

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.

DIRECT. XXVI.

Use not your selves needlessly to the familiar company of that sort of Christians, who use to reproach and censure them, that are more sober, Catholick and charitable than themselves : Unless you also be as much or more with the soberer sort, who will shew you the sin and mischiefs of uncharitableness, censoriousness, and divisions.

Nothing is more experienced, than the power which the converse of chosen familiars hath upon the minds of the injudicious and unsettled. Which maketh education and the converse of our youth, to have so great a hand in choosing mens opinions and Religion : And is the cause that Religion is, as Languages are, diversified by the territories or bounds of Countries. They that are bred among such, as use to speak of dissenters, as odious, as hypocrites, as hereticks, as schismaticks, as ungodly, as proud fanaticks, are very like to be possessed themselves with the same spirit of malice and detraction. The words of those whom you respect, especially when you hear them not confuted, will make you believe that it is so indeed, and that the persons are as mad or as odious as they make them. And thus, the Papists think odiously of the Protestants, and the Lutherans of the Calvinists ; and the Arminians and Anti-Arminians, the Diocesans and the

the Presbyterians, the Pædobaptists and Anabaptists of one another : because they converse only with such as paint them in an odious shape. And thus if you use only or chiefly to converse with the *censorious Separatists*, you shall hear so many invectives against them that are truly Catholick, and sober, as will make you think that Love and Peace and Catholick Communion, are some sinful and mischievous things. Sometimes they will deride them as ridiculous; and sometimes they will call them temporizers, formalists, or luke-warm hypocrites, who will do any thing in compliance with their own commodities, and for the saving of their flesh. And sometimes they will thunder out some terrible threatnings against them and their way, as heinously sinful. And this language will form the belief and affections of ignorant Christians, into its own uncharitable mold; as a necessary part of Christian zeal. As it was the common way of the success of the Quakers, to come into Christian assemblies, and in a propheticall strain, like men commissioned from heaven, in the name of the most high God to denounce his judgements against the faithfullest Pastors and their flocks, and pronounce them condemned enemies of the light; and so by the very terrour of their words, they frightened many women and boys into their sect, before they understood at all what it was that they were against or for : so do the Separatists declaim against the sinfulness of Parish assemblies and communion, and of forms of prayer and such like, till they have frightened the ignorant into their mistaken zeal.

There-

Therefore, though I am not perswading you to separate from these feaverish persons, as they do from others, yet I would advise all the younger and unsetled sort, that love themselves, not needlessly to choose the familiar frequent company of such: Our private company is at our own choice.

And as the company of fierce self-conceited dividers, is so very dangerous, so on the contrary, the company of grave, experienced, sober, charitable and judicious Divines and other Christians, is exceeding helpful to settle the minds of the younger and weaker sort: with them they shall hear the unity of the Church, and the doctrine of Christian Love and Concord, humility, meekness and moderation opened; and the sinfulness and lamentable consequents, of schism, self-conceitedness, censoriousness and discord; which among others they should never hear.

And let me leave this warning to the Church of God, that if ever it may be hoped that Unity, Love and peace shall be recovered, it must be by the training up of the younger Christians, under the precepts and examples of such grave, judicious, experienced and peaceable guides, instead of educating them in the smoky scorching chimney, of young, unexperienced, self-conceited teachers, who burn with the ambition of applause. And let the sober be think them whether our times and teachers are better and purer than theirs, to whom Paul said, *Act. 20. 30.* Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. And *Eph. 4. 14.* He gave the Church Pastors and Teachers, for its Unity and perfection [That we henceforth be

no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lye in wait to deceive. I

DIRECT. XXVII.

Take heed of mis-judging of the Answers of your prayers, and of taking those things to be from God, which are but the effects of your prejudice, passion or weakness of understanding.

THIS is a sin, which I know not whether I may say is more common with many godly persons, or more injurious to God, or more pitiful as to themselves.

It is so common, that it is hard to meet with many women and passionate Christians, who are earnest in prayer, but sometimes they run into this mistake, and judge ungroundedly of the answer of their prayers, by such feelings and strong apprehensions of their own, as never came from the spirit of God at all.

And it is a great wrong to God, to be made the author of mans infirmities and errours, and of that which is contrary to his word.

And yet it is a very pitiful case, as to the offenders; because it is usually the sin of persons, that are very upright and honest in the main, and that are very serious in their prayers to God; and of such as have naturally such weakness of reason and strength

strength of affection, as that they are less blameable, though less curable, than others are.

To understand this matter the better, I pray you consider, that Prayer is not to change Gods mind; but to make us the meet receivers of his mercies: And this it doth by exciting and exercising those apprehensions and desires, which make us fit by valuing them to improve them. Therefore such principles, dispositions and desires as are in us, Prayer doth excite and exercise: And every man prayeth according to his own judgement, disposition and affection. And that apprehension and affection, which is most stirred up and exercised, is most felt. And that which is most felt, doth most take us up, and is most observed: And so we think, that it is the impulse of Gods spirit, and the answer of our prayers, when it is but the operation of our own spirits, and the sensible activity of our former principles.

There are very few that take their impulses and resolutions, for the spirits answer of their prayers, but they had before an understanding most inclined to that opinion, or else a byas upon their affections, bending them that way; or something in themselves which occasioned the scales to turn that way.

Obj. *But I did bring my mind to a pure impartiality, and prayed to God that he would shew me the truth, be it what it would be: and that if this were not right, he would blast it and never suffer it to go on: And the more I prayed, the more I was confirmed, that this is the right.*

Ans. All this may be, without any of Gods appro-

approbation of the conclusion which you think is his answer to your prayers. For whilest you prayed that God would turn your mind from it, if it were not right; yet at that time your judgement was inclined to it; or your affections at least: And it is an easier thing to speak impartial words in prayer, than to get an impartial unprejudiced mind. And when you think that your mind is brought to an impartiality, alas, there may be many deep roots of prejudice, which you observe not: And there is scarce one of a thousand, who thinketh that he prayeth with a pure impartiality, but his opinion, disposition, inclination, interest, or secret affection, doth byas and ponderate his mind, more to one side than to the other.

But if you were never so willing to know the truth, yet there are passions in you, and corruptions, and ignorance and former errours, which may all do much to hinder you from knowing it, and may breed many false apprehensions in your mind; and yet may cherish them with as dear an espousal and affection, as if they were certainly from God.

And moreover, you have been guilty of former sins: And whether God for any of them, may leave you to run into mistakes, you know not. Or whether any present self-conceitedness may occasion him to leave you to mistakes.

But the principal part of my answer is this
= God hath no where promised to reveal all his truth to you, because you desire him so to do. It is not every prayer of yours, which he hath promised to hear and grant; but only those which are agreeable to his will: His will is either his, De-

cree, his *Command*, or his *Promise*. Though the first be not it that is meant in the text, yet it is certain that your prayers cannot change Gods decrees. The *will* of his command doth more concern the sense of the text; but it is only a negative which may hence be gathered; that is, that if your prayers be contrary to Gods commands, they are your sins and have no promise of his grant. But it will not follow that God will grant all the prayers which are put up in obedience to his laws: But only that you shall be no losers by such obedience; but he will give you that, or something which shall be as good for you. It may be Gods command that godly children should pray for the lives of their sick parents; and that parents pray for the conversion of their ungodly children, and that we pray for all men: And yet it doth not follow that we shall have the very thing which we obediently pray for. But it is his *Promising will* which is the measure of our hope, as his *Commanding will* is the rule of our obedience. Whatsoever he hath *promised*, he will certainly give us. Now God hath nowhere promised in his word, that he will reveal the true meaning of every text of scripture, to every godly person that asketh it. *Praying* is but one of the means which God hath appointed you to come to knowledge. Diligent reading, hearing, and meditation, and counsel of the wisest is another means. Even to dig for it as for silver, and to search for it, as for hidden treasure, and to continue so doing, and wait at the posts of wisdoms doors, that knowledge may come into you by degrees in time. God hath not promised you
true

true understanding, upon your prayers alone, without all the rest of his appointed means: Nor that you shall attain it by those means, as soon as you desire and seek it; For then prayer would be a notable pretense for laziness, and they that would not be at the labour, of study, meditation, or conference, might save all their pains, and go to God and ask wisdom of him and he would give it them. Even as idle beggars think without working, to get an alms to maintain them in their slothfulness. If instead of all our reading, hearing, and meditation, we could but pray, and so get all the knowledge which other men study, labour and wait for, it would be too cheap a way to wisdom. *Solomon* that got it by prayer extraordinarily, commandeth us very great diligence to get it.

It is very considerable, not only that *Christ* increased in wisdom in his youth, but also that he would not enter upon his publick Ministry (as is aforesaid) till he was about thirty years of age. When it had been more easie for *Christ* to have got all knowledge by two or three earnest prayers, than for any of us.

Moreover you must pray according to Gods will of precept, not only in the matter but in the manner of your prayers. And there may be more selfishness, and many other corruptions in the manner of them than you discern.

And there are many things which submissively you may lawfully pray for, which God hath never promised you at all: You may pray for the life of the sick, and for the conversion and salvation of all your relations, and of thousands of others

others which God will not give you. Otherwise all the relations of every true Christian should be saved, yea and all his enemies and all the world.

To apply all this, It may be you are in doubt whether this or the other be the meaning of such a text of scripture? Or whether you should joyn with such a Church, in the use of such preaching and prayers or not? And when you have prayed earnestly, you are confirmed for one way and against the other. And perhaps all this is but to be confirmed in your error: For first, you came with a secret prejudice; secondly, or you came with distempered affections; or with such a fear of going one way rather than the other, that the very fear doth much to cause your apprehensions. Thirdly, or you come with the guilt of former sin. Fourthly, or you have some partiality on your spirit, and a secret inclination to one side more than to the other; or some overvaluing of your own understandings, persons or prayers. Fifthly, Or you are lazy and presumptuous; and think God must teach you that in one hour, and at a wish or prayer, which others better than you must learn with prayer and twenty years study, diligence and patience. Sixthly, or you think God must needs resolve you of that which he never promised to resolve you in. Where hath he promised upon all your prayers, that ever he will teach you in this life the sense of every text of Scripture? If ever he promised this he will perform it. And is it to *One Christian*, or to *every praying Christian* that he hath promised it? If to *every one*, why are we not all of a mind? Why be not all as wise as you? What need we Com-
menta-

mentaries then? Or what need have others of your Revelations: If it be but, to *some*, who be *those some*? And how shall we know them? And how know you that you are one of them? And why do not *those some*, condescend to write an infallible Commentary upon all the Bible, when they themselves are taught it of God, that so we may doubt and differ no more?

But if you say that it is not the meaning of every text, that God hath promised to make known to you when you pray, but of *some few*, how will you know which *those few* be? And where is the promise which maketh this difference? Except only that to all true Christians, he hath promised to reveal so much as is necessary to their salvation. But if you will pray for more, your belief of your success must not go beyond the promise. If you will promise to your selves, you must perform for your selves?

Obj. But hath not God bid us believe that we shall receive what ever we ask, and promised to believers that they shall receive it?

Ans. He hath first made a Law to command you prayer, and then made a promise to grant, what you pray for, according to his will, that is, according to his command and promise, and hath made your believing of this promise, one of the conditions of his fulfilling it to you. So that if you believe not his power and promise you shall not have right immediately to the thing promised. But if you pray and believe and withall use those other means with diligence and patience which God hath appointed you, you shall know in that measure as is suitable to your state (For God hath not

not promised the same measure of *knowledg* to all true believers.) So that this is all that the promise giveth you, and not that you shall know all that you pray to know, and that immediately.

Obj. But then you leave us at utter uncertainty, whether we have the answer of our prayers or not?

Ans. Not so. But the answer of your prayers must not be tried by your conceits but by Gods rule. If you pray for that which you have neither a *command* nor *promise* for, your prayer is fish, and your answer can be nothing but Gods rebuke, or your own delusion. But if you pray for that which you have a *command* for, but no particular *promise*, then you have only the *General promise* that your prayer shall not be lost, but shall bring down either the thing you pray for, or something else which the wisdom of God seeth to be best for you and others; and to his ends. And this is all that you can warrantably believe. But if you pray for that which hath both a *command* and a particular *promise* (as the pardon of sin, and necessary grace and life eternal to a believer) you may be sure that this prayer shall be granted in kind. So that you are not to judge of the answer of prayers, by your feelings and passions and impulses, but by the promise of God, which you must believe will be fulfilled what ever you feel: Faith and not feeling must tell you whether your prayer be accepted.

Nay if you should receive health or wealth or gifts for your selves or others, when you have prayed for them; you cannot tell whether it be

a merciful answer to your prayer, or a judgement, unless you try it by faith according to the promise. I have nothing now to say of the case of miracles, but this: If God promise a miracle, you may believe it because it is promised: If he perform it without a promise, then either you must not believe it till it is done, or else your faith must be a miracle also; And then the faith it self is its own justification. But miracles are now so rare, that all sober Christians will take heed how they expect them, or over-hastily believe them; and especially how they take their own belief for a miracle. All the talk that some men make of a particular faith, may be tried by what I have here said.

To conclude, the warning which I give you in this case, is from long and sad experience. I have known too many very honest hearted Christians, especially melancholly persons and women, who have been in great doubt about the opinions of the Millenaries, the Separatists, the Anabaptists, the Seekers, and such like, and after earnest prayer to God, they have been strongly resolved for the way of error, and confident by the strong impression, that it was the spirits answer to their prayers, and thereupon they have set them into a course of sin. If you say, How know you that they were mistaken? I will tell you how. First, Because they have been resolved contrary to the word of God. And I know, that Gods spirit did first make a standing Rule, to try all after-impulses by; And what ever impulse is contrary to that Rule, is contrary to Gods spirit. The Law and the testimony are now sealed, and all spirits

to be tried by them. *Isa.* 8. 20. Secondly, Because I have found their impulses contrary to one another. One hath been resolved for Infant baptism, and another against it: One hath had a revelation for a prelacy, like the order of *Aaron*, and the Priests, and another against all Prelacy.

One hath been confident of an answer of prayers for Antinomianism, and another against it for Arminianism: One for publike Communion, and another to detest it: And both came in, in the same way. And Gods spirit is not contrary to it self. Thirdly, Because I have seen abundance of prophecies of things to come, which people have this way received with the greatest confidence to prove all false. Fourthly, Because I have staid till many of the persons have found by experience that they were deceived, and have confessed it with lamentation. And fifthly, because perhaps I know more of the nature of prejudice, affection, melancholy, feminine weakness, and self-conceit, and of tempting God in the way of prayer, and of satans transforming himself into an Angel of light, than every Reader will know till they have paid for their learning.

DIRECT. XXVIII.

Do not too much reverence the impulses or revelations or most confident opinions of any others, upon the account of their sincerity or holiness: but try all judiciously and soberly by the Word of God.

MAny that have no such impulses themselves, are yet so much taken with the reverence of others, that they are very apt to be seduced by their confidence. When so great a man as *Tertullian* was deceived by *Montanus* and his prophetess: when such a one as *Hacket* could deceive not only *Coppinger* and *Arthington*, but abundance more, some taking him for the Messiah, and some by his breathing on them thinking that they received the Holy Ghost! When *David George* in *Holland*, and *John* of *Leyden* in *Munster*, and *Behmen Stiefelins* and so many more pretended Prophets in *Germany* could deceive so many persons as they did? When the pretended revelations of the Ranters first, and the Quakers after could so marvellously transport many thousand professors of religion in this land; I think we have fair warning to take the counsel of *St. John*, Believe not every spirit; but try the spirits whether they be of God. It is a pitiful instance of the good old learned *Comenius*, who so easily believed the prophecies of *Daubritius* and the rest which he hath published: Yea when he saw the prophecies fail, yet when he adjured the prophet to speak truth, and

got him to swear as before the Lord that it was truth; this seemed enough to confirm his belief of him: whereas if he had been as well acquainted with the nature of Melancholy and Hysterical passions as many others are, he would have known that as strange things as that he recordeth of the man or women, may be done without any Divine inspirations: and that it is no wonder if that person swear that his words are true, who is first deceived himself before he deceive others. For a crackt brain'd person to believe his delusions to be real verities, is little wonder.

I have many a time my self conversed with persons of great honesty and piety (though of no great judgment) who have some of them affirmed that they had angelical revelations, and some of them thought that the Spirit of God did bring this Scripture, or that Scripture to their mind in answer to their prayers; and were so very confident that what they affirmed was the certain truth or voice of God, that I have been stricken with a reverence to their professions, and with a fear lest I should resist God in resisting them. But resolving to take none on earth for the master of my faith, but to try the Spirits whether they be of God, by going to the Law and Testimony, I was constrained to turn my reverence into pity. For I found that their seeming revelations were some of them *Scripture-doctrine*, and some of them = *contrary* to the Scripture: As for that which is already in the Scripture, what need I further revelation for it? Is it not there sufficiently revealed? Can their words add any authority to the Word of God? And have I not Gods own Ministers and

means to help me to the knowledge of his word? And as for that which is *contrary* to Scripture, I am sure that it is contrary to the will of God: And if an Angel from Heaven should preach another Gospel to me, I must hold him accursed: *Gal. 1. 7, 8.* so that if these persons should have the appearance & voice of an Angel speaking to them, I would despise it as well as the words of a mortal man, if they be against the recorded word of God.

But by what I have seen and heard, I know that it is a great temptation to some weak Christians to hear one that is much in prayer, say, *Take heed what you do: Have no Communion with this sort of men, nor in this or that way of worship; nor in this or that opinion; for I am sure it is against the mind of God: I once thought as you do, but God hath better made known his mind unto me.*

But saving the due respect to the honesty of such persons, ask them, How shall I know that you are in the right? If they say, *I will not reason the case with you, but I know it to be the mind of God;* Tell them, that God hath made you reasonable creatures, and will accept no unreasonable service of you; and you have but one Master of your Faith, even Christ: Therefore if they believe that themselves, which they can give you no reason to believe, they must be content to keep their belief to themselves, and not, for shame, perswade any other to it, without proof! If they say that God hath revealed it to them, Tell them, that he hath not revealed it to you, and therefore that's nothing to you, till they prove their divine revelation: If God reveal it to them but for themselves they must keep it to themselves. If he reveal

reveal to them *for others*, he will enable them to make some proof of their revelations, that others may be sure that they sin not in believing them. If they say, that the Scripture is their ground, Tell them that the Scripture is already revealed to all; And if indeed what they speak be there, you are ready to believe it. But if they pervert the Scripture by false interpretation, or abuse it and misapply it, none of this is the work of the Spirit of God.

If they say that the spirit hath told them the meaning of the Scripture, say as before, that is not told for you, which is not proved to you? The Scripture is written in such words as men use, of purpose that they might understand it; and is to be understood by all men that hear it, though they have no revelation: God hath set Pastors in his Church to teach it; If therefore revelations be still necessary to the understanding of the Scripture revelations, then the Scriptures seem to be in vain; and these last revelations must again have new revelations to the right understanding of them also.

The truth is, it is very ordinary with poor fanciful women and melancholy persons, to take all their deep apprehensions for revelations. And if a text of Scripture come into their minds, they say, *This text was brought to my mind, and that text was set upon my spirit*; As if nothing could bring a text to their thoughts, but some extraordinary motion of God? And as if this bringing it to their mind, would warrant their false exposition of it.

To conclude, Decry not the necessity of the ordinary sanctifying work of the spirit, to bless

the Scripture to your true illumination and sanctification: And if any pretend to any other revelations or inspirations, or expositions of the Scripture which they cannot prove to you, *despise them not*, but modestly leave them to themselves: But take heed that the reverence of any ones holiness, tempt you not to depart from the certain sufficient word of God and draw you not into any Sect or Heresie, or Separation, or Opinion contrary to Gods standing Law.

DIRECT. XXIX.

Take heed lest the trouble of your own disquieted doubting minds do become a snare, to draw you to some uncouth way of cure, and so make the fancy of some new Opinion, Sect or Practise, to seem your Remedy, and give you ease, and thereby perswade you that it is the certain truth.

THis is the pitiful Case of the ignorant, and ungrounded, and troubled sort of religious persons; that they are looking every way for ease and comfort: And having not wisdom enough to fetch true grounded satisfaction from the Scriptures, and from the solid truth, in the use of Gods appointed means, they hearken to any one that will promise them comfort and salvation, by what means soever. Like ignorant people is their sickness; some of them know not an able Physi-

Physician, and some of them will not be at the cost; and some of them will not take such unpleasing Medicines; and most of them have not patience to stay for a Cure, unless the Medicine at twice or thrice taking do give them ease, they will not believe that it will do them any good: And so in their foolish ignorance, and the weariness of their pain, they will go to any ignorant woman or unskilful fellow, who will take cheapest of them, and be boldest in his undertakings: And those that die by it, are out of sight, and forgotten by the living: And those that by the strength of nature do recover, do magnifie their ignorant Physician, as if there were none such, and so entice others to their Graves.

Thus many troubled unquiet souls, either *know* not sound Doctrine and Teachers from deceit, or else will not be at the *pains or patience*, to wait on God in the use of the right means; or most commonly spoil the Remedy offered them, by their own misapplications; and then for ease they hearken to any ignorant *Sectary*, that will fiercely cry out against sound Teachers, and revile all that are wiser than himself, as if he knew more than all the Ministers in the Country. O saith the deceiving Papist, you will never have settled comfort while you follow these Ministers, and till you come to us, who are the true Church — Saith the Anabaptist, you will never be well settled while you follow these Preachers: They have not the Spirit, but speak only by the book: Come to us and be baptized, and you will have peace. And thus saith the Quaker, the Familist, and other Sects.

I have known some that have lived long in doubts and fears of damnation, who have turned Anabaptists, and suddenly had comfort: And yet in a short time they forsook that Sect and turned to another. I have known those also that have lived many years in timorous complaints, and fears of Hell; and they have turned to the Antinomians, and suddenly been comforted: And others have turned Arminians, which is clean contrary, and been comforted: And others have but heard of the Doctrine of *perfection in this life*, and suddenly been past their fears, as if hearing of perfection had made them perfect: And from thence they have turned *Familists*, and at last shew'd their perfection by *fornication and licentiousness* and meer Apostasie; who yet liv'd very conscionably and blamelessly, as long as they lived in their fears and troubles.

The reason of all this is plain to any judicious Observer. 1. The persons are ignorant and never had the right knowledge and skilful improvement, of the sound doctrine which at first they seemed to embrace. And 2. the power of conceit and fancy brought them comfort or quietness in their change. For they thought before, that if they had not somewhat extraordinary they could have no assurance of salvation; And while they held that sound Doctrine which all about them held as well as they, and found no extraordinary power of it on their hearts, they perceived no difference between themselves and others: But when they had entertained new opinions, and entered into a new Sect, which confidently told them, that they only were in the right, they had then

then something extraordinary to trust their souls on. And the novelty of the matter, and greatness of the change with the conceited excellency of the opinions and party, did make them think that they were now grown very acceptable to God.

To this may be added, that as a life of holiness hath far more opposition from the Devil, the world and the flesh, than the changing of an opinion or joyning with a party hath; so it must be harder to get and keep that comfort which is got and kept by faith and holiness, than that which is got by such an easie change.

We see among us what abundance of persons can live like beasts in most odious whoredomes, drunkenness and rage; or like devils in bloody cruelty against the good, and yet be comforted, because they are of the Church of *Rome*, which they think is the true Church. As if God saved men for being of such a side or party! And why may not Separatists, Anabaptists and others easily take such kind of comfort?

O therefore labour for well-grounded faith and solid knowledge; that you may attain the true Evangelical comforts, and your ignorance may not prepare you for deceit? and you may not be like children toss'd to and fro and carried up and down with every wind of doctrine by deceived and deceitful men. Nor may not have need to go to the devil to be your comforter, nor to steal a little unlawful peace from parties and opinions, as if there were not enough to be had in Christ and holiness and eternal life.

DIRECT.

DIRECT. XXX.

Keep in the rank of a humble Disciple or learner in the Church of Christ, till you are fit and called to be your self a Teacher.

CHrist owneth no Disciples which are not in one of these two ranks; either *Teachers* by office upon a lawful call, or *Learners* who submit to be taught by others. When his Ministers have made men his *Disciples*, they must afterward *Teach them to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded them.* *Matth. 28. 19, 20.* And a *Learner* must hear and read and discourse in a learning way, by humble asking the resolution of his doubts, acknowledging the weakness of his own understanding, and the superiority of his Teachers. This is the common ruine of raw professors, that they presently grow proud of a poor ignorant head, as if it were full of knowledge and spirituality: and while they continue Hearers, they continue not *Disciples* or *Learners*, but come with a proud and carping humour, to quarrel with their Teachers as poor ignorant men, in comparison of them; And therefore choose them a *heap of Teachers* according to their own opinions: And all this while they have such list to be some body and to vent their seeming wisdom, that they can hardly stay from being Teachers themselves, till they have any thing like a lawful call. Whereas if they would have kept in the rank of humble Learners till they had

grown

grown wiser, they might have preserved the Churches peace and their own.

DIRECT. XXXI.

Grow up in the great substantial practical truths and duties, and grow downwards in the roots of a clearer belief of the word of God and the life to come; And neither begin too soon with doubtful opinions, nor ever lay too much upon them.

HE that taketh this course will have all these advantages. First, He will be himself a solid Christian, and will make sure of the main, which is his own salvation. Secondly, He will have so fast hold of the necessary points, that no controversies or opinions, will shake his faith or destroy his love to God or man. Thirdly, He will honour God by *upright practise*, and shew forth the power and excellency of religion in the true success upon the heart and life: His Religion which begins in solid faith, will grow up into sincere Love and good works. Fourthly, He will be without *partiality*, a Lover of all the servants of Christ, and therefore escape temptations to faction and division, because his Religion consisteth in those common truths and duties, which all profess. Fifthly, he will not only safely receive all further truths from these principles, but all his knowledge and disputes will be sanctified, as being all subservient to faith and love and holiness.

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Whereas he that taketh the contrary course, and presently falleth to the study of by-opinions, and layeth too much upon them, will prove too like a superficial hypocrite, and a deceiver of himself, by thinking that he is something when he is nothing. *Gal. 6. 5, 6.* And he will make a pudder in the world for nothing, as children do in the house about their babies and their bawbles: He will make but an engine of his by-opinions, to destroy true Piety and Christian Love in himself first, and then in all that will believe him. He will first make himself, and then many others, believe that Religion is nothing but proud self-conceit and faction; And he will be the shame of his profession, and the hardener of the wicked in their sin and misery; by perswading them that the Religions are but a few ignorant whimsical fanaticks. These are too sad experienced truths.

DIRECT. XXXII.

Lay not a greater stress upon your different words or manner of prayer, than God hath laid: And take heed either of scorning, reproaching or slighting, the words and manner of other mens worship, when it is such as God accepteth from the sincere.

IT is an easie thing to turn the native heat of Religion, into a feaverish out-side zeal about words, or circumstances or ceremonies, whether it be

be for them or against them. O what a wonder is it, that by so palpable a trick as this, the Devil should deceive so many, and make such a stir and disturbance in the Church. I know that one party will cry up *Order*, & the other will cry up *Spirituality*, and both will say that God maketh not light of the smallest matters in religion, nor no more must we: And in this general position there is some truth. But if *nothing* could be said for both their errors, they would then be no deceits, nor be capable of doing any mischief. Some things that you contend about, God hath left wholly undetermined and indifferent; And some things in which your brother erreth, his error is so small a fault, as not at all to hinder his acceptance with God, nor with any man that judgeth as God doth. Had you ever understood, *Rom. 14 & 15.* you would have understood all this.

It would make a knowing Christian weep between indignation and compassion, to see in these times, what censures and worse are used on both sides, about the *wording* of our prayers to God! How vile and unsufferable some account them, that will pray in any words which are *not written down for them*? And how unlawful others account it to pray in *their imposed forms*: some because they are *forms*, and some because they are *sack forms*; and some because that *Papists* have used them, and some because they are *imposed*! when God hath given them no command, but to pray in faith and fervency, according to the state of themselves, and others; and in such order as is agreeable to the matter, and in such method as he hath given them a Rule and Pattern of. But of all quarrels

quarrels about *forms* and *words*, he hath never made any of their particular determinations, no more than whether I shall preach by the help of Notes, or study the words, or speak those which another studied for me.

It is a wonder how they that believe the Scriptures, came first to make themselves believe, that God maketh such a matter as they do, of their several words and forms of prayer: That he loveth only *extemporary* prayer as some think, and hateth all prescribed forms: Or that he loveth only *prescribed Forms* as others think, and hateth all extemporary prayers by habit? Certainly in Christs time both Liturgies by *forms*, and also prayers by habit were used? And yet Christ never interposed in the Controversie, so as to condemn the one or the other. He condemneth the Pharisees for making *long prayers* to cover their *devouring widows houses*, and for their *praying to be seen of men*: But whether their prayers were a *Liturgie* and *set forme*, or whether they were *extemporary*, he taketh no notice, as telling us that he condemned neither! (And its like the Pharisees long Liturgy, was in many things worse than ours, though the Psalms were a great part of it: And yet Christ and his Apostles oft joyned with them, and never condemned them.)

Nay as far as I can find, the Pharisees and other Jews were not in this so blind and quarrelsome as we; nor never made a controversie of it, nor ever presumed to condemn either Liturgies or Prayers by habit.

I shall now pass by their errour who are utterly against publike prayers from a habit, as having

ing spoken of it at large elsewhere when I had opportunity. I shall now only answer the contrary extreme.

Obj. Where hath God given any men power to prescribe and impose forms for others? or commanded others to obey them?

Ans. First, where ever he hath given any power to teach their inferiours to pray, who cannot do it in a better way. He hath given Parents this power where he hath bid them, *Bring up their Children in the nurture, and admonition of the Lord*: Is it not by the Law of nature, the Parents duty to teach their children to pray? And is not the learning of the words first, profitable to their learning of the sense? May they not teach their Children the *Lords Prayer* or a *Psalm*, though it be a Form? And why not then other words which are agreeable to their State? And he that taught his own Disciples a Form and Rule of Prayer, and telleth us that so *John taught his Disciples*, and saith to his Apostles, *As my Father sent me, so send I you*; by making them Teachers to his Church, did allow them to teach either by forms or without, as the cause required. All the Scripture is now to Preachers, a form of Teaching: And when we read a Chapter, we read a prescribed form of Doctrine: And it hath many forms of prayer and praise, and forms of Baptizing & administering the *Lords Supper*.

If you say, that the Apostles had an infallible spirit, I answer, True: And that proveth that that their Doctrine was more infallible than other mens: but not that they only and not other men may teach by the way of forms. All the Books of Sermons now written are so many prescribed words.

or forms of teaching: And if we may use forms of Teaching as well as the Apostles, why not also forms of praying.

If you say that the Apostles prescribed the Church no Liturgy, I answer, That only proveth that no one is *universally necessary*, nor to be *universally imposed*? but not that therefore no use of forms of prayer are lawful; May we not now use the *Lords Prayer*, or pray in some other *Scripture form*?

Obj. *But the Apostles compelled none to use them.*

Ans. Christ and his Apostles assumed not the civil Sword, and therefore so compelled men to nothing: But yet their authority bound the conscience; when Christ said, *when ye pray, say, Our Father*, &c. he bound them in duty to do as he bid them, though he forced them not.

But Secondly, tell me if you can where God forbiddeth you to use good and lawful words in prayer, meerly because the Magistrate or Pastor bids you use them. Is this the meaning of all the Precepts of honouring and obeying your Superiors [Do nothing which they bid you do, though otherwise lawful.] O strange exposition of the Fifth Commandment? If you command your Child to learn a Catechism or Form of Prayer before his meat, or for other times, will you teach him to say Father or Mother, it had been lawful for me to use this Form, if neither you nor any body had bid me; But because you bid me, now it is unlawful.] O whither will not partiality lead men!

Obj. *But though it be lawful to impose forms on chil-*

children, yet not upon aged Christians.

Ans. Aged persons have too many of them as much need of such forms as children. Age maketh not the difference: We are fain to teach many aged persons *forms of Catechism* as well as children; Why not therefore forms of prayer?

Obj. But it is not lawful to impose forms publickly on whole Congregations of Believers.

Ans. All sects in the world do it. I never heard any Separatist or Anabaptist or any other publick Minister, but he imposed a form of prayer upon all the Congregation. He is void of common sense that thinketh that his extemporary prayer is not as truly a *form* to all the people, as if it had been written in a book. The order and words are not of your own invention, but invented by another to your hand; and imposed upon you to use: For I hope you come together to pray, and not to hear a prayer only. But the difference is, First, that one imposeth every day a new form on you, and the other imposeth every day the same: Secondly, And that one telleth you not what words you shall pray in, before you hear them; and the other writeth them down for you to know before hand. For my part I wonder why written or unwritten, long-premeditated or suddenly expressed prayers should be taken for unlawful. But however do not think the difference to lie where it doth not: For doubtless to the people, they are both *formes*, and both imposed, though not imposed by the same persons and authority.

Obj. But at least you have no proof for imposing forms

forms on the Ministers themselves.

Ans. First, I know no man that questioneth but some form of prayer and praise were imposed by God himself, on the *Jewish Ministers*; And one was taught by Christ to his Apostles: And a form of *Profession of faith*, and of *Baptism* and the *Lords supper* is imposed on all the Ministers of the Church. And *Joel 2. 17.* a form of prayer is taught the Priests: Secondly, But we are not now pleading for the needless imposing of any forms, nor the causeless restraint of extemporary prayers. I have fully born my testimony against that in due season: But many things are lawfully and necessarily obeyed, which are not lawfully commanded, as I shall shew you more anon. I could heartily wish that we could say that all Ministers (of any party) were such as were wholly above the need of forms. Or at least such whose own composures were better for the Church, than any that could be offered them by others (If it were not a contradiction)

But all that I now expect from the Objectors is, that they tell me or themselves, what proof they have that it is a sin for a Minister only to use an imposed form; when all the Congregation else may use it? Answer this well before you go.

And I pray let all the people note here, that it is not, nor cannot be denied, but that a form (even a new one every day) may be lawfully be imposed upon all them; and that the question is only of the Ministers use of imposed forms.

Obj. But our Ministers do not impose their prayers by force.

Ans.