

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

him not so much, and yet is the greater part of our duty to him; as the positives of Religion are before the negatives. Exhortation (rightly used) is the plain direct expression of Love, and an earnest desire of anothers good: When Reproof doth savour of a mixture of Love and displeasure; and the wrath doth often cloud the love.

And I must say, that I find many surly proud Professors, much proner to Reproof, than to Exhortation: Their pride and self-conceitedness makes them too forward to reprove their Governours, and the ignorant people are ready enough to reprove their Teachers, and the servant to reprove the Master or the Mistis; but not to be reprov'd by them. Ministers must be wise and cautelous how they set such people on *reproving* and finding fault with others, when their own pride and passion and fond self-opinion, is ready to put them on too far.

**I**

**DIRECT.**



## DIRECT. LI.

*The more you suffer by your Rulers ( or any men ) the more be watchful lest your sufferings tempt you to dishonour them. And the more you are wronged by your equals, the more be afraid lest you should be tempted to withdraw the Love which is their due.*

**T**He Honouring of our superiours, is a Moral or Natural duty ( of the fifth Commandment ) which sufferings will not excuse us from : And so is the Love of all men, even of our enemies. And *selfishness* and *Passion* are things so powerful, that it is wonderful hard to escape their deceit: They will blind the mind, and change the judgement, and corrupt the affections, before you are aware, or believe that you are at all perverted.

Every man must watch most where his temptation is strongest. Do you not think that you have a far stronger temptation, to dishonour a persecuting Magistrate than a good one? And to hate an enemy than a friend? Therefore arm your selves, and one another against this snare. And when others are aggravating the fault and injury, do you in company remember each other, in what danger you are now of losing your innocency, and of doing your selves more hurt by that, than any powers or enemies can do you. It is an easie thing to Love one that loveth you, and  
to

*Avoid the Revenge of heart and tongue. 243*

to honour a Magistrate that doth good to you and all. But as the Apostle saith of servants, 1 Pet. 2. 18, 19, 20. (*Be subject — Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward: For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully: For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults you take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*)

DIRECT. LII.

*Make conscience of heart-revenge, and tongue-revenge, as well as of hand-revenge.*

**I**T is so notorious that Revenge is a usurpation of Gods prerogative, & a heinous sin, that Professors could not so frequently & easily commit it, if they did not first deceive themselves, and take that to be no revenge which is. To do any open hurt to another, they take notice of as sinful revenge. But is there no *secret wish* in your heart, that some evil may befall another? Nor no secret gladness that some evil hath befallen him? You will say, It is not in revenge, but in hope he may repent: But take heed what is in your heart. Its one thing to Repent of his injury to you as such, and to make you amends and repair your honour: And its another thing to repent of it as a sin against God, to the saving of his own soul. Is it not the former that you more desire than the latter?



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And are not your *Tongues* employed too often in revenge? What are all your secret reflections, and endeavours to dishonour those that have wronged you, but *vengeful speeches*? Railing, and backbiting, and nibling at anothers honour and good name may be acts of revenge as truly as the actions of the hand.

### DIRECT. LIII

*When you are exasperated at the hurt which you feel from Magistrates, remember the good which the Church receiveth by them, as well as the hurt.*

**I**F you look all at the evil in any man, and overlook the good, you cannot choose but hate him: And if you think only of what you suffer by Magistrates, you may easily know what the effect must be. And the sin is so great, that it should not be made light of, by a tender conscience. The good of the Office and of the person is of God; and the evil is of Satan: And should you so look at *Satans* part, as to pass by all *Gods* part? What ingratitude is it, to take notice so deeply of your suffering, and to take no notice of your mercies. There are few *Heathen Magistrates*, from whom those Christians who live under them, receive not much more good than hurt. Much more *Christian Magistrates* are a blessing to believers. For if they persecute some, yet they usually protect more, from the fury of the vulgar

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vulgar rabble, who would quickly devour them, if Rulers did not restrain them. And the countenancing of the Christian Religion in the essentials, and defending Christian assemblies for Gods worship is an unvaluable mercy. If *Paul* said to the Romans [ *Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil — Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the Minister of God to thee for good* ] *Rom. 13. 3, 4.* How much more may those say so who have Christian Magistrates! Or if some particular persons do suffer more under some such, than *Paul* or the Christians did under Heathens ( *Acts 28. last* ) yet every true Christian, must more regard the publick interest than his own: and must rejoyce that the Gospel hath any protection and furtherance, and the souls of the people any benefit, whatever his personal suffering be. Read *Phil. 1. 12,* to the 20.

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DIRECT. LIV.

*Learn to suffer by Ministers and Good people,  
and not only by Magistrates, nor only by  
the ungodly.*

**I** Confess it is a thing most unnatural for one true Christian to afflict another; and especially for a Minister, who is the father of the flock, to be a hurter of them, and to do like an enemy; and to fleece them and devour them. But yet it



is a thing which sometimes must be born. I have observed that Religious people when a *Magistrate* (though a usurper) persecuteth them, they can in some sort undergo it, as no strange thing. And they are not so forward to cast off the *office* and abhor the *persons* by whom they suffer. But if they suffer never so little by a *Minister*, they fly away from him, and are incapable of comfortable communion with him, and the breach is hardly ever made up. I confess there is some more colour for this impatency; (to be mentioned in another place.) But yet Gods servants have been tryed by this kind of suffering also, and therefore you must not be so tender of it, nor be driven by it into sinful separations, or into a contempt of the Ministers of the Gospel, as too many sects in these times have been. Read what at large is said of the afflicting Shepherds, Ezek. 34. & Zech. 10. & 11. And you will see that it is not a thing to be wondered at, to have Shepherds which fleece and destroy the flocks, and tread down their pasture and muddy their waters, and feed themselves and not the flocks, and gather not that which goeth astray: Nay their own Shepherds pitied them not. Zech. 11. 5, I know that it is the *Magistrates* that are often meant by Shepherds in the Prophets: but the Priests also are usually meant with them, and sometime distinctly by the same word. And their falshood and cruelty oft expressed, as in Jer. 2. 8, 26. & 5. 31. and 26. 7, 8, 11. & 32. 32. Ezek. 22. 26. Hos. 6. 9. Mich. 3. 11. Zeph. 3. 4. Mal. 1. 6, & 2. 1. &c. And remember that all the wickedness of these Priests, and their abuse of the people, did not warrant the people

people to forsake the Jewish Church: Though the Ark was taken by the Philistines for the wickedness and violence of *Eli's* sons; and the people tempted to desire a King, by the sins of the sons of *Samuel*, yet none of their mis-doings did warrant a separation from that Church. Yea Christ who was persecuted by the Priests, did yet bid the cleansed Leper go shew himself to the Priest, and offer according to the Law.

Therefore a true Christian must learn (though not to favour any mans sin, nor to be indifferent what Ministry he liveth under, yet) patiently to suffer much abuse and persecution, sometimes from Ministers themselves; and to see that it drive them not in peevish impatency into any extream, or to any unlawful sect or separation, nor to a disdain of the sacred office, which they abuse, nor to lose the benefit of it, or be unthankful for it.

And though it be sad that true Christians should abuse each other, yet this also must be born. Many can bear the scorn and cruelties of the openly profane, who can scarce bear to be neglected or set light by, much less to be hardly censured by the Religious. But observe first, that your *Pride* may notably appear in this: and it is no great sign of *humility* to suffer only from the worst. For you look on them as persons of no honour, and therefore not capable of *dishonouring* you: For a dog to bark at you, you take for no disgrace: Nay you take it for your honour to suffer by such persons, as supposing it a mark of Christs disciples. But the Religious you more reverence, and think their contempt is a great dishonour to you; and



fore your pride will not suffer you to bear it patiently.

Secondly, And remember that different opinions and interests may possibly so far exasperate some that are otherwise religious, as to make them afflictors, or more plainly, persecutors of one another, though Godliness it self be applauded by them all. The experience of England, Scotland and Ireland within these 25 years doth sadly tell us and the world, how far men can go in persecuting each other for different interests and opinions, who all profess a zeal for godliness.

And let it have your special remark, that one reason why all men as Christians and Godly do more easily and commonly love one another, is because as Christians and Godly, they do not hurt or wrong each other: But as they are of various sects they hate and envy one another, because as they are sectaries they hurt and injure one another. For the spirit and zeal of a sect as such is censorious, hurtful, unpeaceable and dividing: But the spirit and zeal of Godliness and Christianity, is kind and gentle and inclineth to do good to all.

Remember that you have never learnt the Christian art of suffering aright, till you can suffer not only by bad men, but by men that otherwise are good; nor only by enemies but by friends, nor only by them that bear the sword, but also by some who preach the word; and will not by oppression be made mad, nor driven from your innocency.

DIRECT. LV.

*When you complain of violence and persecution in others, take heed lest you shew the same inward sin, by Church-persecution and cruelty against them, or any others.*

**B**ut because I know that guilt causeth impatience, and passion disposeth men to mistakes and false reports, before I proceed, I must here foretell you, 1. That I mean not by *Separatists* all that are so called by interessed injudicious persons: But those 1. that account *true Churches* of Christ to be *no Churches*, 2. or that account it *unlawful* to hold *Communion* with those Churches, whose communion is not *unlawful*; because they are *faulty*, or because they *differ from them* in some *opinions* or *circumstances* of worship: 3. especially if they *practise*, and *perswade* others to *practise* according to these two opinions; of which the first is the higher sort of separation, and the second the lower.

And secondly, That by *Church-dividers*, I mean both these and all such whose principles and practises are against that love of a Christian as a Christian, and that forbearance of dissenters, which should be exercised to all the members of Christ; and who fly from the ancient simplicity and primitive terms of Church-communion, and adde (as the Papists do) their own little novelties as necessary things.

And these that do *causelessly* separate from their own



own lawfully called Pastors; For *ubi Episcopus, ibi Ecclesia*; where the true Pastor is, there the Church is (what ever place it be that they assemble in) (as Cyprian once said.)

And lastly, those that are of uncharitable, humorous, peevish, contentious and fiery spirits, and will stir up mutinies and sidings, and causeless divisions in any Church where they come. And truly they that think of the present state of *Hartford* and some other Churches in *New England*, (which I will not here make a Narrative of) me thinks should fear Separations, Schismes or Divisions, from or in the Churches called Independent, as much as those of a different Discipline do as to theirs: (if not somewhat more, on several accounts.)

Thirdly, And remember that I am not here speaking of any mens former faults, by way of uncharitable bitterness, insulting or reproach; but verily brethren, if we are not impartially willing to know the truth of every side, and of our own selves as well as others, we *choose* deceit, and resist the light, and provoke God to forsake our understandings. Do we not yet know where *Judgment* hath begun, after such plagues and flames, and Church convulsions? And do we not yet know where Repentance must begin? Enquire for good news whence you will, I will enquire whether we are awakened to a true Repentance; and by that I will fetch my prognosticks of our future state? Not whether you cry out against other mens sins, but against your own, and that particularly with all their aggravations; and whether Professours of Religiosity do as heartily

tily lament their own notorious publick scandals, as they expect that drunkards and fornicators, and the friends of looseness, should lament theirs! Till we see this, what promise have we of the pardon of our dreadful temporal penalties? ( to say nothing of the greater. )

Woe to the Land and People that can multiply sin and cannot Repent ! And woe to them that pretend Repentance, and love to be flattered in their sin, and cannot endure to be admonished, but take all the discoveries of their sin to be injurious reproach? among the prophane we take this to be a deadly sign of impenitency? And is it so bad in them, and good in us? It is part of my office to cry with holy *Bradford*, *REPENT O ENGLAND*; and to say after Christ, [*Except ye Repent, ye shall all Perish,*] And can I call men to Repent, when I must not dare to tell them of what? Nor to mention the sin which is most to be repented of? I use all this preface because I know that Guilt and Impenitency are touchy and tender, and galled, and querulous, and such will bestow the time in backbiting their Monitor, which they should bestow in lamenting their sin. But shall I therefore forbear, and betray their souls, and betray the Land through cowardly silence? Must I shew that I have Professours by not admonishing them, (*Lev. 19. 17.*) when I must shew that I love the looser sort by my sharp reproofs? Must I not fear them that can kill the body? and must I fear to *displease* a professed Christian, by calling him to Repentance in a time of Judgments.

Lord, hide not my own miscarriages from my sight!



fight ! and suffer me not to take any sin that I have committed to have been my innocency or duty, lest I should dare to father sin on God, and lest I should live and die without Repentance, and lest I should be one that continueth judgments and danger to the Land ? stir up some faithful friend to tell me, with convincing evidence, where it is that I have miscarried, that Contrition may prepare me for the peace of remission ? O save me from the plague of an impenitent heart, that cannot endure to be told of sin ! & from that ungodly folly, which taketh the shame that Repentance casteth upon sin, to be cast upon God and Religion, which bind us to Repentance and Confession !

Nay in this place, I am not mentioning things past, so much to humble you, as necessarily to inform you, of the groundlessness of your present arguings, that you may see the truth.

Fourthly, Note also that I lay not any miscarriages on any whole parties, (Anabaptists or others.) For I have found that all parties of Christians indeed have some good, experienced, sober, charitable persons, and some self-conceited and contentious novices, (1 Tim. 3. 6.) But I speak only of the persons that were guilty and no more.

Fifthly, Lastly, remember that while I seem to compare the faults of one sort of persons, with anothers, it is none of my intent to equal them ; much less to equal the state of the several sorts of Offenders as to the rest of their lives : But only to mention so much of the similitude, as is necessary to represent things truly and impartially to your view.

Read

Read on now with these *Memento's* in your eye: And if after so plain a premonition you will venture to charge me with that which I disclaim, do it at your own peril; I stand or fall to the judgment of God, and look for a better reward than the hypocrites, which is to have the good opinion of men, be they professors of piety, or profane. And with me, by Gods grace, it shall hereafter be accounted a small thing (to the hindering of my fidelity to Christ and mens souls) to be judged of men, 1 Cor. 4. 3.

And if there should be any Pastors of the Churches, who instead of concurring, to heal the flocks of these dividing principles, shall rather joyn with backbiters, and encourage them in their misreports and slanders, because it tendeth to the supposed interest of their party or themselves. Let them prepare to answer such unfaithfulness to their consciences which will shortly be awakened, and to the great Shepherd of the Flock who is at the door, and who told even the Devils agents, that a House or Kingdom divided against it self, cannot stand, but is brought to nought! *Matth. 12.* (If alas, alas, experience hath not yet, not yet, not yet, done enough to teach them this!)

For my part I have had humane applause enough: I'll value that Vanity as dying men do. And temptations to man pleasing from covetousness I have none: For I have nothing of worldly gain or expectations which I should fear to lose, to tempt me to betray my conscience or the truth by silence.

But (mark and remember brethren, what I say  
to



to you,) *whoever is of your mind at present, Persecution will say as I have told you: And though wrong ways seem fit or necessary for some present exigence, or jobb, yet nothing but Truth, and Integrity, and Charity and Concord, will do the main work, and hold out to the last.*

The foresight of impatient guilt, & censure having caused me here to give you this premonition (besides what is in the Epistle) now Reader, go on.

O the deceitfulness of the heart of man! Little do many real Separatists, who cry out against the spirit of persecution, suspect that the *same spirit* is in them! whence is persecution, but from *thinking ill* of others, & abhorring them, or not loving them? And do not you do so by those whom you causelessly separate from? you will say, that *though you think them not to be true Christians, yet you love them as men, and wish their good: And so will those say by you, whom you call your Persecutors: Though they think you to be proud and humerous, and disobedient; yet they say they love you as men, and do but correct you to cure your self-willedness and humour, and to do you good, and to preserve the publick peace. They think you to be bad, and therefore imprison you: you think them to be bad, and therefore avoid Communion with them. They think you so bad as to be unworthy of civil liberty, and priviledges: you think them so bad as to be unworthy of Church priviledges and liberties. They think you unworthy to be suffered in the land perhaps. And you think them unworthy to be suffered in the Churches. They cry against you, Away with them they are schismatical or heretical: you cry against them,*  
Away

Away with them, they are prophane!

*Obj.* But they who would not give us our *licit* liberties, do more against us, than we would do against them.

*Ans.* I pray you think on that again. First, Is not the privilege of the Church, better than the privileges of the Commonwealth? as the soul is better than the body? Secondly, Is it not a deeper accusation to charge one to be *ungodly* and prophane, than to charge him only to be schismatical?

*Obj.* But charity must not be blind: They are prophane: I charge them truly: But I am not schismatical or heretical; but they accuse me falsely.

*Ans.* You say so, and they say the same of you. They say that you are schismatical, but they are not prophane. Now how shall a slanderer know which of you is in the right? Doubtless by the witnesses and evidences: They try you in some Court or before some Magistrate before they punish you. You reverence them, nor hear them speak for themselves, nor examine any witness publicly against them, nor allow them any Church-justice, but avoid their Communion upon reports or pretence of private knowledge. They judge you personally one by one: You condemn whole Parishes in the lump, unheerd: They condemn you as for a positive crime: But you condemn them without charging any one crime upon them, because they have not yet given you a satisfying proof of their godliness; They say, we prove you guilty: You say, you have not sufficiently proved your selves innocent. If a man were rebbed



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on the high way, and you and another were both charged with the robbery; and to the other it is said, *I prove by witness that thou didst rob me*; And to you it is said, *Do thou bring sufficient proof that thou didst not rob me*? Would you not think that you had the more injustice?

*Obj.* But of all men living no man can think that a persecutor is godly and fit for Church-communion.

*Answ.* Either of these answers may stop your mouths, First, What is that to the whole *Parishes* whose communion you avoid, who never persecuted you? Did all the Ministers and common people persecute you?

Secondly, Was it no persecution when many Anabaptists and Separatists made such work in *England, Scotland and Ireland* in *Cromwells* time and after as they did? When so many were turned out of the *Universities* for not engaging? and so many out of the *Ministry*? and so many out of the *Magistracy & Corporation* priviledges? And when an *Ordinance* was made to cast out all *Ministers* who would not pray for the success of their wars against *Scotland*, or that would not give God thanks for their *Victories*. When I have heard them profess that they believed that there were many thousand godly men, that were killed at *Dunbar* (to instance in no other;) and yet we were all by their *Ordinance* to be cast out, that would not give God thanks for this? And the execution of it was much threatened, though they did it not. And what more harsh kind of persecution could there be, than to force men to go hypocritically to God against their consciences, and take on them to beg for the success of a war which they judged unlawful,

lawful; and to return him a publick counterfeit thanks for blood-shed; yea for the blood of thousands; and the blood of confessed godly men: When the crime which they would have forced us to (had we been so ductile as to obey them) was no less than *publick hypocrisie* and *owning such blood-guiltiness*; and the penalty no less than *separation from our flocks* and *publick maintenance* (though not silencing.)

I speak not any of this to trample upon those whom God in justice hath cast down. (A thing which I so abhorred that I have avoided it to the great displeasure of others) But if you are of the mind, either that Gods justice should not be observed or justified; or that you should not be called to repentance; or that you should be suffered quietly to forget your sin, and die impatiently; or that the nation should forget the effects of religious pride and faction, and so lose the warning which they have had from God at so dear a rate, and be tempted again into the same sin and calamity, for fear of offending the ears of the guilty; I am in all this as far from your minds, as I was in the acting of these crimes: And can no more consent to you, than I should have done to have had all the Israelites murmurings, idolatry and unbelief; and the sins of *Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, Peter, &c.* forgotten, and the history of them never mentioned in the Bible.

But (I pray you mark it) *the way of God is to shame the sinner, how good soever in other respects that the sin may have the greater shame, and Religion may not be shamed as if it allowed men to sin, nor God the Author of Religion be dishonoured; nor others be with-*



out the warning. But the way of the devil is, To hide or justify the sin, as if it were for fear of disparaging the goodness of the persons that committed it; that so he may thereby dishonour Religion and Godliness itself, and make men believe that it is but a cover for any wickedness, and as consistent with it as a looser life is; and that he may keep the sinner from repenting, and blot out the memory of that warning which should have preserved after-ages from the like falls.

Scripture shameth the Professours (though a David, Solomon, Peter, Noah, or Lot) that the Religion professed may not be shamed but vindicated. Satan would preserve the honour of the Professours, that the Religion professed may bear the shame; and so it may fall on God himself. When God turneth Lot's wife into a Pillar of Salt, Satan is willing to seem so tender of the honour of the godly, as to take it down, that it may be forgotten. God saith to the Israelites, that when those that pass by shall ask why hath God done all this great evil against this people, the posterity shall recount their ancestors sins, and say, Because they sinned against the Lord their God, &c. But Satan could find in his heart to pretend more tenderness of the names and honour of the Church, so he might but undo the present age by impenitency, and after ages by taking Gods publick warnings from before their eyes. On these terms he will be all for the honour of professours.

But God will make men more tender of his honour and less tender of our own, and more willing openly to take shame to our selves to vindicate the honour of Religion, before he will give us a full discharge.

It is the nature of true Repentance, to cry out as publickly as we can to all the world, and be glad to leave it upon record [ *It was not God or Religion that ever encouraged me to these sins; but it was my own doing: Religion is clear but I am guilty.* ] Pardon this long excursion on this subject. And if you cannot bear it, I cannot help that. *I made not the sore, nor galled place which is so tender.* I only mind you, in answer to your objection, that Faction and opinions will raise persecutions, and have done, even by such as you, yet do not separate from. I know none of you that separate from the Anabaptists and Separatists who were the authors of these aforesaid persecutions, nor do I urge you to it. Therefore do but impartially judge of the sin.

Obj. *But it is one thing to persecute for particular opinions and interests (as almost all parties have sometimes done) and another thing to persecute for Godliness it selfe.*

Ans<sup>r</sup>. I confess it is, and the difference between these two is very great. But I pray you consider, first, that they are but few, perhaps not one, of all that you separate from, that ever persecuted you any way at all: Nor can you prove that ever they so much as allowed of it.

Secondly, That they whom you and I do suffer by, do not believe that they persecute us for Godliness, but think that here the case is more defensible than yours was: For you had no just authority over us: When the Anabaptists did pull down the Ministers they pull'd down the Magistrates too; And therefore it was a persecution of equals, without authority; But those that we Ministers



suffer by now are our *lawful Rulers*, who have made *Laws* to require us to *subscribe*, and *say* and *swear* and do the things which we do not? And therefore *they think* that we suffer but for a *different opinion* joyned with disobedience. It is not all *men* whom they forbid to preach, but *those* who dissent and do not obey them: It is not all *men* that are godly whom they imprison; but *those* that meet to worship God in a place and manner differing from theirs, and forbidden by them. So that how can you say that this is not for *differing opinions*.

Obj. But we forbid not them to hold their own Church-communion, though we separate from them, we never denied them the liberty of their consciences.

Ans. Some of your judgement denied many of them much of that liberty which consisteth in worshipping of God in their own way, when you were in power. But suppose they had not, it is but another way of *uncharitableness*: The vice expressed seemeth to be the same. For you condemn them as unfit for *Christian-Communion*, and therefore you *exclude* them from yours: And you take their Church-communion among themselves, to be but a *prophanation* of holy things: which maketh them the more *impious*, and therefore the more *odious*: And you tolerate it in them as you tolerate mens folly and madness, or leprosie or plague, because you cannot cure it. And I pray you judge whether there be any more *Christian Love* in this kind of dealing, than there is in that which you call persecution? Or at least, whether it proceed not from the same *uncharitableness*? I suppose you to be spiritual and not car-

carnal persons, at least in profession and therefore that you are not so tender of the flesh, as to take its suffering to be any great matter to you, in comparison of any of the sufferings of the soul. When you refuse Communion with men, as judging them unfit for fellowship with the visible Churches of Christ, you judge them the visible members of the devil, and condemn them to the loss of the greatest priviledges on earth, and to be left out with the dogs, with Publicans and Heathens: Though you think that you have no more to do your selves in the execution of this sentence, but to separate from them, yet you declare that you think that all others should do the same: So that your tolerating their Communion among themselves, is no great signification of your charity.

The sum of all that I say to you is this: It is but one and the same sin in the *Persecutor* and the *Divider* or *Separatist*, which causeth the one to smite their brethren, and the other to excommunicate them: the one to cast them into prisons as *Schismaticks*, and the other to cast them out of the Church as *prophane*: the one to account them intollerable in the land, and the other to account them intollerable in the Church: the one to say, Away with them they are contumacious; and the other to say, Away with them they are ungodly. The inward thoughts of both is the same, that those whom they smite or separate from, are bad and unlovely and unfit for any better usage. When Love which thinketh no evil till it is necessitated, and believeth all things which are at all credible, and hopeth all things which are not



desperate, and covereth sins instead of condemning without proof, would equally cure them both.

And let me yet conclude with this double protestation against the carping slanderer who useth to falsifie mens words. First, That I intend not in all this any flattery of the ungodly, or making them better than they are, or forbearing plain reproof or Church-discipline, nor any unlawful communion with the wicked, nor countenancing them in any of their sins, nor neglecting to call them to repentance.

Secondly, That while I here name *persecution*, my purpose is not to mark out any persons or party above others, or determine who they be that are the persecutors: But only to detect the deceitfulness of our hearts when we most complain of it; and to shew that wherever that sin is indeed, it cometh but from the same principle as sinful separation doth: even from the death of Love to others.

Thirdly, and I add, that though I here aggravate the persecution of unjust excommunications or separations, as robbing men of the privilege of Christians, yet leaving them the common liberties of men and subjects; it is none of my purpose to equal this absolutely with that destroying cruelty, which leaveth them neither; and will not suffer them to enjoy so much liberty, as Heathens and Infidels may enjoy, or as *Paul* had under such. *Act. 28. ult.*

DIRECT.

DIRECT. LVI.

Keep still in your thoughts, the state of all Christs Churches upon Earth: that you may know what a people they are through the world, whom Christ hath communion with; and may not be deceived by ignorance, to separate from almost all Christs Churches, while you think that you separate from none, but the few that are about you.

**T**Housands of well meaning people live as if England were almost all the world. And do boldly separate from their Neighbours here, which they durst not do, if they soberly considered that almost all the Christian world are worse than they. But narrow minds who can look but little further with their Reason than with their eye-sight, do keep out at once both Truth and Love. It is a point that I have often had occasion to repeat, and yet will not forbear to repeat it here again; It is but about one sixth part of the known world who make any profession of Christianity and are baptized: (besides how much peopled the unknown part of the world may be, we know not.) Of this sixth part the Ethiopians, Egyptians, Syrians, Armenians, the Greek Churches, the Muscovites, and all the Papists, are so great a body, that all the Protestants, or Reformed Churches are little more than a sixth part of this sixth: (The Papists being about a fourth or fifth part; and the other



Christians making up the rest) And of these Protestants, Sweden, Denmark, Saxony, and many other parts of Germany, making up the greatest part, are such as are called Lutherans! And of the other half, which are supposed to be more Reformed, there is scarce any of so Reformed lives as these in *England* and *Scotland*: And among these, how great a number are they that you separate from? If you look to the Papists, their worship is by the Mass: If you look to the Muscovians, they have a Liturgy much more blameable than ours, and have a few Homilies instead of preaching? If you look to the Greek Church, to the Armenians, the Abassines, and all the Eastern and the Southern Churches, in *Asia* and *Africa*, they also worship God by Liturgies, much more lyable to blame than ours, and have but little preaching among them, besides Homilies; and the Members of their Churches are commonly far more ignorant than the worst of ours, even than the rudest part of *Wales*. If you look to the Lutherans, they have Liturgies, and Ceremonies, and Images in their Churches, though not adored; and have far worse Preachers, and of worse lives, and more unprofitable preaching than is usually found with us; and the people more ignorant and vicious. If you look to the remnant, called the *more Reformed Churches*, in *Holland*, *France*, *Helvetia*, *Germany*, though they have much less of Liturgy, or Ceremonies, yet are their Church-members usually as ignorant as ours, and more addicted to intemperance, and there is no less scandal in their lives, than among ours. Now this being the true state of the world, and though

we daily pray that it may be better, yet it is no better, I would only intreat you but to think of it as it is, and that to answer me deliberately these few Questions.

*Quest.* 1. Do you believe that all baptized professed Christians. (not denying any essential part of Christianity) are Christs Universal Visible Church?

*Qu.* 2. Do you not believe that this Church is only *One*; and that every particular Church, and every Christian is a part of it?

*Qu.* 3. Do you not believe that it is unlawful in any case whatsoever to separate from it? And that to separate from the Universal Visible Church, is visibly to separate from Christ?

*Qu.* 4. Do you not believe that to give a Bill of Divorce to the Universal Church, or to many hundred parts of it, or to any one part, and to declare that they are none of the Church of Christ, is not great arrogancy, and injury to men, and unto Christ himself?

*Qu.* 5. Dare you say before God, Let me have no part in any of the prayers of all these Churches on earth, who use a Liturgy as culpable, as ours? because I will have no Communion with them? Do you set so light by your part in their prayers?

*Q.* 6. If you travelled or lived in *Abassia*, *Armenia*, *Greece*, or any Christian Country, (where their worship is not Idolatry nor substantially wicked, nor they force not the worshippers to any false Oaths, subscriptions or other actual sin) would you refuse all communion with them, and all publick worshipping of God? Or  
would



would you not rather joyn with them, than with no Church at all?

*Q. 7.* When you remember on the Lords days, that now all the Christian world are congregate, and are calling upon God and praising him, in the name of one Christ, and in the profession of one Faith, dare you think of being a Body separated from them all? And can you think that Christ disowneth them all, save you?

*Q. 8.* Can you think it agreeable to the gracious nature, design and office of Jesus Christ, to cast off and condemn so many hundred parts of the Church-universal, and to accept that one part only which you joyn with? Judge by his actions and expressions in the Scriptures.

*Q. 9.* If there were but ten persons of your mind in all the world, would you believe that God would save none but those ten, or accept the worship of no more, or that it were lawful to have communion with none but those ten? If not, how can you think so in a case so near it?

*Q. 10.* Can you prove that Christ doth separate from all the Christians of the world which you separate from? or that they have no visible Communion with him? or that he taketh them for no Churches, and disowneth the administration of all the Ministers in the world whom you disown? or yet that it is safe, to separate where Christ doth not separate, and to be gone from his House while he there abideth? and to condemn those whom he condemneth not? nor yet commandeth you to forsake or to condemn?

*Obj.*

Obj. The Church of Christ is a little flock, and not to be estimated by number : And if he confine his grace to never so few, I will confine my Communion to as few.

Ans. First, Grace is not visible to you, but the Profession of it only : Therefore your Communion must be extended according to mens profession, and not according to sincerity which you know not ? when the question is, *who hath grace, and who hath not*, God hath not made you a heart-searching Judge, but hath made profession the sign which you must judge by. And he that professeth Christianity, professeth all that is of necessity to salvation.

Secondly, If Christs flock was little when he spake those words, it is much greater now. And if it be little still (as it is in comparison of the world of Heathens, Infidels, and Hypocrites) will he give them thanks that will make it less, yea a thousand times less than it is indeed ? Hath he so few ? and will you take from him almost all those few ? If you had but a hundred sheep when your neighbour had a thousand, would you thank him that would rob you of all save one ?

Thirdly, So far as God hath revealed the fewness of the saved, we reverence his Counsels, and believe his word : But if you will make it so much less a number, while you falsifie Gods word, you will tempt your selves at last, not to believe it, because you have made it false and incredible by making it *your own*. Brethren, I beseech you be not angry with us while we pity you, and would save your souls from your own snares and delusions. You know not how fast you are hastening



to infidelity, and to the renouncing of Christ himself? you little suspect that your extraordinary strictness, for the purity of the Church doth tend to your turning *heathens*, and denying the *whole Church*? But remember, that the nature of God is so infinitely Good, as well as *Just*, and the Gospel is such glad tidings to all the world, and Christ called, the *Saviour of the world*, and God is said so to love the world in giving him, Joh. 3. 16. that if you should say God would save but *one man* in the world, or *ten*, or a *thousand*, and damn all the rest, if you did in your bravado believe your selves *this year*, by the *next* you might be like enough to believe that the Gospel is but a fable. I have much ado to forbear naming some high Professours (known lately at *Worcester*, *Exeter* and other parts) who died Apostate-infidels, deriding Christianity and the immortality of the soul, who once were Separatists. And I must profess to you that for my own part, if I did believe that Christ's Church were no more numerous than all the Separatists on earth, it would make the work of faith more difficult: For as he is no King that hath no Kingdom; so he is next to no King, whose Kingdom is next to none: He that would prove that our King is only King of *Islington*, or *Hackney* and no more, would by deriding him to day, prepare for the deposing him to morrow. They are glorious things that are spoken of the Kingdom of Christ; even that the Kingdoms of the world are become his Kingdoms. And if you will take from him all save two or three Cottages, I mean the separated Churches only, it is but a little addition to your treason to take the rest,

rest, and to Crucifie Christ afresh and write over him in derision, the title of a King. You do not discern the design of Satan. He that cannot entice an Apple from a Child, if he can get him to let him eat all the rest till it come to a little of the Core, will then easily get him to throw away that worthless relict. If to day you will needs believe that Christ will reject all the world, and all the Churches, save only a few persons who have pride enough to condemn all the rest, by to morrow or ere long you are like enough to add one other degree to your derision, and to deny him to be Christ.

*Obj. But we are more than were in the Ark of Noah.*

*Ans.* First, You never yet proved that all that were out of the Ark were damned, and no more saved from Hell, than were saved from the Deluge. Secondly, If you had; yet the Scripture speaketh such great things of the Universal Gospel Church, as that which maketh up the former diminutions and losses, and helpeth Faith against such difficulties.

**DIRECT.**



## DIRECT. LVII.

Yet let not any here cheat you by overdoing, nor meer names and titles of Unity deceive you instead of the thing it self: Nor must you ever dream of any Head and Center of the Unity of the Catholick Church, but Christ himself.

There is no part of Religion which Satan doth not endeavour to destroy, under pretense of promoting it: And his way is to overgo Christ and his Apostles, and to seem more zealous than ever they were, and to mend their work by doing it better or doing more. Christ was not strict enough for the Pharisees, in keeping the Sabbath, nor in his company, nor in his diet. Satan hath always two ways to destroy both *truth* and *duty*; The first is by direct opposing it; But when that will not do, the next is by overdoing and pretending to defend it. If he cannot destroy *zeal*, by scorning it, and quenching it; he will try to do it by overheating and distempering it. If he cannot destroy *knowledge*, by the way of gross *ignorance*, he will try to spin it out into the finer threads of vain and innumerable questions and speculations, and to crumble it into such invisible *atomes*, that it shall be reduced to scepticisme or nothing. If he cannot destroy *faith* by open *infidelity*, he will try to make men believe too much, by making the objects of their own belief, and calling that a *particular faith*, & altering God

word