

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

perceive that they have too much contrariety to the Christian nature, by their endeavouring to make each other odious. And all because instead of distinguishing the members of the *same Body* by their several offices and degrees, we are grown to make *several Bodies* of them, and to set one part against another. How many a Kingdomes conversion from Infidelity hath been hindered? and how many a faithful Minister silenced or reproached? and how many excellent Christians slandered and vilified? and how many blameless customs, forms, and practises accused? and how many infirmities aggravated as mortal crimes, by a siding factional disposition, and to promote the cause and interest of a Sect. Therefore as you love your integrity and peace, keep up an impartial universal love and honour to all Christians as such, and take heed of a dividing spirit.

DIRECT. XX.

Be very suspicious of your Religious passions; and carefully distinguish between a sound and a sinful zeal; lest you should father your sin on the spirit of holiness, and think that you are most pleasing God, when you offend him.

WE are seldome more mistaken in justifying our selves than in our *Passions*: And when our *Passions* are *Religious* the mistake is both most easie and most perillous: *Easie*, because we are apt

apt to be most confident, and not suspect them, the matter seeming so *great* and *good*, about which they are exercised. And *Perilous*, because the *greatness* and *goodness* of the *matter*, doth make the error the *greater* and the *worse*. I have shewed before how easie it is, to think that our *Religious passions*, are all the works of the spirit of God: For we are apt to estimate them, by the depth and earnestness which we feel. But excellent persons have been here mistaken, as *James* and *John* were. And not only so, but when the passion is up, the judgement it self is seldome to be far trusted; For it inclineth us to err in all things that concern the present business. Therefore still remember the difference between *true* zeal and *false*: And know that he that is upright in the main, and whose zeal for Christianity is sound, may yet have much zeal that is unsound with it.

First, It is an ill sign when your zeal is raised about some *singular opinion* which you have owned, and not for the *common-salvation* and substance of the Christian faith or practise. Or at least, when your odd opinion hath a *greater proportion* of your zeal, than many more plain and necessary truths.

Secondly, when your zeal is moved by any *personal interest* of your own: By honour or dishonour; By any wrong that is done you, or any reputation of wisdom or goodness, which lieth on the cause. Or at least when your *own interest* hath too large a *proportion* in your zeal.

Thirdly, when your zeal is more for the *interest* of your party, than for the Universal Church, and the common cause of Godliness, and Christianity; and can be content that some *detriment*

to the whole, may further the interest of the party.

Fourthly, when your zeal tendeth to *hurt* and *cruelty*, and would have God rather to glorifie his *Justice* by some present notable judgement; than his *Mercy* by patience and forgiving: And when your secret desire of *fire from heaven*, or some destruction of the adversaries is greater than your desire and prayer for their conversion. The sure mark of true zeal is, that it is *zealous Love*: It maketh you love your neighbours and enemies more fervently than others do: But false zeal maketh you more inclined to their suffering; and to reproach and hurt them.

Fifthly, It is an ill signe when your zeal is beyond the proportion of your understanding: And your prudence and experience is as much less than other mens, as your zeal is greater. True zeal hath some equality of *Light* and *Heat*.

Sixthly, It is an ill sign when it is a zeal which is easily kept alive, and hardly restrained: For that sheweth the flesh and the Devil are too much its friends. The true zeal of the spirit doth need the fuel of all holy means, and the bellows of meditation, and prayer to kindle it: and all is too little to keep it up in the constancy that we desire. But carnal zeal will burn of it self without such endeavours.

Seventhly, It is an ill signe when some *sect* or *false teacher* was the kindler of it; and not the sober preaching of the truth.

Eighthly, And it is an ill sign when it burneth in the same soul where *lust* and *wrath* and *pride* and *malice* burn; And when it prospereth at the same

time

time, when the love of God, and a heavenly mind and life decay, The zeal of a sensualist, of a proud man, of a covetous man, of a self-conceited empty person; can hardly be thought a spiritual zeal.

9. And it is an ill sign when it carrieth you from the *holy rule*; and pretendeth to come from a spirit which will not be tryed by the Scripture: Or when it driveth you to use means which God forbiddeth in his Word: and putteth you upon ways which the sealed Law and Testimony condemn: It cannot be of God, which is against Gods Word.

10. Lastly, it is a suspicious sign, when it is contrary to the judgement, experience and zeal of the generality of the most wise, experienced, tryed, sober, godly Christians; and so to the ordinary working of Gods Spirit in other men, who are as good as you. For Gods Spirit is not contrary to it self.

By all these signs you may easily perceive, how the dividing zeal of a Sect as a sect, doth differ from the genuine Christian zeal. The one is a zeal for some *singular opinion*: The other is a zeal for *Godliness and Christianity*. The one is kindled by some *interest* of our *own* religious reputation: the other is kindled by the interest of the *will* and *glory of God*. The one is for the strengthening of a *Party*: The other is to increase the *Church Universal*, and promote the common cause of Christianity: even when some particular truth or duty is the *Matter* of it, yet the *general cause* of *godliness* is the end. The one is a *burning, haring zeal*, even the same which hath made matter for so many

many Martyrologies, and frightful Histories, by inquisitions, torments, prisons, flames, massacres and bloody wars: And the same which hath silenced so many faithful Ministers, and disturbed so many States and Churches: The other is a *zeal of Love*, which maketh men fervent in *doing good* to others: The one causeth men to revile and despise and censure and backbite, and zealously to make all dissenters seem odious, that the hearers may abate their love to them. The other maketh us value all that is good in others, and to hide their nakedness, and to make them better, and to provoke the hearers to love and to good works. The one tendeth to divisions and sidings and separations and distances from our brethren; and to feed contentions: The other is a zeal for *unity, amity and peace*. The one is the complexion of the weak, and childish, the proud, and self-conceited, the peevish and surly sort of Professors: The other is the zeal of solid knowledge, and of the prudent, humble, meek and well grounded sort of Christians. The one is a zeal which flyeth most outward, against the sins of other men, and can live with pride, and covetousness, and selfishness, and sensuality at home: such *serve not the Lord Jesus, but their own bellies*, Rom. 16. 16, 17. The other beginneth at home, and consumeth all these vices in the heart; and as zeal increaseth humility, and meekness, and love, and self-denial, and temperance, and heavenly mindedness increase. The one is easily got and easily kept, and hardly kept under! O how easie is it to get and keep a contemptuous, censorious, backbiting, dividing or persecuting zeal! But the

the other is not so much befriended by Satan or the flesh, and therefore must be preserved by prayer and meditation, and very great diligence. How *hard* is it to keep up a *zealous love of God and Man*? and a fervour in all our heavenly and spiritual desires? Abate but your *diligence* and this will presently decay: when the fierce, contending, hurting, separating and persecuting zeal doth need no such fuel or labour to maintain it: The one is kindled by the enflaming censures of some rash and passionate Preacher, that knoweth better how to *kill Love* than to *cause* it; or by the singular conceits of some Sectary or Divider; or by the backbitings of some *Doeg*, or malicious Calumniator: The other is kindled by the humble, and heavenly preaching of the Gospel, and by the meditations on Christs example, and a study to imitate him and his Saints in patience, forbearance, so giving others and doing good. The one is a zeal which carrieth men *from the Scripture*, to pretences of such revelations, and inspirations, and impulses as have no proof, but the feeling and fancy of the person: or at least, to abuse the Word of God, and plead it for that which it condemneth: It provoketh men to some unlawful practise, under pretence of misinterpreted texts, and of good ends and meanings. The other still putteth you upon good, and striveth against evil; and goeth for tryal of every cause to the Law and to the testimony. Lastly, the one is a zeal which pretendeth the spirit, and yet goeth contrary to the common workings of the spirit, in the most part of the best and wisest Christians. But the other is the common vital heat, which animateth all

all the body of Christ, and actuateth all his living members; and keepeth up love and holiness in the Church; and is the same in all humble heavenly Christians in the world. It will be of great use to you, in order to your own and the Churches peace, to understand and observe the difference between these contrary sorts of religious zeal.

DIRECT. XXI.

Lend not a patient ear to back-biters; much less must you hastily believe them when they speak ill of others: But shew your detestation of that sin, though they should be most religious people that use it, and do it upon a religious pretence.

I Do not say that it is *always* unlawful to speak that which is ill of another behind his back. Sometime wicked men will take occasion to justify sin it self, by the advantage of a sinners name: And sometime they will magnifie the vertues of some wicked man, or of some of their sect, on purpose to cast reproach on godliness, or to make others odious by the comparison. Yet in such cases we must repress their malignity more by a *defensive* than an *offensive* opposition. But the usual course of back-biting in all sorts of men, is sinful. The back-biter (how great or learned or religious soever) is but the devils minister, to preach

preach down the love of others, and to exhort you
 to hate your brother, or to abate your charity to
 him. And he that patiently hearkeneth to such,
 is a partaker of their sin. And he that believeth
 them, hath taken the infection. Most of our o-
 dious thoughts of others, and our false and un-
 charitable censures, do come in this way. For
 the most part, men censure and separate and per-
 secute most, where they are acquainted least, but
 go by hear-say, and judge of men by back-biters
 mis-reports: And acquaintance and familiarity
 usually reconcileth them, and sheweth them their
 error. You think it is a fair excuse for you,
 when you either believe or report evil of another,
 to say, that you heard it from very honest and
 religious, or reverend persons; or you heard it
 from many, and confidently uttered. But God
 hath not allowed you to receive back-biters, be-
 cause they are *godly*, or because they are *many*.
 This very age and time doth experimentally con-
 fute this excuse: In which it is so common a
 thing, for false reports and news to be uttered
 with confidence, and that by multitudes, and ma-
 ny of them religious, and yet neither truth nor
 ground at all, for what is said. *Back-biters, and*
haters of God are conjoynd *Rom. 1.30.* *He that*
back-biterh not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his
neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neigh-
bour, is one that hath the mark of a Citizen of
Zion. Psal. 15. 3. *An angry countenance must*
drive away a back-biting tongue. Pro. 25. 23. Paul
 was afraid of that which we all now feel the evil
 of, even this evil spirit which I am now detect-
 ing. *2 Cor. 13. 20.* *Lest there be debates, envy-*
ings,

ings, wraths, strifes, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults, and so God would humble him among them. Rebuke *back-bitings* and *whisperings*, or you will hardly avoid the rest of these iniquities. It may be the report which you hear may be all false: Or it may be it is some little matter made much greater than it is. Or it may be some part of the truth is concealed and some circumstance which would make it better, ^{not} understood. However, if it be true, when the reporter hath no call to speak it, or when the accused is not heard speak for himself, and you never heard what he hath to say, there is sin and injustice in the back-biter, the believer and reporter.

DIRECT. XXII.

Make not your selves judges of other mens actions, much less of their state, before you have a call, and before you have sufficient acquaintance or proof, of the person and of the case.

Very common reports and very confident presumptions, may all prove injurious and false. You may hear that such a family is prophane, and that such a person hath no religion, that such a one is covetous, & such a one erroneous, &c. and when it comes to the trial, it may all prove false. However it must be as false to you, till you know, or prove it to be true: you may be ignorant of ano-

ther mans faults, without any faultiness of your own: But you cannot rashly censure another without being your self faulty though the matter should prove true. Justice must be observed as well in *private* as in *publike* judging. As no Judge in any Civil or Ecclesiastical Court, must condemn any man without sufficient proof (which made Christ say *Matth. 18. 15, 16.* Take one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established) so no man in his own *thoughts* must condemn his brother, by any rash or groundless sentence. It is safer for you to judge better of another than he is, than it is to judge worse of him than he is. In many cases it may be your duty to judge better of him than he is; because you must judge according to proof; And if the evidence or proof deceive you, it is none of your fault to be so deceived. And yet you are not hereby bound to believe a falshood: All that you are bound to believe is, that it is *probable* that such a person is virtuous, innocent or sincere: And this is no falshood: for that may be *probable* or *likely* which is not true.

Few well consider of the meaning of Christs words in *Math. 7. 1, 2.* Judge not that ye be not judged: For with what judgement ye judge ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again: I doubt not but part of the sense may be, He that judgeth without mercy of another, shall have judgement without mercy from God; as St. James expresseth it. But thats not all; but the rest of the sense is [And he that judgeth cruelly rashly and falsely of his brother, shall be so judged of by other men himself.] Not that

that God will *cause* it, but he will *permit* it; and therefore can *foretel* it; and make a righteous punishment, of the sin which he doth but permit. Do you not know that other men will censure and backbite you, as boldly and as busily as you do censure and backbite others. Is it such a pleasure to you to imitate the Devil, the great accuser, as that you will be as much accused your selves, and as hardly thought of, rather than you will give it over.

And see here how sin doth cross it self. Most of the censorious, are *proud* persons, who think others much worse than themselves; and therefore speak worse of their common and more ignorant neighbours, that they may be thought to be no common nor ignorant persons themselves; and they are offended with the Pastor of the Church, for admitting such persons into communion with such as they: That so their piety may be more conspicuous than their neighbours: when all this while they are but preparing for their own dishonour; And others will judge as bad of them. When usually the meek and humble and merciful Christian who judgeth hardly of himself and tenderly of all others; is tenderly and lovingly judged of by all. The Prelatist saith, [what obstinate persons are these Non-conformists, They do all to keep the approbation of their party] And are they not requited by many of them whom they censure, who say [What temporizing hypocrites are these Formalists and Latitudinarians ! They would turn Papists or any thing to save their skins, or get preferment. What perjury or other heinous crime will they not

number with *things* indifferent.] The Papist thinks the Protestant a Heretick unworthy to live on earth and therefore thirsteth for his blood; And is he not requited by the censures of them that think that he is but a blood-thirsty limb of Antichrist himself? If he think that the Protestant cannot be saved, because he is not a member of the Pope, or Roman Church; the Protestant requiteth him oft times with concluding, that a Papist cannot go beyond a reprobate, nor a worshipper of the Beast be saved. If the Independent censure the Presbyterian as a favourer of looseness and formality, the Presbyterian can requite him, by censuring him to be an enemy to order, government & peace, and a turbulent cause of all confusion. The same I may say of all other sects: It is not now my purpose to take part with any of them, nor to speak against any one of them more than the rest: But to them tell all of their mistake in their censorious way, & how certainly they prepare for the same measure and judgement which they give to others. *Rom. 14.4. Who art thou that judgest another mans servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth: Yea he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand. — But why judgest thou thy brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ — So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* It is strange that those men that can understand a text against swearing and drunkenness, can see no light nor feel no power in such words as these.

DIRECT. XXIII.

*Mistake not the nature of the sin of scandal :
Think not that it is the bare displeasing or
grieving of another ; For it is the laying
of a stumbling block , that is , a temptati-
on, or occasion of sinning before another.*

INdeed the word [*offend*] hath occasioned the
mistake of many in this point, to the great en-
snaring of themselves and others. *Offending some-
time* signifieth only *Displeasing or grieving* another:
And this is not the *scandal* which the Scripture
speaks against. But it signifieth also the laying
of a *stumbling block* before another, upon which
he may be occasioned to fall into sin ; And this is
the *offence* which is called *scandal*. Abundance of
well meaning people, have thought that they must
not use any form or words or order or action (e-
specially if it be indifferent in it self) which o-
thers are displeased or grieved at : Because they
think that is *scandal* : Indeed there is a *grieving*
others which is *scandal* ; that is, when by grieving
them we occasion them to *sin*. But consider I be-
seech you these two things.

First, what a wretched person that is, who will
sin against God every time that his brother doth
not humor him? Durst these persons profess this o-
penly with their tongues ? Dare you say, Do not
you use such a form of prayer or such a ceremony
for if you do, I will sin against God ? What else
do you mean, when you blame men for scandaliz-

zing you? I hope you do not mean that no body must *displease* you? If not, you must know that this only is true scandal, to *occasion* you to sin? And is it not a shame that you will sin so easily?

2. And if bare *displeasing* had been scandal, then *peevishness* and *ignorance* would have advanced all that had them to be the Governours of the world. For what is it to govern, but to have all others obliged to fulfil your wills? And if no man must *displease* you then all must fulfil your wills: And he is scandalous that is not ruled by you. And if this were so, the most childish and womanish sort of Christians, who have the weakest judgement and the strongest wils, and passions, must rule all the world: For these are hardliest pleased, and no man must *displease* them.

But I beseech you remember that *scandal* lieth in *Pleasing* men as well as in *displeasing* them, when it may harden them in an error, or tempt them to any sin: I will instance to you but in two scandalous acts of *Peter* himself. The first was to Christ in *Math. 16. 22, 23*. Where he thought to please Christ and save him from suffering, and would have had him to spare or favour himself. And Christ saith, Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence to me: the *Greek* word is, *A scandal*: that is, Thou wouldst do as *Satan* did, even tempt me to sin, & neglect the work which I came into the world about. The other was in *Gal. 2. 12, 13*. Where *Peter* did scandalize the *Jews* by *pleasing* them! For fear of offending the weak Judaizing Christians, he separated from familiar communion with the Gentiles. By which he laid a stum-

bling

bling block or temptation before them, to harden them in the sinful opinion of separation. If it had been done in our dayes many would have been drawn away with *Barnabas*, and thought that *Peter* had not given scandal to the *Jewish Christians*, but only separated for fear of scandalizing them. Many a time I have the rather gone to the Common prayers of the publick assemblies, for fear of being a scandal to those same men, that called the going to them a scandal: that is, for fear of hardening them in a sinful separation and error: because I knew that that was not scandal which they called scandal, that is, *displeasing them and crossing their opinions*: but hardening them in an error or other sin, is true scandalizing. Understand this or you will displease God under pretence of avoiding scandal.

DIRECT. XXIV.

Make conscience of scandalizing one party as well as another: and those most who are most in danger by your offence.

MAny persons pretend the avoiding of scandal, only to flatter one party and to preserve their own reputation and interest with that side which they are lothest to displease. And perhaps discern not the deceit of their own hearts in all this; but think that it is indeed the sin of scandal which they avoid. But why make you no conscience of scandalizing others, on the contrary

side? Who perhaps are more in number, and whose salvation should be as much desired by you? The Papist perhaps will not deliver the Lords Supper in both kinds, nor will forbear his Image-worship, lest he offend the Roman-Catholicks: But he careth not much that by so doing he offendeth the Protestants and other Churches; Nor that his Images are a scandal to all the *Mahometans*, and keep them from the Christian faith. And thus every sect saith; If you do this or that, you will scandalize and offend many good people: Meaning their own side: But they never regard how many others they shall really scandalize by the contrary: One saith, It is scandalous to use extemporary prayers; And another saith, it is scandalous to pray by forms and books: And both sides usually mean no more, but that their own party will be displeased and take it for a sin. But as he is not scandalized by me, who only taketh my action to be a sin; but he that is ensnared by it in any sin himself; so whether it be displeasing or tempting that you mean, you must regard one side as well as the other. The heavenly wisdom is without partiality and without hypocrisie. Jam. 3. 17.

And usually they talk most against scandalizing those whom they account to be the best: And the best are least in danger of sinning. And so they accuse them to be the worst, or else they know not what they say. For suppose a separatist should say, If you hold communion with any Parish minister or Church in *England*, it will be a scandal to many good people! I would ask such a one why call you those good people, that are easily drawn to sin against God?

God? Nay that will sin, because I do my duty? He will say, No, they will not sin, but they will take it to be *your sin*, and they will be troubled at it? I must answer him, you talk of *scandal*, and know not what *scandal is*: *scandal is not troubling men*, nor making them take *me* for a sinner; but occasioning *them to sin themselves* by some unlawful or needless act of mine. Therefore if you know what you say, you make the separatists almost the worst of men, that will sin against God because another *will not sin*: yea if they would but sin, because another *sinneth* it were bad enough. I would ask you therefore, whether you take not the people of the Parish Churches to be more than you? and to be *worse* than you? If you took them not for much *worse* than your selves, you would not separate from them. And if you do think them worse, you must think that they are more in danger of sinning, or being turned from the liking of godliness and of the Gospel. And if so, then we are bound to be more afraid of giving scandal *to them* than unto *you*. Are not men most afraid of overthrowing the *children* and the *weak*, rather than those that are *stronger* than themselves? If you are apter to sin and turn from Christ than the people of the Parish Churches, we should rather *separatee from you* than from them. If not, we must more take heed of scandalizing them than you.

Obj. But Christ pronounceth a *wo* to them that offend his little ones.

Ans. If by [*offending them*] be meant only persecuting and *burning* them as many think, then it is nothing to the question in hand. For I hope

communicating with others is not a persecuting you. And bare [displeasing them] it is certain that the text doth not mean at all. But if by [offending them] be meant scandalizing them, that is, laying snares before them, whether by fraud or persecution, to turn them from Christ, and draw them to sins, then it confirmeth all that I say: And the term [little ones] containeth the reason of the words: Because as little children are easily overthrown & easilier deceived, so the young & weak believers of little faith, are most in danger of being turned away from Christ, or ensnared in any sin or error. And therefore if you think the Parish Churches to consist of weaker persons than your selves, the woe is to you, or us, if we offend them.

The truth is, *offending and giving scandal, is commonly taken in the Gospel, for any action (which is not our necessary duty) by which either Heathens and Infidels and enemies to Christ, are like to be drawn to harder thoughts of the Christian faith; or any wicked man is like to be kept from a godly life; or else by which the young ungrounded and unsetled sort of Christians, may be tempted to turn back and forsake the faith which they have professed, or fall into any dangerous sin. And therefore seeing the separatists profess to be settled in the faith already, and many in the Parish Churches are weak, and many averse to some duties of Religion, and more in danger of being turned away, we are bound to be much more afraid of giving scandal to the Parishes, than to the separatists.*

Obj. *But Christ cared not for offending such persons*
verse

verse ones, as Herod, or the Pharisees?

Ans. Christ feared not to displease the greatest, when it would be done by doing good: No more must you or they be pleased by our neglect of any duty. But Christ was against laying any trap before either *Herod*, or the Pharisees, to make them sin.

And it is not your censure of others, that will warrant us to use them as Reprobates, forsaken of God. If every man that can be uncharitable enough, to call his neighbours Pharisees or enemies of Christ, without proof, shall keep us from communion with them, then the worse any man is, the more he shall be Lord of all other mens consciences.

DIRECT. XXV.

Be not over-tender of your reputation with any sort of men on earth; nor too impatient of their censures, displeasure, or contempt.

THe fangs of the censorious are a common scandal; and as strong a snare or temptation to some men, as worldly preferments are to others: When we come among men whom we take for the most Religious, and hear them keenly censure all for hypocrites, or formalists, profane or schismatics, who are contrary to them in opinion or practise; at the first we are in danger of being carried away as *Barnabas* in dissimulation, and to say as they say, or at least comply with

with them by our Glence and practise, lest we should be censured by them as others are. Especially Ministers are greatly in danger of this snare. For the prophane hate them for their doctrine and their holy lives; And it is the godly that are the fruit of their labours, and the satisfaction which they have for all their sufferings, and the comfort of their lives: And if these forsake them and despise them, with whom shall they find any comfort in the world? Therefore they are very much in danger of complying too far with their errors and weakneses, to keep their interest in them: And they think it is that they may do them good. And perhaps this was the case of *Peter* and *Barnabas*, with the weak Judaizing Christians. For *Paul* telleth us *Rom.* the 14. that it was the use of the weak (who thought those things to be duties and sins which were not so) to judge the strong, who knew their liberty: And it was the custome of the strong to despise the weak: Just as at this day, the mistaken superstitious Christian, saith, They are prophane that are not against all that he is against: And those that see his error say, what giddy whimsical fanaticks are these? So was it then; and so it is like to be, till God give the world a better mind. Many a faithful Minister I have known, who have freely confessed to me, that the censures of peevish self-conceited Christians, enclined to separation, was a far stronger temptation to them to forsake or overrun their own understandings, than all the offers of honours, or riches could be on the other side. It is a hard thing, when we have spent our labour and lives to bring men to Christ, and have got them

them into a state of hope and forwardness, to be shortly after cast off by them as formalists or temporizers or any thing that their sick fancies will call us. But for all this, it is but one of those trials which God will have his servants undergo : And both Ministers and private persons must be above the praise and the dispraise even of self-conceited Religious persons, before they can be fit to follow Christ, as tried and firmly settled men. Stand your ground if you are in the right. Truth will bear all your charges at the last, and will defend it self and you : If you please men (whoever they be) contrary to God and conscience, you are servants of men, and verily you have your reward. *Math. 6.* But you are no longer the servants of Christ. *Gal. 1. 10.* And you will never be settled, but change as the Moon as the parties or opinions of the censurers change. But if you stick to the words of truth and soberness, at last the sober part of the Religious will be your encouragers, and many of the giddy will come to you by Repentance, when experience hath shewed them that which they would not learn of you. That which is vertiginous will at last settle its rest on that, which is permanent and firm : As boys when they have made themselves wheel-sick with turning round, will lay hold on the next post, to keep them from falling. Therefore bear the censures of the ignorant. Please them in all things lawful for their good and edification; and become all things to all men in a lawful way: But depart not from the principles or practise of Christian-union, Communion, Charity, or Sobriety, to please a dividing hot-brain'd party, nor to escape

escape their sharpest censures. He is unfit to be a Physician that cannot bear a mad mans railings; or the harsh expressions of his friends, when a phrensie or feaver makes them brain-sick. When you have followed them in their violent heats a while to avoid their censure, either you must come back with sorrow, or run to the end with them, as many in this age have done to their own, and to the Churches, and the States confusion; or which is worst of all, God may justly give you up, to be of their minds, and to think that way right and necessary at last, which at first you only yielded to, in compliance with the heats of other men. And when you have sinned against God to avoid their censures, and keep an interest in them, its two to one, but they will turn on still further and further, till you are forced to let them go, and you shall in the end be more censured and despised by them, than if you had never humoured them at all. These things are written in an age of full experience, by one that hath seen the proof in multitudes.

For my own part, I will be so ingenuous and thankful, to the disingenuous and unthankful world as to confess, that they have used me with unusual moderation and civility; in that they have still mixed too high commendations with their blind unreasonable Censures. But yet I must say that he is worse than a fool who would not be taught, by so much experience as I have had, of the vanity of the judgments of the vertiginous world, to choose a more stedfast seat for his rest, than a windmills-sails. The *malicious censurers* and railers on one side, and the *peevish censurers*

surers on the other side, have taught me to stand to the judgment of God, and to pity the poor hypocrite, who hath no better a reward, than, the thoughts and praise of mortal men.

Do I speak according to the most common judgment of Divines? The Sectary saith, my light is *divine*: I speak but by rote, and not by true illumination. Do I pretend to add any clearness to the methods or points received, or to correct any error which hath got the major Vote of the injudicious? Then I am self-conceited, and a novel-list; and if not a heretick, its well! And the honour of all the Divines which are of a contrary mind, must be engaged to promote the Censure. And the fear that sober Christians have of novelty and error, must be called up to make them abhor any truth which the grave and ignorant censurer doth not understand: And they that confess that they never seriously read what I have written, on such or such a subject, yet have wisdom and honesty little enough to say behind my back, O take heed of such a mans Books, for they are *tantum non* heretical: Though in *presence* they are as gentle as Lambs, or as quickly silenced (or worse) as the Owls at the approach of day light: If such a judicious Writer, as *Camero*, or *Davenant*, or *Usher*, or *Grocins*, or *Bergius*, or *Amyrald*, or *Placcus*, or *Capellus*, or *Tetardus*, or *Blondel*, or *Dallaus*, or *Le Blanc* (in his late excellent impartial judicious Theses) or *Junius*, or *Vossius*, or *Strangius*, &c. do tell any of the unstudied or injudicious sort of Divines, any more than they have received from that party of Teachers, who are in greatest reputation with them; you shall have

have those that never understood them, tell the ignorant (that cannot contradict them) how erroneous they are, and how they contradict themselves: and what inconsistencies and absurdities they speak: And it all goes down with deluded auditors, as if the Speaker were an Oracle; or at least, knew what he said.

And to teach you to despair of the hypocrites reward, let me tell you; that till God make the world another thing than now it is, there is no hope that ever the *honestest* sort of *Christians* or *Teachers* (much less the dishonest) should ever come to so high attainments, that the major part should be truly judicious in judging of deep and difficult controversies! And that there is as little hope, that either of them should know how little they know, till their knowledge in the matter it self increase; or that ever the world (whether *Christians* or *Heathens*, *Pastors* or *People*) should cease to overvalue their own apprehensions; till greater Light and study bring them first to *Doubting*, and lastly to separate the *certainities* from the *uncertainities*, and to *fasten* upon one, and lay by the other. But I have been long upon this instance.

And it is so in almost all things else. Scarce a day or hour that I spend, but I must sin or be censured for it. If I neglect my most publike labours, my conscience and those at a distance censure me. If I do not, those at hand who expect all my time should be spent in private converse with them, censure me, If my publike duty command me away, yet he that expected that hour in conference, thinks that I disdainfully neglect him;
And

And if I should cast off preaching and writing, it is almost all one: For that hour which I have been spending with one, another hath been that while expecting; and censuring me as sharply for his frustration.

If I had a benefit to do or give, which I can give but to one, ten shall censure me, because they have it not, when the one that had it is scarcely thankful. If you would give all that you have to the poor, when all is given, many that had nothing will censure you more then those that had it will be grateful. Expectations with most men are high, and they understand not your inability: And mens necessities are many and great; And every one will say, why I look but for so much; when all set together is ten times more than you have to give.

And as to the *Manner* of our duties, the censures will be as sure and many. If I would cure any hearers of an error, instead of a cure, they make me know they feel the smart; And that they came not to be taught, but to be pleased. (So dangerous a thing is it for men to come into the School of Christ, as *Judges* and not as *Scholars*, (or *Disciples*.) Its two to one but there are present many persons of contrary opinions! what shall I do to please them all? Shall I first preach for *Separation*, *Anabaptism*, *Antinomianism*, *Purpery*, to please those on those sides; and then preach against them all again to please those on the other side? This would displease them all: (and God and Conscience who are more than all.) If I speak on one side, I lose the other. If I meddle with no Controversie,

I must meddle with no truth : For one or other controverteth all things ; (the Immortality of the Soul, Christianity and the Deity, not excepted.)

If in prayer it self I let fall a confession of the controverted sin, which any are guilty of who are present, they censure that Confession, and instead of repentance, are ready to say they will joyn with such a one no more; And it is the Confession which must be the sin.

But if once we have to do against the sin, of any that are *Great* or *Godly*, that *power* or *piety* is made a patron of the error; then it may be a smarting censure indeed, which we may expect : One crieth out, He is a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition, as they did of *Paul*, though I hate and preach-against sedition. Another saith, he is bitter and speaketh against the Godly, when I spend my self to preach up Godliness.

But if it be a *party* that is engaged in the error, you must expect the censure of all the *party*. And what error is it that hath not a *party*? or that hath neither *Greatness* nor *Godliness* for a refuge?

If in doctrinal or practical consultations of great moment you have to do with injudicious unskilful men, if you contradict their way (be it never so modestly) you are proud and self-opinionated, and must have your own way : If you follow their mistakes, and contradict them not, you may wound the Church and Cause of Christ, and be more generally censured at the last.

In a word, when such a multitude of things are matters of *Controversie*, as many may be the matters of

or Censure. One will censure me for praying with a form, or book, and another for praying without it. One for being too long, and another for being too short : one for this gesture, and another for that : One for preaching when I am silenced ; another for not preaching more. One for being too gentle to dissenters, and another for being too severe : One for being too narrow in my principles, and communion ; and another, for being too large and universal.

And if in the sense of the sin and misery of some Christians Love-killing principles and practices, I have spent the best of twenty years, in writing, preaching (while I had leave) conferring and praying for the Union of Christians and the Churches peace ; I have but made a wedge of my bare hand, by putting it into the cleft ; and both sides have closed upon me to my pain. But I have turned both parties in the fray, which I endeavoured to part, against my self ; when each side had one adversary, I had two.

Nay this is not the worst to be expected : But moreover I must add, that I was never more accused of any thing as a crime, than of that which I did most against, And even for doing so. Never more suspected of Carnal compliance, than when I exercised the greatest self-denial : Never more accused of unpeaceableness, than for labouring for the Churches peace. Never was I more accused of Schism, than for striving with all my power, to have united the Ministers, and healed the Church, or at least prevented further divisions. Never more accused of enmity against the true Discipline of the Church, than when I

have done most (and at the dearest rates) to stablish it, and to prevent its fall.

In all this I meddle not with my Civil Superiours, as thinking it meeter patiently to bear, than to aggravate their censures, though not all so tolerable as private mens.

I might give you as many instances of the matters of common Converse: He that hath much to do in the world, shall hardly escape the censure of many. The buyer will say he sells too dear: The seller will say, he would buy too cheap. Every one that expecteth a commodity, will censure him that hindereth it, and steps in before him.

If I have a friend or kinsman unworthy of any office or preferment, he is nevertheless peremptory in his desires and expectations, for being unworthy. If I will not speak for him and further his suit, I am censured as unnatural and unkind, and turn a friend into an enemy: If I do speak for him, I am false to my conscience and the common good; and I must look to be censured accordingly by many.

But I will add no more instances, lest what I intend for instruction, seem to be but a complaint. But to what purpose is all this?

It is to let the Reader know, that man is not God, nor his judgement to be rested in, nor his favour to be over-valued. To call to you, O cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils; whose heart is deceitful and desperately wicked! For wherein is he to be accounted of! Look up to God, and take him for your God indeed: Rest in his Love, and be satisfied in his approbation:

Despise

Despise not man, nor lay any *stumbling blocks* before them; but as to your *own interest* in their esteems (farther than Gods service and their benefit requireth it) account it but a shadow, and a thing of nought: And say of it as *Paul*, *With me it is a very small thing, to be judged of you or of mans day (or judgement) For I have one that judgeth me even the Lord.* 1 Cor. 4. 3.

It is *GOD* (Christians) it is *GOD*, it is only *GOD*, whose infallibility, justification, and unspotted truth and goodness, you must make your rest. It is *Heaven*, it is *Heaven*, it is only *Heaven*, where perfect truth, and impartial righteousness, and the full vindication of all the just, and the fruition of perfect Love and Concord, is to be expected: and where malice, and lies, and discord, and the father of them, are totally and finally shut out.

As you would not be used as Hypocrites by God, and deprived of the true Reward of faith, O seek not after the hypocrites reward! What is the applause of mortal man! Can you not bear the censure of such a shadow? How then would you suffer martyrdom for Christ? Over-value not the esteem of High or Low, of the Great or of the Godly, of the many or of the few. Gods approbation is sufficient to be your reward. See that you be *Godly*, and then be more indifferent though you are *thought ungodly*. See that you be *loyal*, and *peaceable*, and then you may bear it, if you be called the contrary. Abhor all unwarrantable divisions, and then you may bear to be reputed schismatics. Study you to be *good*, and not to be *accounted good*.

And what if I should look further, to historical fame when I am dead! Away with the over-valuing of that too, as part of the hypocrites reward! I confess God usually blesteth the memory of the just, and sets their names above the power of the greatest tyrants, and causeth the names of the wicked to rot: But this is but a temporal and uncertain thing. If one write in my praise to the highest; and another write a Volume of false reproaches, how shall posterity know which is true; who knew neither party nor the cause?

But yet the nearer reason of all this admonition is, to let you know that as contention comes by pride, so over-valuing the esteem and censures of men (though Good or Great) is a dreadful snare, and cause of schismes: For then you will be stretching your consciences, and using your wits to please the party whose censures you must escape: And you will wound the truth, and be warping to their errors and extremes: And though by this you may think, that some present necessity may be satisfied, and some inconveniences avoided, yet at the long running, the wound will be found to be increased; and the cure the harder because of the delay. converse with all men as those that must be finally judged by God: and remember that the Judge is at the door.

DIRECT.