

truth should have upon your Church-Communion.

Do you say that your neighbours are not to be accounted members of the Church, nor to be communicated with? Who took them into the Church by Baptism? Was it not a Minister of Christ? If you say no, you must prove your accusation. If you grant it, was it not his *Office* so to do? Hath not God made his Ministers Judges, whom they are to baptize? And afterward also whom to catechise and instruct and admit to the communion of the Church? There is no doubt of it. If then they are admitted by an entrusted Officer, will you venture to usurp the place, yea and to do them the wrong to say that they are no members? Is it any of your trust or work? I pray you mark = what a mercy it is to you, that the Officers and not the private members are entrusted with this work. First, if it were *your work*, you must *stand* and be able to perform it. Secondly, you must *watch* for it, and *constantly attend* it. If a Heretick pervert the Text of Scripture, you must convince him by your skill in the Originals, or in the sense. How many hundred or thousand persons are there in a Parish to be tried? The worst of them must have a hearing and just trial at least, before you can refuse him lawfully: And how accurately must this difficult work be done, that the weakest be not denied his right, nor the unfit admitted? How long must a sinner be admonished and exhorted to repentance? And are *you able* and *willing* to leave all your callings, to do all this?

If the *Minister* that doth it, must lay by the

business of the world, how think you that you can do the same without laying by your worldly business? If he must have so many years learning and preparation, can you do it without? Mistake not, it is not for *Sermons* only that Ministers need all their learning and labour; but also for the *discipline* and *guidance* of the flocks. Thirdly, and if it be *your work*, you must be *accountable* for it before God. And do you not fear such a reckoning? And if these busie people had their wish, would they not be in a worse case than the most dumb and lazy Minister?

Consider it well, and you will find that you are not at all bound to *know* what the spiritual state of any man is, as he is to joyn in Church-communion with you, but upon *your Pastors trust* and *word*. Whether their understanding be sufficient at their admittance, you are not any where called to try: but the Pastor is: And if he have admitted them, you are to rest in his judgment (unless you would undertake the office yourselves) whether their profession of faith and repentance be serious and credible, you are not called to try and judge: But if your Pastor have admitted them, he hath numbred them with the visible Christians: And it is the *credibility* of the *Pastor* that you have to consider; and by him you must judge of the credibility of the professour, and not immediately by your own trial. Who are the persons that you shall meet at a Sacrament or in publike Communion, you are not at all required to try; And if you never saw them before or heard them speak, you may perform your duty nevertheless: Indeed if as a *neighbour* you are called

called to instruct or counsel or comfort them, you must do it: But there may be five thousand in one Church with you, whose names or faces you are not bound to know; but to rest in the knowledge of them to whom the keys are committed, who according to their office take them in.

Obj. But what if they are notoriously wicked? Must I be blind?

Ans. No: you must do your best by neighbourly watchfulness and help (though not by Pastoral Government) to reform all about you, whom you are able to do good to. And if you know them to be so bad, you must privately admonish them, as is proved; and then if they hear not, tell the Church: But if you see a man in the Church at the Sacrament, or a thousand men, who are unreformed, and you know it not, you have no reason to avoid the communion of such: And if there be a thousand in the Church whose case you are strangers to, this may be no sin of yours, and should be no impediment of your communion.

Obj. But what if carnal negligent Ministers will let in all into the Church by Baptism and give them the Lords Supper? Shall it be thus in their power to corrupt the Church: And must we joyn with them and take no care of it?

Ans. There is no person in any office or trust, but may too easily abuse it: And the more noble the work and trust is, the greater is the sin and calamity of such abuse. And no doubt but a bad unfaithful Minister is one of the greatest sinners on earth, and one of the most pernicious plagues to the Church. Which could not be, unless

less it were in his power to do very much hurt. But it will not follow that therefore you must take his place, and become the Church Governours, or try all the peoples fitness your selves. If a Judge be bad, you may say what an intollerable thing is it, that one man shall have power to give away mens estates, and take away the lives of the innocent, and to acquit the guilty. But for all that you must not mend it, by stepping up into the judgement seat your self, and saying, that you or the rest of the people will do it better. Some body must be trusted with it. If you are fittest, offer your self to the office. The thing that you must do is, to do your best to deliver the Church from so bad a Pastor : Use all your wisdom and diligence to amend him : And if you cannot do that, use all your interest to get him out, and get a better : And if you cannot do that, deliver your own soul from him, by removing to a better, if you are free ; But if as servants or children or wives you are under another Government which restraineth you, be patient, and use such means as God provideth for you. This is the true way of your Church-duty, and not to think that you must have a knowledge of the Godliness of all that you communicate with ; or that you must refuse communion, if the Pastor be remiss and negligent.

Obj. But will it not be my sin if I communicate with such as I know to be notoriously wicked ? when a little leaven, leaveneth the lump.

Ans. It will be your sin if you obey not Christ, *Mat. 18. 15.* in admonishing them ; and so if it be long of you, that they are not removed :
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or if you do not your duty to reform the Pastor or remove him: But otherwise if they be there without your fault, it is no more your sin to communicate with such men, than it is to live and converse with fellow servants, that are wicked; when it is not *you*, but your *Master* that hath the choice of them.

And the *leavening* of the *lump* which the Text speaketh of, is the tempting of others to the like sin; and not that the innocent shall be held guilty of it: nor were the words spoken to the people to perswade them to do the Pastors work, or to separate from the Church; but to the Pastors to perswade them to cast out the sinner; and to the people to perswade them to execute their Sentence, (and the Apostles in particular.)

It would rule and quiet people, if they knew the trust and work of the Pastors, from their own.

DIRECT. XII.

Well study the gracious Nature and Office of Jesus Christ, and his great readiness to receive those that come to him, though weak in faith; and his backwardness to refuse such Commers; that so you may desire a Church-discipline, that is suitable to the Nature and Office of Christ, and to the design and tenor of the Gospel.

CHrists outward Discipline is agreeable to his inward. As those that come to him by faith,

he will in no wise cast out or reject; so those that come to him by *profession* of faith, he would not have his Ministers in any wise reject. And *coming to Christ* when he was personally on earth, did signifie the following of him in presence, as well as believing in him: Just so far as men will come, so far they shall be received by Christ: If they will come but *towards* him, he will not put them back. If they will come but to his *visible Church*, by a dead profession, he would not have his Ministers repulse them. The outward priviledges of the visible Church which they come to, they shall possess. If they will come over to the Church of the regenerate, they shall be saved. But where ever they stop it shall be their own doing. Many came to Christ when he was on earth, whom he never repulsed, though he was marvelled at and grudged at for entertaining them. Some came so far as to own his Name, and did Miracles by it, that yet did not follow him: whom the Apostles would have hindered, but Christ reprov'd them, *Mar. 9. 38. Luk. 9. 49.* Some came only to receive a Cure of their Diseases from him, whom his Disciples sometimes repulsed, but so did not he: when little children were brought to him, his Disciples rebuked those that brought them, as thinking them unfit for his reception: but Christ rebuked them for their forbidding of such guests. When he eat and drank with publicans and sinners, and when he received the kindness of a woman that had bin a great sinner, the Pharisees, censured him therefore as ungodly: But yet he would not abate his clemency. Many at this day can scarce digest it, that he sent forth a *Judas* to preach

preach the Gospel, when he knew that he was a thief and an hypocrite, and foreknew that he was a Son of perdition, and would betray him, and that the Devil would enter into him; yea, knew that he was a Devil. *Joh. 6. 70. & 13. 2.* yea, that this *Judas* should be one of the twelve select Apostles, and one of the Family of Christ. Yet Christ repulsed him not; And if he did not partake of the Sacrament at his last Supper, it was not because Christ did turn him out, but because he went away himself. And accordingly the Apostles received 3000 at once into the Church, upon their sudden profession of repentance, even of such as had killed the Lord of life. And though *Simon Magus* would not come out of the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, yet was he not kept out of the visible Church, when he professed to believe and desired baptism.

Indeed if men will not come so far as to the profession of true faith and repentance, they are not to be received into the Church; Because the Church is a Society of such Professours: And if they will not come, they cannot be received. The Church and Sacrament must not be altered, and made another thing than Christ made it, for the receiving of another sort of men. We must not do as some that would have no profession of saving faith and repentance, but only a consent to learn, required of them that are baptized; and so baptism changed into another sort, which Christ never instituted and the Church never used to this day. But if Christians had well studied the compassions of a Saviour, and the tenour of his Gospel, and his practice upon earth, and instead of a surly flying

from their neighbours, and groundless censuring them, were possessed themselves, with that love and tenderness which is the Evangelical temper, and the image of their Lord; it would put an end to many of our divisions, and bring us nearer the truth and one another.

DIRECT. XIII.

Yet, lest you run into the worse extrem, remember still that the destroying of sin, and the sanctifying of mans nature and life by recovering us to the obedience and Love of God, was the design and work of the Redeemer: And that Holiness and Peace must go together: And that the outward order and discipline of the visible Church, must be subservient to the inward spirituality and prosperity of the regenerate Church: And no such favour must be shewed to sinners, as favoureth and strengthneth their sin, and hindereth the increase of holiness.

IT is woful work which ungodly Pastors make in the visible Church, under the name and pretense of *Unity, Concord, Peace and Order*; when an enemy to true holiness, hath the managing of these, you may easily imagine how they will be used: But sad experience hath told the *Christian* world, these 1300 years more doleful things than could otherwise have bin imagined. The compassion which Christ shewed to sinners was to convert
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and save them from their sin: But the compassion which carnal Pastors shew them, is to harden them in their sin, and make them believe that repentance and holiness are but hypocrisie or needless things. The *Unity* and *Concord* which Christ intended, was a *Unity* in himself and a *Concord* in holy Obedience to his Lawes: But it is a *Unity* in the will of man and a *Concord* in obeying the Dictates of the proud, which Treacherous Pastors do require. It is a *Peaceable* progress of the Gospel, and *unanimous* endeavor to convert and sanctifie and save the world, which Christ requireth us to promote: But it is a *Peaceable* enjoyment of their own prosperity, wealth and honour, and a *peaceable* forbearance of a holy life, which Wolvish Pastors do desire. It is an *Orderly* management of holy doctrine, worship and conversation, for the edification of the flock, and the increase of godliness, which Christ commandeth. But it is an absolute obedience to their wills, and an exact observance of their new-made Religions, and needless scandalous inventions, and an adoring of their titles and robes of honour, covering their ignorance, pride and sensuality, which Church-tyrants call the *Order* of the Church. All Christs indulgent tenderness and Discipline, are but to further his Holy designe, of killing sin and sanctifying souls. But the *Images* of Piety, Government, Unity, Peace and Order, which Hypocrites and Pharisees set up, are devised engines to destroy the Life and serious practice of the things themselves, and are set up in enmity against spirituality and holiness, that there might be no
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other Piety, Government, Unity, Peace or Order in the Church, but these lifeless Images.

It is far from the mind of Christ, that no difference should be made between the *Holy* and the *profane*, the precious and the vile: Or that serious piety should be suppressed or discouraged; or faithful preachers hindered from promoting it, or ignorant graceless Ministers countenanced, under pretence of *Peace* or *Order*. The design of Christ was not like *Mahomet's*, to get himself an earthly Kingdom, and numerous followers merely to cry up his name: And therefore he will not indulge men in their sins, nor abate or alter the conditions of his Covenant, to win disciples: He will have his Ministers deal plainly with all to whom they preach, and let them know that without *self-denial* and *forsaking all* (in estimation and resolution) and a willing exchange of earth for heaven, they cannot be his true Disciples: Nor without a *Profest consent* to thus much, they cannot be his *visible profest* Disciples: But all that will not repent must perish. And therefore in their Baptism they must profess a renunciation of all competitors. His Ministers also must impartially exercise the Keyes which he hath committed to their trust, and must not fear the faces of men, who at most are able but to kill the body. *Luk. 12. 4.* They must discern between the righteous and the wicked; and draw all scandalous sinners to repentance, or else exclude them from the communion of Saints, that the world may see that Christ is no friend to prophane persons, or sensual fleshly bruits. As *Chrysostome* comman-

commandeth the *Presbyters* not to give the body and blood of Christ to the unworthy, though he were the greatest Commander or wore a *Dia-dem*, and professeth that he would suffer his own blood to be shed, before he would give the blood of Christ to the unworthy: And as blessed *Paul* would become all things to all men to win them, and commandeth us not to please our selves, but to please our neighbours for their good to edification: And yet when it came to the flattering of men in their sins, he saith that if he should so please men, he should be no longer the servant of Christ. And as to his own interest in mans esteem, he saith, *With me it is a small thing to be judged of you, or of mans judgment.* Rom. 15. 1, 2, 3. 1 Cor. 10. 33. Gal. 1. 10. 2 Tim. 2. 4. 1 Cor. 4. 3. Take heed therefore of pretending Unity, order, peace, or charity, against the strictest obedience of Gods laws, or against the faithful preaching of the Gospel, and exercise of true Church-discipline, or against the necessity of the ancient profession of saving faith and true-repentance in all that will be admitted to the communion of the Church: It is not an ungodly unity, peace or order that we plead for.

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DIRECT. XIV.

Though your Governours and not you, must judge what persons shall be of your publike Church-communion, yet it is you that must judge who are fit or unfit for your private company and familiarity. Here therefore exercise your strictness in your own part.

AS it is not you, but the King that must judge, who shall be of the *same Kingdome* with you: nor the *servant* but the *Master*, that must choose who shall be in the *family* with him: Nor the *scholler* but the *Schoolmaster* that must choose who shall be of the *same School* with him: So it is not you, but your *Pastor* that must judge who shall be of the *same Church* with you. As to the *Universal visible Church*, this is confessed by all: And there is no reason why it should be denied of *particular Churches*, as is proved. But who shall be your *Pastors* or your *Masters*, your husbands or your wives, if you are yet *free*, you your selves must be the choosers: And who shall be your intimate companions, or your bosome friends: Here therefore make as strict a choice as you can. If you meet a prophane person at the *Lords Table*, it is his own fault, or the *Pastors*: But if you keep company needlessly with such, or *marry* such, it is your own fault. If the *Pastor* do not excommunicate them, you may choose not to be *familiar* with them: Though you must meet them at the *Church* and pray with them; you need not meet them

them at the *Ale-house* and drink with them. Though you may not with a few of the most godly separate from the publike communion of all the rest; yet may you keep a more intimate familiarity with those few, than with all the rest. And if you will consider, this is all that is necessary to your own duty, and that which is best for your own edification. Keep thus to a strictness within the bounds of your own place and calling, and God will bless you in such a strictness.

DIRECT. XV.

Understand well how much it hath pleased God, to lay all mens good or evil, happiness or misery, upon their own choice: And observe the reasons of it, that you may not oppose this order of God.

THough God by his grace must change the perverse disposition of mens wills, before they will make a gracious choice; yet it is most certain, that the teachings, commands, exhortations and reproofs of God, are directed to the will of man: And that the promises and threatenings, mercies and judgements, are used to move and change the will: And that in the tenor of his Laws and Covenants Christ hath set Life and Death before men, and put their *Happiness* in their own choice; and that no man shall have better or worse than he made choice of: that is, none shall be either happy or miserable, but as they

they did *choose* or *refuse*, the *causes* of happiness or misery. And the reason of this is, because *Natural-free-will*, was part of the *Natural-image* of God on *Adam*; and it is as natural to a man to be a *free-agent*, as to be *Reasonable*. And God will govern *Man as Man*, agreeably to his *nature*.

Therefore do not wonder if *Church priviledges* are principally left to *mens own wills* or *choice*, when their *salvation* is left to it.

Indeed God would not have any man admitted into the Church and to its communion, in *his own way*, and on *his own terms*: The way and terms are of Christs appointment: That they must *Profess Faith and Repentance* is his appointed condition: that the *Minister* must be the *publike judge* of this profession; and accordingly receive them solemnly by *Baptism*, and that they must enter under the hand of the *Key-bearers* of the Church; All this is of Christs institution. But whether they will make this profession or not? and whether they will make it in *truth* or in *falsehood*; and whether they will live according to it, or play the hypocrites and live contrary to it; These are at their own choice. And good reason; for the *gain* or *loss* must be their own. If any be in the Communion of the Church, who either *never made profession* of Christianity, or who is *proved* before them to have *apostatized* from that profession, or to live *impenitently* in any *gross sin*, after the *Churches admonition*, it is the *Pastors fault*; and yours if it be by the neglect of your duty. But if any *other* be there it is their *own fault*, and the *loss* and *hurt* must be their own. If any one that *professeth*

fesseth Christianity ignorantly, unbelievingly, and hypocritically be there: or if they come to the Sacrament whilst they live in secret or open sin, before they have been openly admonished by the Church, it is their own sin; and not you but they shall bear the blame. God leaveth such matters to their own choice: and as they choose they speed. And for us to grudge at this order of God, is but to quarrel at wisdom and goodness, and to correct Gods order by our disorder. The man that came in without a wedding garment, is blamed, and bound hand and foot, and punished: But the Minister that called him in and admitted him, is not blamed; because he did as he was bidden: He went to the high-ways and hedges and compelled them (by importunity) to come in, that the House might be filled: Nor are any that came in *with him* blamed, for having communion with such: For *they* were in *their places*, and did as they were exhorted to do. And so will it be in the case that is before us.

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DIRECT. XVI.

Though the profession of Christianity which entitleth men to Church-communion, must be credible: yet remember that there are divers Degrees of credibility; and that every Profession which is not proved false is credible in such a degree, as must be accepted by the Church.

Profession of Christianity is every mans Church-title. No man is to prove the sincerity of his own profession; nor may the Church require such proof at his hands; For how can a man prove to another the sincerity of his own heart? But the fuller testimony he giveth of it, the better it is: And therefore none should refuse to make his own profession, as fully credible to the Church as he is able, nor is the Church to be blamed for enquiring after the fullest credibility, so be it they do it, but *ad melius esse*, and not *ad esse*; not laying his title upon it, nor refusing him for want of it. But every profession, as such, is credible in some degree, which is not disproved. Because men are under God, the only competent judges of their own hearts: And the belief of one another is the ground of humane converse: And it is an injury to any man to account him a lyar, without sufficient proof. He that will disprove a mans profession, must prove first, that he doth not tolerably understand what he saith; secondly, or that he speaketh not seriously, but in jest; or not voluntarily;

lancarily, but in hypocrisie by constraint, or for some by end: Thirdly, or that he contradicteth his own words by some more credible words or deeds. And if you never yet thus disproved mens profession of Christianity before the Pastors of the Church, and yet cry out against the Pastors for admitting them, you are not *true Reformers*, but *disorderly Mutineers*, and peevish censurers in the Church of Christ. Christs orders, and mens right, and all Church-justice, must not be trodden down and sacrificed to your humour, and arbitrary way.

DIRECT. XVII.

Know how far either Grace or Gifts are necessary to a Minister; that you may give both Grace and Gifts their due.

There have been two great questions which long have troubled the Church, whether we may take him for a true Minister of Christ, that is *ungodly*? And what measure of *Gifts* is necessary to the being of the Ministry? I have carefully answered them both in my *Disputation of Ordination* long ago, and shall now only say in brief. First, that no *ungodly man* is so called to the Ministry, as to *excuse himself* before God for his usurpation and hypocritical administrations. Secondly, But many an *ungodly man* is so far called to the Ministry as that his administration is all *valid to the Church*, and the *innocent people* shall not

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have the *loss*. Thirdly, no people should *choose* and *prefer* such an ungodly Minister before a better. Fourthly, but they should rather *submit* to such than have *none*, when a better cannot (by them) be had. *Judas* had a place in the Ministry with the Apostles, *Act. 1. 17*. And his ministrations might be valid to others, though his hypocrisy might turn it into sin to himself. And his ministry might have been accepted of the people, though they had known his hypocrisy as Christ did: But a *sincere* Apostle was to be preferred before him.

And for *Gifts*, First the greatest degree is best; and secondly, God maketh so great use of them, that many an hypocrite with excellent gifts, doth edifie the Church more than many good men that are ungifted. Thirdly, but that measure of Gifts only is necessary to the *Being* of a Minister without which the *essential parts* of his office cannot be performed.

Learn therefore to prefer them that have most grace and gifts; but not to take them for no Ministers that want *Grace* totally, or want only a greater degree of Gifts. And marvel not that Gifts are more necessary to the validity of ministrations than Grace is. He may perform the office of a Minister to the benefit of the Church, that hath no saving grace at all: so did *Judas*: so did those in *Math. 7. 21*. that prophesied and cast out devils in Christs name, to whom he will yet say, Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I know you not: For *Grace* is to save him that possesseth it: But Gifts are to teach and profit others. Yet *Grace* is an exceeding furtherance of the right
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and successful use of gifts : For ordinarily he that speaketh from the heart speaketh to the heart; when an unexperienced hypocrite speaketh without life. But sometimes a dulness and want of utterance in the sincere, and a natural and affected fervency in the hypocrite, with a voluble tongue, do obscure this difference; and make the hypocrite the more profitable to the Church.

DIRECT. XVIII.

Understand well the necessity of your Communion with all the Universal Church, and wherein it consisteth, and how far to be preferred before your Communion with any particular Church.

With the *Universal Church mystical*, you must have communion by the *same spirit*, the *same regeneration*, the *same Faith and Love*, and the *same Laws of God*; and obedience thereto.

With the *Universal Church visible*, you must have communion, in the *same Profession of faith and repentance*, and the *same baptism*, and the *same sort of ministry and publike worship*, so far as they are *universally determined of by Christ*. And though you are absent in body, you must be as present in spirit by consent, with all the Churches of Christ on earth. You must have *spiritual communion* with the whole *spiritual Church*, and *visible communion in kind* (in the *same Rule of faith*, and *kind of worship*) with all the *visible Church*; and

Local-presential communion with that particular Church where you are present, and with any other where your presence afterwards may be needful; unless they hinder you by unlawful terms.

So that it is not the same kind nor measure of Communion which you are obliged to hold with all; But you must have Communion with all men as a man; and with neighbours as a neighbour, and with relations according to the relations civil or domestical; and with all true Christians, as a true Christian; and with all professed Christians, as a professed Christian; and with the particular Church of which you are a part, as a part of that Church. And with your bosome Friends and intimate Companions, as a Friend and Companion.

And yet in all this, you must communicate with no Church or person in their sin it self: and yet not refuse their Communion in good, though mixt with sin. You must own all the prayers of all the Churches in the world, so far as they are good, and joyn in spirit by consent, as if you concurred with them in presence, and made all their prayers to be your own (As you do by the prayers of the Church where you are present.) If there be disorders or imperfections or sinful blemishes in their prayers, you must disown all those faults, but not therefore disown any part of all their prayers which are good, but desire to have a part in them and desire the pardon of their failings.

And here you may perceive what a mischief pievish separation is on both sides. It hindereth you from praying aright for others, as the members should do for all the body; And it hindereth

eth you from partaking in the benefit of the prayers of most of the Church of God on earth. Indeed God may hear those prayers for you which you your selves disown: But whether this may be expected, according to the ordinary course of his dealing, is much to be doubted: seeing he hath made every mans *will* or *choice* the ordinary condition of his participation of such benefits, it is hard to conceive, that he that abhorreth the prayers of other men, or taketh them for such as God abhorreth, or will not accept, and in his mind disowneth all participation, and communion in them, should yet have a part against his will. But of this more anon.

As your *Baptism* maketh you Members of the Universal Church, in order of nature before you are members of a particular Church; so your *relation* to the Universal Church is more *noble*, more *necessary*, and more *durable*, than your relation to any particular Church: It is more *noble*, because the Society is more *noble*.

The *whole* is more excellent than a little part: It is more *necessary*; because you cannot be saved and be Christians without being members of the Universal Church: But you may be Christians and be saved, without being a member of any stated particular Church. It is more *durable*, because you can never separate from the Universal Church, or cease to be a member of it, without being separated from Christ: But divers occasions may warrant your remove all from a particular Church. Live not therefore in those narrow and dangerous principles, as if your Congregation or your party were all the Church of Christ; or

as if you had no Christian relation to any other Ministers or People, nor owed any duty to them as Members of the same Body. But remember that all Christians, Persons and Congregations, are but the Members of the Kingdom of Christ.

DIRECT. XIX.

Take heed of engaging your selves too far in any divided Sect, or of espousing the interest of any party of Christians, to the neglect or injury of the common interest of the Universal Church, or cause of Christianity.

I Doubt not but among several ranks of Christians, the soundest and most upright are to be best esteemed, and (*ceteris paribus*) their Communion to be preferred, before theirs that are more unsound and scandalous. But its one thing to prefer the eye or hand, before the foot; a noble member before a more ignoble; and another thing to own a *Sect as such*, or a *party* as they either divide from others, or take up a dividing opposite interest. You are sure that the *Universal Church* of Christ can never erre against the essentials of Christianity, nor against any truth or duty necessary to their salvation. For then the Church were no Church, and then Christ were not its Head. And then the body of Christ might perish: And then Christ were not the Saviour of his body. But you cannot say of any *one part*, that
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you are sure *that part* shall never fall away and perish. There may fall out a necessity which may warrant the Body to cut off a hand or leg, to save the rest; But no corporal necessity can warrant you to destroy the whole; nor any one member to forsake the Body, before it is forcibly cut off.

He that seeth not how the espousing of parties and divided interests, doth corrupt most Christians in the world, and lacerate and deface the Church of Christ, doth not understand or not observe the condition of mankind. It is somewhat rare to meet with any serious Christians, who are not so deeply engaged into some *Sect* or *Side* or *party*, as to darken their judgements, and pervert their affections as to all the rest, and to corrupt their converse in the world: How blindly do such look on all that is good in those that differ from them? How partially do they judge of the judgements and practises of others? How small a thing will serve the turn, to excuse the faults of any of their party? And how small and common a good seemeth excellent in them? And how perversely do they aggravate the faults of all that are against their way? As if every infirmity were a crime, and had no excuse? yea, they are oft glad to hear of some miscarriage in them, for which they may speak against them. And very readily take up such reports, and are the willing-tongues of slanderous fame: And in all this their faction maketh them impenitent: For they think it tendeth to the disgrace of the other Party, and so of their Cause, which they account an error; and consequently that God hath use for

their malicious Calumnies to his glory.

What company can you come into of forward Christians, but they are talking against those of other parties? (except a few true entire Christians, who are thoroughly possessed with the loving compassionate spirit of their Lord, and have received the true impression of the Gospel.) And if you mark the cause you will find it is a *sectarian spirit*, that prevaileth against the *Catholick spirit* of *Christianity*. And in no sect more, than in those that pretend to be the *only Catholicks*, and to do all this against the *Sectaries* as such! What bitter lies do the Popish sects under the name of *Catholicks* daily vent not only against *Luther*, *Calvin*, and other Reformers, but any that stand against the peculiar interest of their party. And they that can get the upper hand and by worldly advantages become the domineering sect, do think that thereby, they are exempted from the name and number of sectaries; and that all are sectaries that question their authority, and do not absolutely obey them.

In all their discourse the stigmatizing of dissenters is an ordinary part! One side reproacheth the other as Hereticks and Schismatics; And the other reproacheth them as hypocrites, formalists, and pharisaical persecutors: And every party think that all this is a part of Christian zeal; and if they did it not they should be guilty of lukewarmness and neutrality, and consenting to the sins of others. And thus the Church of Christ is engaged in a war against it self: And when all men should know them to be Christs disciples by loving one another; most men may perceive