

holy, and love and obedience may be as natural to you.' And then the practice of holy doctrine, will be easy to you, when it is your delight.

Direct. x. Take heed that you receive not ungrounded, or unnecessary prejudices against the person of the preacher.' For that will turn your heart, and lock it up against the doctrine. And therefore abhor the spirit of uncharitableness, cruelty, and faction, which always bendeth to the suppressing, or vilifying and disgracing all those, that are not of their way and for their interest: and be not so blind as not to observe, that the very design of the devil, in raising up divisions among Christians is, that he may use the tongues or hands of one another to vilify them all, and make them odious to one another, and to disable one another from hindering his kingdom, and doing any considerable service to Christ. So that when a minister of Christ should be winning souls, either he is forbidden, or he is despised, and the hearers are saying, 'O, he is such, or such a one,' according to the names of reproach which the enemy of Christ and love hath taught them.

CHAPTER XX.

Directions for profitable Reading the Holy Scriptures.

SEEING the diversity of men's tempers and understandings is so exceedingly great, that it is impossible that any thing should be pleasing and suitable to some, which shall not be disliked and quarrelled with by others; and seeing in the Scriptures there are many things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction^a. And the word is to some the savour of death unto death^b. You have therefore need to be careful in reading it. And as Christ saith, "Take heed how you hear^c;" so I say, Take heed how you read.

Direct. i. 'Bring not an evil heart of unbelief. Open the Bible with holy reverence as the book of God, indited by the Holy Ghost. Remember that the doctrine of the New Testament was revealed by the Son of God, who was

^a 2 Pet. iii. 16.

^b Mark iv. 24. 2 Cor. ii. 16.

^c Luke viii. 18.

purposely sent from heaven to be the light of the world, and to make known to men the will of God, and the matters of their salvation^d.’ Bethink you well, if God should but send a book or letter to you by an angel, how reverently you would receive it? How carefully you would peruse it; and regard it above all the books in the world? And how much rather should you do so, by that book which is indited by the Holy Ghost, and recordeth the doctrine of Christ himself, whose authority is greater than all the angels? Read it not therefore as a common book, with a common and unreverent heart; but in the dread and love of God the author.

Direct. II. ‘Remember that it is the very law of God which you must live by, and be judged by at last. And therefore read with a full resolution to obey whatever it commandeth, though flesh, and men, and devils contradict it.’ Let there be no secret exceptions in your heart, to baulk any of its precepts, and shift off that part of obedience, which the flesh accounteth difficult or dear.

Direct. III. ‘Remember that it is the will and testament of your Lord, and the covenant of most full and gracious promises; which all your comforts, and all your hopes of pardon and everlasting life are built upon. Read it therefore with love and great delight.’ Value it a thousand fold more than you would do the letters of your dearest friend, or the deeds by which you hold your lands; or any thing else of low concernment. If the law was sweeter to David than honey, and better than thousands of gold and silver, and was his delight and meditation all the day, O what should the sweet and precious Gospel be to us!

Direct. IV. ‘Remember that it is a doctrine of unseen things, and of the greatest mysteries; and therefore come not to it with arrogance as a judge, but with humility as a learner or disciple: and if any thing seem difficult or improbable to you, suspect your own unfurnished understanding, and not the sacred Word of God.’ If a learner in any art or science, will suspect his teacher and his books, whenever he is stalled, or meeteth with that which seemeth unlikely to him, his pride would keep possession for his ignorance, and his folly were like to be incurable.

^d Read Chap. iii, Direct. i. And against Unbelief, Part i.

Direct. v. ‘Remember that it is an universal law and doctrine, written for the most ignorant as well as for the curious; and therefore must be suited in plainness to the capacity of the simple, and yet have matter to exercise the most subtle wits; and that God would have the style, to savour more of the innocent weakness of the instruments, than the matter.’ Therefore be not offended or troubled when the style doth seem less polite than you might think be-seemed the Holy Ghost; nor at the plainness of some parts, or the mysteriousness of others: but adore the wisdom and tender condescension of God to his poor creatures.

Direct. vi. ‘Bring not a carnal mind, which savoureth only fleshly things, and is enslaved to those sins which the Scripture doth condemn:’ “For the carnal mind is enmity against God, and neither is, nor can be subject to his law.” “And the things of God are not discerned by the mere natural man, for they are foolishness to him, and they must be spiritually discerned:” and enmity is an ill expositor. It will be quarrelling with all, and making faults in the Word which findeth so many faults in you. It will hate that Word which cometh to deprive you of your most sweet and dearly beloved sin. Or, if you have such a carnal mind and enmity, believe it not, any more than a partial and wicked enemy should be believed against God himself; who better understandeth what he hath written, than any of his foolish enemies.

Direct. vii. ‘Compare one place of Scripture with another, and expound the darkest by the help of the plainest, and the fewer expressions by the more frequent and ordinary, and the more doubtful points by those which are most certain;’ and not on the contrary.

Direct. viii. ‘Presume not on the strength of your own understanding, but humbly pray to God for light; and before and after you read the Scripture, pray earnestly that the Spirit which did indite it, may expound it to you, and keep you from unbelief and error, and lead you into the truth.’

Direct. ix. ‘Read some of the best annotations or expositors;’ who being better acquainted with the phrase of

^c Rom. viii. 7. 8.

^f 2 Cor. ii. 14.

^g 1 Cor. ii. 10. 12. xii. 8—10.

the Scripture than yourselves, may help to clear your understanding. When Philip asked the eunuch that read Isa. liii. "Understandest thou what thou readest? he said, How can I except some man should guide me^b?" Make use of your guides, if you would not err.

Direct. x. 'When you are stalled by any difficulty which over-matcheth you, note it down, and propound it to your pastor; and crave his help, or (if the minister of the place be ignorant and unable) go to some one that God hath furnished for such work.' And if after all, some things remain still dark and difficult, remember your imperfection, and wait on God for further light, and thankfully make use of all the rest of the Scripture which is plain. And do not think as the papists, that men must forbear reading it for fear of erring, any more than that men must forbear eating for fear of poison, or than subjects must be kept ignorant of the laws of the king, for fear of misunderstanding or abusing them.

CHAPTER XXI.

Directions for Reading other Books.

BECAUSE God hath made the excellent, holy writings of his servants, the singular blessing of this land and age; and many an one may have a good book, even any day or hour of the week, that cannot at all have a good preacher^a; I advise all God's servants to be thankful for so great a mercy, and to make use of it, and be much in reading; for reading with most doth more conduce to knowledge than hearing doth, because you may choose what subjects and the most excellent treatises you please; and may be often at it, and may peruse again and again what you forget, and may take time as you go to fix it on your mind: and with very many it doth more than hearing also to move the heart, though hearing of itself, in this hath the advantage; because lively books may be more easily had, than lively preachers: es-

^b Acts viii. 30, 31.

^a Xenophon primus omnium quæ dicebantur, notis excepta in publicum edidit. Diog. Laert. lib. ii. sect. 48. p. 109.

pecially these sorts of men should be much in reading. 1. Masters of families, that have more souls to care for than their own. 2. People that live where there is no preaching, or as bad or worse than none. 3. Poor people, and servants, and children, that are forced on many Lord's days to stay at home, whilst others have the opportunity to hear. 4. And vacant persons that have more leisure than others have. To all these, but especially masters of families, I shall here give a few Directions.

Direct. I. 'I presuppose that you keep the devil's books out of your hands and house.' I mean cards, and idle tales, and play-books, and romances or love-books, and false, bewitching stories, and the seducing books of all false teachers, and the railing or scorning books which the men of several sects and factions write against each other, on purpose to teach men to hate one another, and banish love: for where these are suffered to corrupt the mind, all grave and useful writings are forestalled. And it is a wonder to see, how powerfully these poison the minds of children, and many other empty heads: also books that are written by the sons of Corah, to breed distastes and discontents in the minds of the people against their governors, both magistrates and ministers. For there is something in the best rulers, for the tongues of seditious men to fasten on, and to aggravate in the people's ears; and there is something even in godly people, which tempteth them too easily to take fire and be distempered before they are aware; and they foresee not the evil to which it tendeth.

Direct. II. 'When you read to your family, or others, let it be seasonably and gravely, when silence and attendance encourage you to expect success; and not when children are crying or talking, or servants bustling to disturb you.' Distraction is worst in the greatest businesses.

Direct. III. 'Choose such books as are most suitable to your state, or to those you read to^b.' It is worse than unprofitable to read books for comforting troubled minds, to those that are blockishly secure, and have hardened, obstinate, unhumabled hearts. It is as bad as to give medicines

^b Saith Aristippus, in Diog. Laert. As they are not the healthfulest that eat most, so are they not the most learned that read most; but they that read that which is most necessary and profitable.

or plasters contrary to the patient's need, and such as cherish the disease. So is it to read books of too high a style or subject, to dull and ignorant hearers. We use to say, 'That which is one man's meat, is another man's poison.' It is not enough that the matter be good, but it must be agreeable to the case for which it is used.

Direct. iv. 'To a common family, begin with those books, which at once inform the judgment about the fundamentals, and awaken the affections to entertain them and improve them.' Such as are treatises of regeneration, conversion, or repentance: to which purpose I have written myself, *The Call to the Unconverted*;—*The Treatise of Conversion*;—*Directions for a Sound Conversion*;—*A Treatise of Judgment*;—*A Sermon against making Light of Christ*;—*True Christianity*;—*A Sermon of Repentance*;—*Now or Never*;—*A Saint or a Brute*; with others; which I mention, not as equalling them with others, but as those which I am more accountable for. On this subject these are very excellent, *Mr. R. Allen's Works*;—*Mr. Whateley on the New Birth*;—*Mr. Swinnock of Regeneration*;—*Mr. Pinks's five Sermons*;—most of *Mr. Hooker's Sermons*;—*Mr. J. Rogers's Doctrine of Faith*;—*Mr. Dent's Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*;—most of *Mr. Perkins'*, and *Mr. Bolton's Works*, and many the like.

Direct. v. 'Next these, read over those books which are more suited to the state of young Christians for their growth in grace, and for their exercise of faith, and love, and obedience, and for the mortifying of selfishness, pride, sensuality, worldliness, and other the most dangerous sins.' My own on this subject are, my *Directions for Weak Christians*;—my *Saints' Rest*;—*A Treatise of Self-denial*;—another of *The Mischiefs of Self-ignorance*;—*Life of Faith*;—*Of Crucifying the World*;—*The Unreasonableness of Infidelity*;—*Of Right Rejoicing, &c.* To this use these are excellent, *Mr. Hildersham's Works*;—*Dr. Preston's*;—*Mr. Perkins'*;—*Mr. Bolton's*;—*Mr. Fenner's*;—*Mr. Gurnall's*;—*Mr. Anthony Burgess's Sermons*;—*Mr. Lockier on the Colossians*, with abundance more that God hath blessed us with.

Direct. vi. 'At the same time labour to methodise your knowledge, and to that end read first and learn some short

catechism, and then some larger (as Mr. Ball's, or the Assemblies, larger); and next some body of divinity, (as Amesius's Marrow of Divinity, and Cases of Conscience, which are Englished).' And let the catechism be kept in memory while you live, and the rest be throughly understood.

Direct. vii. ' Next read (to yourselves or families) the larger expositions of the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments.' Such as Perkins, Bishop Andrews on the Commandments, and Dod, &c. That your understanding may be more full, particular, and distinct; and your families may not stop in generals, which are not understood.

Direct. viii. ' Read much those books which direct you in a course of daily communion with God, and ordering all your conversations.' As Mr. Reyner's Directions;—The Practice of Piety;—Mr. Palmer's;—Mr. Scudder's;—Mr. Bolton's Directions;—and my Divine Life.

Direct. ix. ' For peace, and comfort, and increase of the love of God, read Mr. Symmond's Deserted Soul, &c.;—and his Life of Faith:—all Dr. Sibbs's Works;—Mr. Harsnet's Cordials;—Bishop Hall's Works, &c.: my Method for Peace, and Saints' Rest, &c.

Direct. x. ' For the understanding of the text of Scripture, keep at hand either Deodate's, or the Assembly of Divines, or the Dutch Annotations; with Dr. Hammond's, or Dickson's and Hutchinson's brief observations.

Direct. xi. ' For securing you against the fever of uncharitable zeal and schism, and contentious wranglings and cruelties for religion sake. Read diligently Bishop Hall's Peacemaker (and other of his books);—Mr. Burrough's Irenicon;—Acontius's Stratagems of Satan;—and my Catholic Unity;—Catholic Church;—Universal Concord, &c.'

Direct. xii. ' For establishing you against Popery, on the soundest grounds, not running in the contrary extreme; read Dr. Challoner's Credo Ecclesiam, &c.;—Chillingworth;—Dr. Field of the Church, &c.;—and my True Catholic;—and my Key for Catholics;—and my Safe Religion;—and Winding-sheet for Popery;—and Disputation with Mr. Johnson.'

Direct. xiii. ' For especial preparation for affliction, sufferings, sickness, death: read Mr. Hughes's Rod;—Mr. Lawrence's Christ's Power over Sicknesses;—Mr. S. Ru-

therford's Letters, &c.;—my Treatise of Self-denial;—the Believer's Last Work;—the Last Enemy Death;—and the Fourth Part of my Saints' Rest. I will add no more, lest they seem too many.'

CHAPTER XXII.

Directions for the Right Teaching of Children and Servants, so ~~as~~ may be most likely to have Success.

I **H**ERE suppose them utterly untaught that you have to do with; and therefore shall direct you what to do, from the very first beginning of your teaching, and their learning. And I beseech you study this Chapter more than many of the rest; for it is an unspeakable loss that befalls the church, and the souls of men, for want of skill, and will, and diligence, in parents and masters in this matter.

Direct. 1. 'Cause your younger children to learn the words, though they be not yet capable of understanding the matter.' And do not think as some do, that this is but to make them hypocrites, and to teach them to take God's name in vain: for it is neither vanity nor hypocrisy to help them first to understand the words and signs, in order to their early understanding of the matter and signification. Otherwise no man might teach them any language, nor teach them to read any words that be good, because they must first understand the words before the meaning. If a child learn to read in a Bible, it is not taking God's name or Word in vain, though he understand it not: for it is in order to his learning to understand it; and it is not vain which is to so good a use: if you leave them untaught till they come to be twenty years of age, they must then learn the words before they can understand the matter. Do not therefore leave them the children of darkness, for fear of making them hypocrites. It will be an excellent way to redeem their time, to teach them first that which they are capable of learning: a child of five or six years old can learn the words of a catechism or Scripture, before they are capable of understanding them. And then when they come to years of understanding, that part of their work is done,