly, of the excellencies of heaven, and of the Word of God and all holy means, than any of those do that are now reproached by them, for being of this mind. But what the better will they be for this? No more than Adam for knowing good and evil. No more than it will profit a man when he is dead, to know of what disease he died. No more than it will profit a man to know what is poison, when he hath taken it, and is past remedy. The thief will be wise at the gallows; and the spendthrift prodigal when all is gone. But they that will be safe and happy, must be wise in time. The godly know the worth of heaven, before it is lost; and the misery of damnation, before they feel it; and the necessity of a Saviour, while he is willing to be a Saviour to them; and the evil of sin, before it hath undone them; and the preciousness of time, before it is gone; and the worth of mercy, while mercy may be had; and the need of praying, while praying may prevail. They sleep not till the door is shut, and then knock and cry, 'Lord open to us,' as the foolish ones, Matt. xxv. They are not like the miserable world, that will not believe, till they come where devils believe and tremble; nor repent, till torment force them to repent. As ever you would escape the dearbought experience of fools, be wise in time; and leave not conscience to answer all your cries, and means, and fruitless wishes, with this doleful peal, 'Too late! too late!' Do but know now by an effectual faith, what wicked men will know by feeling and experience, when it is too late, and you shall not perish. Do but live now as those enemies of holiness will wish they had lived when it is too late, and you will be happy. Now God may be found:

“ Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon¹.” Read but the doleful lamentation of Christ over Jerusalem, Luke xix. 41, 42. and then bethink you, what it is to neglect the season of mercy and salvation: “ He beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes!”

Direct. II. ‘ Remember that the neglecting of the season is the frustrating and destroying of the work.’ When the season is past, the work cannot be done. If you sow not in the time of sowing, it will be in vain at another time. If you reap not, and gather not in harvest, it will be too late in winter to hope for fruit. If you stay till the tide is gone, or take not the wind that fits your turn, it may be in vain to attempt your voyage. All works cannot be done at all times: Christ himself saith, “ I must work while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work^m.” Say not then, ‘ The next day may serve the turn:’ the next day is for another work: and you must do both.

Direct. III. ‘ Consider that if the work should not be impossible, yet it will be difficult out of season; when in its season it might be done with ease.’ How easily may you swim with the tide? and sail with the wind? and form the iron if you hammer it while it is hot? How easily may many a disease be cured, if taken in time, which is afterwards incurable? How easily may you bend a tender twig, and pluck up a plant, which will neither be plucked up nor bended when it is grown up to be a tree? When you complain of difficulties in religion, bethink you whether your loss of the fittest season, and acquainting yourselves no sooner with God, be not the cause?

Direct. IV. ‘ Consider that your work out of season is not so good or acceptable, if you could do it.’ “ Every thing is beautiful in its seasonⁿ.” To speak a “ word in season to the weary,” is the skill of the faithful messengers of peace^o. When out of season good may be turned into

¹ Isa. lv. 6, 7.^m John ix. 4.ⁿ Eccles. iii. 11.^o Isa. l. 4.

evil. Who will thank you for giving physic, or food, or clothing to the dead? Or pitying the poor when it is too late? In time all this may be accepted.

∴ *Direct. v.* ‘Remember that if thou omit the season, thou art left to uncertainties both for time, and means, and grace.’ Lose this time, and for aught thou knowest, thou lovest all. Or if thou have time, it may be curst with barrenness, and never more may fruit grow on it. Preachers may be taken from thee: and gracious company may be taken from thee: helps and means may be turned into hindrances, and opposition, and strong temptations: and then you will find what it was to neglect the season! Or if you have the continuance of all helps and means, how know you that God will set in by his grace, and bless them to you, and move your hearts? He may resolve that if you resist him now, his Spirit shall strive with you no more. If while it is called to day, you will harden your hearts, he may resolve to leave you to the hardness of Pharaoh, and to get himself a name upon you, and use you as vessels of wrath, prepared by your neglect and obstinacy for destruction.

Direct. vi. ‘Bethink you how all the creatures keep their proper seasons, in the service which God hath appointed them for you.’ The sun riseth and setteth in its season, and keepeth its diary, and annual course, and misseth not a minute. So do the other celestial motions. You have day and night, and seedtime, and harvest, summer and winter, spring and fall, and all exactly in their seasons. “Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed time, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.” Shall only man neglect his season?

Direct. vii. ‘Consider how you know and observe the season for your wordly labours, and should you not much more do so in greater things?’ You will not plough when you should reap; nor do the work of the summer in the winter. You will not lie in bed all day, and go about your business in the night. You will be inquisitive, that you may be skilful in the seasons, for your benefit or safety in the world: and should you not much more be so for a better world? O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the

sky! but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" As at harvest you look for the fruit of your land, so doth God in season expect fruit from you. The "godly" are "like a tree that is planted by the river's side, which bringeth forth its fruit in season." Shall worldlings know their season, and shall not we?

Direct. viii. 'Consider how vigilant the wicked are to know and take their season to do evil.' And how much more should we be so in doing good! Seducers will take the opportunity to deceive. The thief and the adulterer will take the season of secrecy and darkness. The ambitious and covetous will take the season for profit and preferment. The malicious watch their seasons of revenge. And have we not more need and more encouragement than they? Is it time for them to be building their houses, and growing great by covetousness and oppression, and is it not time for you to be honouring God, and providing for your endless life? They "cannot sleep unless they do evil;" and can you sleep securely while your time passeth away, and your work is undone?

Direct. ix. 'Remember that the devil watcheth the season of temptation to destroy you.' He prevaileth much by taking the time: when he seeth you disarmed, forgetting God, in secure prosperity, fittest to hearken to his temptations. The same temptations out of season might not prevail. And will you let your enemy outdo you?

Direct. x. 'Consider how earnest you are with God in your necessities and distress, not only to relieve and help you, but to do it speedily and in season.' You would rather have him prevent the season, than to let it pass. You are impatient till deliverance come, and can hardly stay the time till it be ripe. When you are in pain and sickness, you would be delivered speedily: you are ready to cry, "How long, Lord, how long?" And as David, "The time, yea, the set time is come." "Make no longer tarrying, O my God!" It would not satisfy you if God should say, I will ease you of your pain the next year. Why then should you neglect the time of duty, and use so many delays with God? He giveth you all your mercies in their season; why

¶ Matt. xvi. 3.

¶ Prov. iv. 16.

¶ Mark xiii. 2.

¶ Psal. cii. 13.

¶ Psal. i. 3.

¶ Psal. xl. 17.

then do you not in season give up yourselves to his love and service? when you have his promise, that you shall “reap in due season if you do not faint’.”

Tit. 3. Directions Practical for Redeeming Time.

Direct. 1. ‘The first point in the art of redeeming time, is, to dispatch first with greatest care and diligence, the greatest works of absolute necessity, which must be done, or else we are undone for ever.’ First see that the great work of a sound conversion or sanctification be certainly wrought within you. Make sure of your saving interest in Christ: get proof of your adoption and peace with God, and right to everlasting life. Be able to prove to your consciences from the Word of God, and from your regenerate, heavenly hearts and lives, that your souls are justified and safe, and may comfortably receive the news of death, when ever it shall be sent to call you hence. And then, when you have done but this much of your work, you will incur no such loss of time, as will prove the loss of your souls or happiness. Though still there is much more work to do, for yourselves and others; yet when this much is soundly done, you have secured the main. If you lose the time in which you should be renewed by the Spirit of Christ, and in which you should lay up your treasure in heaven, you are lost for ever. Be sure therefore that you look first to this: and then if you lose but the time in which you might have grown rich or got preferment, your loss is tolerable; you know the worst of it; you may see to the end of it. Yea, if you lose the time in which you should increase in holiness, and edify others, the loss is grievous; but yet it will not lose you heaven. Therefore as Solomon directeth the husbandman, “Prepare thy work without and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house² :” so I advise you, to see first that the necessary work be done; when that is done, and well done, you may go quietly and cheerfully about the rest: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;” O what a deal is done when this is done!

Direct. 11. ‘Learn to understand well the degrees of du-

¹ Gal. vi. 9.

² Prov. xxiv. 27.

ties, which is the greater and which the less, that when two seem to require your time at once, you may know which of them to prefer.' Not only to know which is simply and in itself the greatest, but which is the greatest for you, and at that season, and as considered in all the circumstances. A great part of the art of redeeming time, consisteth in the wise discerning and performing of this; to give precedency to the greatest duty. He loseth his time, who is getting a penny when he might get a pound; who is visiting his neighbour, when he should be attending his prince; who is weeding his garden, when he should be quenching a fire in his house, though he be doing that which in itself is good. So is he losing his time, who is preferring his body before his soul; or man before God; or indifferent things before necessary; or private duties before public; or less edifying before the more edifying; or sacrifice before necessary mercy. The order of good works I have shewed you before, Chap. iii. Direct. 10. which you may peruse.

Direct. III. 'Be acquainted with the season of every duty, and the duty of each season; and take them in their time.' And thus one duty will help on another: whereas misplacing them and disordering them, sets them against one another, and takes up your time with distracting difficulties, and loseth you in confusion. As he that takes the morning hour for prayer, or the fittest vacant hour, shall do it quietly, without the disturbance of his other affairs; when if the season be omitted, you shall scarce at all perform it, or almost as ill as if you did it not at all: so is it in point of conscience, reproof, reading, hearing, meditating, and every duty. A wise and well-skilled Christian should bring his matters into such order, that every ordinary duty should know his place, and all should be as the links of one chain which draw on one another; or as the parts of a clock or other engine, which must be all conjunct, and each right placed. A workman that hath all his tools on a heap or out of place, spends much of the day in which he should be working in looking for his tools: when he that knoweth the place of every one, can presently take it, and lose no time. If my books be thrown together on a heap, I may spend half the day in looking for them when I should use them:

but if they be set in order, and I know their places, it spares me that time. So is it in the right timing of our duties.

Direct. iv. 'Live continually as under the government of God; and keep conscience tender, and in the performance of its office; and always be ready to render an account to God and conscience of what you do.' If you live as under the government of God, you will be still doing his work; you will be remembering his judgment; you will be trying your work whether it be such as he approveth: this will keep you from all time-wasting vanities. If you keep conscience tender, it will presently check and reprehend you for your sin: and when you lose but a minute of time, it will tell you of the loss: whereas a "seared conscience" is "past feeling," and will give you over to "lasciviousness," and will make but a jest at the loss of time: or at least will not effectually tell you either of the sin or loss. If you keep conscience to its office, it will ask you frequently, what you are doing? and try your works: it will take account of time when it is spent, and ask you, what you have been doing? and how you have spent every day and hour? And (as Seneca could say) "He will be the more careful what he doth, and how he spends the day, who looks to be called to a reckoning for it every night." This will make the foreseen day of judgment have such a continual awe upon you, as if you were presently going to it; while conscience, with respect to it, is continually forejudging you. Whereas they that have silenced or discarded conscience, are like schoolboys that bolt their master out of doors, who do it with a design to spend the time in play, which they should have spent in learning: but the after-reckoning pays for all.

Here, for the further direction of your consciences, I shall lay you down a few rules, for the right spending of your time. 1. Spend it in nothing (as a deliberate moral act) which is not truly, directly, or remotely an act of obedience to some law of God: (of mere natural acts, which are no objects of moral choice, I speak not.) 2. Spend it in nothing which you know must be repented of. 3. Spend it in nothing which you dare not, or may not warrantably pray for a blessing on from God. 4. Spend it in nothing

* Ephes. iv. 19. 1 Tim. iv. 2.

which you would not review at the hour of death, by an awakened, wellinformed mind. 5. Spend it in nothing which you would not hear of in the day of judgment. 6. Spend it in nothing which you cannot safely and comfortably be found doing, if death should surprise you in the act. 7. Spend it in nothing which fleshpleasing persuadeth you to, against your consciences, or with a secret grudge or doubting of your consciences. 8. Spend it in nothing which hath not some tendency, directly or remotely, to your ultimate end, the pleasing of God, and the enjoying him in love for ever. 9. Spend it in nothing which tendeth to do more hurt than good: that would do a great hurt to yourself or others, under pretence of doing some little good, which perhaps may better be done another way. 10. Lastly, Spend it in nothing which is but a smaller good, when a greater should be done.

Direct. v. ‘Do your best to settle yourselves where there are the greatest helps and smallest hindrances to the redeeming of your time. And labour more to accommodate your habitation, condition, and employments to the great ends of your life and time, than to your worldly honour, ease, or wealth.’ Live where is best trading for the soul: you may get more by God’s ordinary blessing in one year, in a godly family, or in fruitful company, and under an able, godly minister, than in many years in a barren soil, among the ignorant, dead-hearted, or profane, where we must say, as David, “I held my peace even from good, while the wicked is before me^b.” And when we must do all the good we do through much opposition; and meet with great disadvantages and difficulties, which may quickly stop such dull and backward hearts as ours. If you will prefer your profit before your souls in the choice of your condition, and will plunge yourselves into distracting business and company, your time will run in a wrong, unprofitable channel.

Direct. vi. ‘Contrive beforehand with the best of your skill, for the preventing of impediments, and for the most successful performance of your work.’ If you leave all to the very time of doing, you will have many hindrances rise before you, and make you lose your time, which prudent forecast might have prevented. As for the improving the

^b Psal. xix. 1, 2.

Lord's day, if you do not beforehand so order your business, that all things may give place to holy duties, you will meet with so many disturbances and temptations, as will lose you much of your time and benefit: so for family duties, and secret duties; and meditations, and studies, and the works of your callings. If you do not forecast what hindrance is like to meet you, that you may prevent it before the time, you must lose much time, and suffer much disappointment.

Direct. vii. 'Endure patiently some smaller inconvenience and loss, for the avoiding of greater, and for the redeeming of time for greater duties: and let little things be resolutely cast out of your way, when they would draw out your time by insensible degrees.' The devil would cunningly steal that from you by drops, which he cannot get you to cast away profusely at once: he that will not spend prodigally by the pounds, may run out by not regarding pence. You shall have the pretences of decency and seemliness, and civility, and good manners, and avoiding offence, and censure, and of some necessity too, to draw out your precious time from you by little and little; and if you are so easy as to yield, it will almost all be wasted by this temptation. As, if you be ministers of Christ, whose time must be spent in your studies, and pulpits, and in conference with your people, and visiting them, and watching over them, and it is your daily groans that time is short and work is long, and that you are forced to omit so many needful studies, and pass by so many needy souls, for want of time; yet if you look not well about you, and will not bear some censure and offence, you shall lose even the rest of the time, which now you do improve. Your friends about you will be tempting and telling you, 'O this friend must needs be visited, and the other friend must be civilly treated; you must not shake them off so quickly: they look for more of your time and company: you are much obliged to them: they will say you are uncivil and morose: such a scholar comes to be acquainted with you; and he will take it ill, and misrepresent you to others, if you allow him not time for some familiar discourse. It is one that never was with you before, and never took up any of your time: (and so saith the next and the next as well as he.) Such an one visited you, and you must needs visit him again. There is

this journey or that which must needs be gone: and this business and that which must needs be done.' Yea, one's very family occasions will steal away all his time, if he watch not narrowly: we shall have this servant to talk to, and the other to hear, and our relations to respect, and abundance of little things to mind, so little as not to be named by themselves, about meat, and drink, and clothes, and dressing, and house, and goods, and servants, and work, and tradesmen, and messengers, and marketing and payments, and cattle, and a hundred things not to be reckoned up, that will every one take up a little of your time, and those littles set together will be all. As the covetous usurer, that to purchase a place of honour, agreed for a month, to give a penny to every one that asked him: which being quickly noised abroad in the city, there came so many for their pence, as took all that he had, and made him quit his place of honour, because he had nothing left to maintain it. So perhaps you are an eminent, much valued minister; and this draweth upon you such a multitude of acquaintance, every one expecting a little of your time, that among them all, they leave you almost none for your studies, whereby not only your conscience is wounded, but your parts are quenched, and your work is starved and poorly done, and so your admirers themselves begin to set as light by you as by others, for that which is the effect of their own importunity. And as in our yearly expences of our money, there goeth near as much in little matters, not to be named by themselves, and incidental, unexpected charges, of which no account can be given beforehand, as doth in food, and raiment, and the ordinary charges which we foreknow and reckon upon: just so it will be with your precious time, if you be not very thrifty and resolute, and look not well to it: you will have such abundance of little matters, scarce fit to be named, which will every one require a little, and one begin where the other endeth, that you will find in the review, when time is gone, that satan was too cunning for you, and cheated you by drawing you into seeming necessities. This is the grand reason why marriage and housekeeping are so greatly inconvenient to a pastor of the church, that can avoid them; because they bring upon him such abundance of these little diversions, which cannot be foreseen. In this

case a conscionable man (in what calling soever) must be resolute : and when he hath endeavoured with reason to satisfy expectants, and put by diversions, if that will not serve, he must neglect them, and cast them off, and break away, though he lose by it in his estate, or his repute, or his peace itself, and though he be censured for it to be imprudent, un-civil, morose, or neglective of his friends : God must be pleased, whoever be displeased : we must satisfy our minds with his alone approbation, instead of all : time must be spared, whatever be lost or wasted : and the great things must be done, whatever become of the less : though where both may be done, and the lesser hinder not the greater, and rob us not of time from necessary things, there we must have a care of both.

Direct. VIII. 'Labour to go always furnished and well provided for the performance of every duty which may occur.' As he that will not lose his time in preaching, must be well provided ; so he that will not lose his time in solitariness, must be always furnished with matter for profitable meditation : and he that would redeem his time in company, must be always furnished with matter for profitable discourse : he that is full will be ready to pour out to others, and not be silent and lose his time for want of matter, or skill, or zeal ; for in all these three your provision doth consist. An ignorant, empty person wants matter for his thoughts and words : an imprudent person wants skill to use it : a careless, cold, indifferent person, wants life to set his faculties on motion, and oil and poise to set the wheels of his soul and body a-going. Bethink you in the morning what company you are like to meet, and what occasions of duty you are like to have ; and provide yourselves accordingly before you go, with matter and resolution. Besides the general preparative of habitual knowledge, charity, and zeal, which is the chief ; you should also have your particular preparations for the duties of each day. A workman that is strong and healthful, and hath all his tools in readiness and order, will do more in a day, than a sick man, or one that wanteth tools, or keeps them dull and unfit for use, will do in many. "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment:" (and no wonder, when) "The law of his God is in his heart : none of his steps

shall slide^c.” “ Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh : a good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things ^d.” “ Every scribe which is instructed to the kingdom of heaven, is like a man that is an householder that bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old^e.”

Direct. ix. ‘ Promise not long life to yourselves, but live as those that are always uncertain of another day; and certain to be shortly gone from hence.’ The groundless expectation of long life, is a very great hindrance to the redeeming of our time. Men will spend prodigally out of a full purse, who would be sparing if they knew they had but a little, or were like to come to want themselves. Young people, and healthful people, are under the greatest temptation to the loss of time. They are apt to think that they have time enough before them, and that though it is possible that they may die quickly, yet it is more likely that they shall live long : and so, putting the day of death far from them, they want all those awakenings, which the face of death doth bring to them that still expect it : and therefore want the wisdom, zeal and diligence which are necessary to the redemption of their time. Pray therefore as “ So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom^f.” Dream not of rest and plenty for many years, when you have no promise to live till the next morning^g. When they perceive death is at hand and time is near an end, almost all men seem highly to esteem of time, and promise to spend it better if God would but try them once again. Do you therefore continually perceive that death is even at hand, and time near an end, and then it will make you continually more wise than death maketh the most ; and to redeem your time as others purpose to redeem it when it is too late.

Direct. x. ‘ Sanctify all to God that you have and do, and let Holiness to the Lord, be written upon all ;’ whether you eat or drink let it be intended and ordered ultimately to his glory. Make all your civil relations, possessions and employments, thus holy ; designing them to the service and pleasing of God, and to the everlasting good of yourselves or others, and mixing holy meditation and prayer with them

^c Psal. xxxvii. 30, 31.

^f Psal. xc. 12.

^d Matt. xii. 35.

^e Luke xii. 19, 20.

^e Matt. xiii. 52.

all in season. And thus we are bid, to “pray continually,” and “in all things give thanks^b.” And “in all things to make known our requests to God, in prayer, supplication, and giving of thanksⁱ.” And “all things are sanctified by the word and prayer.” This sacred alchymy, that turneth all our conversation, and possessions, and actions into holy, is an excellent part of the art of redeeming time.

Direct. XI. ‘Lastly, be acquainted with the great Thieves that rob men of their time, and with the devil’s methods in enticing them to lose it, and live in continual watchfulness against them.’ It is a more necessary thriftiness to be sparing and saving of your time, than of your money. It more concerneth you to keep a continual watch against the things which would rob you of your time, than against those thieves that would break your house, and rob you by the highway. Those persons that would tempt you to the loss of time, are to be taken as your enemies, and avoided. I shall here recite the names of these thieves, and time-wasters, that you may detect them, and save your time and souls from their deceits.

Tit. 4. The Thieves or Time-wasters to be watchfully avoided.

Thief 1. One of the greatest time-wasting sins is idleness, or sloth. The slothful see their time pass away, and their work undone, and can hear of the necessity of redeeming it, and yet they have not hearts to stir. When they are convinced that duty must be done, they are still delaying, and putting it off from day to day, and saying still, I will do it to-morrow, or hereafter. To-morrow is still the sluggard’s working day; and to-day is his idle day. He spendeth his time in fruitless wishes: he lieth in bed, or sitteth idly, and wisheth, Would this were labouring: he feasteth his flesh, and wisheth that this were fasting: he followeth his sports and pleasures, and wisheth that this were prayer, and a mortified life: he lets his heart run after lust, or pride, or covetousness, and wisheth that this were heavenly-mindedness, and a laying up a treasure above. Thus the “soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat^k.” “The desire of the slothful kil-

^b 1 Thess. v. 17, 18.

ⁱ Phil. iv. 6.

^k Prov. xiii. 4.

leth him; for his hands refuse to labour^m." Every little opposition or difficulty will put him by a duty. "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothingⁿ." "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets^o." "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." And at last his sloth depraves his reason, and bribeth it to plead the cause of his negligence. "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason^p." Time will slide on, and duty will be undone, and your souls undone, if impious slothfulness be predominant. "The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns; but the way of the righteous is made plain^q." You seem still to go through so many difficulties, that you will never make a successful journey of it. Yea, when he is in duty, the slothful is still losing time. He prayeth as if he prayed not, and laboureth as if he laboured not; as if the fruit of holiness passed away as hastily as worldly pleasures. He is as slow as a snail; and rids so little ground, and doth so little work, and so poorly resisteth opposition, that he makes little of it, and all is but next to sitting still and doing nothing. It is a sad thing that men should not only lose their time in sinful pleasures; but they must lose it also in reading, and hearing, and praying, by doing all in a heartless drowsiness! Thus "he also that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster^r." If he "begin in the Spirit," and for a spirt seem to be in earnest; he flags, and tireth, and "endeth in the flesh." "The slothful roasteth not that which he took in hunting; but the substance of a diligent man is precious^s." If he see and confess a vice, he hath not a heart to rise against it, and resolutely resist it, and use the means by which it must be overcome. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon

^m Prov. xxi. 25.

ⁿ Prov. xx. 4.

^o Prov. xxii. 13.

^p Prov. xxvi. 14—16.

^q Prov. xv. 19.

^r Prov. xviii. 9.

^s Prov. xii. 27.

it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little dumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man¹." Shake off then this unmanly sluggishness: remember that you run for the immortal crown; and therefore see that you lose no time, and look not at the things that are behind: that is, do not cast an eye, or lend an ear to any person or thing that would call you back, or stop you: heaven is before you. "We have seen the land, and behold it is very good; and are ye still? be not slothful to go and to enter, and possess the land, (as the five Danite spies said to their brethren².) Abhor a sluggish habit of mind: go cheerfully about what you have to do: and do it diligently, and with your might. Even about your lawful, worldly business, it is a time-wasting sin to be slothful. If you are servants or labourers you rob your masters and those that hire you; who hired you to work and not to be idle. Whatever you are, you rob God of your service, and yourselves of your precious time, and all that you might get therein. It is they that are lazy in their callings, that can find no time for holy duties. Ply your business the rest of the day, and you may the better redeem some time for prayer and reading Scripture. Work hard on the week days, and you may the better spend the Lord's day entirely for your souls. Idle persons (servants or others) do cast themselves behindhand in their work, and then say, they have no time to pray or read the Scripture. Sloth robbeth multitudes of a great part of their lives. "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep: and an idle soul shall suffer hunger³." You cannot say, "No man hath hired you," when you are asked, "Why stand you idle?" See how sharply Paul reproveth idleness, 2 Thesa. iii. determining that "they that will not work should not eat;" and that they be avoided, as unfit for Christian society. And 1 Tim. v. 13. he sharply rebuketh some women that "learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house." And Rom. xii. 11. "Not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit serving the Lord." A painful, diligent person is still redeeming time, while he doth that which is good: and a slothful person is always losing it.

Thief II. The second thief or time-waster is, excess of

¹ Prov. xxiv. 30—34

² Judges xviii. 9.

³ Prov. xix. 15.

⁴ Matt. xx. 3. 6.

sleep. Necessity cureth most of the poor of this : but many of the rich are guilty of it. If you ask me, 'What is excess?' I answer, 'All that is more than is needful to our health and business.' So much as is necessary to these, I reprehend not : and therefore the infirm may take more than the healthful ; and the old more than the young : and those that find that an hour's sleep more will not hinder them, but further them in their work, so that they shall do the more, and not the less, as being unfit without it, may use it as a means to the after improvement of their time. But when sluggish persons spend hours in bed which neither their healths nor labours need, merely out of a swinish love of sleep ; yea, when they will have no work to do, or calling to employ them, but what shall give place to their sleepy disease, and think they may sleep longer than is necessary, because they are rich and can afford it, and have no necessary business to call them up ; these think they may consume their precious time, and sin more, and wrong their souls more, because God hath given them more than others : as if their servant should plead that he may sleep more than others, because he has more wages than others. O did these drowsy wretches know, what work they have to do for God, and their poor souls, and those about them, it would quickly awake them, and make them stir. Did they but know how earnestly they will shortly wish, that they had all those hours to spend again, they would spend them better now than in drowsiness. Did they but know what a woeful account it will be, when they must be answerable for all their time, to say, we spent so many hours every week or morning, in excess of sleep ; they would be roused from their sty, and find some better use for their time, which will be sweeter in the review, when time is ended, and must be no more.

Thief III. The next thief or time-waster is, inordinate adorning of the body. The poor may thank God that they are free also from the temptations to this ; and can quickly dress them and go about their business : but many ladies and gallants are so guilty of this vice, that I wonder conscience is so patient with them^a. O poor neglected, un-

^a Nosti mores mulierum? Dum moliantur, dum comuntur, annus est. Terent. *Heaut. Act. ii.*

dressed souls! O filthy consciences, never cleansed from your pollutions, by the Spirit or blood of Christ! Have you not better use for your precious hours, than to be washing, and pinning, and dressing, and curling, and spotting, and powdering, till ten or eleven o'clock in the morning, when honest labourers have done one half of their day's work? While you are in health, were not six o'clock in the morning a fitter hour for you to be dressed, that you might draw near to the most holy God in holy prayer, and read his Word, and set your souls, and then your families, in order for the duties of the following day? I do not say that you may go no neater than poor labouring people, or that you may bestow no more time than they in dressing you: but I say, that for your souls and in your callings, you are bound by God to be as diligent as they: and have no more time given you to lose than they, and that you should spend as little of it in neatifying you as you can: and be sensible that else the loss is your own: and that abundance of precious hours which your pride consumeth, will lie heavy one day upon your consciences: and then you shall confess,—I say you shall confess with aching hearts, that the duties you owed to God and man, and the care of your souls, and of your families, should have been preferred before your appearing neat and spruce to men. If you have but a journey to go, you can rise earlier and be sooner dressed: but for the good of your souls, and the redeeming of your precious time you cannot. O that God would but shew you what greater work you have to do with those precious hours: and how it will cut your hearts to think of them at last! If you lay but hopelessly sick of a consumption, you would be cured it is like of this proud disease, and bestow less of your time in adorning the flesh, which is hasting to the grave and rottenness. And cannot you now see how time and life consume? and what cause you have with all your care and diligence, to use them better before they are gone? I know they that are so much worse than childish, as prodigally to cast away so many hours in making themselves fine for the sight of men, and be not ashamed to come forth and shew their sin to others, will scarce want words to excuse their crime, and prove it lawful, (be they sense or nonsense.) But conscience itself shall answer all, when time is gone, and make

you wish you had been wiser. You know not, ladies and gallants, how precious a thing time is! You little feel what a price yourselves will set upon it at the last: you little consider what you have to do with it: you see not how it hasteth, and how near you stand to vast eternity! You little know how despised time will look a wakened conscience in the face! or what it is to be found unready to die! I know you lay not to heart these things: for if you did, you could not, I say, you could not, so lightly cast away your time. If all were true that you say, that indeed your place and honour requireth, that your precious morning hours be thus spent, I profess to you, I should pity you more than galley-slaves, and I would bless me from such a place and honour, and make haste into the course and company of the poor, and think them happy that may better spend their time. But indeed your excuses are frivolous and untrue, and do but shew that pride hath prevailed to captivate your reason to its service. For we know lords and ladies, as great as the rest of you, (though alas, too few,) that can quickly be up and dressed, and spend their early hours in prayer and adorning their souls, and can be content to come forth in a plain, and incurious attire; and yet are so far from being derided, or thought the worse by any whose judgment is much to be regarded, that they are taken justly for the honour of their order: and if it were not that some few such keep up the honour of your rank, I will not tell you how little in point of morality it would be honoured.

Thief iv. Another time-wasting thief is, unnecessary pomp and curiosity in retinue, attendance, house, furniture, provision and entertainments; together with excess of compliment and ceremony, and servitude to the humours and expectations of time-wasters*. I crowd them altogether, because they are all but wheels of the same engine, to avoid prolixity. Here also I must prevent the cavils of the guilty, by telling you that I reprove not all that in the rich, which I would reprove if it were in the poor: I intend not to level them, and judge them by the same measure. The rich are not so happy as to be so free as the poor, either

* Nihil mihi magis quam pompa displicet; non solum quia mala, et humilitati contraria, sed quia difficilis, et quieti adversa est. Petrarch in vita sua.

from the temptation, or the seeming necessity and obligation: let others pity the poor: I will pity the rich, who seem to be pinched with harder necessities than the poor: even this seeming necessity of wasting their precious time in compliment, curiosity and pomp; which the happy, poor, may spend in the honest labours of their callings; wherein they may at once be profitable to the commonwealth, and maintain themselves, and meditate or confer of holy things: But yet I must say, that the rich shall give an account of time, and shall pay dear for that which unnecessary excesses do devour: and that instead of envying the state and curiosity of others, and seeking to excel or equal them to avoid their obloquy, they should contract and bring down all customs of excess, and shew their high esteem of time, and detestation of time-wasting curiosity; and imitate the most sober, grave and holy; and be a pattern to others of employing time in needful, great and manly things; I say manly; for so childish is this vice, that men of gravity and business do abhor it: and usually men of vanity that are guilty of it, lay it all on the women, as if they were ashamed of it, or it were below them. What abundance of precious time is spent, in unnecessary state of attendance, and provisions? What abundance under pretence of cleanliness and neatness is spent in needless curiosity about rooms, and furniture, and accommodations, and matters of mere pride, vain-glory, and ostentation, covered with the honest name of decency! What abundance is wasted in entertainments, and unnecessary visits, compliments, ceremony, and servitude to the humours of men of vanity? I speak not for nastiness, uncleanness, and uncomeliness: I speak not for a cynical morosity or unsociableness. When conscience is awakened, and you come to yourselves, and approaching death shall better acquaint you with the worth of time, you will see a mean between these two; and you will wish you had most feared the time-wasting prodigal extreme^b. Methinks you should freely give me leave to say, that though Martha had a better excuse than you, and was cumbered about many things for the entertainment of such a guest as Christ himself, (with all his followers,) who looked for no curiosity, yet Mary is more approved of by

^b *Nimia omnia nimium exhibent negotium.*

Christ, who neglected all this, to redeem the time for the good of her soul, by sitting at his feet to hear his word: she chose the better part, which shall not be taken from her. Remember, I pray you, that one thing is necessary: I hope I may have leave to tell you, that if by you or your servants, God, and your souls, and prayer, and reading the Scriptures, and the profitable labours of an honest calling, be all or any of them neglected, while you or they are neatifying this room, or washing out that little spot, or setting straight the other wrinkle, or are taken up with feminine trifling, proud curiosities, this is preferring of dust before gold, of the least before the greatest things: and to say, that decency is commendable, is no excuse for neglecting God, your souls, or family, or leaving undone any one greater work, which you or your servants might have been doing that while: I say, any work that is greater all things considered. O that you and your families would but live, as those that see how fast death cometh! how fast time goeth! and what you have to do! and what your unready souls yet want! This is all that I desire of you: and then I warrant you, it would save you many a precious hour, and cut short your works of curiosity, and deliver you from your slavery to pride, and the esteem of vain time-wasters.

Thief v. Another time-wasting sin, is needless and tedious feasting, gluttony, and tipping: which being of the same litter, I set together*. I speak not against moderate, seasonable, and charitable feasts: but alas, in this luxurious, sensual age, how commonly do men sit two hours at a feast, and spend two more in attending it before and after, and not improving the time in any pious or profitable discourse: yea, the rich spend an hour ordinarily in a common meal, while every meal is a feast indeed; and they fare as their predecessor, Luke xvi. deliciously or sumptuously every day. Happy are the poor, that are free also from this temptation. You spend not so much time in the daily addresses of your souls to God! and reading his Word; and taking an account of the affairs of conscience, and preparing for death; as you do in stuffing your guts, perhaps at

* Convivia quæ dicuntur (cum sint commensationes modestæ et bonis moribus inimicæ) semper mihi displicuerunt; laboriosum, et inutiliter vocare et vocari, &c. Idem.

one meal. And in taverns and alehouses among the pots, how much time is wasted by rich and poor! O remember, while you are eating and drinking, what a corruptible piece of flesh you are feeding and serving; and how quickly those mouths will be filled with dust? and that a soul that is posting so fast unto eternity, should find no time to spare for vanity: and that you have important work enough to do, which if performed, will afford you a sweeter and a longer feast.

Thief vi. Another time-wasting sin, is idle talk: what abundance of precious time doth this consume. Harken to most men's discourse when they are sitting together, or working together, or travelling together, and you shall hear how little of it is any better than silence: (and if not better, it is worse.) So full are those persons of vanity who are empty, even to silence, of any thing that is good, that they can find and feed a discourse of nothing, many hours and days together; and as they think, with such fecundity and floridness of style, as deserveth acceptance if not applause. I have marvelled oft at some wordy preachers, with how little matter they can handsomely fill up an hour! But one would wonder more to hear people fill up, not an hour, but a great part of their day, and of their lives, and that without any study at all, and without any holy and substantial subject, with words, which if you should write them all down and peruse them, you would find that the sum and conclusion of them is nothing. How self-applaudingly and pleasingly they can extempore talk idly and of nothing a great part of their lives! I have heard many of them marvel at a poor unlearned Christian, that can pray extempore many hours together in very good order and well-composed words: but are they not more to be marvelled at, that can very handsomely talk of nothing ten times as long, with greater copiousness, and without repetitions, and that extempore, when they have not that variety of great commanding subjects to be the matter of their speech? I tell you, when time must be reviewed, the consumption of so much in idle talk, will appear to have been no such venial sin, as empty, careless sinners now imagine.

Thief vii. Another thief which by the aforesaid means would steal your time, is vain and sinful company. Among

whom a spiritual physician that goeth to cure them, or a holy person that is full and resolute to bear down vain discourse I confess may well employ his time, when he is cast upon it, or called to it. But to dwell with such, or choose them as our familiars, or causelessly, or for complacency keep among them, will unavoidably lose abundance of your time. If you would do good, they will hinder you: if you will speak of good, they will divert you, or reproach you, or wrangle and cavil with you, or some way or other stop your mouths. They will by a stream of vain discourse, either bear down, and carry you on with them, or fill your ears, and interrupt and hinder the very thoughts of your minds, by which you desire to profit yourselves, when they will not let you be profitable to others.

Thief VIII. Another notorious time-wasting thief, is needless, inordinate sports and games, which are commonly stigmatised by the offenders themselves, with the infamous name of pastimes; and masked with the deceitful title of recreations; such as are cards and dice, and stage-plays, and dancings, and revellings, and excesses in the most lawful sports, especially in hunting, and hawking, and bowling^d, &c. Whether all these are lawful or unlawful of themselves, is nothing to the present question: but I am sure that the precious hours which they take up, might have been improved to the saving of many a thousand souls, that by the loss of time are now undone and past recovery. Except malicious enemies of godliness, I scarce know a wretcheder sort of people on the earth, and more to be lamented, than those fleshly persons, who, through the love of sensual pleasure, do waste many hours day after day, in plays and gaming, and voluptuous courses; while their miserable souls are dead in sin, enslaved to their fleshly lusts, unreconciled to God, and find no delight in him, or in his service, and cannot make a recreation of any heavenly work. How will it torment these unhappy souls, to think how they played away those hours, in which they might have been pleasing God, and preventing misery, and laying up a treasure in heaven? And to think that they sold that precious time, for a little fleshly sport, in which they

^d Laertius saith of Solon, that Thespim tragœdias agere, ac docere prohibuit, inutilem eas falsiloquentiam vocans. Lib. I. sect. 59. p. 37.

should have been working out their salvation, and making their calling and election sure. But I have more to say to these anon.

Thief ix. Another time-wasting thief, is excess of worldly cares and business. These do not only as some more disgraced sins, pollute the soul with deep stains in a little time, and then recede; but they dwell upon the mind, and keep possession, and keep out good: they take up the greatest part of the lives of those that are guilty of them. The world is first in the morning in their thoughts, and last at night, and almost all the day; the world will not give them leave to entertain any sober, fixed thoughts of the world to come; nor to do the work which all works should give place to. The world devoureth all the time almost that God and their souls should have; it will not give them leave to pray, or read, or meditate, or discourse of holy things: even when they seem to be praying, or hearing the word of God, the world is in their thoughts; and as it is said, "They come unto thee as the people cometh; and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love; but their heart goeth after their covetousness:" In most families there is almost no talk nor doings but all for the world; these also will know, that they had greater works for their precious time, which should have always had the precedency of the world.

Thief x. Another time-waster is vain ungoverned and sinful thoughts. When men are wearied with vain works and sports, they continue unwearied in vain thoughts; when they want company for vain discourse and games, they can waste the time in idle, or lustful, or ambitious, or covetous thoughts alone without any company. In the very night time while they wake and as they travel by the way, yea while they seem to be serving God, they will be wasting the time in useless thoughts: so that this devour-eth a greater proportion of precious time, than any of the former: when time must be reckoned for, what abundance will be found upon men's accounts, as spent in idle, sinful thoughts! O watch this thief; and remember, though you may think that a vain thought is but a little sin, yet time is

* Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

not a little or contemptible commodity, nor to be cast away on so little a thing as idle thoughts: and to vilify thus so choice a treasure is not a little sin: and that it is not a little work that you have to do in the time which you thus waste. And a daily course of idle thoughts doth waste so great a measure of time, that this aggravation maketh it more heinous, than many sins of greater infamy. But of this more in the next part.

Thief xi. Another dangerous time-wasting sin, is the reading of vain books, playbooks, romances, and feigned histories; and also unprofitable studies, undertaken but for vainglory, or the pleasing of a carnal and curious mind. Of this I have spoken in my book of Self-denial. I speak not here how pernicious this vice is by corrupting the fancy and affections, and breeding a diseased appetite, and putting you out of relish with necessary things: but bethink you before you spend another hour in any such books, whether you can comfortably give an account of it to God: and how precious the time is, which you are wasting on such childish toys. You think the reading of such things is lawful: but is it lawful to lose your precious time? You say that your petty studies are desirable and laudable; but the neglect of far greater things, is not laudable: I discourage no man from labouring to know all that God hath any way revealed to be known. But I say, as Seneca, 'We are ignorant of things necessary, because we learn things superfluous and unnecessary.' Art is long and life is short: and he that hath not time for all, should make sure of the greatest matters; and if he be ignorant for any thing, let it be of that which the love of God and our own and other men's salvation, and the public good, do least require, and can best spare. It is a pitiful thing to see a man waste his time in criticising, or in growing wise in the less necessary sciences and arts, while he is yet a slave of pride or worldliness, and hath an unrenewed soul, and hath not learned the mysteries necessary to his own salvation. But yet these studies are laudable in their season. But the fanatic studies of those that would pry into unrevealed things, and the lascivious employment of those that read love-books, play-books, and vain stories, will one day appear, to have been but an unwise expense of time, for

those that had so much better and more needful work to do with it. I think there are few of those that plead for it, that would be found with such books in their hands at death, or will then find any pleasure in the remembrance of them.

Thief x11. But the master-thief that robs men of their time, is an unsanctified, ungodly heart; for this loseth time whatever men are doing: because they never truly intend the glory of God: and having not a right principle or a right end, their whole course is hell-wards; and whatever they do, they are not working out their salvation: and therefore they are still losing their time, as to themselves, however God may use the time and gifts of some of them, as a mercy to others. Therefore a new and holy heart, with a heavenly intention and design of life, is the great thing necessary to all that will savingly redeem their time.

Tit. 5. On whom this Duty of Redeeming Time is principally incumbent.

Though the redeeming of time be a duty of grand importance and necessity to all, yet all these sorts following have special obligations to it.

Sort 1. Those that are in the youth and vigour of their time: nature is not so much corrupted in you, as in old accustomed sinners: your hearts are not so much hardened: sin is not so deeply rooted and confirmed: satan hath not triumphed in so many victories: you are not yet plunged so deep as others, into worldly incumbrances and cares: your understanding, memory and strength are in their vigour and do not yet fail you. And who should go fastest, or work hardest but he that hath the greatest strength? You may now get more by diligence in a day, than hereafter you may get in many. How few prove good scholars, or wise men that begin not to learn till they are old? "Fly youthful lusts," therefore, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." "If you be now trained up in the way you should go, you will not depart from it when you are old^f." O that you could but know what an unspeakable advantage, and benefit, and comfort it is, to come to a ripe age with the provisions and furniture of that wisdom, and holiness,

^f 1 Tim. ii. 22. Eccl. xii. 1. Prov. xxii. 6.

and acquaintance with God, which should be attained in your youth! and what a misery it is to be then to learn that which you should have been many years before in practising, and to be then to begin to live when you must make an end? much more to be cast to hell, if death should find you unready in your youth? or to be forsaken of God to a hardened age! Happy they that with Timothy and Obadiah, do learn the Scripture and fear God in their childhood, and from their youth.

Sort 11. Necessity maketh it incumbent on the weak, and sick, and aged, in a special manner to redeem their time. If they will not make much of it that are sure to have but a little; and if they will trifle and loiter it away, that know they are near their journey's end, and ready to give up their accounts, they are unexcusable above all others. A thief or murderer will pray and speak good words when he is going out of the world. Well may it be said to you, as Paul doth, Rom. xiii. 11, 12. "Now is it high time to awake out of sleep;" when your salvation or damnation is so near! It is high time for that man to look about him, and prepare his soul, and lose no time, that is so speedily to appear before the most holy God, and be used for ever as he has lived here.

Sort 111. It is specially incumbent on them to redeem the time, who have loitered and mispent much time already. If conscience tell you that you have lost your youth in ignorance and vanity, and much of your age in negligence and worldliness, it is a double crime in you, if you redeem not diligently the time that is left. The just care of your salvation requireth it, unless you are willing to be damned. Ingenuity and duty to God requireth it; unless you will defy him, and resolve to abuse and despise him to the utmost, and spend all the time against him which he shall give you. The nature of true repentance requireth it; unless you will know none but the repentance of the damned; and begin to repent the mispending of your time, when it is gone, and all is too late.

Sort iv. It is specially their duty to redeem the time, who are scanted of time through poverty, service or restraint. If poor people that must labour all the day, will not redeem the Lord's day, and those few hours which they have, they will then have no time at all for things spiritual:

servants that be not masters of their time, and are held close to their work, had need to be very diligent in redeeming those few hours which are allowed them for higher things.

Sort. v. Those that enjoy any special helps either public or private must be specially careful to improve them and redeem the time. Do you live under a convincing, powerful ministry? O improve it and redeem the time; for you know not how soon they may be taken from you, or you from them. Do you live with godly relations, parents, husband, wife, masters in a godly family, or with godly fellow-servants, friends or neighbours? Redeem the time: get somewhat by them every day: you know not how short this season will be. Do you live where you have books and leisure? Redeem the time: this also may not be long. Had not Joshua been horribly unexcusable if he would have loitered when God made the sun stand still, while he pursued his enemies? O loiter not you, while the sun of mercy, patience, means and helps do all attend you.

Sort. vi. Those must especially redeem the time, who are ignorant, or graceless, or weak in grace, and have strong corruptions, and little or no assurance of salvation, and are unready to die, and have yet all or most of their work to do: if these loiter, they are doubly to blame: sure the time past of your lives may suffice to have loitered and done evil. Hath not the devil had too much already? Will ye stand "all the day idle?" Look home and see what you have yet to do? How much you want to a safe and comfortable death? "Sow to yourselves in righteousness: reap in mercy: break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you!"

Sort. vii. It much concerneth them to redeem the time, who are in any office, or have any opportunity of doing any special or public good; especially magistrates and ministers of Christ. Your life will not be long: your office will not be long: O bestir you against sin and satan, and for Christ and holiness while you may: God will try you but a time. Let Obadiah hide and feed the prophets when he is called to it, and while he may, that God may hide him, and

^a 1 Pet. iv. 3.

^b Matt. xx. 6.

^c Hos. x. 12.

not think to shift off duty, and save himself to a better time. Saith Mordecai to Esther, "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews: for if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall their enlargement and deliverance arise from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this^k." Are you ministers? O preach the Gospel while you may: redeem the time: all times are your season: so great a work, and the worth of souls, commandeth you to do it "in season and out of season^l." A man that is to save many others from drowning, or to quench a fire in the city, is inexcusable above all men, if he redeem not time, by his greatest diligence and speed.

Sort VIII. Lastly, it is especially incumbent on them to redeem the time, who, being recovered from sickness, or saved from any danger, are under the obligation both of special mercy and special promises of their own: who have promised God, in the time of sickness or distress, that if he would but spare them and try them once again, they would amend their lives, and live more holy, and spend their time more carefully and diligently for their souls, and shew all about them the truth of their repentance, by the greatness of their change, and an exemplary life. O it is a most dangerous, terrible thing to return to security, sloth, and sin, and break such promises to God! Such are often given over to woeful hard-heartedness or despair: for God will not be mocked with delusory words.

Thus I have opened this great duty of Redeeming Time the more largely, because it is of unspeakable importance; and my soul is frequently amazed with admiration, that the sluggish world can so insensibly and impenitently go on in wasting precious time, so near eternity, and in so needy and dangerous a case. Though, I bless my God, that I have not wholly lost my time, but have long lived in a sense of the odiousness of that sin, yet I wonder at myself that such overpowering motives compel me not to make continual haste, and to be still at work with all my might, in a case of everlasting consequence.

^k Esther ix. 13, 14.

^l 2 Tim. iv. 2.