

CHAPTER XXIV.

*Cases and Directions against Censoriousness and Unwarrantable Judging.**Tit. 1. Cases of Conscience about Judging of Others.*

Quest. 1. 'AM I not bound to judge truly of every one as he is.'

Answ. 1. There are many that you are not bound to meddle with, and to pass any judgment at all upon. 2. There are many whose faults are secret, and their virtues open; and of such you cannot judge as they are, because you have no proof or evidence to enable you: you cannot see that which is latent in the heart, or done in darkness. 3. You neither ought on pretence of charity, nor can believe an evident known untruth of any man,

Quest. 'Doth not charity bind me to judge men better than they are?'

Answ. Charity bindeth you, 1. Rather to observe the best in them, than the worst. 2. And as I said, to judge of no man's faults uncalled. 3. Nor to judge of that which is not evident, but out of sight; and thus consequently it bindeth you to judge some men better than they are; but not directly.

Object. 'Then a man is bound to err, and believe an untruth.'

Answ. No; you are not bound to believe that it is certainly true, that such a man is better than he is; because you have no evidence of its certain truth. But you are bound to believe it a thing probable or verisimile, likely to be true, by an opinion or fallible human faith; and this is not a falsehood; for that is likely and probable to you, which hath the more probable evidence, and more for it than against it: so that the thing which you are to believe immediately is this proposition, 'There is more evidence to me to prove it likely that this man is sincere than the contrary:' and consequently you believe this, and believe not the contrary, because the contrary hath no evidence. But you are

not to take it as a certain thing, that the contrary hath no latent reality.

Quest. 11. 'How far may I judge ill of one by outward appearances, as by the countenance, gestures and other uncertain but suspicious signs?'

Ans. There are some signs which are not so much as probable, but a little suspicious, and which men are very ordinarily mistaken by; as those that will judge of a man at the first look, by his face; and those that will judge a studious, serious person (a lawyer, a judge, or a divine) to be morose or proud, because they are not complimentary, but of few words; or because they have not patience to waste precious hours in hearing an empty vessel sound; an ignorant, self-conceited person talk foolishly. Such censures are but the effects of injudiciousness, unrighteousness and rash haste. There are other signs which make it probable to a wise and charitable person, that the man is bad (e. g. proud, or covetous, or an hypocrite). If with these, there are as great signs to make the contrary probable, we must rather incline to the better, than the worse. But if not, we may fear the worst of that person, but not conclude it as a certainty; and therefore we may not in public censures, proceed upon such uncertainties, nor venture to divulge them; but only use them to help us for due caution, and pity, and prayer, and endeavour for such an one's recovery and help.

Quest. 111. 'How far may I censure upon the report of others?'

Ans. According to the degree of the credibility of the persons, and evidence of the narrative; not simply in themselves, but as compared with all that is to be heard on the contrary part: else you are partial and unjust.

Quest. 1v. 'Doth not the fifth command oblige me in honour to parents and princes, to judge them to be better than their lives declare them to be?'

Ans. You are gradually to honour them more than others, and therefore to be more afraid of dishonouring them, and must not sit in judgment on them, to believe any harm of them, which evidence doth not compel you to believe. But you are not to judge any sin the less, because it is theirs; nor to judge contrary to evidence, nor to call

evil good, nor to be wilfully blind, nor to flatter any in their sin.

Quest. v. 'Whom must we judge for sincere and sanctified Christians?'

Answ. 1. All those that profess to be such, whom you cannot disprove. 2. But as there are several degrees of evidence and probability, so must there be several degrees of your good opinion of others. Of some who give you the highest probability, you may have the strongest confidence short of certainty: of others you may have less; and of others you may have much more fear than hope. 3. And in matters of church-rights and public communion, your fears will not allow you to use them as no Christians; for their profession of faith and repentance is certain; and as long as your fears of their hypocrisy or unsoundness are but uncertain, it must not (on that account) prevail to deprive another of his right.

Quest. vi. 'But is not my error my sin, if I prove mistaken, and take that man for a sincere Christian who is none?'

Answ. If you judged it to be certain, your judgment and error was your sin; but if you only judged him a professor of Christianity, and one that on that account you were bound to have church-communion with as if he were sincere, because you cannot prove the contrary, this was no error: or if you erred for want of sufficient evidence to know the truth, this error is not in itself a sin.

Quest. vii. 'Whom must I judge a visible member of the church, with whom I am thus bound to hold communion?'

Answ. 1. If you are the pastor of the church who are made the judge, at his admission by baptism or afterwards, you must so judge of every one who maketh a credible profession of true Christianity, that is, of his present consent to the sacramental covenant: and that profession is credible, which is, 1. Understood by him that maketh it. 2. Deliberate. 3. Voluntary. 4. Seemingly serious. 5. And is not disproved by valid evidence of the contrary. These are the true measures of church-communion; for every man, next God, is the judge of his own heart; and God

would have every man the chooser or refuser of his own mercies.

2. But if you are but a private member of the church, whom the pastor hath taken in by baptism, and not cast out again by excommunication; except the contrary be notorious: and even then you are oft obliged for order sake to carry yourself towards him as a visible member, till he be regularly cast out.

Quest. VIII. 'Whom must I judge a true worshipper of God, and whom not?'

Ans. Him that professeth true Christianity, and joineth in true worship with a Christian church, or privately (when hindered) acknowledgeth the true God in all his essential attributes, and heareth his Word, and prayeth to him for all things necessary to salvation, and praiseth him accordingly, not giving the worship proper to God unto any creature: and doth all this as a sinner redeemed by Jesus Christ, trusting in his merits, sacrifice and intercession, and giveth not his office to any other. And he is a false worshipper who denieth any essential attribute of God, or essential part of the office of Christ, or giveth these to any other; or refuseth his Word, or excludeth in his prayers any thing essential to Christianity, or absolutely necessary to salvation. But 'secundum quid,' in lesser parts, or in circumstances, or measures, every man on earth is a false worshipper, that is, he offereth God a worship some way faulty and imperfect, and hath some sin in his worshipping of God; and sin is a thing that God requireth not, but forbiddeth even in the smallest measures.

Quest. IX. 'Which must I judge a true church of Christ, and which a false church?'

Ans. The universal church is but one, and is the whole society of Christians as united to Christ their only head; and this cannot be a false church. But if any other set up an usurper as the universal head, and so make another policy and church, this is a false church formally, or in its policy: but yet the members of this false church or policy may some of them as Christians be also members of the true church of Christ: and thus the Roman church as papal is a false Catholic church, having the policy of an usurper; but as Christians they may be members of the true Catholic

church of Christ. But for a particular church which is but part of the universal, that is a true church considered merely as an ungoverned community, which is a true part of the Catholic, prepared for a pastor, but yet being without one : but that only is a true political church, which consisteth of professed Christians conjoined under a true pastor, for communion in the profession of true Christianity, and for the true worshipping of God, and orderly walking for their mutual assistance and salvation.

Quest. x. ' Whom must we judge true prophets and pastors of the church ? '

Answ. He is a true prophet who is sent by God, and speaketh truth by immediate supernatural revelation or inspiration. And he is a false prophet who either falsely saith that he hath Divine revelations or inspiration, or prophesieth falsehood as from God. And he is a true pastor at the bar of God, who is, 1. Competently qualified with abilities for the office. 2. Competently disposed to it, with willingness and desire of success ; and hath right ends in undertaking and discharging it. 3. Who hath a just admission, by true ordination of pastors, and consent of the flock ; and he is to be accounted a true pastor ' in foro ecclesia,' in the church's judgment, whom the church judgeth to have all these qualifications, and thereupon admitteth him into the possession of the place, till his incapacity be notorious, or publicly and sufficiently proved, or he be removed or made incapable.

Tit. 2. Directions for the Cure of Sinful Censoriousness.

Direct. 1. ' Meddle not at all in judging of others without a call.' Know first whether it be any of your work ; if not, be afraid of those words of your Judge, Matt. vii. 1—5. " Judge not, that ye be not judged ; for with what judgment ye judge, you shall be judged," &c. And Rom. xiv. 4. " Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? To his own master he standeth or falleth." And verses 10. and 13. " But why dost thou judge thy brother ? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother ? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ— Every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore

judge one another any more." "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment— Therefore judge nothing before the time till the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts a—." "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of any holy day, or of the new moon, or sabbath b."

Quest. 'But when have I a call to judge another?'

Ans. You may take the answer to this from the answer to *Quest. x. Chap. xxiii. Tit. 1.* 1. If your office and place require it as a magistrate, pastor, parent, master, tutor, &c. 2. If the safety of the church, or your neighbour do require it. 3. If the good of the sinner require it that you may seek his repentance and reformation. 4. If your own preservation or welfare (or any other duty) require it.

Direct. II. 'Keep up an humble sense of your own faults, and that will make you compassionate to others.' He that is truly vile in his own eyes is least inclined to vilify others: and he that judgeth himself with the greatest penitent severity, is the least inclined to be censorious to his brother. Pride is the common cause of censoriousness: he that saith with the Pharisee, "I fast twice a week, and pay tithes of all that I have, I am no adulterer," &c., will also say, "I am not as other men, nor as this publican:" when the true penitent findeth so much of his own to be condemned, that he smiteth on his own breast and saith, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The prouder, self-conceited sort of Christians are ever the most censorious of their neighbours.

Direct. III. 'Be much therefore at home in searching and watching, and amending your own hearts:' And then you will find so much to do about yourselves, that you will have no mind or leisure to be censoring others; whereas the superficial hypocrite whose religion is in externals, and is unacquainted with his heart and heaven, is so little employed in the true work of a Christian, that he hath leisure for the work of a censorious Pharisee.

Direct. IV. 'Labour for a deep experimental insight into the nature of religion, and of every duty.' For no men

^a 1 Cor. iv. 3—5.

^b Col. ii. 16.

are so censorious as the ignorant who know not what they say; whilst experienced persons know those difficulties and other reasons which calm their minds. As in common business, no man will sooner find fault with a workman in his work, than idle praters who least understand it. So is it commonly in matters of religion: women and young men that never saw into the great mysteries of divinity, but have been lately changed from a vicious life, and have neither acquaintance with the hard points of religion, nor with their own ignorance of them, are the common, proud censurers of their brethren much wiser than themselves, and of all men that are more moderate and peaceable than themselves, and are more addicted to unity, and more averse to sects and separations than they. Study harder, and wait till you grow up to the experience of the aged, and you will be less censorious and more peaceable.

Direct. v. 'Think not yourselves fit judges of that which you understand not: and think not proudly that you are more like to understand the difficulties in religion, with your short and lazy studies, than those that in reading, meditation and prayer have spent their lives in searching after them.' Let not pride make you abuse the Holy Ghost, by pretending that he hath given you more wisdom in a little time, and with little means and diligence, than your betters have by the holy industry of their lives: say not, God can give more to you in a year than to others in twenty; for it is a poor argument to prove that God hath done it, because he can do it. He can make you an angel, but that will not prove you one. Prove your wisdom before you pretend to it, and overvalue it not: Heb. v. 11, 12. sheweth that it is God's ordinary way to give men wisdom according to their time and means, unless their own negligence deprive them of his blessing.

Direct. vi. 'Study to keep up Christian love, and to keep it lively.' For love is not censorious, but is inclined to judge the best, till evidence constrain you to the contrary. Censoriousness is a vermin which crawleth in the carcase of Christian love, when the life is gone.

Direct. vii. 'Value all God's graces in his servants: and then you will see something to love them for, when hypocrites can see nothing: make not too light of small de-

grees of grace, and then your censure will not overlook them.

Direct. VIII. 'Remember the tenderness of Christ,' who condemneth not the weak, nor casteth infants out of his family, nor the diseased out of his hospital; but dealeth with them in such a gracious gentleness, as beseemeth a tender-hearted Saviour: he will not break the bruised reed: he carrieth his lambs in his arms, and gently driveth those with young! He taketh up the wounded man, when the priest and Levite pass him by. And have you not need of the tenderness of Christ yourselves as well as others? Are you not afraid lest he should find greater faults with you, than you find in others? and condemn you as you condemn them?

Direct. IX. 'Let the sense of the common corruption of the world, and imperfection of the godly, moderate your particular censures.' As Seneca saith, 'To censure a man for that which is common to all men, is in a sort to censure him for being a man, which beseemeth not him that is a man himself.' Do you not know the frailty of the best, and the common pravity of human nature? How few are there that must not have great allowance, or else they will not pass for current in the balance. Elias was a man subject to passions: Jonah to peevishness: Job had his impatience: Paul saith even of the teachers of the primitive church, "They all (that were with him) seek their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ." What blots are charged on almost all the churches, and almost all the holy persons, mentioned throughout all the Scriptures! Learn then of Paul a better lesson than censoriousness: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Let every man prove his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone^d," &c.

Direct. X. 'Remember that judgment is God's prerogative,' (further than as we are called to it for the performance of some duty, either of office, or of private charity, or self-preservation :) and that the Judge is at the door! and that judging unmercifully maketh us liable to judgment without

^d Gal. vi. 1.

mercy. The foresight of that near universal judgment, which will pass the doom on us and all men, will do much to cure us of our rash censoriousness.

Direct. xi. 'Peruse and observe all the Directions in the last chapter against Evil-speaking and Backbiting, that I may not need to repeat them.' Especially avoid, 1. The snare of selfishness and interest; for most men judge of others principally by their own interest: he is the good man that is good to them, or is on their side; that loveth and honoureth them, and answereth their desires; this is the common false judgment of the corrupted, selfish world; who vilify and hate the best, because they seem unsuitable to them and their carnal interest; therefore take heed of their judgment about any man that you have a falling out with; for it is two to one but you will wrong him through this selfishness. 2. Avoid passion; which blindeth the judgment. 3. Avoid faction; which maketh you judge of all men as they agree or disagree with your opinions, or your side or party. 4. Avoid too hasty belief of censures, and rebuke them. 5. Hear every man speak for himself before you censure him, if it be possible, and the case be not notorious.

Direct. xii. 'Keep still upon your mind a just and deep apprehension of the malignity of this sin of rash censuring.' It is of the greatest consequence to the mortifying of any sin, what apprehensions of it are upon the mind. If religious persons apprehended the odiousness of this as much as they do of swearing, drunkenness, fornication, &c., they would as carefully avoid it: therefore I shall shew you the malignity of this sin.

Tit. 3. The Evil of the Sin of Censoriousness.

1. It is an usurpation of God's prerogative, who is the judge of all the world; it is a stepping up into his judgment-seat, and undertaking his work, as if you said, 'I will be God as to this action;' and if he be called the anti-christ who usurpeth the office of Christ, to be the universal monarch and head of the church, you may imagine what he doth, who (though but in one point) doth set himself in the place of God.

2. They that usurp not God's part in judgment, yet ordinarily usurp the part of the magistrate or pastors of the church. As when mistaken censorious Christians refuse to come to the sacrament of communion, because many persons are there whom they judge to be ungodly, what do they but usurp the office of the pastors of the church? To whom the keys are committed for admission and exclusion; and so are the appointed judges of that case. The duty of private members is but to admonish the offender first secretly, and then before witnesses, and to tell the church if he repent not, and humbly to tell the pastors of their duty, if they neglect it; and when this is done, they have discharged their part, and must no more excommunicate men themselves, than they must hang thieves when the magistrate doth neglect to hang them.

3. Censoriousness signifieth the absence or decay of love; which inclineth men to think evil, and judge the worst, and aggravate infirmities, and overlook or extenuate any good that is in others. And there is least grace where there is least love.

4. It sheweth also much want of self-acquaintance, and such heart-employment as the sincerest Christians are taken up with. And it sheweth much want of Christian humility and sense of your own infirmities and badness; and much prevalency of pride and self-conceitedness: if you knew how ignorant you are, you would not be so peremptory in judging; and if you knew how bad you are, you would not be so forward to condemn your neighbours. So that here is together the effect of much self-estrangedness, hypocrisy and pride: did you ever well consider the mind of Christ, when he bid them that accused the adulterous woman, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Certainly adultery was a heinous crime, and to be punished with death, and Christ was no patron of uncleanness; but he knew that it was an hypocritical sort of persons whom he spoke to, who were busy in judging others rather than themselves. Have you studied his words against rash censurers; "And why beholdest thou the mote in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let

* John viii. 7.

me pull out the mote out of thine eye ; and behold a beam is in thine own eye ? Thou hypocrite ! first cast out the beam out of thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote which is in thy brother's eye^f." I know well that impenitent sinners do use to pervert all these words of Christ, against any that would bring them to repentance for their sin ; and account all men rash censurers, who would make them acquainted with their unsanctified hearts and lives. But it is not their abuse of Scripture, which will justify our overpassing it with neglect : Christ spake it not for nothing ; and it must be studied by his disciples.

5. Censoriousness is injustice, in that the censurers would not be so censured themselves : you will say, ' Yes, if we were as bad, and did deserve it : ' but though you have not that same fault, have you no other ? And are you willing to have it aggravated, and be thus rashly judged ? You do not as you would be done by : yea, commonly censurers are guilty of false judging ; and whilst they take things hastily upon trust, and stay not to hear men speak for themselves, or to inquire thoroughly into the cause, they commonly condemn the innocent ; and call good evil, and put light for darkness^g ; and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him, when God hath cursed such with a woe.

6. And false censuring is the proper work of the devil, the accuser of the brethren ; " who accuseth them before God, day and night^h ; " and Christians should not bear his image, nor do his work.

7. Censoriousness is contrary to the nature and office of Jesus Christ ; he came to pardon sin, and cover the infirmities of his servants, and to cast them behind his back, and into the depth of the sea, and to bury them in his grave ; and it is the censurer's work to rake them up, and to make them seem more and greater than they are, and to bring them into the open light.

8. Censoriousness causeth uncharitableness and sinful separations in the censurers ; when they have conceited their brethren to be worse than they are, they must then reproach them or have no communion with them, and avoid

^f Matt. vii. 3, 4.

^g Isa. v. 10.

^h Rev. xii. 10.

them as too bad for the company of such as they. Or when they have usurped the pastor's work in judging, they begin the execution by sinful separation.

9. Censoriousness is an infectious sin, which easily taketh with the younger and prouder sort of Christians, and so setteth them on vilifying others; and at this little gap there entereth all uncharitableness, backbitings, revilings, church-divisions and sects, yea, and too often rebellious and bloody wars at last.

10. Censoriousness is a sore temptation to them that are censured, either to contemn such as censure them, and go on the other hand too far from them; or else to comply with the errors and sinful humours of the censurers, and to strain their consciences to keep pace with the censorious.

And here I must leave it on record to posterity for their warning, that the great and lamentable actions, changes and calamities of this age, have arisen, next to gross impiety, from this sin of censoriousness producing these two contrary effects, and thereby dividing men into two contrary parties. The younger sort of religious people, and the more ignorant, and many women, having more zeal than judgment, placed too much of their religion in a sharp opposition to all ceremonies, formalities and opinions which they thought unlawful; and were much inclined to schism and unjust separations upon that account; and therefore censured such things as antichristian, and those that used them as superstitious and temporizers; and no man's learning, piety, wisdom or laboriousness in the ministry could save him from these sharp, reproachful censures. Hereupon one party had not humility and patience enough to endure to be so judged of; nor love and tenderness enough for such peevish Christians, to bear with them in pity, as parents do with froward infants; but because these professed holiness and zeal, even holiness and zeal were brought under suspicion for their sakes; and they were taken to be persons intolerable, as unfit to lie in any building, and unmeet to submit to Christian government; and therefore meet to be used accordingly. Another sort were so wearied with the profaneness and ungodliness of the vulgar rabble, and saw so few that were judiciously religious, that they

thought it their duty to love and cherish the zeal and piety of their censorious weak ones, and to bear patiently with their frowardness, till ripeness and experience cured them, (and so far they were right.) And because they thought that they could do them no good, if they once lost their interest in them (and were also themselves too impatient of their censure), some of them seemed (to please them) to be more of their opinion than they were; and more of them forbore to reprove their petulance, but silently suffered them to go on; especially when they fell into the sects of Antinomians, Anabaptists and Separatists, they durst not reprove them as they deserved, lest they should drive them out of the hive, to some of these late swarms. And thus censoriousness in the ignorant and self-conceited, drove away one part to take them as their enemies; and silenced or drew on another party to follow them that led the van in some irregular, violent actions; and the wise and sober moderators were disregarded, and in the noise of these tumults and contentions could not be heard, till the smart of either party in their suffering forced them to honour such, whom in their exaltation again they despised or abused. This is the true sum of all the tragedies in Britain of this age.

Tit. 4. Directions for those that are rashly censured.

Direct. 1. 'Remember when you are injured by censures, that God is now trying your humility, charity and patience; and therefore be most studious to exercise and preserve these three.' 1. Take heed lest pride make you disdainful to the censurer; a humble man can bear contempt; hard censures hurt men so far as they are proud. 2. Take heed lest imbecility add to your impatience, and concur with pride: cannot you bear greater things than these? Impatience will disclose that badness in yourselves, which will make you censured much more; and it will shew you as weak in one respect as the censurers are in another. 3. Take heed lest their fault do not draw you to overlook or undervalue that serious godliness which is in many of the censorious; and that you do not presently judge them hypocrites or schismatics, and abate your charity to them, or incline to

handle them more roughly than the tenderness of Christ alloweth you. Remember that in all ages it hath been thus: the church hath had peevish children within, as well as persecuting enemies without; insomuch as Paul, Rom. xiv. giveth you the copy of these times, and giveth them this counsel, which from him I am giving you. The weak in knowledge were censorious and judged the strong. The strong in knowledge were weak in charity, and contemned the weak; just as now one party saith, 'These are superstitious persons, and antichristian:' the other saith, 'What giddy schismatics are these;' but Paul chideth them both; one sort for censuring, and the other for despising them.

Direct. II. 'Take heed lest whilst you are impatient under their censures, you fall into the same sin yourselves.' Do they censure you for differing in some forms or ceremonies from them? Take heed lest you overcensure them for their censoriousness; if you censure them as hypocrites who censure you as superstitious, you condemn yourselves while you are condemning them. For why will not censuring too far, prove you hypocrites also, if it prove them such?

Direct. III. 'Remember that Christ beareth with their weakness, who is wronged by it more than you, and is more against it.' He doth not quit his title to them for their forwardness, nor cease his love, nor turn every infant out of his family that will cry and wrangle, nor every patient out of his hospital that doth complain and groan; and we must imitate our Lord, and love where he loveth, and pity where he pitieth, and be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful.

Direct. IV. 'Remember how amiable a thing the least degree of grace is, even when it is clouded and blotted with infirmities.' It is the Divine nature, and the image of God, and the seed of glory; and therefore as an infant hath the noble nature of a man, and in all his weakness is much more honourable than the best of brutes (so that it is death to kill an infant, but not a beast): so is the most infirm and forward true Christian more honourable and amiable than the most splendid infidel. Bear with them in love and honour to the image and interest of Christ.

Direct. V. 'Remember that you were once weak in grace

yourselves ; and if happy education under peaceable guides did not prevent it, it is two to one but you were yourselves censorious.' Bear therefore with others as you bear with crying children, because you were once a child yourself. Not that the sin is ever the better, but you should be the more compassionate.

Direct. vi. 'Remember that your own strength and judgment is so great a mercy, that you should the more easily bear with a censorious tongue.' The rich and noble can bear with the envious, remembering that it is happy to have that worth or felicity which men do envy. You suffer fools gladly seeing you yourselves are wise. If you are in the right let losers talk.

Direct. vii. 'Remember that we shall be shortly together in heaven, where they will recant their censures, and you will easily forgive them, and perfectly love them.' And will not the foresight of such a meeting cause you to bear with them, and forgive and love them now ?

Direct. viii. 'Remember how inconsiderable a thing it is as to your own interest, to be judged of man ; and that you stand or fall to the judgment of the Lord¹.' What are you the better or the worse for the thoughts or words of a man ; when your salvation or damnation lieth upon God's judgment. It is too much hypocrisy, to be too much desirous of man's esteem and approbation, and too much troubled at his disesteem and censure, and not to be satisfied with the approbation of God. Read what is written against Man-pleasing, Part i.

Direct. ix. 'Make some advantage of other men's censures, for your own proficiency.' If good men censure you, be not too quick in concluding that you are innocent, and justifying yourselves ; but be suspicious of yourselves ; lest they should prove the right, and examine yourselves with double diligence. If you find that you are clear in the point that you are censured for, suspect and examine lest some other sin hath provoked God to try you by these censures ; and if you find not any other notable fault, let it make you the more watchful by way of prevention, seeing the eyes of God and men are on you ; and it may be God's

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

warning, to bid you take heed for the time to come. If you are thus brought to repentance, or to the more careful life, by occasion of men's censures, they will prove so great a benefit to you, that you may bear them the more easily.

CHAPTER XXV.

Cases and Directions about Trusts and Secrets.

Tit. 1. Cases of Conscience about Trusts and Secrets.

Quest. 1. 'How are we forbidden to put our trust in man? And how may it be done?'

Ans. 1. You must not trust man for more than his proportion, and what belongs to man to do: you must not expect that from him which God alone can do. 2. You must not trust a bad, unfaithful man to do that which is proper to a good and faithful man to do. 3. You must not trust the best man, being imperfect and fallible, as fully as if you supposed him perfect and infallible: but having to do with a corrupted world, we must live in it with some measure of distrust to all men; (for all that Cicero thought this contrary to the laws of friendship). But especially ignorant, dishonest, and fraudulent men must be most distrusted. As Bucholtzer said to his friend that was going to be a courtier, 'Commendo tibi fidem diabolorum, crede et contremisce:' he that converseth with diabolical men, must believe them no further than is due to the children of the father of lies. But we must trust men as men, according to the principles of veracity that are left in corrupted nature: and we must trust men so far as reason sheweth us cause, from their skill, fidelity, honesty, or interest: so a surgeon, a physician, a pilot may be trusted with our lives: and the more skilful and faithful any man is, the more he is to be trusted.

Quest. 11. 'Whom should a man choose for a matter of trust?'

Ans. As the matter is: one that hath wisdom, skill,