

37, 38, 39. Luk. 10. 27. And so doth the Apostle Rom. 13. 10. 1 Pet. 1. 22. 1 John. 3. 11, 14, 23. & 4. 7, 11, 12, 20. 2 Joh. 5. And the fruits of the spirit are manifest Gal. 5. 22, 23. James saith, that pure Religion and undefiled before God even the father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in adversity, and to keep our selves unsupported of the world, Jam. 1. 27. Paul saith, 1 Tim. 1. 5. The end of the Commandment is Charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned: And then addeth, From which some having swerved, have turned aside to vain janglings —

In a word [The effectual belief of pardon and eternal Glory given through Christ, and the Love of God and man, with the denial of our selves, and fleshly desires, and contempt of all things in the world, which are competitors with God and our salvation, with a humble patient enduring of all which must be suffered for these ends] is the nature and sum of the Christian Religion.

Do nothing therefore as a duty which is a hinderance to any of this. Contentious preachings, and factious tidings which weaken Love, are not of God. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, 2 Tim. 2. 24. When you come into a family and find that their Religion consisteth in promoting some odd opinion, and pleading for a party, and vilifying others, be sure that this is a Religious way of serving the devil, being contrary to the great and certain duties of a godly life. When you fall into company, which stifleth all talk of Heaven, and all Heart-searching and Heart-humbling conference, by pleading ~~for~~ that opinion, be sure that it is but one way

way of enmity to Holiness, though not so gross as scorning and persecuting it. That which I said before of *Truth*, is applicable to this of *Duty*.

It is one of the most important things in the world, for the resolving of a thousand cases of conscience, and the directing of a Christian life, to know which *Duties* are the *Greater* and which are the *lesser*; and so which is to be preferred in competition; For that which is a duty at another time, is a sin, when it is done instead of a greater! as Christ hath resolved in the case of the Sabbath. If *Good* must be loved as *Good*, then the *Greatest Good* must be most loved and sought. Sacrifice instead of mercy is a sin: Our gift must be left at the altar, while we go to be reconciled to our brother. *Math. 5.* Never hearken to those men who would set up their controverted duties, or any positives and lesser things, against the duties of nature it self, or the great substantial parts of godliness.

R. DIRECT.

DIRECT. XL:

Labour for a sound judgement to know good from evil, lest you trouble your selves and others by mistakes : And till you grow so judicious, forsake not the guidance of a judicious Teacher, nor the company of the agreeing generality of the Godly.

Almost all our contentions and divisions are caused by the ignorance and injudiciousness of Christians ; especially the most self-conceited. They are for the most as children , that yet need to be taught the very principles of the divine Oracles, and to be fed with milk , when they think themselves fit to be teachers of others. *Heb. 5. 11, 12.* And therefore as children they are tossed to and fro, and caried about with every wind of doctrine, *Eph. 4. 14.* And when they have many years together been crying up an opinion, and vilifying dissenters, at last they turn to some other opinion, and confess that they did all this upon mistake. And was it not a pitiful life that they lived that while ? and a pitiful zeal which did set them on ? and a pitiful kind of worship which they thus offered to God ? Alas to hear a man pray and preach up Antinomianism one year, and Arminianism the next, and Socinianism the next ! To hear a man make Separation and Anabaptisttry a great part of his business to men in preaching and to God in prayer for

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seven and seven years together; and at last confess that all this was his error and his sin: (Or if he confess it not, it is so much the worse.) Is it not sad that ignorance and hasty rashness, should so much injure the Church and mens souls that so many well meaning people, should put evil for good and good for evil, darkness for light and light for darkness, *Isa.* 5. 20.

But because there is no hope that most should be judicious, there is no other remedy for such but this of Christs prescript which I have here set down.

First, Happy is he that chooseth a judicious faithful Guide and learneth of him till his own understanding be better illuminated; And that escapeth the conduct of ignorant, erroneous, self-seeking, proud, dividing Teachers.

Secondly, Continue in the Communion of the generality of agreeing Christians: The generality of the godly are more unlikely to be forsaken of Christ, than a few odd self-conceited singular professours. This is the way of peace to your selves and to the Church of Christ.

DIRECT. XLI.

Let not the bare Fervour of a Preacher, or the Lowdness of his voice, or affectionate manner of utterance, draw you too far to admire or follow him; without a proportionable degree of solid understanding and judiciousness.

IT is pity that any wise and judicious Minister should want that fervour and seriousness of speech, which the weight of so great a business doth require. And it is greater pity, that any serious affectionate Minister, should be ignorant and injudicious: And it is yet greater pity that in any good men, too much of their fervour should be meerly affected, and seem to be what it is not; or at least be raised by a selfish desire to advance our selves in the hearers thoughts, and to exercise our parts upon their affections. But it is most pitiful that the Church hath any hypocrites who have no other but such affected disssembled fervency. And it is not the least pity that so many good people, especially youths and women, should be so weak, as to value an affectionate tone of speech, above a judicious opening of the Gospel. I confess there is something in an affectionate expression, which will move the wisest: And as light and judgement tend to generate judgement, so heat of affection tendeth to beget affection. And I never loved a senseless delivery of matters of eternal consequence; As if

if we were asleep our selves, or would make the hearers to be so : Or would have them think by our cold expressions, that we believe not our selves, when we set forth the great inestimable things of the life to come. But yet it grieveth my very soul to think, what pitiful, raw, and ignorant kind of preaching, is crowded most after in many places, for the meer affectionate manner of expression, and lowdness of the Preachers voice ! How oft have I known the ablest Preachers undervalued, and an ignorant man by crouds applauded, when I that have been acquainted with the Preacher *ab incunabulis*, have known him to be unable well to answer most questions in the common Catechism. And I durst not tell them of his great insufficiency and ignorance, for fear of hindering the success of his labours, and being thought envious at other mens acceptance. I have known poor tradesmens boys have a great mind of the Ministry ; and we that were the Ministers of the Countrey, contributed to maintain them while they got some learning and knowledge : But they had not patience to keep out of the Pulpit till they competently understood their business there : And yet many of the religious people valued these as the only men : And some of them shortly after turned to some whimsical Sect or other, and contemned the Ministers that instructed and maintained them : And all this while, understood not half so much as many of our sober Auditors understood. This prepareth the poor people to be hurried into any disorder or division, when they no better know how to choose their Guides.

DIRECT. XLII.

Your belief of the necessary Articles of Faith, must be made your own, and not taken merely upon the Authority of any: And in all points of Belief or Practice which are of necessity to Salvation, you must ever keep company with the Universal Church: for it were not the Church if it erred in these: And in matters of peace and concord, the greater part must be your guide; In matters of humane obedience, your Governours must be your Guides: And in matters of high and difficult speculation, the judgment of one man of extraordinary understanding and clearness is to be preferred before both the Rulers and the major Vote.

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Latter. p. 35.

IN several sorts of Controversies and Cases, you must prefer several sorts of Guides or Judges: It is a grand pernicious Error to think that the same mens judgments must be most followed in every Case. And it is of grand importance to know how to value and vary our Guides, as the Cases vary. And for the most part, every man is more to be regarded in his own way of study and profession, than wiser men in other matters, of other studies and professions: As a Lawyer is to be valued in the Law more than the ablest and most illuminated Divine: And a Philosopher

Philosopher in Philosophy, and a Linguist in the Tongues, and a Physician in Physick, &c. For instance,

First, Suppose it were a Controversie whether Christ be God, or whether there be a life to come, or a resurrection, &c. Here no man must be Judge, because if you are Christians indeed, it is past controversie with you: And you believe this upon the evidences of truth, which have convinced you: And herein the universal Church are your associates.

Secondly, Suppose it be made a Controversie whether you shall use this Translation or version in publick, or another, or whether you shall meet at this hour or that; at this place or that; what words of prayer shall be used in publick; what persons you shall communicate with in publick, and what not, &c. In all such, your lawful Pastors and Rulers are the Judges, and their judgments must be preferred before more learned men that are not related to you.

Thirdly, Suppose the question be among many associated Churches, whether *this Church* or *Pastor* be to be disowned as *Heretical*, or owned by the rest as orthodox Christians. Here the judgement of the Pastors of those associated Churches in Councils, is to be preferred as of the proper Judges.

Fourthly, Suppose the question were among a free people, that want a Pastor, whether this man or that or the other (being all sufficient) shall be the Pastor of that Church: Here the major Vote of the people of that Church should be preferred.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, Suppose the question be, whether *1 John 5. 7. c. g.* be Canonical Scripture; or the Doxology after the the Lords Prayer, &c. here a few learned Antiquaries, are to be believed before a major Vote or Council, unskilled in those things, who contradict them.

Sixthly, Suppose the question were of the Object of predestination, of the nature of the wills liberty, of the concurrence of God, and determining way of grace, of the definition of justification, faith, &c. Here a few well studied judicious Divines must be preferred before Authority and majority of Votes: As one clear-sighted man seeth further and better than a thousand that have darker sight: So that you must in such vary your guides, according to their several capacities and the Case. *Obedience* hearkneth most to *Authority*; *Unity* and *Concord* must depend most on some majority of Votes: *Hard questions* must be decided by the best *studied Persons*, and the quickest clearest sights, and not by bare *Commands* or *Votes*.

DIRECT.

DIRECT. XLIII.

Take heed lest you be tempted to reject a good Cause, because it is owned by some bad persons; or to like a bad cause when it is owned by men that are otherwise good: And that you judge not of the faith and cause by the persons, when you should judge of the persons rather by the faith and cause. v. p. 294.

I Confess when we have no other reason to encline us to one opinion or to another, but only the reputation of them that hold it, *ceteris paribus*, in matters of meer godliness, the judgment of godly men is much to be preferred before theirs that are ungodly, and they are much liker to be in the right. But when God hath given us other means to know the truth, we must impartially make use of them.

It too oft falleth out that honest people are like straying sheep: If one leap over the hedge, the rest will croud and strive to follow him: And therefore errors are like Languages and Fashions, that follow the Country where they are bred. The religious people in Sweden and Denmark have one sort of error; In Holland and Helvetia perhaps they have another: In France, and Spain, and Italy they have others: In Greece, and Armenia, and Ethiopia they have others. And it is an easie matter before we are aware, to fall into the common epidemical disease; and to think, This is best, because the best and strictest people are

are of this mind. And indeed sin doth seldom get so great an advantage in the world, as when it hath won the major vote among the most religious sort of people: If but a *Peter* separate, *Barnabas* and many more will follow.

And on the other side, sometimes the worse sort of men may hold fast the truth, and many ignorant persons are apt to reject it, because it is owned by men so bad. But if Truth be the Religion of their King and Countrey, or of their Ancestors in which they were brought up; or if their reputation or peace of conscience lie upon it; or if the defence of it shew their wit or learning; or if they can take an advantage by it, against better men, who erre in that one point: It is no wonder in all these Cases, if the worse sort of men defend the truth.

For instance; If any Sect should rise in *England*, who should deny Christ, or the Scripture, or the Resurrection, or the Life to come, or the Lords day (for all that they cannot keep it holy, yet) the worse sort of the people would all rise up against such errours. Shall we therefore think that the people are in the wrong? So if any better persons deny *Infant Baptisme*, or the use of the Lords Prayer, &c. the worse sort of people would be all against them; and yet be in the right.

And yet how many do take a form of prayer or Liturgy to be unlawful, meerly because the most of the worse sort are for it! As a Pharisee can gratifie his hypocrisie by long Prayers, which yet are good in themselves; so can an ungodly person gratifie his hypocrisie and sloth by Forms
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and Liturgies: which yet doth not prove them to be unlawful.

DIRECT. XLIV.

To take the bad example of religious men, to be one of your most petilous temptations: And therefore labour to discover especially what are the sins of Professors in the age that you live in, that you may especially watch and fortifie your souls against them.

Sometimes the strictest sort run in a gang after one opinion, and sometimes after another: sometimes to overvalue free will with the *Pelagians*: sometimes to abuse the name and notion of free grace: sometimes they are drawn with *Peter* to lay about them with a private unwarranted Sword; or by Politicians tempted into unlawful tumults: sometimes they run together into unlawful Compliances and Conformities to escape some censure or danger to the flesh: And most commonly they are hurried by Passion to follow some erroneous Leader into Schisme and Divisions, which are contrary to Unity, Love, and Peace.

Study well what is the common errour of the religious party in the times and places where you live, that you may take a special care to escape them, (For some such or others it is too probable they have.) Like not their fault for their Religi-
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onsake: But specially take heed lest the Devil draw you, to dislike their Religion for their faults. Joyn with them heartily in the one, but not in the other.

DIRECT. XLV.

Desire the highest degree of Holiness, and to be free from the corruptions of the times: But affect not to be odd and singular, from ordinary Christians in lawful things.

AN affectation of singularity in indifferent things, doth either come from such ignorance as those were guilty of in *Rom. 14.* or most commonly from Pride, though you perceive it not your selves. If it be to go in a meaner garb than others, and as the Quakers, not to put off the hat; or with the Fryars, to go barefoot, or in a distinguishing habit, that all men may see and say, This is a singular person in Religion, it is easie to see how this gratifieth pride. Humility desireth not to be specially taken notice of: And therefore in all things lawful, to do as others do, doth gratifie humility very much. It's strange to observe how much stress some persons lay upon their singular habits, gestures, expressions and actions, when they have once taken them up? and how sharp they are against all that are contrary? For as the Masters of every Sect of Monks among the Papists had their several Rules of singula-

gularity in things indifferent; and yet presently desired to get disciples to take their names, and follow their rules; so is it with most that begin in singularity: They would have all follow them, that it might grow common.

DIRECT. XLVI.

When you have to do only with stigmatized scandalous ones, to vindicate the honour of Christianity from their scandal, go as far from them as lawfully you can: But with the common sort of sinners, whose conversion you are bound to seek, go not as far from them as you can, but purposely study to come as near them, as lawfully you may, that you may have the better advantage to win them to the truth.

When it is our work to avoid persons that they may be ashamed, or that we may shew our detestation of their wickedness, then going from them is our duty, and we must do it; (To the excommunicate in publick, and to the notoriously wicked and impenitent after admonition, in our private way of life.) But with most men, our duty is to labour their conversion, and in hope to seek the saving of their souls, till they prove as dogs and swine to their exhorters. It is a common question whether we should go as far
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as we may from wicked men, or come as near them as we may. And it is very great ignorance to say either the one or the other, without distinguishing of wicked men! Seeing our duty lyeth the clean contrary way, towards one sort of them and towards another.

And there is much difference also to be made of the *matter* in which our joyning with them, or going from them doth consist. For there are some things which though they are no sin, yet are so like sin, that our doing them is most like to be a snare, and to hinder mens repentance, and not to further it: And in this we must not come too near them. But there are other things in which our going too far from them is like to hinder their repentance.

The injudicious zeal of many young Christians, doth often carry them into this extream. Any fashion of apparel which the common people use, they will avoid as far as modesty will permit them. And any lawfull recreation which they use, they will fly the further from because they use it: And they think it a scandal, to shoot or bowl or use any such game which bad men use. And any form or *manner* of speech which is lawfull in it self they think they must avoid because such use it. But especially any way of worshipping God, or any controvertible opinion in Religion, which is owned by bad men, they flye as far from as they can; By which means all this evil is committed.

First, Their own faith and practise is corrupted: For many an error is taken up, by going too far from other mens faults. Many a one turneth

neth Pelagian, by flying indiscreetly from Antinomianism. And many a one turneth Antinomian by avoiding Pelagianism. Many a one turneth Papist to shew his detestation of multitudes of sects: And many a one turneth to the giddiest sects, to avoid the things which are held and practised by the Papists; and are so zealous in avoiding the Papists ceremonies and forms and holidays too far, that at last they renounce their Ordination and their Baptism, and some at last deny the Scriptures, the Creed, and the Christ, which the Papists own. Many a one turneth Separatist and Anabaptist and Quaker, to get far enough from Bishops and Liturgies: And many a one is ready to over-run his consideration, and abuse his conscience in the extent of his compliance with all impositions, through the indignation or contempt against the unreasonable humours of the Sectaries. And thus mens own judgement and practise is depraved, while they think more from whence to go, than whither.

Secondly, you lose your advantage of doing good to those you flye from: And therein disobey the will of God, and have a hand in the loss of the souls of men: *Paul* became a Jew to the Jews, and all things to all men to save some. 1 Cor. 9. 19, 20, 21, 22. I pray you mark his words: It had been no strange thing, if he had become *wise* to gain the *foolish*, and shewed himself *strong* to win the *weak*, &c. But to become a *Jew* (as when he circumcised *Timothy*, and shaved his head because he had a vow, &c.) and to be as under the Law to them that are under Law; and as without Law to them that are with-

our Law ; and to become as *weak* to them that are *weak*, to gain the weak, and to be *made all things to all men*, to save some, this is far from the religion of the Separatists. What abundance of things do many now blame, and censure others for as temporizers, which they have nothing against (that may be called *Reason*) but only that their neighbours use them? If a man stand up at the profession of the Belief, or if he stand up when the Psalms and Hymns of Praise to God are uttered, they say, he conformeth to the gestures of the Congregation : and make that his dispraise which is his praise. And what is not *standing* a fit gesture to profess our Faith in? and a fit gesture to *praise God* in? Or is it praise-worthy to be *odd* and *singular* in the Church? and not to do as the rest of the Church doth? *Austin* professed his resolution, in all such gestures and lawful orders to do as the Church doth where he is: And *Paul* would have us with *one mouth* as well as with *one mind* to glorifie God. I entreat these men to mark whether it was Christ or the Pharisees that came nearest to their way, and whom they now imitate? Was it for going too far from sinners that the Pharisees did censure Christ? Or was it not for eating and drinking with Publicans and sinners (though he did it not to harden them in their sin, but as a Physician conversing with the sick to heal them) was it not for Sabbath-breaking and not being strict enough in such matters, that they were offended with Christ and his disciples? The case is plain: But corrupted nature more favoureth the *separating* zeal of the Pharisees, than the *Loving winning* zeal of Christ: And

And will easilier suffer us to be imitators of the Pharisees than of Christ.

Thirdly, This going too far from those whom we should win, doth not only lose our advantage to do them good, but greatly tendeth to harden them in all their prejudices against a religious life; and to hinder their conversion and to undo their souls. When they hear and see us place any of our Religion, in avoiding a lawful recreation, or a lawful use of words, or a lawful fashion of apparel, or a lawful gesture or circumstance in Gods worship, they will judge of the rest of our Religion by that part: And this is one thing that hath hardened thousands (especially of the rich who are enclined to excesses) in a scornful contempt of strictness in Religion, under the name of Puritans and Bigots and Precisians, and such like: They think they are but an ignorant humorous sort of people, who are almost mad with a pride of their singularity in Religion; And think that when you tell them of a Conversion, you would have them become such whimsical fanaticks: And that the difference between their Religion and yours is but, whether such a form of prayer, or such a gesture, or such a fashion of apparel, or such musick or other recreation, be lawful, or unlawful; In which they are confident that they are in the right? And what greater cruelty can you shew to souls, than thus to harden them in their sin and misery? Little do such persons think, how many be in Hell, through these scandals and snares which they have set before them? And yet they take on them; that is because they would not encourage men in

sin, that they thus flye from them. When they do their worst to make all the world believe that strict religiousness, is but the whimfie of a giddy sort of people, who are almost out of their wits with pride. And what greater injury can men do to Christ and to Religion than this? To make it the scorn and contempt of the world?

I know they will say that *Religion was ever scorned by the wicked, and ever will be?* But if it be scorned for its genuine nature, its heavenly wisdom, purity and goodness, this is the disgrace only of them that scorn it: Or if they maliciously and causelessly call *wisdom*, *folly*, or call *good*, *evil*, this will redound to the speakers shame, where true Reason hath but leave to work. But if you will therefore do as the Jews did, and cloath Christ in a fools Coat, and put a Reed in his hand for a Scepter, to expose him to the laughter and scorn of the beholders, it is you that will be found his deriders and crucifiers! If you *blind-fold him*, and others smite him, and say, *Read who smote thee*; his buffetting will prove to be caused by you: If you will *paint a saint* in the garb of a *mad man*, the countries hatred and abuse of saints will be imputed unto you.

Fourthly, yea I may add, that you are the great cause of the *persecutions* of the *godly*, and of the damnation of the persecutors. While godly people appear in their own likeness, in wisdom and love and humility and meekness and sobriety, the world doth usually bear *some* reverence to *them*, though it hate them. But when you have made men believe that those that call themselves *Godly people*, are but a company of superstitious Pharisees,

sees, that cry, *Touch not, taste not, handle not*; or a sort of melancholly humorists, who must sit because their neighbours stand, or must go out of the way, because their neighbours go in it; This maketh them justifie all their cruelties, to you and others, and think persecution to be their duty: and to say that, *the whip is for the fools back, and wanton children must be made wise by the rod*; and that it is no wrong to a mad man to lie in Bedlam.

If you say, that *Godliness hath been alwayes persecuted*, I answer, But if you are the *causers* of it, though it must needs be that scandal or offence come, yet wo to him by whom it cometh. *Math. 18. 7. Luk. 17. 1, 2.*

The way of heavenly wisdom is pure, but peaceable and gentle and easie to be entreated: The way that Christ and his Apostles have led us, is to draw as near to sinners as we can, by Love and all the offices of Love, neither following them in any sin, nor flying from them in any thing that is *lawful*; that they may be convinced that it is not *humour and disdain and pride*, but true necessity and *Gods command*, which maketh us differ from them as we do. And that we may not be disabled by any contrary errors of our own from evincing and oppugning theirs.

DIRECT. XLVII.

When ever you are avoiding any error or sin, forget not that there is a contrary extreame to be avoided, of which you are in danger as well as of that which you are opposing.

THe minds of most men are so narrow, that they cannot look many wayes at once. If they be intent on one thing, they forget another. But it is a narrow bridge betwixt dangerous gulfs, which Christian faith and obedience must pass over: And he that looketh on the one side, with the greatest fear and caution, is undone, if he look not also on the other.

The common way of avoiding any error or vice, is to run into the contrary. And on those terms satan himself will be Orthodox, and a reformer, and an enemy to vice. I gave you some instances even now. He is a rare person, that is so wise and happy, as to flye from every error and sin, with an impartial awakened fear of the contrary. And thence it is that the most judicious old experienced Christians are usually in controversies for a *middle way*; and in the croud of contentious sects, they commonly are the *reconcilers*: Not only because they are more calm and moderate, and peaceable than others; but especially because they have seen the error on both extreames, when others see only the error on one side. Only in our inclination to our ultimate

mate end, that is, in our Love to God, we never need to fear over-doing. But all the means may be perverted and turned into sin by extreams.

Many that observe the pollution of the Church by the great neglect of holy Discipline, avoid this error by turning to a sinful separation: And many that are offended at separation avoid it; by a gross neglect of Christian discipline, and taking it for a needless thing.

Many who observe how heartlessly and hypocritically prescribed forms of prayer are used by too many, do avoid it by denying the lawfulness of all forms: And many who see the error of this opinion, do escape it by turning to meer formality, and deriding all prayer which is not written in a book, or prescribed by another.

If any who see how those that were baptized in Infancy, are admitted to adult Communion without ever understanding or seriously owning the Covenant into which they were then entered; and seeing how the Church is corrupted hereby; do avoid this error by denying the baptism of Infants. And many that see the error of the Anabaptists, do avoid it by countenancing the aforesaid Church-corruption: and if Infants be but baptized, they never care whether they be called at years of discretion, to the solemn renewing and owning of their Covenant.

And many that see both these extreams do plead for Confirmation, as the middle way: But they turn it into a meer Ceremony, and defeat the ends of it, and never bring the baptized to a solemn renewall of their holy Vow. And many

who see the Papists abuse of Confirmation, do wholly cast it off, and deny the healing use aforesaid.

Many who see the effects of Papal tyranny, dislike all *General Ministry*, which taketh the care of many Churches. And many who see the incoherence of Independent Churches, and the calamity of sects; do incline to Papal Usurpation.

Many who see the evils of Independency in respect of *Council and Concord*, are inclined to a *Regimental dependency* and *subordination* of one Church to another, as of Divine appointment. And many who see that there is no proof that God ever appointed such a *Regimental dependency*, do turn to Independency in point of *Council and Concord*.

Many who observe the grossness of their error, who would have the people have the power of the Keys, and govern the Church by the major Vote, do deny the people the liberty of choosing their Pastors, and being guided in spirituals as Volunteers. And many who see this error of denying the people liberty, do give them the fore-said power of the Keyes, and make them Governours of themselves by Vote.

Many who hear the Papists talk so much of merits and of good works, do deny our own Faith, and Love, and Repentance, the place that God hath assigned them in order to pardon and salvation, in subordination to Christ: And many who hear the presumptuous boast of being Righteous by Christs imputed Righteousness, without any fulfilling of the Conditions of the Covenant of Grace

Grace on their parts, do make as a jest of *imputed Righteousness* (as it is taken in a sound and warrantable sense) and do ascribe too much to the works of man.

Many who hear the Socinians make *faith* and *obedience* to be all one, do deny that the faith by which we are justified, is a giving up the soul in Covenant to Christ intirely in all his office, even as our Redeemer and Lord, and so an engagement to obedience by subjection. And many that hear men say, that faith justifieth us only as an instrument, apprehending Christs satisfaction and meritorious righteousness as their own, do confound our faith and obedience; and forget that the faith by which we are justified, is [*our becoming Christians, or, Assent and Consent to the Covenant which we make in Baptisme* (nothing more or less;) and not *our living as Christians in after obedience*, which is the fruit or effect of faith.

And, even in *civil things*, many who observe how Turkish, Tartarian, Japonian, China's, and other Heathenish and Infidel Tyranny, is the chief Resister of the Gospel, and Suppressor of Christianity to the damnation of millions of souls; And how Papal tyranny, and Muscovian, and Spanish cruelties, are the chief Maintainers of ignorance and unreformedness in the Churches, are ready hereupon to think dishonourably of Monarchy it self, and to murmur at the power of Christian Princes, and to rush into seditions and rebellions. And many that see the mischiefs of seditions, conspiracies and rebellions, are ready to forget the grand and heynous sin of Tyranny, and the calamity of Souls, and Churches, and

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Kingdoms thereby : (As Campanella saith, The abuse of the Potestative Primality, is Tyranny, the abuse of the Intellective Primality is Hereſie, and the abuse of the Volitive Primality is Hypocriſie : Though indeed he ſhould have mentioned both extreams).

In a word, woe be to the Reformer, who feareth not running into the Extream, which is contrary to the Errour and Sin which he would reform.

DIRECT. XLVIII.

Think more and talk more of your faults and failings againſt others ; eſpecially againſt Princes, Magiſtrates, and Miniſters, than of their faults and failings againſt you.

THe Reason of this Counſel is very obvious and paſt contradiction. Another mans ſin as ſuch is not yours : No mans ſin ſhall damn you but your own ; no nor bring any proper penalty on you. Our ſuffering by *other mens* ſin, is the common way to Heaven, by which Chriſt and his Apoſtles went : But our own ſin is that which muſt have the blood and ſpirit of a Saviour for its cure, or it will undo us. He came to deſtroy the works of the Devil, and to ſave his people from their ſins : *Math. 1. 21. 1 Job. 3. 8.* But not to keep us from being persecuted by ſinners : *Math. 5. 10, 11.* without eſcaping perſecution

we may be saved, (for every one that will live
godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution,
2 *Tim.* 3. 12.) But except we Repent of our own
sin we shall perish, *Luk.* 13. 3, 5. we must mourn
for the sins of others (*Ezek.* 9. 4.) but we pro-
perly Repent of none but our own.

Should we not most fear that which we are most
in danger of ? And most lament that, which we are
most guilty of ? And most talk against that which
most concerneth us ? And all this is not *other*
mens faults, no not *Magistrates* or *Ministers*
(though much to be bewailed) but our own.

Every one will confess, that the true spirit of
Christianity is agreeable to what I say. And yet
how contrary is the practise of no small number
of the Religious ? In all companies how forward
are they to talk of the sins of Princes and Parlia-
ments ? of Courtiers and Nobility, and Gentry ?
especially of Ministers ; And not only of the
scandalous that are guilty indeed, but of the *in-*
nocent that are not of their way ; whose faults they
rather *make* than *find* ? But how seldome do you
hear them tell any how bad they are themselves ?
(unless it be in formality to seem humble per-
sons) yea, how impatient are they with any other
that find fault with them ? It would be much more
acceptable to God and wise men, to hear you
talk of your own infirmities, than of the Rulers
or Ministers, or Neighbours ? The one is a work
of Repentance ; and the other of detraction and
backbiting. The one is a work which you are
commanded by God (to judge your selves, and
confess your faults one to another :) But the o-
ther is a work which you have seldomer a call
from

from God to do. One tendeth to your pardon ; the other to your guilt : Therefore if you fall into the company of backbiters, that are dishonouring their Rulers or their Pastors, or telling how bad their neighbours are ; labour to purifie these stinking waters, or turn the stream : say to them, [O friends how bad are we our selves ! what pride is in our hearts ! what ignorance in our minds ! so wanting are we even in the lowest grace, Humility, that we have scarce enough to make us take patiently, such censures as now we are giving out upon others ? so *selfish* as dishonoureth our profession with the brand of *contractedness*, and *partiality* ; so weak that all our *duties* are liable to greater censures than we can bear : And our inward graces weaker than our outward duties. Of such ungoverned thoughts, that *confusion* and *tumult* instead of *order*, and *fruitful improvement*, are the dayly temper and employment of our imaginations : so passionate, impatient, and corrupt, that we are a trouble to our selves and others, and a dishonour to the Gospel, and a hinderance to the conversion of those whom our holy exemplary lives should win to God : so strange to Heaven, as if we had never well believed it : And to say all in one, so empty of Love to our dear Redeemer and the God of Love, that our Hearts lie vacant to entertain the love of worldly vanities ; and draw back from the serious thoughts of God, which should be our daily work and pleasure ; and flie from the face of Death, as if we should be worst, when we are nearest to our God. And when we are our selves no better, should we not rather complain of the sore that is so near us ?
and

and marvel that our neighbours vilifie not us, and that the Church doth not judge us unworthy of its Communion ! Nature teacheth or constraineth all men, to be more sensible of their own diseases, than of their neighbours ; and to complain of them most as loving themselves best : Is it then because you love your neighbours better than your selves, that you speak more of their faults and infirmities than of your own ? If not, take heed lest it prove not to be the voice of love ! and then I need not tell you how bad it signifieth ! God is Love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. The Devil is the *Love-killer* : And what way can you imagine so powerful to *kill love* to any others, as to make men think them to be very bad ? Doth any man *love evil* that *knoweth* it to be evil ? certainly therefore these speakings evil of others, are *love-killing* words (though to his face to make him know himself, they might be medicinal :) And therefore they are the service of the *love-killing* spirit.]

DIRECT. XLIX.

Take notice of all the good in others which appeareth, and rather talk of that behind their backs, than of their faults.

IF there were no *God* in others, they were not to be *loved* : For it is contrary to mans nature, to will or love any thing, but *sub ratione boni*,
as

as supposed to be good. The *good of nature*, is lovely in all men as *men*, even in the wicked and our enemies (And therefore let them that think they can never speak bad enough of nature take heed lest they run into excess :) And the *capacity* of the *good of holiness* and *happiness*, is part of the *good of nature*. The *good of gifts* and of a common Profession, with the possibility or probability of sincerity, is lovely in all the visible members of the Church. And truly the excellent gifts of Learning, judgment, utterance and memory, with the virtues of meekness, humility, patience, contentedness, and a loving disposition inclined to do good to all, are so amiable in some, who yet are too strange to a heavenly life, that he must be worse than a man who will not love them.

To vilifie all these gifts in others, savoureth of a malignant contempt of the gifts of the Spirit of God. And so it doth, to talk all of their faults, and say little or nothing of their gifts and virtues : yea, some have so unloving and unlovely a kind of Religiousness, that they backbite that *man* as a *defender of the prophane*, and a *commender of the ungodly*, who doth but contradict or reprehend their backbitings : And are ever gain-saying all the commendations which they hear of any whom they think ill of.

But if you would when you talk of others (especially them who differ from you in opinions) be more in commendation of all the good which indeed is in them. 1. You would shew your selves much liker to God who is Love, and unliker to Satan the accuser. 2. You would
shew

shew an honest impartial ingenuity, which honoureth virtue where ever it is found. 3. You would shew a humble sense of your own frailty, who dare not proudly contemn your brethren. 4. You would shew more love to God himself, when you love all of God whensoever you discern it; and cannot abide to hear his gifts and mercies undervalued. 5. You would increase the grace of love to others, in your selves, by the daily exercise of it; when backbiting and detraction will increase the malignity from which they spring. 6. You would increase *Love* also in the *hearers*; which is the fulfilling of the Law; when detraction will breed or increase malice. 7. You will do much to the winning and conversion of them whom you commend, if they be unconverted. For when they are told that you speak lovingly of them behind their backs, it will much reconcile them to your persons, and consequently prepare them to hearken to the counsel which they need. But when they are told that you did backbite them, it will fill them with hatred of you, and violent prejudice against your counsel and profession.

Yet mistake me not: It is none of my meaning all this while, that you should speak any *falsehood* in commendation of others; nor make people believe, that a careless carnal sort of persons, are as good as those that are careful of their souls; or that their way is sufficient for salvation; Nor to commend ungodly men in such a manner, as tendeth to keep either them or their hearers from repentance; Nor to call evil, good, or put darkness for light, nor honour the works of the devil.

vil. But to shew Love and impartiality to all; and to be much more in speaking of all the good which is in them, than of the evil: Especially if they be your enemies, or differ from you in opinions of Religion: *Tit. 3. 1. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers; to obey Magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers but gentle, shewing all meekness to all men. For we our selves were sometime foolish, &c. Grace is clean contrary to this detracting vice.*

DIRECT. I

Study the Duty of instructing and exhorting, more than Reproof and finding fault.

I Deny not but that it is duty to tell a brother of his fault, and to reprove and that with plainness too. *Math. 18. 15. Lev. 19. 17.* And it is but few that do this rightly, of many that will backbite and censure. But yet I have long observed, that many Christians are enquiring, How they must manage the duty of Reproof, who never enquire how to perform the duty of *Christian exhortation* or instructing of the ignorant. When as this later is much more usually a duty than the former; And you are bound to *exhort* a multitude whom you are not bound to *reprove*. And *exhortation* to good is a duty which the hearer is usually less offended at; It doth not so much gall and exasperate his mind: It shameth him