

# RICHARD BAXTER

A CHRISTIAN  
DIRECTORY, PART 3:  
CHRISTIAN  
ECCLESIASTICS

**Richard Baxter**  
**A Christian Directory, Part**  
**3: Christian Ecclesiastics**

*[http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio\\_book/?art=24177628](http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24177628)  
A Christian Directory, Part 3: Christian Ecclesiastics:*

# Содержание

CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	30
CHAPTER III.	61
CHAPTER IV.	76
CHAPTER V.	84
CHAPTER VI.	161
CHAPTER VII.	201
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	224

# **Baxter Richard**

## **A Christian Directory, Part 3: Christian Ecclesiastics**

Reader,

That this part and the next are imperfect, and so much only is written as I might, and not as I would, I need not excuse to thee if thou know me, and where and when I live. But some of that which is wanting, if thou desire, thou mayst find, 1. In my "Universal Concord." 2. In my "Christian Concord." 3. In our "Agreement for Catechising," and my "Reformed Pastor." 4. In the "Reformed Liturgy," offered to the commissioned bishops at the Savoy. Farewell.

# CHAPTER I. OF THE WORSHIP OF GOD IN GENERAL

That God is to be worshipped solemnly by man, is confessed by all that acknowledge that there is a God.<sup>1</sup> But about the matter and manner of his worship, there are no small dissensions and contentions in the world. I am not now attempting a reconciliation of these contenders; the sickness of men's minds and wills doth make that impossible to any but God, which else were not only possible, but easy, the terms of reconciliation being in themselves so plain and obvious as they are. But it is directions to those that are willing to worship God aright, which I am now to give.

*Direct.* I. Understand what it is to worship God aright, lest you offer him vanity and sin for worship. The worshipping of God is the direct acknowledging of his being and perfections to his honour. Indirectly or consequentially he is acknowledged in every obediential act by those that truly obey and serve

---

<sup>1</sup> Qui totos dies precabantur et immolabant, ut sui liberi sibi superstites essent, superstitiosi sunt appellati, quod nomen patuit postea latius. Qui autem omnia, quæ ad cultum Deorum pertinerent, diligenter retractarent, et tanquam relegerent, sunt dicti religiosi, ex relegendo; ut elegantes ex eligendo, a diligendo diligentes, ex intelligendo intelligentes. Superstitiosi et religiosi, alterum vitii nomen, alterum laudis. Cicer. Nat. Deor. lib. ii. pag. 73, 74.

him; and this is indirectly and participatively to worship him; and therefore all things are holy to the holy, because they are holy in the use of all, and Holiness to the Lord is, as it were, written upon all that they possess or do (as they are holy): but this is not the worship which we are here to speak of; but that which is primarily and directly done to glorify him by the acknowledgment of his excellencies. Thus God is worshipped either inwardly by the soul alone, or also outwardly by the body expressing the worship of the soul. For that which is done by the body alone, without the concurrence of the heart, is not true worship, but a hypocritical image or show of it, equivocally called worship.<sup>2</sup> The inward worship of the heart alone, I have spoken of in the former part. The outward or expressive worship, is simple or mixed: simple when we only intend God's worship immediately in the action; and this is found chiefly in praises and thanksgiving, which therefore are the most pure and simple sort of expressive worship. Mixed worship is that in which we join some other intention, for our own benefit in the action; as in prayer, where we worship God by seeking to him for mercy; and in reverent hearing or reading of his word, where we worship him by a holy attendance upon his instructions and commands; and in his sacraments, where we worship him by receiving and

---

<sup>2</sup> If they that serve their God with mere words, and ceremony, and mimical actions, were so served themselves, they might be silenced with Aristippus's defence of his gallantry and sumptuous fare, *Si vituperandum, ait, hoc esset, in celebritatibus deorum profecto non fieret.* Laert. in Aristip. So Plato allowed drunkenness only in the feasts of Bacchus.

acknowledging his benefits to our souls; and in oblations, where we have respect also to the use of the thing offered; and in holy vows and oaths, in which we acknowledge him our Lord and Judge. All these are acts of divine worship, though mixed with other uses.

It is not only worshipping God, when our acknowledgments (by word or deed) are directed immediately to himself; but also when we direct our speech to others, if his praises be the subject of them, and they are intended directly to his honour: such are many of David's psalms of praise. But where God's honour is not the thing directly intended, it is no direct worshipping of God, though all the same words be spoken as by others.

*Direct.* II. Understand the true ends and reasons of our worshipping God; lest you be deceived by the impious who take it to be all in vain. When they have imagined some false reasons to themselves, they judge it vain to worship God, because those reasons of it are vain. And he that understandeth not the true reasons why he should worship God, will not truly worship him, but be profane in neglecting it, or hypocritical in dissembling, and heartless in performing it. The reasons then are such as these.

1. The first ariseth from the use of all the world, and the nature of the rational creature in special. The whole world is made and upheld to be expressive and participative of the image and benefits of God. God is most perfect and blessed in himself, and needeth not the world to add to his felicity. But he made it to please his blessed will, as a communicative good,

by communication and appearance; that he might have creatures to know him, and to be happy in his light; and those creatures might have a fit representation or revelation of him that they might know him. And man is specially endowed with reason and utterance, that he might know his Creator appearing in his works, and might communicate this knowledge, and express that glory of his Maker with his tongue, which the inferior creatures express to him in their being.<sup>3</sup> So that if God were not to be worshipped, the end of man's faculties, and of all the creation, must be much frustrated. Man's reason is given him that he may know his Maker; his will, and affections, and executive powers are given him, that he may freely love him and obey him; and his tongue is given him principally to acknowledge him and praise him: whom should God's work be serviceable to, but to him that made it?

2. As it is the natural use, so it is the highest honour of the creature to worship and honour his Creator: is there a nobler or more excellent object for our thoughts, affections, or expressions? And nature, which desireth its own perfection, forbiddeth us to choose a sordid, vile, dishonourable work, and to neglect the highest and most honourable.

3. The right worshipping of God doth powerfully tend to make us in our measure like him, and so to sanctify and raise the soul, and to heal it of its sinful distempers and imperfections. What can make us good so effectually as our knowledge, and love,

---

<sup>3</sup> Read Mr. Herbert's Poem called "Providence."

and communion with him that is the chiefest good? Nay, what is goodness itself in the creature if this be not? As nearness to the sun giveth light and heat, so nearness to God is the way to make us wise and good; for the contemplation of his perfections is the means to make us like him. The worshippers of God do not exercise their bare understandings upon him in barren speculations; but they exercise all their affections towards him, and all the faculties of their souls, in the most practical and serious manner, and therefore are likeliest to have the liveliest impressions of God upon their hearts; and hence it is that the true worshippers of God are really the wisest and the best of men, when many that at a distance are employed in mere speculations about his works and him, remain almost as vain and wicked as before, and professing themselves wise, are (practically) fools,

Rom. i. 21, 22.

4. The right worshipping of God, by bringing the heart into a cleansed, holy, and obedient frame, doth prepare it to command the body, and make us upright and regular in all the actions of our lives; for the fruit will be like the tree; and as men are, so will they do. He that honoureth not his God, is not like well to honour his parents or his king: he that is not moved to it by his regard to God, is never like to be universally and constantly just and faithful unto men. Experience telleth us that it is the truest worshippers of God that are truest and most conscionable in their dealings with their neighbours: this windeth up the spring, and ordereth and strengtheneth all the causes of a good conversation.

5. The right worshipping of God is the highest and most rational delight of man. Though to a sick, corrupted soul it be unpleasant, as food to a sick stomach, yet to a wise and holy soul there is nothing so solidly and durably contentful. As it is God's damning sentence on the wicked, to say, "Depart from me," Matt. xxv. 41; vii. 23, so holy souls would lose their joys, and take themselves to be undone, if God should bid them, "Depart from me; worship me, and love me, and praise me no more." They would be weary of the world, were it not for God in the world; and weary of their lives, if God were not their life.

6. The right worshipping of God prepareth us for heaven, where we are to behold him, and love and worship him for ever. God bringeth not unprepared souls to heaven: this life is the time that is purposely given us for our preparation; as the apprenticeship is the time to learn your trades. Heaven is a place of action and fruition, of perfect knowledge, love, and praise: and the souls that will enjoy and praise God there, must be disposed to it here; and therefore they must be much employed in his worship.

7. And as it is in all these respects necessary as a means, so God hath made it necessary by his command.<sup>4</sup> He hath made it our duty to worship him constantly; and he knoweth the reason of his own commands. "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," Matt. iv. 10. If God should command us nothing, how is he our Governor and our

---

<sup>4</sup> Psal. xlv. 11; lxvi. 4; lxxxvi. 9; xcvi. 6; xcix. 5.

God? and if he command us any thing, what should he command us more fitly than to worship him? and he that will not obey him in this, is not like to obey him well in any thing; for there is nothing that he can with less show of reason except against; seeing all the reason in the world must confess, that worship is most due to God from his own creatures.

These reasons for the worship of God being undeniable, the objections of the infidels and ungodly are unreasonable: as, *Object. 1.* That our worship doth no good to God; for he hath no need of it. *Answer.* It pleaseth and honoureth him, as the making of the world, and the happiness of man doth: doth it follow that there must be no world, nor any man happy, because God hath no need of it, or no addition of felicity by it? It is sufficient that it is necessary and good for us, and pleasing unto God.

*Object. 2.* Proud men are unlikeliest unto God; and it is the proud that love to be honoured and praised. *Answer.* Pride is the affecting of an undue honour, or the undue affecting of that honour which is due. Therefore it is that this affectation of honour in the creature is a sin, because all honour is due to God, and none to the creature but derivatively and subserviently. For a subject to affect any of the honour of his king, is disloyalty; and to affect any of the honour of his fellow-subjects is injustice: but God requireth nothing but what is absolutely his due; and he hath commanded us, even towards men, to give "fear and honour to whom they are due," Rom. xiii. 7.

*Direct. III.* Labour for the truest knowledge of the God whom

you worship. Let it not be said of you, as Christ said to the Samaritan woman, John iv. 22, "Ye worship ye know not what;" nor as it is said of the Athenians, whose altar was inscribed, "To the unknown God," Acts xvii. 23. You must know whom you worship; or else you cannot worship him with the heart, nor worship him sincerely and acceptably, though you were at never so great labour and cost: God hath no "pleasure in the sacrifice of fools," Eccles. v. 1, 4. Though no man know him perfectly, you must know him truly. And though God taketh not every man for a blasphemer, and denier of his attributes, whom contentious, peevish wranglers call so, because they consequentially cross some espoused opinions of theirs; yet real misunderstanding of God's nature and attributes is dangerous, and tendeth to corrupt his worship by the corrupting of the worshippers. For such as you take God to be, such worship you will offer him; for your worship is but the honourable acknowledgment of his perfections; and mistakingly to praise him for supposed imperfections, is to dishonour him and dispraise him. If to know God be your eternal life, it must needs be the life of all your worship. Take heed therefore of ignorance and error about God.

*Direct.* IV. Understand the office of Jesus Christ as our great High Priest, by whose mediation alone we must have access to God.<sup>5</sup> Whether there should have been any priesthood for sacrifice or intercession if there had been no sin, the Scripture telleth us not expressly; but we have great reason to conjecture

---

<sup>5</sup> Heb. viii. 3.

there would have been none, because there would not have been any reasons for the exercise of such an office. But since the fall, not only the Scriptures, but the practice of the whole world, doth tell us that the sinful people are unmeet immediately thus to come to God, but that they must come by the mediation of the priest, as a sacrificer and intercessor. So that either nature teacheth sinners the necessity of some mediator, or the tradition of the church hath dispersed the knowledge of it through the world: and certainly no other priest but Christ can procure the acceptance of a sinful people upon his own account; nor be an effectual mediator for them to God, unless in subserviency to an effectual mediator who can procure us access and acceptance for his own sake. For all other priests are sinners as well as the people, and have as much need of a mediator for themselves. 1. See therefore that you never appear before God, but as sinners, that have offended him, and have deserved to be cast out of his favour for ever, and such as are in absolute necessity of a mediator to procure their access and acceptance with God: come not to God without the sense of sin and misery. 2. See also that you come as those that have a mediator in the presence of God; even Jesus our High Priest who appeareth before God continually to make intercession for us: come therefore with holy boldness, and confidence, and joy, having so sure and powerful a Friend with God, the Beloved of the Father, whom he heareth always.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Heb. vii. 27, 28; ix. 26, 28; x. 19-22, 13, 24; vi. 20; vii. 25, 26; Matt. xvii. 5; John xi. 42.

*Direct.* V. Look carefully to the state of thy soul, that thou bring not an unholy heart to worship the most holy God. Come not in the love of sin, nor in the hatred of holiness; for otherwise thou hatest God, and art hated of him, as bringing that before him which he cannot but hate. And it is easy to judge how unfit they are to worship God, that hate him; and how unlike they are to be accepted by him whom he hateth. Psal. v. 3-7, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord: in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up: for thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. – Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercies, and in thy fear will I worship towards thy holy temple." Psal. lxxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psal. xv. 1, 2, "Who shall abide in God's tabernacle, but he that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness?" God will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, Lev. x. 3; and are unsanctioned persons fit for this? And can the unholy offer him holy worship? "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" is it fit then to serve and honour him? Rom. i. 7, 8. See 2 Cor. vi. 15-18. "Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," 2 Tim. ii. 19. It is a purified, peculiar, holy people that Christ hath redeemed to be the worshippers of God, and as priests to "offer him acceptable sacrifice," Tit. ii. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9. If you will

"receive the kingdom that cannot be moved, you must have grace in your hearts to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 28, 29. I know an ungodly person, as soon as he hath any repenting thoughts, must express them in confession and prayer to God. But as no prayers of an ungodly man are profitable to him, but those which are acts of his penitent return towards God; so no worship of God hath a promise of divine acceptance, but that which is performed by such as sincerely return to God (and such are not ungodly). "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight," Prov. xv. 8. I know the wicked must "seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near;" but it must be in "forsaking his way and thoughts, and turning to the Lord," Isa. lv. 6, 7. Simon Magus must first "repent of his wickedness," and then pray that the thoughts of his heart may be forgiven him, Acts viii. 22. O come not in thy unholy, carnal state to worship God, unless it be as a penitent returner to him, to lament first thy sin and misery, that thou mayst be sanctified and reconciled, and fit to worship him.

*Direct.* VI. Yet take it not as sufficient that thou art in a state of sanctification, but also particularly sanctify thyself to every particular address to God in holy worship. Even the child of a king will not go rudely in dirt and filthiness into his father's presence. Who would not search his heart and life, and cleanse his soul from his particular pollution, by renewed repentance and purposes of reformation, before he venture to speak to God?

Particular sins have made sad breaches between God and his children, and made foul work in souls that the blood of Christ had cleansed. Search therefore with fear, lest there should be any reviving sin, or any hidden root of bitterness, or any transgression which thou winkest at or wilfully cherishest in thyself; that, if there be such, thou mayst bewail and hate it, and not come to God as if he had laid by his hatred of sin.

*Direct.* VII. Whenever thou comest to worship God, labour to awaken thy soul to a reverent apprehension of the presence, and greatness, and holiness of his majesty, and to a serious apprehension of the greatness and excellency of the holy work which thou takest in hand. Remember with whom thou hast to do, Heb. iv. 13. To speak to God, is another kind of work than to speak to the greatest prince on earth, yea, or the greatest angel in heaven. Be holy, for the Lord your God is holy. To sanctify the name of God, and come in holiness before him, is to apprehend him as infinitely advanced above the whole creation, and to come with hearts that are separated from common things to him, and elevated above a common frame. A common frame in worship (such as we have about our common business) is mere profaneness. If it be common it is unclean. Look to your feet when you go to the house of God, Eccl. v. 1. Put off the shoes of earthly, common, unhallowed affections, whenever you tread on holy ground, that is, when you are about holy work, and when you draw near the holy God. In reverent adoration say as Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of

God, and this is the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 17. See Isa. vi. 1, 3, 5.

*Direct.* VIII. In the worship of God, remember your communion with the holy angels, and with all the hosts of heaven.<sup>7</sup> You are the servants of the same God, and though you are yet far below them, you are doing that which tendeth towards their dignity; for you must be equal with them. Your work is partly of the same kind with theirs: it is the same holy Majesty that you admire and praise, though you see him yet but as in a glass. And the angels are some of them present with you, and see you, though you see not them: 1 Cor. xi. 10, you are commanded to respect them in your behaviour in God's worship. If the eye of faith were so far opened, as that in all your worshipping of God, you saw the blessed companies of angels, though not in the same place and manner with you, yet in the same worship and in communion with you, admiring, magnifying, extolling, and praising the most glorious God, and the glorified Redeemer, with flaming, fervent, holy minds, it would sure do much to elevate your souls, and raise you up to some imitation or resemblance of them.<sup>8</sup> You find that in God's public worship, it is a great help to the soul, in holy cheerfulness and fervour, to join with a full assembly of holy, fervent, cheerful worshippers: and that it is very difficult to the best, to keep up life and fervent cheerfulness

---

<sup>7</sup> Luke xx. 36; see Eccl. v. 5; Psal. cxxxviii. 1; Isa. vi. 2.

<sup>8</sup> See Mr. Ambrose's book of Communion with Angels; and Zanchy on the same subject: and Mr. Lawrence's and Dr. Hammond's Annotat. on 1 Cor. xii.

in so small, or ignorant, or profane a company, as where there is no considerable number to concur with us. Oh then, what a raising help would it be, to praise God as within the sight and hearing of the heavenly praises of the angelical choir! You see how apt men are to be conformed to the company that they are in. They that are among dancers, or gamesters, or tipplers, or filthy talkers, or scorers, or railers, are apt to do as the company doth, or at least to be the more disposed to it. And they that are among saints, in holy worship or discourse, are apt to imitate them much more than they would do in other company. And what likelier way is there, to make you like angels in the worshipping of God, than to do it as in the communion of the angels? and by faith to see and hear them in the concert? The angels disdain not to study our studies, and to learn "by the church the manifold wisdom of God," Eph. iii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 12. They are not so far from us, nor so strange to us and our affairs, as that we should imagine ourselves to be out of their communion. Though we may not worship them, Col. ii. 18, we must worship as with them.

*Direct.* IX. Take special care to the matter of your worship, that it be such as is agreeable to the will of God, to the holiness of his nature, and the directions of his word; and such as hath a promise of his acceptance. Offer him not the sacrifice of fools, who know not that they do evil, and are adding to their sins, while they think they are pleasing him. Bring no false fire unto his altars: let your zeal of God be according to knowledge. For no zeal will make a corrupt, unlawful kind of worship, to be

acceptable unto God.<sup>9</sup>

*Direct. X.* See that you perform every part of worship to the proper end to which it is appointed; both as to the ultimate, remote, and nearest end. The end is essential to these relative duties. If you intend not the right end, you make another thing of it: as the preaching of a sermon to edify the church, or putting up a prayer to procure God's blessings, is not the same thing as a stage-player's profane repeating the same words in scorn of godliness, or an hypocrite's using them for commodity or applause. The ultimate end of all worship and all moral actions is the same, even the pleasing and glorifying God, 1 Cor. x. 31; 2 Tim. ii. 4.<sup>10</sup> Besides which every part of worship hath its proper, nearest end. These must not only be distinctly known, but actually intended. It is God in Christ that a holy worshipper thirsteth after and seeketh for in every part of worship, either to know more of God, and of his will, and blessings; or to have some more communion with him, or some further grace communicated from him, to receive his pardoning, or cleansing, or quickening, or confirming, or comforting, or exalting grace; to be honoured or delighted in his holy service, or to make known his grace and glory for the good of others, and the honour of his name.<sup>11</sup> Here it is that God proclaimeth his name, as Exod. xxxiv.

---

<sup>9</sup> Adulterium est, impium est, sacrilegium est, quodcunque humano furore instituitur, ut dispositio Divina violetur. Cyprian. Eccl. v. 1, 2; Lev. x. 1-3; Rom. x. 2, 3.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 4; Col. i. 10; John viii. 29; 1 Cor. vii. 32; Heb. xi. 6; 1 John iii. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Psal. xlii.; lxxxiv.

6. The ordinances of God's worship are like the tree in which Zaccheus climbed up (being of himself too low) to have a sight of Christ. Here we come to learn the will of God for our salvation; and must enter the assembly with such resolutions as Cornelius and his company met, Acts x. 33, "We are all here met to hear all things commanded thee of God: " and as Acts ii. 37, and Acts xvi. 30, to learn what we must do to be saved. Hither we come for that holy light, which may show us our sin, and show us the grace which we have received, and show us the unspeakable love of God, till we are humbled for sin, and lifted up by faith in Christ, and can with Thomas, as it were, put our fingers into his wounds, and say in assurance, "My Lord and my God: " and as Psal. xlvi. 14, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Here we do as it were with Mary sit at the feet of Jesus, to hear his word, Luke x. 39, that fire from heaven may come down upon our hearts, and we may say, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he spake to us, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 32. Here we cry to him as the blind man, Mark x. 51, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." We cry here to the watchmen, Cant. iii. 3, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth." Here we are in his "banqueting house," under the "banner of his love," Cant. ii. 4. We have here the sealing and quickenings of his Spirit, the mortification of our sin, the increase of grace, and a prospect into eternal life, and a foresight of the endless happiness there. See then that you come to the worship of God with these intentions and expectations; that if God or conscience call to you,

(as God did sometime to Elias,) "What dost thou here?" you may truly answer, I came to seek the Lord my God, and to learn his will that I might do it. And that your sweet delights may make you say, Psal. lxxxiv. 4, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." If thou come to the worship of God in mere custom, or to make thy carnal heart believe that God will forgive thee because thou so far servest him, or to quiet thy conscience with the doing of a formal task of duty, or to be seen of men, or that thou mayst not be thought ungodly, if these be thy ends, thou wilt speed accordingly. A holy soul cannot live upon the air of man's applause, nor upon the shell of ordinances, without God who is the kernel and the life of all: it is the love of God that brings them thither, and it is love that they are exercising there, and the end of love, even the nearer approach of the soul to God, which they desire and intend. Be sure then that these be the true and real intentions of thy heart.

How to know that we have the right ends in worship.

*Quest.* But how shall I know whether indeed it be God himself that I am seeking, and that I perform his worship to the appointed ends?

*Answ.* In so great a business it is a shame to be unacquainted with your intentions. If you take heed what you do, and look after your hearts, you may know what you come for, and what is your business there. But more particularly, you may discern it by these marks: 1. He that hath right ends, and seeketh God, will labour to suit all his duties to those ends, and will like that best which is

best suited to them; he will strive so to preach, and hear, and pray, not as tends most to preferment or applause, but as tendeth most to please and honour God, and to attain his grace; and he will love that sermon or that prayer best, that is best fitted to bring up his soul to God, and not that which tickleth a carnal ear. Mark what you fit the means to, and you may perceive what is your end. 2. If it be God himself that you seek after in his worship, you will not be satisfied without God: it is not the doing of the task that will satisfy you, nor yet the greatest praise of men, no not of the most godly men; but so far as you have attained your end, in the cleansing, or quickening, or strengthening of the soul, or getting somewhat nearer God, or pleasing or honouring him, so far only you will be contented. 3. If God be your end, you will be faithful in the use of that more private and spiritual worship, where God is to be found, though no human applause be there to be attained. 4. And you will love still the same substantial, necessary truth and duty, which is to your souls as bread and drink is to your bodies; when those that have carnal ends will be looking after variety and change, and will be weary of the necessary bread of life. By observing these things you may discern what are your ends in worship.

And here I must not let go this necessary direction, till I have driven on the reader with some more importunity to the serious practice of it. It is lamentable to see, how many turn the worship of God into vile hypocrisy, and dead formality; and offer God a carrion for a sacrifice; and yet their consciences are so far

from checking them for this heinous sin, that they are much pleased and quieted by it, as if they had deserved well of God, and proved themselves very godly people, and by this sin had made him amends for the common sins of their lives. Is it God himself, and his sanctifying grace, that those men seek after in his worship, who hate his grace and scorn sanctification, and can leave God to be enjoyed by others, if they may but enjoy their fleshly pleasures, and riches, and honours in the world? Even the haters of God and holiness are so blinded, as to persuade themselves that in his worship they are truly seeking that God and holiness which they hate. And oh what a deal of pains is many a formal hypocrite at to little purpose; in spending many hours in outside, heartless, lifeless worship, while they never thirsted after God, nor after a holy conformity to him, communion with him, or fruition of him, in all their lives!<sup>12</sup> Oh what a deal of labour do these Pharisees lose in bodily exercise which profiteth nothing, for want of a right end in all that they do! because it is not God that they seek: when "godliness is profitable to all things," 1 Tim. iv. 8. And what is godliness but the soul's devotedness to God, and seeking after him? We have much ado to bring some men from their diversions to God's outward worship; but oh how much harder is it to bring the soul unfeignedly to seek God in that worship where the body is present! When David in the wilderness was driven from the sanctuary, he crieth out in the bitterness of his soul, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth

---

<sup>12</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 5; 1 Tim. iv. 7.

my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" You see here that it was God himself that David thirsted after in his worship. Alas! what is all the outward pomp of worship, if God be not the end and life of all? Without him how vain a thing would the words of prayer, and preaching, and the administration of the sacraments be! It is not the dead letter, but the quickening Spirit that maketh the dead in sin to live; that convinceth or comforteth the soul; or maketh the worshipper holy or happy. Nay, it is some aggravation of your misery, to be destitute of true communion with God, while you seem to worship him; and to be far from him in the heart, while you draw so near him with the lips; to boast of the temple of the Lord, and be forsaken by the Lord of the temple! That Capernaum shall be cast down to hell, that is but thus lifted up to heaven; and it will be easier for Sodom in the day of judgment, than for such as had the public ordinances without God. David left the ark with Absalom at Jerusalem; but God was not with Absalom but with David.<sup>13</sup> No marvel if such hypocrites grudge at all that is costly in God's service; even the necessary maintenance of the ministers; for if they have only the shell of ordinances without God, it will scarce requite them for their cost. No marvel if they think all their pains too much, when they take up with the chaff which is scarcely worth their pains. No wonder if they find small pleasure in God's

---

<sup>13</sup> Isa. xxix. 13; Matt. xv. 8; xi. 23, 24; 2 Sam. xv. 25, 28, 29.

service; for what pleasure is there in the husks or chaff, or in a deaf nut? No wonder if they grow no better, no holier or stronger by it; for what strength will chaff and shadows breed? No marvel if they are quickly weary, and if a little of such religion seem enough, when the life, and spirits, and strength, and sweetness is neglected. O sinners, remember, that God desireth not yours but you, and all your wealth and service is as nothing to him, if he have not yourselves (when yet you are so little worth the having). Nay, how earnestly doth he sue to have you! how dearly hath he bought you! he may challenge you as his own. Answer this kindness of God aright; let no ordinance nor any common mercy satisfy you, if you have not God himself. And to encourage you let me further tell you,

1. If it be God himself that thou seekest in his worship (sincerely) thou shalt find him: because thou hast chosen the better part, it shall not be taken from thee.<sup>14</sup> Because thou hungerest and thirstest after him thou shalt be satisfied. What joyful news is this to the thirsty soul! 2. Thou art more welcome to God with these high desires; this holy ambition and aspiring of love is only acceptable to him. If all ordinances be nothing to thee without God, he will see that thou understandest the true use of ordinances, and put down thy name among his lovers, whom he cannot despise. He loveth not to see men debase their souls, to feed on husks and chaff with hypocrites, any more than to feed on filth and dirt, with sensualists and worldlings. As he

---

<sup>14</sup> Luke x. 42.

accepted Solomon's prayer because he asked not for little things, but for great,<sup>15</sup> so he is very much pleased with the soul, that is unsatisfied with all the world, and can be content with nothing lower or worse than God himself. 3. Nay, because thou seekest God himself, thou shalt have all things with him that are worth the having, Matt. vi. 33; Rom. viii. 28. When hypocrites have but the carcass and shadow, it is thou that shalt have the substantial food and joy. As they that were with Paul when he was converted, did hear the voice but saw no man, Acts ix. 7; so others shall hear the sound of the word, and the name of God, but it is thou that shalt see him by faith that is invisible, and feel the power and efficacy of all. Thou shalt hear God speak to thee, when he that sitteth in the same seat with thee, shall hear no more than the voice of man. It is he that seeketh after God in his ordinances, that is religious in good sadness, and is employed in a work, that is worthy of an immortal, rational soul. The delights of ordinances as they are performed by man, will savour of his imperfections, and taste of the instrument, and have a bitterness often mixed with the sweet; when the delight that cometh from God himself will be more pure. Ordinances are uncertain: you may have them to-day, and lose them to-morrow! when God is everlasting, and everlastingly to be enjoyed. O therefore take not up short of God, in any of his worship, but before you set upon it, call up your souls to mind the end, and tell them what you are going to do, that you miss not of the end for want of seeking it. The devil

---

<sup>15</sup> 2 Chron. i. 10-12.

will give hypocritical worldlings leave to play them with the most excellent ordinances, if he can but keep God out of sight, even as you will let your children play them with a box of gold, as long as it is shut, and they see not what is within.

*Direct. XI.* Be laborious with your hearts in all God's worship to keep them employed on their duty; and be watchful over them, lest they slug or wander.<sup>16</sup> Remember that it is heart work that you are principally about. And therefore see that your hearts be all the while at work. Take yourselves as idle when your hearts are idle. And if you take not pains with them, how little pains will they take in duty! If you watch them not, how quickly will they lie down, and forget what they are doing, and fall asleep when you are in treaty with God! How easily will they turn aside, and be thinking of impertinent vanities! Watch therefore unto prayer and every duty, 1 Pet. iv. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 5.

*Direct. XII.* Look up to heaven as that which all your duties tend to, that from thence you may fetch your encouraging motives. Do all as a means to life eternal; separate no duty from its reward and end. As the traveller remembereth whither he is going all the way, and a desired end doth make the foulest steps seem tolerable; so think in every prayer you put up, and in every duty, that it is all for heaven.

*Direct. XIII.* Depend upon the Spirit of God for help. You cannot seek God spiritually and acceptably without him. Think not that you are sufficient to worship God aright without his help.

---

<sup>16</sup> Eph. vi. 18; Luke xxi. 36; Rev. iii. 3; Col. iv. 2; Matt. xiii. 33-37.

Where this is despised or neglected, you see what lamentable work is made by blind, corrupted nature in God's service. Sensual wretches that have not the Spirit, are fitter for any thing than to worship God.<sup>17</sup> "If he that hath not the Spirit of Christ be none of his," Rom. viii. 9, then he that pretends to worship God without the Spirit of Christ, can ill think to be heard for the sake of Christ.

*Direct.* XIV. Look also to your tongues and the deportment of your bodies, that the whole man may worship God in holiness as he requireth. Pretend not your good meanings, nor the spirituality of your worship, to excuse you from worshipping also with your bodies. Your hearts must be first looked to; but your words and bodies must be next looked to; and if you regard not these, it is hardly credible that you regard your hearts. 1. Your words and gestures are the due expression of your hearts; and the heart will desire to express itself as it is. Many would express their hearts to be better than they are; and therefore good expressions are oft to be suspected. But few would express their hearts as worse than they are; and therefore bad appearances do seldom lie. 2. Your words and actions are needful to the due honouring of God. As evil words and actions do dishonour him, and the unseemly, disorderly performance of his service, is very injurious to such holy things; so your meet and comely words and gestures are the external beauty of the worship which you perform; and God should be served with the best. 3. Your words and gestures reflect

---

<sup>17</sup> Jude 19.

much on your own hearts. As acts tend to the increase of the habits; so the external expressions tend to increase the internal affections, whether they be good or evil. 4. Your words and gestures must be regarded for the good of others, who see not your hearts, but by these expressions. And where many have communion in worshipping God, such acts of communion are of great regard.

## CHAPTER II.

# DIRECTIONS ABOUT THE MANNER OF WORSHIP, TO AVOID ALL CORRUPTIONS, AND FALSE, UNACCEPTABLE WORSHIPPING OF GOD

The lamentable contentions that have arisen about the manner of God's worship, and the cruelty, and blood, and divisions, and uncharitable revilings which have thence followed, and also the necessary regard that every christian must have to worship God according to his will, do make it needful that I give you some directions in this case.

*Direct.* I. Be sure that you seriously and faithfully practise that inward worship of God, in which the life of religion doth consist: as to love him above all, to fear him, believe him, trust him, delight in him, be zealous for him; and that your hearts be sanctified unto God, and set upon heaven and holiness: for this will be an unspeakable help to set you right in most controversies about the worshipping of God.<sup>18</sup> Nothing hath so much filled the church with contentions, and divisions, and cruelties about

---

<sup>18</sup> Read on this subject a small book which I have written, called "Catholic Unity."

God's worship, as the agitating of these controversies by unholy, unexperienced persons: when men that hate a holy life, and holy persons, and the holiness of God himself, must be they that dispute what manner of worship must be offered to God by themselves and others, and when the controversies about God's service are fallen into the hands of those that hate all serious serving of him, you may easily know what work they will make of it. As if sick men were to determine or dispute what meat and drink themselves and all other men must live upon, and none must eat but by their prescripts, most healthful men would think it hard to live in such a country. As men are within, so will they incline to worship God without. Outward worship is but the expression of inward worship; he that hath a heart replenished with the love and fear of God, will be apt to express it by such manner of worship, as doth most lively and seriously express the love and fear of God. If the heart be a stranger or an enemy to God, no marvel if such worship him accordingly. O could we but help all contenders about worship to the inward light, and life, and love, and experience of holy, serious christians, they would find enough in themselves, and their experiences, to decide abundance of controversies of this kind (though still there will be some, that require also other helps to decide them.) It is very observable in all times of the church, how in controversies about God's worship, the generality of the godly, serious people, and the generality of the ungodly and ludicrous worshippers, are ordinarily of differing judgments! and what a stroke the temper

of the soul hath in the determination of such cases!

*Direct.* II. Be serious and diligent also in all those parts of the outward worship of God that all sober christians are agreed in. For if you be negligent and false in so much as you confess, your judgment about the controverted part is not much to be regarded. God is not so likely to direct profane ones and false-hearted hypocrites, and bless them with a sound judgment in holy things, (where their lives show that their practical judgments are corrupt,) as the sincere that obey him in that which he revealeth to them. We are all agreed that God's word must be your daily meditation and delight, Psal. i. 2; and that you should "speak of it lying down and rising up, at home and abroad," Deut. vi. 6-8; and that we must be constant, fervent, and importunate in prayer, both in public and private, 1 Thess. v. 17; Luke xviii. 1; James v. 16. Do you perform this much faithfully or not? If you do, you may the more confidently expect that God should further reveal his will to you, and resolve your doubts, and guide you in the way that is pleasing to him. But if you omit the duty that all are agreed on, and be unfaithful and negligent in what you know, how unmeet are you to dispute about the controverted circumstances of duty! To what purpose is it that you meddle in such controversies? Do you do it wilfully to condemn yourselves before God, and shame yourselves before men, by declaring the hypocrisy which aggravateth your ungodliness? What a loathsome and pitiful thing is it, to hear a man bitterly reproach those who differ from him in some circumstances of worship,

when he himself never seriously worshipped God at all! when he meditateth not on the word of God, and instead of delighting in it, maketh light of it, as if it little concerned him; and is acquainted with no other prayer than a little customary lip-service! Is such an ungodly neglecter of all the serious worship of God, a fit person to fill the world with quarrels about the manner of his worship?

*Direct.* III. Differ not in God's worship from the common sense of the most faithful, godly christians, without great suspicion of your own understandings, and a most diligent trial of the case. For if in such practical cases the common sense of the faithful be against you, it is to be suspected that the teaching of God's Spirit is against you; for the Spirit of God doth principally teach his servants in the matter of worship and obedience.

The disadvantages of ungodly men in judging of holy worship.

There are several errors that I am here warning you to avoid: 1. The error of them that rather incline to the judgment of the ungodly multitude, who never knew what it was to worship God in spirit and truth. Consider the great disadvantages of these men to judge aright in such a case. (1.) They must judge them without that teaching of the Spirit, by which things spiritual are to be discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 13, 15. He that is blind in sin must judge of the mysteries of godliness. (2.) They must judge quite contrary to their natures and inclinations, or against the diseased habits of their wills: and if you call a drunkard to judge of the evil of drunkenness, or a whoremonger to judge of the evil of

fornication, or a covetous, or a proud, or a passionate man to judge of their several sins, how partial will they be! And so will an ungodly man be in judging of the duties of godliness. You set him to judge of that which he hateth. 3. You set him to judge of that which he is unacquainted with: it is like he never thoroughly studied it; but it is certain he never seriously tried it, nor hath the experience of those, that have long made it a great part of the business of their lives. And would you not sooner take a man's judgment in physic, that hath made it the study and practice of his life, than a sick man's that speaketh against that which he never studied or practised, merely because his own stomach is against it? Or will you not sooner take the judgment of an ancient pilot about navigation, than one's that was never at sea? The difference is as great in this present case.

2. And I speak this also to warn you of another error, that you prefer not the judgment of a sect or party, or some few godly people, against the common sense of the generality of the faithful; for the Spirit of God is likelier to have forsaken a small part of godly people, than the generality, in such particular opinions, which even good men may be forsaken in: or if it be in greater things, it is more unreasonable and more uncharitable for me to suspect that most that seem godly are hypocrites and forsaken of God, than that a party or some few are so.

*Direct.* IV. Yet do not absolutely give up yourselves to the judgment of any in the worshipping of God, but only use the advice of men in a due subordination to the will of God, and

the teaching of Jesus Christ. Otherwise you will set man in the place of God, and will reject Christ in his prophetic office, as much as using co-ordinate mediators is a rejecting him in his priestly office. None must be called master, but in subordination to Christ, because he is our Master, Matt. xxiii. 8-10.

*Direct. V.* Condemn not all that in others, which you dare not do yourselves; and practise not all that yourselves, which you dare not condemn in others.<sup>19</sup> For you are more capable of judging in your own cases, and bound to do it with more exactness and diligent inquiry, than in the case of others. Ofttimes a rational doubt may necessitate you to suspend your practice, as your belief or judgment is suspended; when yet it will not allow you to condemn another whose judgment and practice hath no such suspension. Only you may doubt whether he be in the right, as you doubt as to yourself. And yet you may not therefore venture to do all that you dare not condemn in him; for then you must wilfully commit all the sins in the world, which your weakness shall make a doubt or controversy of.

*Direct. VI.* Offer God no worship that is clearly contrary to his nature and perfections, but such as is suited to him as he is revealed to you in his word. Thus Christ teacheth us, to worship God as he is: and thus God often calleth for holy worship, because he is holy.<sup>20</sup> 1. "God is a Spirit: therefore they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in

---

<sup>19</sup> See Rom. xiv. xv; 1 Cor. viii. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Lev. xix. 2; xx. 7; 1 Pet. i. 16.

truth;" (which Christ opposeth to mere external ceremony or shadows;) "for the Father seeketh such to worship him," John iv. 23, 24. 2. God is incomprehensible, and infinitely distant from us: therefore worship him with admiration, and make not either visible or mental images of him, nor debase him by undue resemblance of him to any of his creatures.<sup>21</sup> 3. God is omnipresent, and therefore you may every where lift up holy hands to him, 1 Tim. ii. 8. And you must always worship him as in his sight. 4. God is omniscient, and knoweth your hearts, and therefore let your hearts be employed and watched in his worship. 5. God is most wise, and therefore not to be worshipped ludicrously with toys, as children are pleased with to quiet them, but with wise and rational worship. 6. God is most great, and therefore to be worshipped with the greatest reverence and seriousness; and not presumptuously, with a careless mind, or wandering thoughts, or rude expressions. 7. God is most good and gracious, and therefore not to be worshipped with backwardness, unwillingness, and weariness, but with great delight. 8. God is most merciful in Christ, and therefore not to be worshipped despairingly, but in joyful hope. 9. God is true and faithful, and therefore to be worshipped believingly and confidently, and not in distrust and unbelief. 10. God is most holy, and therefore to be worshipped by holy persons, in a holy

---

<sup>21</sup> The second commandment. Cicero de Nat. Deor. lib. i. p. 46, saith, that Possidonius believed that Epicurus thought there was no God, but put a scorn upon him by describing him like a man, idle, careless, &c. which he would not have done if he had thought there was a God.

manner, and not by unholy hearts or lips, nor in a common manner, as if we had to do but with a man. 11. He is the Maker of your souls and bodies, and therefore to be worshipped both with soul and body. 12. He is your Redeemer and Saviour, and therefore to be worshipped by you as sinners in the humble sense of your sin and misery, and as redeemed ones in the thankful sense of his mercy, and all in order to your further cleansing, healing, and recovery. 13. He is your Regenerator and Sanctifier, and therefore to be worshipped not in the confidence of your natural sufficiency, but by the light, and love, and life of the Holy Ghost. 14. He is your absolute Lord, and the Owner of you and all you have, and therefore to be worshipped with the absolute resignation of yourself and all, and honoured with your substance, and not hypocritically, with exceptions and reserves. 15. He is your sovereign King, and therefore to be worshipped according to his laws, with an obedient kind of worship, and not after the traditions of men, nor the will or wisdom of the flesh.<sup>22</sup> 16. He is your heavenly Father, and therefore all these holy dispositions should be summed up into the strongest love, and you should run to him with the greatest readiness, and rest in him with the greatest joy, and thirst after the full fruition of him with the greatest of your desires, and press towards him for himself with the most fervent and importunate suits. All these the very being and perfections of God will teach you in his worship: and therefore if any controverted worship be certainly contrary

---

<sup>22</sup> Matt. xv. 2, 3, 6; Mark vii. 3-14; Col. ii. 8, 18, 22.

to any of these, it is certainly unwarranted and unacceptable unto God.

*Direct.* VII. Pretend not to worship God by that which is destructive, or contrary to the ends of worship. For the aptitude of it as a means to its proper end, is essential to it. Now the ends of worship are, 1. The honouring of God. 2. The edifying of ourselves in holiness, and delighting our souls in the contemplation and praises of his perfections. 3. The communicating this knowledge, holiness, and delight to others, and the increase of his actual kingdom in the world. (1.) Avoid then all that pretended worship which dishonoureth God (not in the opinion of carnal men, that judge of him by their own misguided imaginations, but according to the discovery of himself to us in his works and word). Many travellers that have conversed with the soberer heathen and Mahometan nations, tell us, that it is not the least hinderance of their conversion, and cause of their contempt of christianity, to see the christians that live about them, to worship God so ignorantly, irrationally, and childishly, as many of them do.<sup>23</sup> (2.) Affect most that manner of worship (*cæteris paribus*) which tendeth most to your own right information, and holy resolutions and affections, and to

---

<sup>23</sup> But with the barbarous it is otherwise, saith Acosta the Jesuit, p. 249. 1. 2. Proderit quam plurimum ritus et signa et omnem externum cultum diligenter curare. His quippe et delectantur et detinentur homines animales (N. B.) donec paulatim aboleatur memoria et gustus præteritorum. So Gr. Nyssen saith in vita Gr. Neocæs. that they turned the pagans' festivals into festivals for the martyrs, to please them the better. Which Beda and many others relate of the practice of those times.

bring up your souls into nearer communion and delight in God: and not that which tendeth to deceive, or flatter, or divert you from him, nor to be in your ears as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal, or as one that is playing you a lesson of music; and tendeth not to make you better. (3.) Affect not that manner of worship which is an enemy to knowledge, and tendeth to keep up ignorance in the world: such as is a great part of the popish worship, especially their reading the Scriptures to the people in an unknown tongue, and celebrating their public prayers, and praises, and sacraments in an unknown tongue, and their seldom preaching, and then teaching the people to take up with a multitude of toyish ceremonies, instead of knowledge and rational worship. Certainly that which is an enemy to knowledge, is an enemy to all holiness and true obedience, and to the ends of worship, and therefore is no acceptable worshipping of God. (4.) Affect not that pretended worship which is of itself destructive of true holiness: such as is the preaching of false doctrine, not according to godliness, and the opposition and reproaching of a holy life and worship, in the misapplication of true doctrine; and then teaching poor souls to satisfy themselves with their mass, and mass ceremonies, and an image of worship, instead of serious holiness, which is opposed: Prov. xxiv. 24, "He that saith to the wicked, Thou art righteous, him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him." And if this be done as a worship of God, you may hence judge how acceptable it will be: Isa. v. 20, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness

for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" To make people believe that holiness is but hypocrisy, or a needless thing, or that the image of holiness is holiness itself, or that there is no great difference between the godly and ungodly, doth all tend to men's perdition, and to damn men by deceiving them, and to root out holiness from the earth. See Ezek. xxii. 26; xlv. 23; Jer. xv. 19. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth," Mal. iii. 18; Psal. i.; xv. (5.) Affect not a dead and heartless way of worship, which tendeth not to convince and waken the ungodly, nor to make men serious as those that have to do with God.

*Direct.* VIII. Let the manner of your worshipping God be suited to the matter that you have in hand. Remember that you are speaking either to or of the eternal God; that you are employed about the everlasting salvation of your own or others' souls; that all is high and holy that you have to do: see then that the manner be answerable hereunto.

*Direct.* IX. Offer God nothing as a part of worship which is a lie; much less so gross a lie as to be disproved by the common senses and reason of all the world. God needeth not our lie unto his glory.<sup>24</sup> What worship then do papists offer him in their mass, who take it for an article of their faith, that there is no bread or wine left after the consecration, it being all transubstantiated into the very body and blood of Christ? And when the certainty of all men's senses is renounced, then all certainty of faith and all

---

<sup>24</sup> Rom. iii. 7.

religion is renounced; for all presuppose the certainty of sense.

*Direct.* X. Worship not God in a manner that is contrary to the true nature, and order, and operations of a rational soul. I mean not to the corrupted nature of man, but to nature as rational in itself considered. As, 1. Let not your mere will and inclination overrule your understandings; and say not as blind lovers do, I love this, but I know not why; or children that eat unwholesome meat, because they love it.<sup>25</sup> 2. Let not passion overtop your reason: worship God with such a zeal as is according to knowledge. 3. Let not your tongues lead your hearts, much less overgo them: words may indeed reflect upon the heart, and warm it more; but that is but the secondary use: the first is to be the expressions of the heart: you must not speak without or against your hearts, (that is, falsely,) that by so speaking you may better your hearts (and make the words true, that at first were not true); unless it be when your words are but reading recitations or narratives, and not spoken of yourselves. The heart was made to lead the tongue, and the tongue to express it, and not to lead it. Therefore speak not to God either the words of a parrot, which you do not understand, or the words of a liar or hypocrite, which express not the meaning, or desires, or feeling of your hearts: but first understand and feel what you should speak, and then speak that which you understand and feel.

*Quest.* How then can a prayer be lawful that is read or heard from a book?

---

<sup>25</sup> Read Plutarch of Superstition.

*Answ.* There is in reading the eye, and in hearing the ear, that is first to affect the heart, and then the tongue is to perform its office. And though it be sudden, yet the passage to the heart is first, and the passage from the heart is last: and the soul is quick, and can quickly thus both receive and be affected and express itself. And the case is the same in this, whether it be from a book, or from the words of another without book: for the soul must do the same, as quickly, in joining with another that speaketh before us, without a book as with it.

How far the Scripture is the law or rule of worship and discipline, and how far not.

*Direct.* XI. Understand well how far Christ hath given a law and a rule for worship to his church in the holy Scriptures, and so far see that you take it as a perfect rule, and swerve not from it by adding or diminishing. This is a matter of great importance by reason of the danger of erring on either side. 1. If you think that the Scripture containeth not any law or rule of worship at all, or not so much as indeed it doth, you will deny a principal part of the office of Christ, as the King and Teacher of the church, and will accuse his laws of insufficiency, and be tempted to worship him with a human kind of worship, and to think yourselves at liberty to worship him according to your own imaginations, or change his worship according to the fashion of the age or the country where you are. And on the other side, if you think that the Scripture is a law and rule of worship, more particular than Christ intended it, you will involve yourselves and others in

endless scruples and controversies, and find fault with that which is lawful and a duty, because you find it not particularly in the Scripture: and therefore it is exceeding needful to understand how far it is intended to be herein our law and rule, and how far not: to handle this fully would be a digression, but I shall briefly answer it.

1. No doubt but Christ is the only universal Head and Lawgiver to his church.<sup>26</sup> And that legislation is the first and principal part of government: and therefore if he had made no laws for his church, he were not the full governor of it. And therefore he that arrogateth this power to himself to be lawgiver to the church universal (as such) doth usurp the kingly office of Christ, and committeth treason against his government; (unless he can prove that Christ hath delegated to him this chief part of his government, which none can do;) there being no universal lawgiver to the church but Christ, (whether pope or council,) no law that is made by any mere man can be universally obligatory. Therefore seeing the making of all universal laws doth belong only to Christ, we may be sure that he hath perfectly done it; and hath left nothing out of his laws that was fit to be there, nor nothing at liberty that was fit to be determined and commanded. Therefore whatsoever is of equal use or consideration to the universal church, as it is to any one part of it, and to all times as it is to any time of the church, should not be made a law by

---

<sup>26</sup> Isa. ii. 3; i. 10; xlii. 4; Mic. iv. 2; Heb iii. 2, 3, 5; x. 28; Acts vii. 37, 38; iii. 23; Psal. xix. 7; Isa. v. 24.

man to any part of the church, if Christ have not made it a law to the whole: because else they accuse him of being defective in his laws, and because all his subjects are equally dependent on him as their King and Judge. And no man must step into his throne pretending to amend his work which he hath done amiss, or to make up any wants which the chief Lawgiver should have made up.

2. These laws of Christ for the government of his church, are fully contained in the holy Scriptures; for so much as is in nature, is there also more plainly expressed than nature hath expressed it. All is not Christ's law that is any way expressed in Scripture; but all Christ's laws are expressed in the Scriptures; not written by himself, but by his Spirit in his apostles, whom he appointed and sent to teach all nations to observe whatever he commanded them, Matt. xxviii. 20: who being thus commissioned and enabled fully by the Spirit to perform it, are to be supposed to have perfectly executed their commission; and to have taught whatsoever Christ commanded them, and no more as from Christ: and therefore as they taught that present age by voice, who could hear them, so they taught all ages after to the end of the world by writing, because their voice was not by them to be heard.

3. So far then as the Scripture is a law and rule, it is a perfect rule; but how far it is a law or rule, its own contents and expressions must determine. As, (1.) It is certain that all the internal worship of God (by love, fear, trust, desire, &c.)

is perfectly commanded in the Scriptures. (2.) The doctrine of Christ which his ministers must read and preach is perfectly contained in the Scriptures. (3.) The grand and constantly necessary points of order in preaching, are there also expressed: as that the opening of men's eyes, and the converting of them from the power of Satan to God, be first endeavoured, and then their confirmation and further edification, (4.) Also that we humble ourselves before God in the confession of our sins. (5.) And that we pray to God in the name of Christ for mercy for ourselves and others. (6.) That we give God thanks for his mercies to the church, ourselves, and others. (7.) That we praise God in his excellencies manifested in his word and works of creation and providence. (8.) That we do this by singing psalms with holy joyfulness of heart. (9.) The matter and order of the ordinary prayers and praises of christians is expressed in the Scripture (as which parts are to have precedency in our estimation and desire, and ordinarily in our expressions). (10.) Christ himself hath determined that by baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, men be solemnly entered into his covenant, and church, and state of christianity. (11.) And he hath himself appointed that his churches hold communion with him and among themselves, in the eucharistical administration of the sacrament of his body and blood, represented in the breaking, delivering, receiving, and eating the consecrated bread, and in the pouring out, delivering, receiving, and drinking the consecrated wine. (12.)

And as for the mutable, subservient circumstances, and external expressions, and actions, and orders, which were not fit to be, in particular, the matter of a universal law, but are fit in one place, or at one time, and not another, for these he hath left both in nature and Scripture such general laws, by which upon emergent occasions they may be determined; and by particular providences he fitteth things, and persons, and times, and places, so as that we may discern their agreeableness to the descriptions in his general laws: as that all things be done decently, in order, and to edification, and in charity, unity, and peace. And he hath forbidden generally doing any thing undecently, disorderly, to the hurt or destruction of our brethren, even the weak, or to the division of the church.<sup>27</sup> (13.) And many things he hath particularly forbidden in worship: as making to ourselves any graven image, &c. and worshipping angels, &c.<sup>28</sup>

And as to the order and government of the church, (for I am willing to despatch all here together,) this much is plainly determined in Scripture: 1. That there be officers or ministers under Christ to be the stated teachers of his people, and to baptize, and administer the sacrament of his body and blood, and be the mouth and guide of the people in public prayers,

---

<sup>27</sup> Rom. xiii. 9; Matt. xxii. 37; Isa. viii. 16, 20; Acts viii. 25; xv. 35, 36; xxvi. 17, 18; 1 John i. 9; Neh. i. 6; Lev. xvi. 21; Phil. iv. 6; Psal. l. 14; lxix. 30; c. 1, 2, 4; Eph. v. 19; Psal. ix. 11; xcv. 1; Luke xi. 2, 3, &c.; Matt. xxviii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 23-26, 28; xiv. 5, 12, 26; 2 Cor. x. 8; xiii. 10; Rom. xv. 2; 1 Cor. xiv. 40; Rom. xiv. 15, 20; 1 Cor. ix. 20-22; viii. 10; x. 19, 28; 2 Cor. vi. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Second commandment, Col. ii. 18, &c.; 1 John v. 21; Rev. ii. 14.

thanksgiving, and praises, and to bind the impenitent and loose the penitent, and to be the directors of the flocks according to the law of God, to life eternal; and their office is described and determined by Christ. 2. It is required that christians do ordinarily assemble together for God's public worship; and be guided therein by these their pastors. 3. It is required that besides the unfixed ministers, who employ themselves in converting infidels, and in an itinerant service of the churches, there be also stated, fixed ministers, having a special charge of each particular church; and that they may know their own flocks, and from house to house, and the people may know their own pastors that are over them in the Lord, and honour them and obey them in all that they teach them from the word of God for their salvation. 4. The ministers that baptize are to judge of the capacity and fitness of those whom they baptize; whether the adult that are admitted upon their personal profession and covenanting, or infants that are admitted upon their parents' profession and entering them into covenant. 5. The pastors that administer the Lord's supper to their particular flocks, are to discern or judge of the fitness of those persons whom they receive newly into their charge, or whom they admit to communion in that sacrament as members of their flock. 6. Every such pastor is also personally to watch over all the members of his flock as far as he is able; lest false teachers seduce them, or Satan get advantage of them, or any corruption or root of bitterness spring up among them and defile them. 7. It is the duty of the several members of the flock, if

a brother trespass against them, to tell him his faults between them and him; and if he hear not, to take two or three, and if he hear not them, to tell the church. 8. It is the pastor's duty to admonish the unruly, and call them to repentance, and pray for their conversion. 9. And it is the pastor's duty to declare the obstinately impenitent incapable of communion with the church, and to charge him to forbear it, and the church to avoid him. 10. It is the people's duty to avoid such accordingly, and have no familiarity with them, that they may be ashamed; and with such, no, not to eat. 11. It is the pastor's duty to absolve the penitent, declaring the remission of their sin, and re-admitting to the communion of the saints. 12. It is the people's duty to re-admit the absolved to their communion with joy, and to take them as brethren in the Lord.<sup>29</sup> 13. Though every pastor hath a general power to exercise his office in any part of the church, where he shall be truly called to it; yet every pastor hath a special obligation (and consequently a special power) to do it over the flock, of which he hath received the special charge and oversight. 14. The Lord's day is separated by God's appointment for the churches' ordinary holy communion in God's worship under

---

<sup>29</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19; Rom. x. 7, 8; Acts xiv. 23; ii. 42; xx. 7, 28; Eph. iv. 11, 14; Mal. ii. 7; Ezek. iii. 17, 21; 1 Cor. xii. 17, 28; Col. i. 28; Acts xxvi. 18; 1 Thess. v. 12; Heb. xiii. 7, 17; Acts viii. 37; ii. 37, 38; viii 20, 23; 1 Cor. x. 16; ix. 13, 14; Acts xx.; 2 Cor. ii. 11; Heb. xii. 15; Deut. x. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 1-3; Matt. xviii. 15-17; 2 Thess. iii.; 1 Cor. v. 11; 2 John 10, 11; Tit. iii. 10; 1 Cor. v. 3-8; Rom. xvi. 17; 1 Tim. v. 17; Luke x. 16; xii. 42; Acts xiii. 23.

the conduct of these their guides.<sup>30</sup> 15. And it is requisite that the several particular churches do maintain as much agreement among themselves as their capacity will allow them; and keep due synods and correspondences to that end. Thus much of God's worship, and church order and government, at least, is of divine institution, and determined by Scripture, and not left to the will or liberty of man. Thus far the form of government (at least) is of divine right.

But on the contrary, 1. About doctrine and worship; the Scripture is no law in any of these following cases, but hath left them undetermined. (1.) There are many natural truths which the Scripture meddleth not with: as physics, metaphysics, logic, &c. (2.) Scripture telleth not a minister what particular text or subject he shall preach on this day or that. (3.) Nor what method his text or subject shall be opened and handled in. (4.) Nor what day of the week besides the Lord's day he shall preach, nor what hour on the Lord's day he shall begin. (5.) Nor in what particular place the church shall meet. (6.) Nor what particular sins we shall most confess; nor what personal mercies we shall at this present time first ask; nor for what we shall now most copiously give thanks: for special occasions must determine all these. (7.) Nor what particular chapter we shall now read; nor what particular psalm we shall now sing. (8.) Nor what particular translation of the Scripture, or version of the Psalms, we shall now use. Nor into what sections to distribute the Scripture, as we do by chapters and

---

<sup>30</sup> Tit. i. 5, 9; 1 Tim. iii. 5; 1 Pet. v. 1-4; Rev. i. 10; Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

verses. Nor whether the Bible shall be printed or written, or in what characters, or how bound. (9.) Nor just by what sign I shall express my consent to the truths or duties which I am called to express consent to (besides the sacraments and ordinary words). (10.) Nor whether I shall use written notes to help my memory in preaching, or preach without. (11.) Nor whether I shall use a writing or book in prayer, or pray without. (12.) Nor whether I shall use the same words in preaching and prayer, or various new expressions. (13.) Nor what utensils in holy administration I shall use; as a temple or an ordinary house, a pulpit, a font, a table, cups, cushions, and many such, which belong to the several parts of worship. (14.) Nor in what particular gesture we shall preach, or read, or hear. (15.) Nor what particular garments ministers or people shall wear in time of worship. (16.) Nor what natural or artificial helps to our natural faculties we shall use; as medicaments for the voice, tunes, musical instruments, spectacles, hour-glasses: these and such like are undetermined in Scripture, and are left to be determined by human prudence, not as men please; but as means in order to the proper end, according to the general laws of Christ.<sup>31</sup> For Scripture is a general law for all such circumstances, but not a particular law.

So also for order and government, Scripture hath not particularly determined, 1. What individual persons shall be the pastors of the church. 2. Or of just how many persons the

---

<sup>31</sup> Of which I have spoken more fully in my Disput. 5. of Church Government, p. 400, &c.

congregation shall consist. 3. Or how the pastors shall divide their work where there are many. 4. Nor how many every church shall have. 5. Nor what particular people shall be a pastor's special charge. 6. Nor what individual persons he shall baptize, receive to communion, admonish, or absolve. 7. Nor in what words most of these shall be expressed. 8. Nor what number of pastors shall meet in synods, for the communion and agreement of several churches, nor how oft, nor at what time or place, nor what particular order shall be among them in their consultations; with many such like.

When you thus understand how far Scripture is a law to you in the worship of God, it will be the greatest direction to you, to keep you both from disobeying God and your superiors; that you may neither pretend obedience to man for your disobedience to God, nor pretend obedience to God against your due obedience to your governors, as those will do that think Scripture is a more particular rule than ever Christ intended it: and it will prevent abundance of unnecessary scruples, contentions, and divisions.

What commands of God are not universal nor perpetual.

*Direct.* XII. Observe well in Scripture the difference between Christ's universal laws, (which bind all his subjects in all times and places,) and those that are but local, personal, or alterable laws; lest you think that you are bound to all that ever God bound any others to. The universal laws and unalterable are those which result from the foundation of the universal and unalterable nature of persons and things, and those which God hath supernaturally

revealed as suitable constantly to all. The particular, local, or temporary laws are those, which either resulted from a particular or alterable nature of persons and things as mutually related, (as the law of nature bound Adam's sons to marry their sisters, which bindeth others against it,) or those which God supernaturally enacted only for some particular people or person, or for the time. If you should mistake all the Jewish laws for universal laws, (as to persons or duration,) into how many errors would it lead you! So also if you mistake every personal mandate sent by a prophet or apostle to a particular man, as obliging all, you would make a snare of it. Every man is not to abstain from vineyards and wine as the Rechabites were; nor every man to go forth to preach in the garb as Christ sent the twelve and seventy disciples; nor every man to administer or receive the Lord's supper in an upper room of a house, in the evening, with eleven or twelve only, &c.; nor every one to carry Paul's cloak and parchments, nor go up and down on the messages which some were sent on. And here (in precepts about worship) you must know what is the thing primarily intended in the command, and what it is that is but a subservient means; for many laws are universal and immutable as to the matter primarily intended, which are but local and temporary as to the matter subservient and secondarily intended. As the command of saluting one another with a holy kiss, and using love-feasts in their sacred communion, primarily intended the exercising and expressing holy love by such convenient signs as were then in use, and suitable to those times; but that it be done

by those particular signs, was subservient, and a local, alterable law; as appeareth, 1. In that it is actually laid down by God's allowance. 2. In that in other places and times the same signs have not the same signification and aptitude to that use at all, and therefore would be no such expression of love; or else have also some ill signification. So it was the first way of baptizing to dip them over-head; which was fit in that hot country, which in colder countries it would not be, as being destructive to health, and more against modesty; therefore it is plain that it was but a local, alterable law. The same is to be said of not eating things strangled, and blood, which was occasioned by the offence of the Jews; and other the like. This is the case in almost all precepts about the external worshipping gestures: the thing that God commandeth universally is a humble, reverent adoration of him by the mind and body. Now the adoration of the mind is still the same; but the bodily expression altereth according to the custom of countries: in most countries kneeling or prostration are the expressions of greatest veneration and submission: in some few countries it is more signified by sitting with the face covered with their hands: in some it is signified best by standing: kneeling is ordinarily most fit, because it is the most common sign of humble reverence; but where it is not so, it is not fit. The same we must say of other gestures, and of habits: the women among the Corinthians were not to go uncovered because of the angels, 1 Cor. xi. 10, and yet in some places, where long hair or covering may have a contrary signification, the case may be contrary. The

very fourth commandment, however it was a perpetual law as to the proportion of time, yet was alterable as to the seventh day. Those which I call universal laws, some call moral; but that is no term of distinction, but signifieth the common nature of all laws, which are for the governing of our manners. Some call them natural laws, and the other positive: but the truth is, there are some laws of nature which are universal, and some that are particular, as they are the result of universal or particular nature: and there are some laws of nature that are perpetual, which are the result of an unaltered foundation: and there are some that are temporary, when it is some temporary, alterable thing in nature from whence the duty doth result: so there are some positive laws that are universal or unalterable, (during this world,) and some that are local, particular, or temporary only.<sup>32</sup>

*Direct.* XIII. Remember that whatever duty you seem obliged to perform, the obligation still supposeth that it is not naturally impossible to you, and therefore you are bound to do it as well as you can: and when other men's force, or your natural disability, hindereth you from doing it as you would, you are not therefore disobliged from doing it at all; but the total omission is worse than the defective performance of it, as the defective performance is worse than the doing of it more perfectly.<sup>33</sup> And in such a case the defects which are utterly involuntary are none of yours imputatively at all, but his that hindereth you (unless as some

---

<sup>32</sup> See the advertisement before my book against Infidelity.

<sup>33</sup> See Mr. Truman's book of Natural and Moral Impotency.

other sin might cause that). As if I were in a country where I could have liberty to read and pray, but not to preach, or to preach only once a month and no more; it is my duty to do so much as I can do, as being much better than nothing, and not to forbear all, because I cannot do all.

*Object.* But you must forbear no part of your duty? *Answer.* True: but nothing is my duty which is naturally impossible for me to do. Either I can do it, or I cannot: if I can, I must (supposing it a duty in all other respects); but if I cannot, I am not bound to it.

*Object.* But it is not suffering that must deter you, for that is a carnal reason: and your suffering may do more good than your preaching. *Answer.* Suffering is considerable either as a pain to the flesh, or as an irresistible hinderance of the work of the gospel: as it is merely a pain to the flesh, I ought not to be deterred by it from the work of God; but as it forcibly hindereth me from that work, (as by imprisonment, death, cutting out the tongue, &c.) I may lawfully foresee it, and by lawful means avoid it, when it is sincerely for the work of Christ, and not for the saving of the flesh. If Paul foresaw that the preaching of one more sermon at Damascus was like to hinder his preaching any more, because the Jews watched the gates day and night to kill him, it was Paul's duty to be let down by the wall in a basket, and to escape, and preach elsewhere, Acts ix. 25. And when the christians could not safely meet publicly, they met in secret, as John xix. 38; Acts xii. 12, &c. Whether Paul's suffering at Damascus for preaching one more sermon, or his preaching more elsewhere, was to be

chosen, the interest of Christ and the gospel must direct him to resolve: that which is best for the church, is to be chosen.

*Direct. XIV.* Remember that no material duty is formally a duty at all times: that which is a duty in its season, is no duty out of season. Affirmative precepts bind not to all times (except only to habits, or the secret intention of our ultimate end, so far as is sufficient to animate and actuate the means, while we are waking and have the use of reason). Praying and preaching, that are very great duties, may be so unseasonably performed, as to be sins: if forbearing a prayer, or sermon, or sacrament one day or month, be rationally like to procure your help or liberty to do it afterward, when that once or few times doing it were like to hinder you from doing it any more, it would be your duty then to forbear it for that time (unless in some extraordinary case): for even for the life of an ox or an ass, and for mercy to men's bodies, the rest and holy work of a sabbath might be interrupted; much more for the souls of many. Again I warn you, as you must not pretend the interest of the end against a peremptory, absolute command of God, so must you not easily conclude a command to be absolute and peremptory to that which certainly contradicts the end; nor easily take that for a duty, which certainly is no means to that good which is the end of duty, or which is against it. Though yet no seeming aptitude as a means, must make that seem a duty, which the prohibition of God hath made a sin.

*Direct. XV.* It is ever unseasonable to perform a lesser duty of worship, when a greater should be done; therefore it much

concerneth you to be able to discern, when two duties are inconsistent, which is then the greater and to be preferred: in which the interest of the end must much direct you; that being usually the greatest which hath the greatest tendency to the greatest good.

*Direct. XVI.* Pretend not one part of God's worship against another, when all, in their place and order, may be done. Set not preaching and praying against each other; nor public and private worship against each other; nor internal worship against external; but do all.

*Direct. XVII.* Let not an inordinate respect to man, or common custom, be too strong a bias to pervert your judgments from the rule of worship; nor yet any groundless prejudice make you distaste that which is not to be disliked. The error on these two extremes doth fill the world with corruption and contentions about the worship of God. Among the papists, and Russians, and other ignorant sorts of christians, abundance of corruptions are continued in God's worship by the mere power of custom, tradition, and education; and all seemeth right to which they have been long used: and hence the churches in south, east, and west continue so long overspread with ignorance, and refuse reformation.<sup>34</sup> And on the other side, mere prejudice makes

---

<sup>34</sup> Majus fidei impedimentum ex inveterata consuetudine proficiscitur: ubique consuetudo magnas vires habet; sed in barbaris longe maximas: quippe ubi rationis est minimum, ibi consuetudo radices profundissimas agit. In omni natura motio eo diuturnior ac vehementior, quo magis est ad unum determinata. Jos. Acosta de Ind. l. 2. p. 249.

some so much distaste a prescribed form of prayer, or the way of worship which they have not been used to, and which they have heard some good men speak against, whose judgments they highest esteemed, that they have not room for sober, impartial reason to deliberate, try, and judge. Factions have engaged most christians in the world into several parties, whereby Satan hath got this great advantage, that instead of worshipping God in love and concord, they lay out their zeal in an envious, bitter, censorious, uncharitable reproaching the manner of each other's worship. And because the interest of their parties requireth this, they think the interest of the church and cause of God requireth it; and that they do God service when they make the religion of other men seem odious: whenas among most christians in the world, the errors of their modes of worship are not so great as the adverse parties represent them (except only the two great crimes of the popish worship: 1. That it is not understood, and so is soulless. 2. They worship bread as God himself, which I am not so able as willing to excuse from being idolatry). Judge not in such cases by passion, partiality, and prejudice.<sup>35</sup>

*Direct.* XVIII. Yet judge in all such controversies with that reverence and charity which is due to the universal and the primitive church. If you find any thing in God's worship which the primitive or universal church agreed in, you may be sure that it is nothing but what is consistent with acceptable worship; for God never rejected the worship of the primitive or universal

---

<sup>35</sup> See Bishop Jer. Taylor's late book against Popery.

church. And it is not so much as to be judged erroneous without great deliberation and very good proof. We must be much more suspicious of our own understandings.

*Direct. XIX.* In circumstances and modes of worship not forbidden in the word of God, affect not singularity, and do not easily differ from the practice of the church in which you hold communion, nor from the commands or directions of your lawful governors. It is true, if we are forbidden with Daniel to pray, or with the apostles to speak any more in the name of Christ, or are commanded as the three witnesses, Dan. iii. to worship images, we must rather obey God than man;<sup>36</sup> and so in case of any sin that is commanded us: but in case of mere different modes, and circumstances, and order of worship, see that you give authority and the consent of the church where you are their due.

*Direct. XX.* Look more to your own hearts than to the abilities of the ministers, or the ceremonies or manner of the churches' worship in such lesser things. It is heart-work and heaven-work that the sincere believer comes about; and it is the corruption of his heart that is the heaviest burden, which he groaneth under with the most passionate complaints: a hungry soul, inflamed with love to God and man, and tenderly sensible of the excellency of common truths and duties, would make up many defects in the manner of public administration, and would get nearer God in a defective, imperfect mode of worship, than others can do with

---

<sup>36</sup> Acts iv. 17, 18; v. 28.

the greatest helps;<sup>37</sup> when hypocrites find so little work with their hearts and heaven, that they are taken up about words, and forms, and ceremonies, and external things, applauding their own way, and condemning other men's, and serving Satan under pretence of worshipping God.

---

<sup>37</sup> Jam. iii. 15-17.

# CHAPTER III.

## DIRECTIONS ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN COVENANT WITH GOD, AND BAPTISM

Though the first part of this book is little more than an explication of the christian covenant with God, yet being here to speak of baptism as a part of God's worship, it is needful that I briefly speak also of the covenant itself.

*Direct.* I. It is a matter of great importance that you well understand the nature of the christian covenant, what it is. I shall therefore here briefly open the nature of it, and then speak of the reasons of it; and then of the solemnizing it by baptism, and next of our renewing it, and lastly of our keeping it.

The covenant what.

The christian covenant is a contract between God and man, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, for the return and reconciliation of sinners unto God, and their justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification by him, to his glory.

Here we must first consider, who are the parties in the covenant. 2. What is the matter of the covenant on God's part. 3. What is the matter on man's part. 4. What are the terms of it propounded on God's part. 5. Where and how he doth express it.

6. What are the necessary qualifications on man's part. 7. And what are the ends and benefits of it.

I. The parties are God and man: God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost on the one part, and repenting, believing sinners on the other part. Man is the party that needeth it; but God is the party that first offereth it. Here note, 1. That God's part of the covenant is made universally and conditionally with all mankind, (as to the tenor exacted,) and so is in being before we were born. 2. That it is not the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, considered simply as persons in the Godhead; but as related to man for the ends of the covenant. 3. That it is only sinners that this covenant is made with, because the use of it is for the restoration of those that broke a former covenant in Adam. It is a covenant of reconciliation, and therefore supposeth an enmity antecedent. 4. When I say that it is repenting and believing sinners that are the party, I mean, (1.) That taking the covenant in its first act, it is repentance and faith themselves that are the act, and are our very covenanting. (2.) But taking the covenant in its external expression, so it is a repenting, believing sinner that must take it, it being but the expression of his repentance and faith, by an explicit contract with God. 5. Note, that though God's covenant be by one universal act, (of which more anon,) yet man's is to be made by the several acts of the individual persons each one for himself, and not by the acts of societies only.

II. The matter of the covenant on God's part is in general, that he will be our God: more particularly, that God the Father

will be our reconciled God and Father in Jesus Christ; that God the Son will be our Saviour; and God the Holy Ghost will be our Sanctifier. And the relation of a God to us essentially containeth these three parts: 1. That as on the title of creation and redemption he is our Owner, so he doth take us as his own peculiar people. 2. That as he hath title to be our absolute King or Governor, so he doth take us as his subjects. 3. That he will be our grand Benefactor and felicity, or our most loving Father (which compriseth all the rest). And as he will be thus related to us, so he will do for us all that these relations do import. As, 1. He will do all that belongeth to a Creator for his creature, in our preservation and supplies. 2. He will save us from our sins, and from his wrath and hell. 3. And he will sanctify us to a perfect conformity to our Head. Also, 1. He will use and defend us as his own peculiar ones. 2. He will govern us by a law of grace and righteousness. 3. He will make us fully happy in his love for ever.

III. The matter on man's part of the covenant is, 1. In respect of the *terminus a quo*, that we will forsake the flesh, the world, and the devil, as they are adverse to our relations and duties to God. 2. In regard of the *terminus ad quem*, that we will take the Lord for our God: and more particularly, 1. That we do take God the Father for our reconciled Father in Jesus Christ, and do give up ourselves to him as creatures to their Maker. 2. That we do take Jesus Christ for our Redeemer, Saviour, and Mediator, as our High Priest, and Prophet, and King, and do give up ourselves to him as his redeemed ones to be reconciled to God, and saved

by him. 3. That we do take the Holy Ghost for our Regenerator and Sanctifier, and do give up ourselves to be perfectly renewed and sanctified by him, and by his operations carried on to God in his holy service. Also, 1. That we do take God for our absolute Lord or Owner, and do give up ourselves to him as his own. 2. That we take him for our universal, sovereign Governor, and do give up ourselves unto him as his subjects. 3. That we do take him for our most bountiful Benefactor, and loving Father, and felicity, and do give up ourselves to him as his children, to seek him, and please him, and perfectly to love him, delight in him, and enjoy him for ever in heaven as our ultimate end. And in consenting to these relations, we covenant to do the duties of them in sincerity.

IV. The terms or conditions which God requireth of man in his covenant are, consent, and fidelity or performance: he first consenteth conditionally, if we will consent; and he consenteth to be actually our God, when we consent to be his people: so that as bare consent, without any performance, doth found the relation between husband and wife, master and servant, prince and people; but the sincere performance of the duties of the relation which we consent to, are needful afterward to continue the relation, and attain the benefits and ends; so is it also between God and man. We are his children in covenant as soon as we consent; but we shall not be glorified but on condition of sincere performance and obedience.

V. God's covenant with man is nothing else but the universal promise in the gospel; and (to the solemnization) the declaration,

and application, and solemn investiture or delivery by his authorized ministers. 1. The gospel, as it relateth the matters of fact in and about the work of our redemption, is a sacred history. 2. As it containeth the terms on which God will be served, and commandeth us to obey them for our salvation, it is called the law of Christ or grace. 3. As it containeth the promise of life and salvation conditionally offered, it is called God's promise, and covenant (viz. on his part, as it is proposed only). 4. When by our consent the condition is so far performed, or the covenant accepted, then God's conditional, universal promise or covenant, becometh actual and particular as to the effect; and so the covenant becometh mutual between God and man: as if a king make an act or law of pardon and oblivion to a nation of rebels, saying, Whoever cometh in by such a day, and confesseth his fault, and sueth out his pardon, and promiseth fidelity for the future, shall be pardoned. This act is a law in one respect, and it is a universal, conditional pardon of all those rebels; or a promise of pardon; and an offer of pardon to all that it is revealed to: but it is an actual pardon to those that come in, and conferreth on them the benefits of the act as if they were named in it, and is their very title to their pardon, of which their consent is the condition; and the condition being performed, the pardon or collation of the benefit becometh particular and actual, without any new act; it being the sense of the law itself, or conditional grant, that so it should do. So as to the reality of the internal covenant interest and benefits, justification and adoption, it is

ours by virtue of this universal conditional covenant, when we perform the condition. But as to our title *in foro ecclesiæ*, and the due solemnization and investiture, it is made ours when God's minister applieth it to us in baptism by his commission; as the rebel that was fundamentally pardoned by the act of oblivion, must yet have his personal pardon delivered him by the lord chancellor under the great seal. In this sense ministers are the instruments of God, not only in declaring us to be pardoned, but in delivering to us the pardon of our sins, and solemnly investing us therein: as an attorney delivereth possession to one that before had his fundamental title. Thus God entereth into covenant with man.

VI. The qualifications of absolute necessity to the validity of our covenant with God *in foro interiori*, are these: 1. That we understand what we do as to all the essentials of the covenant; for *ignorantis non est consensus*. 2. That it be our own act, performed by our natural or legal selves, that is, some one that hath power so far to dispose of us (as parents have of their children). 3. That it be deliberate, sober, and rational, done by one that is *compos mentis*, in his wits, and not in drunkenness, madness, or incogitancy.<sup>38</sup> 4. That it be seriously done with a real intention of

---

<sup>38</sup> Quis vero non doleat baptismo plerosque adultos initio passim et nostro tempore non raro ante perfundi quam christianam catechesin vel mediocriter teneant, neque an flagitiosæ et superstitiosæ vitæ pœnitentia tangantur, neque vero id ipsum quod accipiunt, an velint accipere, satis constet. Acosta, l. vi. c. 2. p. 520. Nisi petant et instent, christianæ vitæ professione donandi non sunt. Idem. p. 521. And again, While ignorant or wicked men do hasten any how, by right or wrong, by guile or force, to

doing the thing, and not histrionically, ludicrously, or in jest. 5. That it be done entirely as to all essential parts; for if we leave out any essential part of the covenant, it is no sufficient consent (as to consent that Christ shall be our Justifier, but not the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier). 6. That it be a present consent to be presently in covenant with God: for to consent that you will be his servants to-morrow or hereafter, but not yet, is but to purpose to be in covenant with him hereafter, and is no present covenanting with him. 7. Lastly, it must be a resolved and absolute consent, without any open or secret exceptions or reserves.

VII. The fruits of the covenant which God reapeth, (though he need nothing,) is the pleasing of his good and gracious will, in the exercise of his love and mercy, and the praise and glory of his grace, in his people's love and happiness for ever. The fruits or benefits which accrue to man are unspeakable, and would require a volume competently to open them: especially that God is our God, and Christ our Saviour, Head, Intercessor, and Teacher, and the Holy Ghost is our Sanctifier; and that God will regard us as his own, and will protect us, preserve us, and provide for us, and will govern us, and be our God and joy for ever; that he will pardon us, justify, and adopt us, and glorify us with his Son in heaven.

*Direct.* II. When you thus understand well the nature of the covenant, labour to understand the special reasons of it. The

reasons of the matter of the covenant you may see in the fruits and benefits now mentioned. But I now speak of the reason of it as a covenant *in genere*, and such a covenant *in specie*.

1. In general, God will have man to receive life or death as an accepter and keeper, or a refuser or breaker, of his covenant, because he will do it not only as a Benefactor, or absolute Lord, but also as a Governor, and will make his covenant to be also his law, and his promise and benefits to promote obedience; and because he will deal with man as with a free agent, and not as with a brute that hath no choosing and refusing power, conducted by reason: man's life and death shall be in his own hands, and still depend upon his own will; though God will secure his own dominion, interest, and ends, and put nothing out of his own power by putting it into man's; nor have ever the less his own will, by leaving man to his own will. God will at last, as a righteous Judge, determine all the world to their final joy or punishment, according to their own choice while they were in the flesh, and according to what they have done in the body, whether it be good or evil, Matt. xxv. Therefore he will deal with us on covenant terms.

2. And he hath chosen to rule and judge men according to a covenant of grace, by a Redeemer, and not according to a rigorous law of works, that his goodness and mercy may be the fullier manifested to the sons of men; and that it may be easier for men to love him, when they have so wonderful demonstrations of his love; and so that their service here, and their work and

happiness hereafter, may consist of love, to the glory of his goodness, and the pleasure of his love for ever.

*Direct.* III. Next understand rightly the nature, use, and end of baptism. Baptism is to the mutual covenant between God and man, what the solemnization of marriage is to them that do before consent; or what the listing a soldier by giving him colours, and writing his name, is to one that consented before to be a soldier.<sup>39</sup> In my "Universal Concord," p. 29, 30, I have thus described it: **External baptism, what.** Baptism is a holy sacrament instituted by Christ, in which a person professing the christian faith (or the infant of such) is baptized in water into the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost, in signification and solemnization of the holy covenant, in which as a penitent believer (or the seed of such) he giveth up himself (or is by the parent given up) to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, forsaking the devil, the world, and the flesh, and is solemnly entered a visible member of Christ and his church, a pardoned, regenerate child of God, and an heir of heaven.

As the word baptism is taken for the mere administration or external ordinance, so the internal covenanting or faith and repentance of the (adult) person to be baptized, is no essential part of it, nor requisite to the being of it; but only the profession of such a faith and repentance, and the external entering of the covenant; but as baptism is taken for the ordinance as performed in all its essential parts, according to the true intent of Christ

---

<sup>39</sup> See the "Reformed Liturgy," p. 68.

in his institution (that is, in the first and proper meaning of the word); so the internal covenanting of a penitent, sincere believer, is necessary to the being of it. And indeed the word baptism is taken but equivocally or analogically at most, when it is taken for the mere external administration and action: for God doth not institute worship ordinances for bodily motion only; when he speaketh to man, and requireth worship of man, he speaketh to him as to a man, and requireth human actions from him, even the work of the soul, and not the words of a parrot, or the motion of a puppet. Therefore the word baptism in the first and proper signification, doth take in the inward actions of the heart, as well as the outward professions and actions. **Complete baptism, what it is.** And in this proper sense baptism is the mutual covenant between God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and a penitent believing sinner, solemnized by the washing of water, in which as a sacrament of his own appointment God doth engage himself to be the God and reconciled Father, the Saviour and the Sanctifier, of the believer, and taketh him for his reconciled child in Christ, and delivereth to him, by solemn investiture, the pardon of all his sins, and title to the mercies of this life and of that which is to come. What I say in this description of a penitent believer, is also to be understood of the children of such that are dedicated by them in baptism to God, who thereupon have their portion in the same covenant of grace.

The word baptism is taken in the first sense when Simon Magus is said to be baptized, Acts xxviii. And when we speak

of it only in the ecclesiastic sense, as it is true baptism *in foro ecclesiae*; but it is taken in the latter sense when it is spoken of as the complete ordinance of God, in the sense of the institution, and as respecting the proper ends of baptism, as pardon of sin and life eternal; and *in foro cæli*.

In this full and proper sense it is taken by Christ when he saith, Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" that is, he that believeth, and is by baptism entered into the covenant of God; and in this sense the ancients took it, when they affirmed that all that were baptized were regenerated, pardoned, and made the children of God. And in this sense it is most true, that he that is baptized (that is, is a sincere covenanter) shall be saved if he die in that condition that he is then in.<sup>40</sup> All that the minister warrantably baptizeth, are sacramentally regenerate, and are *in foro ecclesiae* members of Christ, and children of God, and heirs of heaven: but it is only those that are sincerely delivered up in covenant to God in Christ, that are spiritually and really regenerate, and are such as shall be owned for members of Christ and children of God *in foro cæli*. Therefore it is not unfit that the minister call the baptized, regenerate and pardoned members of Christ, and children of God, and heirs of heaven, supposing that *in foro ecclesiae* they were the due subjects of baptism. But if the persons be such as ought not to be baptized, the sin then is not in calling baptized persons regenerate, but

---

<sup>40</sup> Read the Propositions of the Synod in New England, and the Defence of them against Mr. Davenport, about the subject of Baptism.

in baptizing those that ought not to have been baptized, and to whom the seal of the covenant was not due.

None ought to be baptized but those that either personally deliver up themselves in covenant to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, professing a true repentance, and faith, and consent to the covenant; or else are thus delivered up, and dedicated, and entered into covenant in their infancy, by those that, being christians themselves, have so much interest in them and power of them, that their act may be esteemed as the infants' act, and legally imputed to them as if themselves had done it. If any others are unduly baptized, they have hereby no title to the pardon of sin or life eternal, nor are they taken by God to be in covenant, as having no way consented to it.

*Direct. IV.* When you enter a child into the christian covenant with God, address yourselves to it as to one of the greatest works in the world; as those that know the greatness of the benefit, of the duty, and of the danger. The benefit to them that are sincere in the covenant, is no less than to have the pardon of all our sins, and to have God himself to be our God and Father, and Christ our Saviour, and the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier, and to have title to the blessings of this life and of that to come. And for the duty, how great a work it is for a sinner to enter into so solemn a covenant with the God of heaven, for reconciliation and newness of life, and for salvation! And therefore if any should abuse God by hypocrisy, and take on them to consent to the terms of the covenant, (for themselves, or their children,)

when indeed they do not, the danger of such profaneness and abuse of God must needs be great. Do it therefore with that due preparation, reverence, and seriousness, as beseemeth those that are transacting a business of such unspeakable importance with God Almighty.

*Direct.* V. Having been entered in your infancy into the covenant of God by your parents, you must, at years of discretion, review the covenant which by them you made, and renew it personally yourselves; and this with as great seriousness and resolution as if you were now first to enter and subscribe it, and as if your everlasting life or death were to depend on the sincerity of your consent and performance. For your infant baptismal covenanting will save none of you that live to years of discretion, and do not as heartily own it in their own persons, as if they had been now to be baptized. But this I pass by, having said so much of it in my "Book of Confirmation."

Of renewing the covenant oft.

*Direct.* VI. Your covenant thus, 1. Made; 2. Solemnized by baptism; 3. And owned at age; must, 4. Be frequently renewed through the whole course of your lives. As, (1.) Your first consent must be habitually continued all your days; for if that ceaseth, your grace and title to the benefits of God's covenant ceaseth. (2.) This covenant is virtually renewed in every act of worship to God; for you speak to him as your God in covenant, and offer yourselves to him as his covenanted people. (3.) This covenant should be actually renewed frequently in prayer and meditation,

and other such acts of communion with God. (4.) Especially when after a fall we beg the pardon of our sins, and the mercies of the covenant, and on days of humiliation and thanksgiving, and in great distresses, or exhilarating mercies. (5.) And the Lord's supper is an ordinance instituted to this very end. It is no small part of our christian diligence and watchfulness, to keep up and renew our covenant consent.

*Direct.* VII. And as careful must you be to keep or perform your covenant, as to enter it, and renew it; which is done, 1. By continuing our consent; 2. By sincere obedience; 3. And by perseverance. We do not (nor dare not) promise to obey perfectly, nor promise to be as obedient as the higher and better sort of christians, though we desire both; but to obey sincerely we must needs promise, because we must needs perform it.

Obedience is sincere, 1. When the radical consent or subjection of the heart to God in Christ is habitually and heartily continued. 2. When God's interest in us is most predominant, and his authority and law can do more with us, than any fleshly lust or worldly interest, or than the authority, word, or persuasions of any man whosoever. 3. When we unfeignedly desire to be perfect, and habitually and ordinarily have a predominant love to all that is good, and a hatred to that which is evil; and had rather do our duty than be excused from it, and rather be saved from our sin than keep it.

*Direct.* VIII. While you sincerely consent unto the covenant, live by faith upon the promised benefits of it, believing that God

will make good on his part all that he hath promised. Take it for your title to pardon, sonship, and eternal life. O think what a mercy it is to have God in covenant with you to be your God, your Father, Saviour, Sanctifier, and felicity! And in this continually rejoice.

# CHAPTER IV.

## DIRECTIONS ABOUT THE PROFESSION OF OUR RELIGION TO OTHERS

*Direct.* I. Understand first how great a duty the profession of true religion is, that you may not think as some foolish people, that every man should conceal his religion, or keep it to himself.<sup>41</sup> Observe therefore these reasons following which require it.

1. Our tongues and bodies are made to exercise and show forth that acknowledgment and adoration of God which is in our hearts. And as he denieth God with the heart who doth not believe in him and worship him in his heart, so he denieth God imputatively with his tongue and life, who doth not profess and honour him with his tongue and life; and so he is a practical atheist. Isa. xlv. 23-25, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength – In the

---

<sup>41</sup> Nemo jam infamiam incutiat; nemo aliud existimet: quin nec fas est ulli de sua religione mentiri. Ex eo enim quod aliud a se coli dicit quam colit, et culturam et honorem in alterum transferendo, jam non colit quod negavit: dicimus, et palam dicimus et vobis torquentibus lacerati et cruenti vociferamur, Deum colimus per Christum. Tertul. Apolog. c. 11.

Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." So Phil. ii. 9-11, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow – and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Isa. xlv. 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call him by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

2. The public assemblies, and worship of God, are purposely appointed by him, that in them we might make open profession of our religion. He that denieth profession, denieth the public faith and worship of the church, and denieth baptism and the Lord's supper, which are sacraments appointed for the solemn profession of our faith.

3. Our profession is needful to our glorifying God. Men see not our hearts, nor know whether we believe in God or not, nor what we believe of him, till they hear or see it in our profession and actions. Paul's life and death was a profession of Christ, that in his "boldness Christ might be magnified in his body," Phil. i. 20. Matt. v. 14-16, "Ye are the light of the world: a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle to put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

4. Our profession is the means of saving others: that which is

secret, is no means to profit them. They must see our good works that they may glorify God, Phil. i. 12-14.

5. God hath required our open and bold profession of him, with the strictest commands, and upon the greatest penalties. 1 Pet. v. 3, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Rom. x. 9, 10, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Mark viii. 38, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."<sup>42</sup>

*Direct.* II. Next, understand what it is in religion that you must principally profess.<sup>43</sup> It is not every lesser truth, much less every opinion of your own, in which you are confident that you are wiser than your brethren. This is the meaning of Rom. xiv. 22, "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God." By "faith" here is not meant the substance of the christian belief, or any one necessary article of it. But a belief of the indifferency of such things as Paul spake of, in meats and drinks. If thou know these things to be lawful when thy weak brother doth not, and so thou

---

<sup>42</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 12; Matt. x. 32, 33; Luke ix. 26.

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 1; 2 Cor. x. 8; Rom. xv. 2; 1 Tim. i. 4; Tit. iii. 9.

be wiser than he, thank God for thy knowledge, and use it to thy own salvation; but do not proudly and uncharitably contend for it, and use it uncharitably to the danger of another's soul, much less to the wrong of the church and gospel, and the hinderance of greater truths. 2 Tim. ii. 14, "Of these things put them in remembrance," (that is, of the saints' hope in God's faithfulness,) "charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but the subverting of the hearers." Yet "for the faith we must earnestly contend," Jude 2, 3. 2 Tim. ii. 23, 24, "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strife. And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men."

But that which is the chiefest matter of our profession is, The being and perfections of God himself; his love to man, and power over him, and man's subjection and obligations unto God; the person, and office, and works, and benefits of our Redeemer, with all the duty that we owe to him in perfect holiness, and all the hopes that we have in him; the happiness of the saints, the odiousness of sin, and the misery of the wicked. These, and such as these, are things that we are called to profess; yet so as not to deny or renounce the smallest truth.

*Direct.* III. Understand also the manner how we must make profession of religion. 1. There is a professing by words, and a professing by actions. 2. There is a solemn profession by God's public ordinances, and an occasional or privater profession by conference, or by our conversations. And all these ways must

religion be professed.

*Direct.* IV. Understand also the season of each sort of profession, that you omit not the season, nor do it unseasonably. 1. Profession by baptism, Lord's supper, and church assemblies, must be done in their season, which the church guides are the conductors of. 2. Profession by an innocent, blameless, obedient life is never out of season. 3. Profession by private conference, and by occasional acts of piety, must be when opportunity inviteth us, and they are likely to attain their ends. 4. The whole frame of a believer's life should be so holy, and heavenly, and mortified, and above the world, as may amount to a serious profession that he liveth in confident hope of the life to come, and may show the world the difference between a worldling and an heir of heaven; between corrupted nature and true grace. The professors of godliness must be a peculiar people, zealous of good works, and adorned with them.<sup>44</sup>

*Direct.* V. Take special care that your profession be sincere, and that you be yourselves as good as you profess to be. Otherwise, 1. Your profession will condemn yourselves. 2. And it will dishonour the truth which you deceitfully profess. There can scarce a greater injury befall a good cause, than to have a bad and shameful patron to defend it. Rom. ii. 3, "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God." Verse 23-25, "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the

---

<sup>44</sup> Tit. ii. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 10.

law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles through you – ."

*Direct. VI.* Let not your profession be so much of your own sincerity as of God and his excellencies: boast not of yourselves, but of God and Christ, and the promise, and the hope of true believers; and do it to God's praise, and not for your own. Be sure that in all your profession of religion, you be seeking honour to God, and not unto yourselves. And then in this manner he that doubteth of his own sincerity, yet may and must make profession of Christ and true religion; when you cannot proclaim the uprightness of your own hearts, you may boldly proclaim the excellencies of religion, and the happiness of saints.

*Direct. VII.* Live upon God alone, and trust his all-sufficiency, and abhor that pusillanimity and baseness of spirit which maketh men afraid or ashamed openly to own the truth. Remember the example of your Lord, who before Pontius Pilate "witnessed a good confession," 1 Tim. vi. 13; who came "for this end into the world, to bear witness to the truth," John xviii. 37. Fear not the face of man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and is perishing even while he is threatening.<sup>45</sup> If thou believe not that Christ can secure thee from the rage of man, thou believest not indeed in Christ. If thou believe not that heaven will satisfy for all that

---

<sup>45</sup> The Arians under Valens, and the Vandals, still silenced the orthodox preachers and forbad their meetings, and yet the people adhered to their pastors and kept their meetings, while they could. Sæpius prohibitum est ut sacerdotes vestri conventus minime celebrarent, nec sua seditione animas subverterunt christianas. Præcept. Hunner. in Victor. Utic. p. 414.

by scorns or cruelties thou sufferest from sinners, thou hast not indeed the hope of a believer. And no wonder if thou profess not that which thou believest not. But if thou believe that God is God, and Christ is Christ, and heaven is heaven, and the gospel is true, thou hast enough in thy belief to secure thee against all the scorns and cruelties of man, and to tell thee that Christ will bear thy charges, in all that thou sufferest for his sake. Oh what abundance are secretly convinced of the truth, and their consciences bear witness to the wisdom of the saints, and a holy life; and yet they dare not openly own and stand to the truth which they are convinced of for fear of being mocked by the tongues of the profane, or for fear of losing their places and preferments! O wretch, dost thou not tremble when thou art ashamed of Christ, to think of the day when he will be ashamed of thee? Then when he comes in glory none will be ashamed of him! Then where is the tongue that mocked him and his servants? Who then will deride his holy ways? Then that will be the greatest glory, which thou art now ashamed of. Canst thou believe that day, and yet hide thy profession, through cowardly fear or shame of man? Is man so great, and is Christ no greater in thine eyes than so? If he be not more regardable than man, believe not in him: if he be, regard him more; and let not a worm be preferred before thy Saviour.

*Direct.* VIII. If any doubt arise, whether thou shouldest now make particular profession of the truth, (as in the presence of scorners, or when required by magistrates or others, &c.) let

not the advice or interest of the flesh have any hand at all in the resolving of the case; but let it be wholly determined as the interest of Christ requireth. Spare thyself when the interest of Christ requireth it; not for thyself, but for him. But when his interest is most promoted by thy suffering, rejoice that thou art any way capable of serving him.<sup>46</sup>

*Direct. IX.* Though sometimes a particular profession of the faith may be unseasonable, yet you must never make any profession of the contrary, either by words or actions. Truth may be sometimes silenced, but a lie may never be professed or approved.

*Direct. X.* If any that profess christianity reproach you for the profession of holiness and diligence, convince them that they hypocritically profess the same, and that holiness is essential to christianity: open their baptismal covenant to them, and the Lord's prayer, in which they daily pray that God's will may be done on earth even as it is in heaven, which is more strictly than the best of us can reach. The difference between them and you is but this, whether we should be christians hypocritically in jest, or in good earnest.

---

<sup>46</sup> Matt. x. 18, 23, 32, 33, 38, 39; xii. 14, 15; xiv. 13; John x. 39; Heb. xi. 27; Acts ix. 25.

# CHAPTER V. DIRECTIONS ABOUT VOWS AND PARTICULAR COVENANTS WITH GOD

## Tit. 1. Directions for the Right Making such Vows and Covenants

What a vow is.

*Direct.* I. Understand the nature of a vow, and the use to which it is appointed.

A vow is a promise made to God. 1. It is not a bare assertion or negation. 2. It is not a mere pollicitation, or expression of the purpose or resolution of the mind: for he that saith or meaneth no more than, I am purposed or resolved to do this, may upon sufficient reason do the contrary; for he may change his mind and resolution, without any untruth or injury to any. 3. It is not a mere devoting of a thing to God for the present by actual resignation. For the present actual delivery of a thing to sacred uses is no promise for the future: though we usually join them both together, yet *devovere* may be separated from *vovere*. 4.

It must be therefore a promise, which is, a voluntary obliging ones self to another *de futuro* for some good. 5. It is therefore implied that it be the act of a rational creature, and of one that in that act hath some competent use of reason, and not of a fool, or idiot, or mad-man, or a child that hath not reason for such an act, no nor of a brain-sick or melancholy person, who (though he be *cætera sanus*) is either delirant in that business, or is irresistibly borne down and necessitated by his disease to vow against the sober, deliberate conclusion of his reason at other times, having at the time of vowing, reason enough to strive against the act, but not self-government enough to restrain a passionate, melancholy vow. 6. Whereas some casuists make deliberation necessary, it must be understood that to the being of a vow so much deliberation is requisite as may make it a rational human act, it must be an act of reason; but for any further deliberation, it is necessary only to the well-being, and not to the being of a vow, and without it it is a rash vow, but not no vow.<sup>47</sup> 7. When we say, it must be a voluntary act, the meaning is not that it must be totally and absolutely voluntary, without any fear or threatening to induce us to it; but only that it be really voluntary, that is, an act of choice, by a free agent, that considering all things doth choose so to do. He that hath a sword set to his breast,

---

<sup>47</sup> Viris gravibus vehementer displicere animadverti, quod ab indis testimonium jure-jurando exigitur, cum constet eos facillime pejerare, utpote qui neque juramenti vim sentiant neque veritatis studio tangantur, sed testimonium eo modo dicant, quo credunt. Judici gratissimum fore, aut a primo suæ factionis homine edocti sunt. Hos igitur jurare compellere et ipsis exitiosum propter perjuriam, &c. Acosta, p. 345.

and doth swear or vow to save his life, doth do it voluntarily, as choosing rather to do it than to die. Man having free-will, may choose rather to die, than vow, if he think best: his will may be moved by fear, but cannot be forced by any one, or any means whatsoever. 8. When I say that a vow is a promise, I imply that the matter of it is necessarily some real or supposed good; to be good, or to do good, or not to do evil. Evil may be the matter of an oath, but it is not properly a vow, if the matter be not supposed good. 9. It is a promise made to God, that we are now speaking of; whether the name of a vow belong to a promise made only to man, is a question *de nomine*, which we need not stop at.

#### The sorts of vows.

A vow is either a simple promise to God, or a promise bound with an oath or imprecation. Some would appropriate the name of a vow to this last sort only, (when men swear they will do this or that,) which indeed is the most formidable sort of vowing; but the true nature of a vow is found also in a simple self-obliging promise.

#### The use of vows.

The true reason and use of vows is but for the more certain and effectual performance of our duties: not to make new laws, and duties, and religions for us, but to drive on the backward, lingering soul to do its duty, and to break over difficulties and delays: that by strengthening our bonds, and setting the danger before our eyes, we may be excited to escape it.

## The obligation of vows.

It is a great question, whether our own vows can add any new obligation to that which before lay upon us from the command of God. Amesius saith, (Cas. Consc. lib. iv. c. 16.) *Non additur proprie in istis nova obligatio, neque augetur in se prior: sed magis agnoscitur et recipitur a nobis: passive in istis æque fuimus antea obligati: sed activa recognitione arctius nobis applicatur a nobismetipsis.* Others commonly speak of an additional obligation; and indeed there is a double obligation added by a vow, to that which God before had laid on us, to the matter of that vow. Premising this distinction between *obligatio imponentis*, a governing obligation, (which is the effect of governing right or authority,) and *obligatio consentientis*, a self-obliging by voluntary consent, (which is the effect of that dominion which a rational free agent hath over his own actions,) I say, 1. He that voweth doth oblige himself, who before was obliged by God only; and that a man hath a power to oblige himself, is discerned by the light of nature, and is the ground of the law of nations, and of human converse: and though this is no divine obligation, yet it is not therefore none at all. 2. But moreover he that voweth doth induce upon himself a new divine obligation, by making himself the subject of it. For example; God hath said, "Honour the Lord with thy substance: " this command obligeth me to obey it whether I vow it or not. The same God hath said, "Pay thy vows to the Most High," Psal. l. 14; and, "When thou vowest a vow to God, defer not to pay it," Eccles. v. 4. This

layeth no obligation on me till I vow; but when I have vowed it doth: so that now I am under a double divine obligation, (one to the matter of the duty, and another to keep my vow,) and under a self-obligation of my own vow: whence also a greater penalty will be due if I now offend, than else would have been.

Hence you may see what to think of the common determination of casuists concerning vows materially sinful, when they say, a man is not obliged to keep them. It is only thus far true, that God obligeth him not to do that particular thing which he voweth, for God had before forbidden it, and he changeth not his laws upon man's rash vowings; but yet there is a self-obligation which he laid upon himself to do it: and this self-obligation to a sinful act, was itself a sin, and to be repented of, and not performed; but it bringeth the person under a double obligation to penalty, as a perjured person, even God's obligation who bindeth the perjured to penalty, and the obligation of his own consent to the punishment, if there was any oath or imprecation in the vow. If it were true that such a person had brought himself under no obligation at all, then he could not be properly called perjured, nor punished as perjured; but he that sweareth and voweth to do evil, (as the Jews to kill Paul,) though he ought not to do the thing, (because God forbiddeth it,) yet he is a perjured person for breaking his vow, and deserveth the penalty, not only of a rash vower, but of one perjured. Thus error may make a man sinful and miserable, though it cannot warrant him to sin.

*Direct.* II. Try well the matter of your vows, and venture not on them till you are sure that they are not things forbidden: things sinful or doubtful are not fit matter for a vow: in asserting, subscribing, and witnessing, you should take care, that you know assuredly that the matter be true, and venture not upon that which may prove false; much more should you take care that you venture not doubtingly in vows and oaths. They are matters to be handled with dread and tenderness, and not to be played with, and rashly ventured on, as if it were but the speaking of a common word: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God," Eccles. v. 2. It is a grievous snare that men are oft brought into by ignorant and rash vows;<sup>48</sup> as the case of Jephthah, and Herod, and many another tell us for our warning: an error in such cases is much more safely and cheaply discerned before, than afterwards. To have a rash vow or perjury to repent of, is to set a bone in joint, or pull a thorn out of your very eye; and who would choose such pain and smart? "Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands," Eccles. v. 6. "It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make inquiry," Prov. xx. 25. Be careful and deliberate to prevent such snares.

---

<sup>48</sup> Vid. Sanderson de Juram. Prælect. vii. Sect. 14. Juramentum oblatum reluctantæ vel dubitante conscientia non est suscipiendum: 1. Quia quod non est ex fide peccatum est. 2. Quia jurandum est in judicio: quod certe is non facit qui contra conscientia suæ judicium facit, &c. ad finem.

*Direct.* III. Vow not in a passion: stay till the storm be over: whether it be anger or desire, or whatever the passion be, delay and deliberate before you vow; for when passion is up, the judgment is upon great disadvantage. In your passion you are apt to be most peremptory and confident when you are most deceived: if it be your duty to vow, it will be your duty to-morrow when you are calm. If you say, that duty must not be delayed, and that you must do it while the Spirit moveth you: I answer, Was it not as much a duty before your passion was kindled as now? It is no sinful delaying of so great a duty, to stay till you have well proved whether it be of God. If it be the Spirit of Christ that moveth you to it, he will be willing that you deliberate and try it by that word which the same Spirit hath indited to be your rule. God's Spirit worketh principally upon the judgment and the will, by settled convictions, which will endure a rational trial: it is liker to be your own spirit which worketh principally on the passion, and will not endure the trial, nor come into the light, John iii. 18, 19; Isa. viii. 20.

*Direct.* IV. Make not a vow of things indifferent and unnecessary: if they be not good, in a true, comparing, practical judgment, which considereth all accidents and circumstances, they are no fit matter for a vow. Some say, things indifferent are the fittest matter both for vows and human laws; but either they speak improperly or untruly, and therefore dangerously at the best. If an idle word be a sin, then an idle action is not a thing to be vowed, because it is not a thing to be done, being as truly a sin

as an idle word: and that which is wholly indifferent is idle; for if it be good for any thing, it is not wholly indifferent; and because it is antecedently useless, it is consequently sinful to be done.

*Object.* I. But those that say things indifferent may be vowed, mean not, things useless or unprofitable to any good end; but only those things that are good and useful, but not commanded: such as are the matter of God's counsels, and tend to man's perfection, as to vow chastity, poverty, and absolute obedience.

*Ans.* There are no such things as are morally good, and not commanded: this is the fiction of men that have a mind to accuse God's laws and government of imperfection, and think sinful man can do better than he is commanded, when none but Christ ever did so well.<sup>49</sup>

*Quest.* I. What is moral goodness in any creature and subject, but a conformity to his ruler's will expressed in his law? And if this conformity be its very form and being, it cannot be that any thing should be morally good that is not commanded.

*Quest.* II. Doth not the law of God command us to love him with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and accordingly to serve him? And is it possible to give him more than all; or can God come after and counsel us to give him more than is possible?

*Quest.* III. Doth not the law of nature oblige us to serve God to the utmost of our power? He that denieth it, is become unnatural, and must deny God to be God, or deny himself to be

---

<sup>49</sup> See the fourteenth Article of the church of England, against voluntary works, over and above God's commandments, as impious.

his rational creature: for nothing is more clear in nature, than that the creature who is nothing, and hath nothing but from God, and is absolutely his own, doth owe him all that he is able to do.

*Quest.* IV. Doth not Christ determine the case to his disciples, Luke xvii. 10?

A middle between good and evil in morality is a contradiction: there is no such thing; for good and evil are the whole of morality: without these species there is no morality.

*Object.* II. It seems then you hold that there is nothing indifferent, which is a paradox.

Whether any things be indifferent?

*Answer.* No such matter: there are thousands and millions of things that are indifferent; but they are things natural only, and not things moral. They are indifferent as to moral good and evil, because they are neither; but they are not *indifferentia moralia*: the indifferency is a negation of any morality in them *in genere*, as well as of both the species of morality.<sup>50</sup> Whatsoever participateth not of virtue or vice, and is not eligible or refusable by a moral agent as such, hath no morality in it. There may be two words so equal as it may be indifferent which you speak; and two eggs so equal, as that it may be indifferent which you eat; but

---

<sup>50</sup> Stoici indifferentia distinguunt: 1. Ea quæ neque ad fœlicitatem neque ad infœlicitatem conferunt, ut sunt divitiæ, sanitas, vires, gloria, &c. Nam et sine his contingit fœlicem esse; cum earum usus vel rectus fœlicitatis, vel pravus infœlicitatis, author sit. 2. Quæ neque appetitum neque occasionem movent, ut pares vel impares habere capillos, &c. Laert. in Zenone.

that is no more than to say, the choosing of one before the other is not *actus moralis*: there is no matter of morality in the choice.

*Object.* III. But if there may be things natural that are indifferent, why not things moral?

*Ans.* As goodness is convertible with entity, there is no natural being but is good: as goodness signifieth commodity, there is nothing but is profitable or hurtful, and that is good to one that is hurtful to another: but if it were not so, yet such goodness or badness is but accidental to natural being; but moral goodness and badness is the whole essence of morality.

*Object.* IV. But doth not the apostle say, "He that marrieth doth well, and he that marrieth not doth better?" Therefore all is not sin which is not best.

Whether marrying be indifferent?

*Ans.* The question put to the apostle to decide, was about marrying or not marrying, as it belonged to all christians in general, and not as it belonged to this or that individual person by some special reason differently from others. And so in respect to the church in general, the apostle determineth that there is no law binding them to marry, or not to marry: for a law that is made for many must be suited to what is common to those many. Now marriage being good for one and not for another, is not made the matter of a common law, nor is it fit to be so, and so far is left indifferent: but because that to most it was rather a hinderance to good in those times of the church, than a help, therefore for the present necessity, the apostle calleth marrying

"doing well," because it was not against any universal law, and it was a state that was suitable to some; but he calls not marrying "doing better," because it was then more ordinarily suited to the ends of christianity. Now God maketh not a distinct law for every individual person in the church; but one universal law for all. and this being a thing variable according to the various cases of individual persons, was unfit to be particularly determined by a universal law. But if the question had been only of any one individual person, then the decision would have been thus: though marrying is a thing not directly commanded or forbidden, yet to some it is helpful as to moral ends, to some it is hurtful, and to some it is so equal or indifferent, that it is neither discernibly helpful nor hurtful; now by the general laws or rules of Scripture to them that *consideratis considerandis* it is discernibly helpful, it is not indifferent, but a duty; to them that it is discernibly hurtful, it is not indifferent, but a sin; to them that it is neither discernibly helpful or hurtful as to moral ends, it is indifferent, as being neither duty nor sin; for it is not a thing of moral choice or nature at all. But the light of nature telleth us that God hath not left it indifferent to men to hinder themselves or to help themselves as to moral ends; else why pray we, "Lead us not into temptation?" And marriage is so great a help to some, and so great a hurt to others, that no man can say that it is morally indifferent to all men in the world: and therefore that being none of the apostle's meaning, it followeth that his meaning is as aforesaid.

*Object. V.* But there are many things indifferent in themselves,

though not as clothed with all their accidents and circumstances: and these actions being good in their accidents, may be the matter of a vow.

*Ans.* True, but those actions are commanded duties, and not things indifferent as so circumstantiated. It is very few actions in the world that are made simply duties or sins, in their simple nature without their circumstances and accidents: the commonest matter of all God's laws, is actions or dispositions which are good or evil in their circumstances and accidents. Therefore I conclude, things wholly indifferent are not to be vowed.

*Direct. V.* It is not every duty that is the matter of a lawful vow. Else you might have as many vows as duties: every good thought, and word, and deed might have a vow. And then every sin which you commit would be accompanied and aggravated with the guilt of perjury. And no wise man would run his soul into such a snare. *Object.* But do we not in baptism vow obedience to God? And doth not obedience contain every particular duty? *Ans.* We vow sincere obedience, but not perfect obedience. We do not vow that we will never sin, nor neglect a duty (nor ought we to do so). So that as sincere obedience respecteth every known duty as that which we shall practise in the bent of our lives, but not in perfect constancy or degree, so far our vow in baptism hath respect to all known duties, but no further.

*Direct. VI.* To make a vow lawful, besides the goodness of the thing which we vow, there must be a rational, discernible probability, that the act of vowing it will do more good than hurt;

and this to a wise, foreseeing judgment. For this vowing is not an ordinary worship to be offered to God (except the baptismal vow, renewed in the Lord's supper and at other seasons); but it is left as an extraordinary means, for certain ends, which cannot by ordinary means be attained: and therefore we must discern the season, by discerning the necessity or usefulness of it. Swearing is a part of the service of God, but not of his daily worship, nor frequently and rashly to be used, by any that would not be held guilty of taking the name of God in vain: and so it is in the case of vowing. Therefore he that will make a lawful vow, must see beforehand, what is the probable benefit of it, and what is the probable hurt or danger: and without this foresight it must be rash, and cannot be lawful. And therefore no one can make a lawful vow, but wise, foreseeing persons, and those that advise with such, and are guided by them, if they be not such themselves; unless in a case where God hath prescribed by his own determining commands (as in the covenant of christianity). Therefore to one man the same vow may be a sin, that to another may be a duty; because one may have more reason for it, or necessity of it, and less danger by it, than another. One man may foresee that vowing (in case where there is no necessity) may ensnare him either in perplexing doubts, or terrors, which will make all his life after more irregular or uncomfortable. Another man may discern that he is liable to no such danger.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Plutarch. Quest. Roman. 44. Why may not priests swear? Resp. Is it because an oath put to free-born men, is as it were the rack and torture offered them? For certain

*Direct.* VII. No man should pretend danger or scruple against his renewing the vow of christianity, or any one essential part of it; viz. To take God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for my God, and Saviour, and Sanctifier, my Owner, Governor, and Father; renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh. Because there is an absolute necessity, *præcepti et medii*, of performing this, and he that doth it not shall certainly be damned; and therefore no worse matter can stand up against it: he that denieth it, giveth up himself despairingly to damnation. Yet I have heard many say, I dare not promise to turn to God, and live a holy life, lest I break this promise, and be worse than before. But dost thou not know, that it must be both made and kept, if thou wilt be saved? Wilt thou choose to be damned, for fear of worse? There is but one remedy for thy soul, and all the hope of thy salvation lieth upon that alone. And wilt thou refuse that one, for fear lest thou cast it up and die? when thou shalt certainly die unless thou both take it, and keep it, and digest it.

*Direct.* VIII. About particular sins and duties, deliberate resolutions are the ordinary means of governing our lives; and vows must not be used where these will do the work without them. For extraordinary means must not be used, when ordinary

---

it is that the soul as well as the body of the priest, ought to continue free, and not to be forced by any torture. Or that we must not distrust them in small matters, who are to be believed in great and divine things? Or because the peril of perjury would reach in common to the whole commonwealth, if a wicked, and ungodly, and forsworn person should have the charge and superintendency of the prayers, vows, and sacrifices made in behalf of the city? Page 866.

will serve the turn. Nor must you needlessly draw a double guilt upon yourselves in case of sinning. And in mutable or doubtful cases, a resolution may be changed, when a vow cannot. Try therefore what deliberate resolutions will do, with the help of other ordinary means, before you go any further.

*Direct. IX.* When ordinary resolutions and other helps will not serve the turn, to engage the will to the forbearance of a known sin, or the performance of a known duty, but temptations are so strong as to bear down all, then it is seasonable to bind ourselves by a solemn vow, so it be cautelously and deliberately done, and no greater danger like to follow. In such a case of necessity, 1. You must deliberate on the benefits and need. 2. You must foresee all the assaults that you are like to have to tempt you to perjury, that they come not unexpected. 3. You must join the use of all other means for the keeping of your vows.

*Direct. X.* Make not a law and religion to yourselves by your voluntary vows, which God never made you by his authority; nor bind yourselves for futurity to all that is a duty at present, where it is possible that the change of things may change your duty. God is our King and Governor, and not we ourselves: it is not we, but he, that must give laws to us. We have work enough to do of his appointing; we need not make more to ourselves, as if he had not given us enough. Vows are not to make us new duties or religions, but to further us in the obedience of that which our Lord hath imposed on us. It is a self-condemning sin of foolish will-worshippers, to be busy in laying more burdens

on themselves, when they know they cannot do so much as God requireth of them. Yea, some of them murmur at God's laws as too strict, and at the observers of them as too precise, (though they come far short of what is their duty,) and yet will be cutting out more work for themselves.

And it is not enough that what you vow be your duty at the present, but you must bind yourselves to it by vows no longer than it shall remain your duty. It may be your duty at the present to live a single life; but if you will vow therefore that you will never marry, you may bind yourselves to that which may prove your sin: you know not what alterations may befall you in your body or estate, that may invite you to it. Are you sure that no change shall make it necessary to you? Or will you presume to bind God himself by your vows, that he shall make no such alteration? Or if you were never so confident of your own unchangeableness, you know not what fond and violent affections another may be possessed with, which may make an alteration in your duty. At the present it may be your duty to live retiredly, and avoid magistracy and public employments: but you may not vow it therefore for continuance; for you know not but God may make such alterations, as may make it so great and plain a duty, as without flat impiety or cruelty, you cannot refuse. Perhaps at the present it may be your duty to give half your yearly revenues to charitable and pious uses: but you must not therefore vow it for continuance (without some special cause to warrant it); for perhaps the next year it may be your duty to give but a fourth or

a tenth part, or none at all, according as the providence of God shall dispose of your estate and you. Perhaps God may impose a clear necessity on you, of using your estate some other way.

*Direct.* XI. If you be under government, you may not lawfully vow without your governors' consent, to do any thing which you may not lawfully do without their consent, in case you had not vowed it. For that were, 1. Actually to disobey them at the present, by making a vow without the direction and consent of your governors. 2. And thereby to bind yourselves to disobey them for the future, by doing that without them, which you should not do without them. But if it be a thing that you may do, or must do, though your governors forbid you, then you may vow it though they forbid you (if you have a call from the necessity of the vow).

*Direct.* XII. If oaths be commanded us by usurpers that have no authority to impose them, we must not take them in formal obedience to their commands. For that were to own their usurpation and encourage them in their sin. If we owe them no obedience in any thing, we must not obey them in so great a thing: or if they have some authority over us in other matters, but none in this, (as a constable hath no power to give an oath,) we must not obey them in the point where they have no authority. But yet it is possible that there may be other reasons that may make it our duty to do it, though not as an act of formal obedience: as I may take an oath when a thief or murderer requireth it, not to obey him, but to save my life. And if any man command me to

do that which God commandeth me, I must do it, because God commandeth it.

*Direct.* XIII. If a lawful magistrate impose an oath or vow upon you, before you take it you must consult with God, and know that it is not against his will. God must be first obeyed in all things; but especially in matters of so great moment, as vows and promises.

*Quest.* I. What if I be in doubt whether the oath or promise imposed be lawful? must I take it, or not? If I take an oath which I judge unlawful or false, I am a perjured or profane despiser of God: and if a man must refuse all oaths or promises, which the magistrate commandeth, if he do but doubt whether they be lawful, then government and justice will be injured, while every man that hath ignorance enough to make him dubious, shall refuse all oaths and promises of allegiance, or for witness to the truth.

*Answ.* I. I shall tell you what others say first in the case of doubting. Dr. Sanderson saith, Prælect. iii. sect. 10, p. 74, 75, *Tertius casus est cum quis juramento pollicetur se facturum aliquid in se fortassis licitum, quod tamen ipse putat esse illicitum. Ut siquis ante hæc tempora admittendus ad beneficium (ut vocant) ecclesiasticum, promississet in publicis sacris observare omnes ritus legibus ecclesiasticis imperatos; vestem scilicet lineam, crucis signum ad sacrum fontem, ingeniculationem in percipiendis symbolis in sacra cæna, et id genus alios; quos ipse tamen ex aliquo levi prejudicio putaret esse superstitiosos et papisticos: quæritur*

*in hoc casu quæ sit obligatio? Pro Resp. dico tria: Dico 1. Non posse tale juramentum durante tali errore sine gravi peccato suscipi. Peccat enim graviter qui contra conscientiam peccat, etsi erroneam. Judicium enim intellectus cum sit unicuique proxima agendi regula; voluntas, si judicium illud non sequatur, deficiens a regula sua, necesse est ut in obliquum feratur. Tritum est illud, Qui facit contra conscientiam ædificat ad gehennam. Sane qui jurat in id quod putat esse illicitum, nihilominus juraturus esset, si esset revera illicitum: atque ita res illa, ut ut alii licita, est tamen ipsi illicita: sententiam ferente apostolo, Rom. xiv. 14, &c. Dico 2. Tale juramentum non obligare, &c.—* That is, The third case is, when a man promiseth by oath that he will do a thing which in itself perhaps is lawful, but he thinketh to be unlawful: as if one before these times being to be admitted to an ecclesiastical benefice, (as they call it,) had promised, that in public worship he would observe all the rites commanded in the ecclesiastic laws, to wit, the surplice, the sign of the cross at the sacred font, kneeling in the receiving of the symbols in the holy supper, and others the like; which yet out of some light prejudice, he thought to be superstitious and papistical. The question is, what obligation there is in this case? For answer I say three things: 1. I say that an oath, while such an error lasteth, cannot be taken without grievous sin; for he grievously sinneth, who sinneth against his conscience, although it be erroneous. For when the judgment of the intellect is to every man the nearest rule of action, it must be that the will is carried into obliquity, if it follow not that

judgment, as swerving from its rule. It is a common saying, He that doth against his conscience, buildeth unto hell: verily he that sweareth to that which he thinketh to be unlawful, would nevertheless swear if it were indeed unlawful. And so the thing, though lawful to another, is to him unlawful, the apostle passing the sentence, Rom. xiv. 14, &c. 2. I say, that such an oath bindeth not, &c. – Of the obligation I shall speak anon;<sup>52</sup> but of the oath or promise, I think the truth lieth here as followeth.

1. The question *de esse* must first be resolved, before the question of knowing or opinion. Either the thing is really lawful which is doubted of, or denied, or it is not. If it be not, then it is a sin to swear or promise to it; and here there is no case of error. But if it be really lawful, and the vowing of it lawful, then the obligations that lie upon this man are these, and in this order: (1.) To have a humble suspicion of his own understanding. (2.) To search, and learn, and use all means to discern it to be what it is. (3.) In the use of these means to acknowledge the truth. (4.) And then to promise and obey accordingly. Now this being his duty, and the order of his duty, you cannot say that he is not obliged to any one part of it, though he be obliged to do it all in this order, and therefore not to do the last first, without the former: for though you question an hundred times, What shall he do as long as he cannot see the truth? the law of God is still the same; and his error doth not disoblige him: *Nemini debetur commodum ex sua culpa*. So many of these acts as he omitteth,

---

<sup>52</sup> See before, chap. iii. gr. direct. 10.

so much he sinneth. It is his sin if he obey not the magistrate; and it is his sin that he misjudgeth of the thing; and his sin that he doth not follow the use of the means till he be informed. So that his erring conscience entangleth him in a necessity of sinning; but disobligeeth him not at all from his obedience. 2. But yet this is certain, that in such a case, he that will swear because man biddeth him, when he taketh it to be false, is a perjured, profane despiser of God; but he that forbeareth to swear for fear of sinning against God, is guilty only of a pardonable, involuntary weakness.

*Direct.* XIV. Take heed lest the secret prevalency of carnal ends or interest, and of fleshly wisdom, do bias your judgment, and make you stretch your consciences to take those vows or promises, which otherwise you would judge unlawful, and refuse. Never good cometh by following the reasonings and interest of the flesh, even in smaller matters; much less in cases of such great importance. Men think it fitteth them at the present, and doth the business which they feel most urgent; but it payeth them home with troubles and perplexities at the last: it is but like a draught of cold water in a fever. You have some present char to do, or some strait to pass through, in which you think that such an oath, or promise, or profession would much accommodate you; and therefore you venture on it, perhaps to your perdition. It is a foolish course to cure the parts (yea, the more ignoble parts) with the neglect and detriment of the whole: it is but like those that cure the itch by anointing themselves with quicksilver;

which doth the char for them, and sendeth them after to their graves, or casteth them into some far worse disease. Remember how deceitful a thing the heart is, and how subtly such poison of carnal ends will insinuate itself. Oh how many thousands hath this undone! that before they are aware, have their wills first charmed and inclined to the forbidden thing, and fain would have it to be lawful; and then have brought themselves to believe it lawful, and so to commit the sin; and next to defend it, and next to become the champions of Satan, to fight his battles, and vilify and abuse them, that by holy wisdom and tenderness have kept themselves from the deceit.

## **Tit. 2. Directions against Perjury and Perfidiousness: Land for keeping Vows and Oaths**

*Direct.* I. Be sure that you have just apprehension of the greatness of the sin of perjury.<sup>53</sup> Were it seen of men in its proper shape, it would more affright them from it than a sight of the devil himself would do. I shall show it you in part in these particulars.

The heinousness of perjury.

1. It containeth a lie, and hath all the malignity in it which I before showed to be in lying, with much more. 2. Perjury is a denial or contempt of God. He that appealeth to his judgment

---

<sup>53</sup> See part i. chap. ix. tit. 2, 3.

by an oath, and doth this in falsehood,<sup>54</sup> doth show that either he believeth not that there is a God,<sup>55</sup> or that he believeth not that he is the righteous Governor of the world, who will justly determine all the causes that belong to his tribunal. The perjured person doth as it were bid defiance to God, and setteth him at nought, as one that is not able to be avenged on him. 3. Perjury is a calling for the vengeance of God against yourselves. You invite God to plague you, as if you bid him do his worst: you appeal to him for judgment in your guilt, and you shall find that he will not hold you guiltless. Imprecations against yourselves are implied in your oaths: he that sweareth doth say in effect, Let God judge and punish me as a perjured wretch, if I speak not the truth. And it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for vengeance is his and he will recompence, Heb. x. 30, 31: and when he judgeth the wicked, "he is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29. 4. Perjury and perfidiousness are sins that leave the conscience no ease of an extenuation or excuse; but it is so heinous a villany, that it is the seed of self-tormenting desperation. Some sins conscience can make shift a while to hide, by saying, It is a controversy; and, Many wise men are of another mind; but perjury is a sin which heathens and infidels bear as free a testimony against (in their way) as christians do. Some sins

---

<sup>54</sup> See Casaubon's Exercit. 202.

<sup>55</sup> Cotta in Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 1. 1. to prove that some hold there is no God, saith, Quid de sacrilegis, de impiis, de perjuris dicemus, si carbo, &c. putasset esse Deos, tam perjurus aut impius non fuisset, p. 25, 26.

are shifted off by saying, They are little ones. But<sup>56</sup> christians and heathens are agreed that perjury is a sin almost as great as the devil can teach his servants to commit. Saith Plutarch,<sup>57</sup> He that deceiveth his enemy by an oath, doth confess thereby, that he feareth his enemy, and despiseth God. Saith Cicero, The penalty of perjury is destruction from God, and shame from man. Saith Q. Curtius, Perfidiousness is a crime which no merits can mitigate. Read Cicero de Offic. lib. iii. Saith Aristotle, He that will extenuate an oath, must say, that those villanous wretches that think God seeth not, do think also to go away with their perjury unpunished. In a word, the heathens commonly take the revenge of perjury to belong in so special a manner to the gods, that they conclude that man, and usually his posterity, to be destinated to ruin, that is perjured and perfidious: insomuch that it is written<sup>58</sup> of Agesilaus and many others, that when their enemies were perjured, and broke their covenants, they took it for a sign of victory, and the best prognostic of their success against them. Plutarch recordeth this story of Clemens, that having made a truce for seven days with the Argives, he set upon them, and killed and took many of them in the night; and when he was charged with perfidiousness, answered, I made not a truce with

---

<sup>56</sup> One of Canutus's laws (26.) was, that perjured persons, with sorcerers, idolaters, strumpets, breakers of wedlock, be banished the realm: cited by Bilson of Subject. p. 202. How few would be left in some lands if this were done!

<sup>57</sup> Plut. in Lysand. Cicer. de Leg. lib. iii. Curt. lib. vii. Arist. Rhet. c. 17.

<sup>58</sup> Ælian. Vari. Hist. lib. xiv.

them for seven nights, but for seven days. But the women fetched arms out of the temples of the gods, and repulsed him with shame, and he ran mad, and with his sword did mangle his own body, and died in a most hideous manner. When conscience is awakened to see such a sin as perjury, no wonder if such run mad, or hang themselves; as perfidious Ahithophel and Judas did. No doubt but everlasting horror and desperation will be the end of such, if true conversion do not prevent it. 5. It is a sin that ruineth families and societies,<sup>59</sup> like fire that being kindled in the thatch, never stoppeth till it have consumed all the house. Though "the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just," Prov. iii. 33; yet among all the wicked, there are few so commonly marked out with their families to shame and ruin, as the perjured. Whatever nation is stigmatized with a *fides Punica vel Græca*, with the brand of perjury, it is not only their greatest infamy, but, like "Lord, have mercy on us" written on your doors, a sign of a destroying plague within.<sup>60</sup> Saith Silius,

Non illi domus aut conjux aut vita manebit  
Unquam expers luctus, lachrymæque: aget æquore semper

---

<sup>59</sup> Though as Moder. Polic. saith, Princ. 7, It is a huge advantage that man hath in a credulous world, that can easily say and swear to any thing: and yet so palliate his perjuries as to hide them from the cognizance of the most. Gabionitarum irritum fœdus, calliditate licet extortum, nonnullis intulisse exitium, &c. Gildas in Prolog.

<sup>60</sup> Haud amentum justitiæ est fides, i. e. dictorum conventorumque constantia et veritas. Cicero.

Ac tellure premens; aget ægrum nocte dieque;  
Despecta ac violata fides —

Saith Claudian,

In prolem dilatarunt perjuria patris,  
Et pœnam merito filius ore luit. —

So Tibullus,

Ah miser: et siquis primo perjuria celat,  
Sera tamen tacitus pœna venit pedibus.

Saith Pausanias, The fraud that is committed by perjury, falleth upon posterity. 6. Perjury and perfidiousness are virtually treason, rebellion, and murder against kings and magistrates, and no more to be favoured in a kingdom, by a king that loveth his life and safety, than the plague in a city, or poison to the body. *Tristissimum et domesticum regibus omnibus pharmacum, liberorum, amicorum et exercitus perfidia*, saith Appian. What security have princes of their crowns, or lives, where oaths and covenants seem not obligatory? There is then nothing left but fear of punishment to restrain the violence of any one that would do them mischief; and craft or strength will easily break the bonds of fear. He that would dissolve the bond of oaths, and teach men to make light of perjury, is no more to be endured in a kingdom, than he that openly inviteth the subjects to kill their king, or

rise up in rebellion against him. If he that breaketh the least of God's commands, and teacheth men so to do, shall be called least in the kingdom of God, Matt. v. 19, then surely he that breaketh the great commands by the most odious sin of perjury, and teacheth men so to do, should neither be great, nor any thing, in the kingdoms of men. 7. Perjury is the poison of all societies, and of friendship, and of human converse, and turneth all into a state of enmity, or hostility, and teacheth all men to live together like foes. He that is not to be believed when he sweareth, is never to be believed: and when oaths and covenants signify nothing, and no man can believe another, what are they but as so many foes to one another? How can there be any relations of governors and subjects? of husband and wife? of master and servants? or how can there be any trading or commerce, when there is no trust? Perjury dissolveth all societies by loosening all the bonds of association. Well might Dionys. Halic. lib. iii. say, The perfidious are far worse than open enemies, and worthy of far greater punishment. For a man may more easily avoid the ambushments of foes, and repel their assaults, than escape the perfidiousness of seeming friends. Saith Val. Max. lib. ix. c. 6, Perfidiousness is a hidden and insnaring mischief; whose effectual force is in lying and deceiving: its fruit consisteth in some horrid villany; which is ripe and sure when it hath compassed cruelty with wicked hands; bringing as great mischief to mankind, as fidelity bringeth good and safety. He that teacheth the doctrine of perjury and perfidiousness, doth bid every man shift for himself, and trust no

more his friend or neighbour, but all take heed of one another, as so many serpents or wild beasts. Lions and bears may better be suffered to live loose among men, than those that teach men to make light of oaths. 8. Thus also it destroyeth personal love, and teacheth all men to be haters of each other: for it can be no better when men become such hateful creatures to each other, as not at all to be credited or sociably conversed with. 9. Perjury and perfidiousness do proclaim men deplorate; and stigmatize them with this character, that they are persons that will stick at the committing of no kind of villany in the world, further than their fleshly interest hindereth them. No charity bindeth a man to think that he will make conscience of murder, rebellion, deceit, adultery, or any imaginable wickedness, who maketh no conscience of perjury and perfidiousness. Such a person alloweth you to judge that if the temptation serve, he will do any thing that the devil bids him: and that he is virtually a compound of all iniquity, and prepared for every evil work. 10. Lastly, as perjury doth thus dissolve societies, and turn mankind into enmity with each other, so it would make the misery uncurable, by making even penitents incredible. Who will believe him, even while he professeth to repent, that hath showed that when he sweareth he is not to be believed? He that dare forswear himself, dare lie when he pretendeth repentance for his perjury. It must be some deeds that are more credible than words and oaths, that must recover the credit of such a man's professions. If perjury have violated any relations, it leaveth the breach almost uncurable, because no

professions of repentance or future fidelity can be trusted. Thus I have partly showed you the malignity of perjury and covenant-breaking.

*Direct. II.* Be sure that you make no vow or covenant which God hath forbidden you to keep. It is rash vowing and swearing which is the common cause of perjury. You should, at the making of your vow, have seen into the bottom of it, and foreseen all the evils that might follow it, and the temptations which were like to draw you into perjury. He is virtually perjured as soon as he hath sworn, who sweareth to do that which he must not do; the preventive means are here the best.

*Direct. III.* Be sure you take no oath or vow which you are not sincerely resolved to perform.<sup>61</sup> They that swear or vow with a secret reserve, that rather than they will be ruined by keeping it, they will break it, are habitually and reputatively perjured persons, even before they break it; besides that, they show a base, hypocritical, profligate conscience, that can deliberately commit so great a sin.

*Direct. IV.* See that all fleshly, worldly interest be fully subdued to the interest of your souls, and to the will of God. He

---

<sup>61</sup> Lege distinctionem Grotii inter ἐπιορκεῖν et ψευδορκεῖν, Annot. in Matt. v. 33. Modern Policy, (supposed Dr. Sandcroft's,) Princ. 7. 1. We are ready to interpret the words too kindly, especially if they be ambiguous; and it is hard to find terms so positive, but they may be eluded indeed, or seem to us to be so, if we be disposed. 2. Some are invited to illicit promises, *qua illicitæ*, because they know them to be invalid. 3. Some are frightened into these bonds by threats and losses, and temporal concerns, and then they please themselves that they swear by duress, and so are disengaged. 4. Some are oath-proof, &c.

that at the heart sets more by his body than his soul, and loveth his worldly prosperity above God, will lie, or swear, or forswear, or do any thing to save that carnal interest which he most valueth. He that is carnal and worldly at the heart, is false at the heart; the religion of such a hypocrite will give place to his temporal safety or commodity, and will carry him no further than the way is fair. It is no wonder that a proud man, or a worldling, will renounce both God and his true felicity for the world, seeing indeed he taketh it for his god and his felicity; even as a believer will renounce the world for God.<sup>62</sup>

*Direct.* V. Beware of inordinate fear of man, and of a distrustful withdrawing of your heart from God. Else you will be carried to comply with the will of man before the will of God, and to avoid the wrath of man before the wrath of God. Read and fear that heavy curse, Jer. xvii. 5, 6. God is unchangeable, and hath commanded you so far to imitate him, as "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth," Numb. xxx. 2. But man is mutable, and so is his interest and his affairs; and therefore if you are the servants of men, you must swear one year, and forswear it, or swear the contrary, the next: when their interest requireth it, you must not be thought worthy to live among men, if you will not promise or swear as they command you; and when their interest

---

<sup>62</sup> It is one of Solon's sayings in Laertius, p. 51, Probitarem jure-jurando certioorem habe. What will not an atheistical impious person say or swear, for advantage?

altereth and requireth the contrary, you must hold all those bonds to be but straws, and break them for their ends.

*Direct.* VI. Be sure that you lose not the fear of God, and the tenderness of your consciences. When these are lost, your understanding, and sense, and life are lost; and you will not stick at the greatest wickedness; nor know when you have done it, what you did. If faith see not God continually present, and foresee not the great approaching day, perjury or any villany will seem tolerable, for worldly ends: for when you look but to men's present case, you will see that "the righteous and the wise, and their works, are in the hands of God; no man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath," Eccles. ix. 1, 2. But in the end, men "shall discern between the righteous and the wicked," Mal. iii. 18. Therefore it is the believing foresight of the end, that by preserving the fear of God and tenderness of conscience, must save you from this, and all other heinous sin.

*Direct.* VII. Be not bold and rash about such dreadful things as vows. Run not as fearlessly upon them as if you were but going to your dinner; the wrath of God is not to be jested with. *Usque ad aras*, was the bounds even of a heathen's kindness to his friend. Meddle with oaths with the greatest fear, and caution, and circumspection. It is terrible here to find that you were mistaken,

through any temerity, or negligence, or secret seduction of a carnal interest.

*Direct.* VIII. Especially be very fearful of owning any public doctrine, or doing any public act, which tendeth to harden others in their perjury, or to encourage multitudes to commit the sin.<sup>63</sup> To be forsworn yourselves is a dreadful case; but to teach whole nations or churches to forswear themselves, or to plead for it, or justify it as a lawful thing, is much more dreadful. And though you teach not or own not perjury under the name of perjury, yet if first you will make plain perjury to seem no perjury, that so you may justify it, it is still a most inhuman, horrid act. God knoweth I insult not over the papists, with a delight to make any christians odious! but with grief I remember how lamentably they have abused our holy profession, while not only their great doctors, but their approved general council at the Lateran under Pope Innocent the Third, in the third canon hath decreed that the pope may depose temporal lords from their dominions, and give them unto others, and discharge their vassals from their allegiance and fidelity, if they be heretics, or will not exterminate heretics (even such as the holy men there condemned were, in the pope's account). To declare to many christian nations, that it is lawful to break their oaths and promises to their lawful lords and rulers, or their vows to God, and to undertake, by defending or owning this, to justify all those nations that shall be guilty of this perjury and perfidiousness, oh what a horrid crime is this!

---

<sup>63</sup> Nunc nunc qui foedera rumpit, Ditatur: Qui servat eget. Claudian.

what a shame even unto human nature! and how great a wrong to the christian name!

*Direct.* IX. Understand and remember these following rules, to acquaint you how far a vow is obligatory: which I shall give you for the most part out of Dr. Sanderson, because his decisions of these cases are now of best esteem.

*Rule I.* The general rule laid down Numb. xxx. 2, 3, doth make a vow, as such, to be obligatory, though the party should have a secret equivocation or intent, that though he speak the words to deceive another, yet he will not oblige himself. Such a reserve not to oblige himself hindereth not the obligation, but proveth him a perfidious hypocrite. Dr. Sanderson, p. 23, *Juramentum omne ex sua natura est obligatorium: ita ut si quis juret non intendens se obligare, nihilominus tamen suscipiendo juramentum ipso facto obligetur*: that is, If he so far understand what he doth, as that his words may bear the definition of an oath or vow; otherwise if he speak the words of an oath in a strange language, thinking they signify something else, or if he speak in his sleep, or deliration, or distraction, it is no oath, and so not obligatory.

*Rule II.* Those conditions are to be taken as intended in all oaths, (whether expressed or no,) which the very nature of the thing doth necessarily imply<sup>64</sup> (unless any be so brutish as to express the contrary). And these are all reducible to two heads: 1. A natural, and, 2. A moral impossibility. 1. Whoever sweareth to do any thing, or give any thing, is supposed to mean, If I live; and

---

<sup>64</sup> See Dr. Sanders. p. 47, and 197.

if I be not disabled in my body, faculties, estate; if God make it not impossible to be, &c. For no man can be supposed to mean, I will do it whether God will or not, and whether I live or not, and whether I be able or not. 2. Whoever voweth or sweareth to do any thing, must be understood to mean it, If no change of providence make it a sin; or if I find not, contrary to my present supposition, that God forbiddeth it. For no man that is a christian is to be supposed to mean when he voweth, I will do this, though God forbid it, or though it prove to be a sin; especially when men therefore vow it, because they take it to be a duty. Now as that which is sinful is morally impossible, so there are divers ways by which a thing may appear or become sinful to us. (1.) When we find it forbidden directly in the word of God, which at first we understood not. (2.) When the change of things doth make that a sin, which before was a duty; of which may be given an hundred instances; as when the change of a man's estate, of his opportunities, of his liberty, of his parts and abilities, of objects, of customs, of the laws of civil governors, doth change the very matter of his duty.

*Quest.* But will every change disoblige us? If not, what change must it be? seeing casuists use to put it as a condition in general, *rebus sic stantibus*. *Answ.* No: it is not every change of things that disobligeth us from the bonds of a vow. For then vows were of no considerable signification. But, 1. If the very matter that was vowed, or about which the vow was, do cease, *cessante materia*,

*cessat obligatio*:<sup>65</sup> as if I promise to teach a pupil, I am disobliged when he is dead. If I promise to pay so much money in gold, and the king should forbid gold and change his coin, I am not obliged to it. 2. *Cessante termino vel correlato, cessat obligatio*: If the party die to whom I am bound, my personal obligation ceaseth. And so the conjugal bond ceaseth at death, and civil bonds by civil death. 3. *Cessante fine, cessat obligatio*: If the use and end wholly cease, my obligation, which was only to that use and end, ceaseth. As if a physician promise to give physic for nothing for the cure of the plague, to all the poor of the city; when the plague ceaseth, his end, and so his obligation, ceaseth. 4. *Cessante persona naturali relata, cessat obligatio personalis*: When the natural person dieth, the obligation ceaseth. I cannot be obliged to do that when I am dead, which is proper to the living. The subject of the obligation ceasing, the accidents must cease. 5. *Cessante relatione vel persona civili, cessat obligatio talis, qua talis*: The obligation which lay on a person in any relation merely as such, doth cease when that relation ceaseth. A king is not bound to govern or protect his subjects if they traitorously depose him, or if he cast them off, and take another kingdom (as when Henry III. of France left the kingdom of Poland): nor are subjects bound to allegiance and obedience to him that is not indeed their king. A judge, or justice, or constable, or tutor, is

---

<sup>65</sup> Cicero de Leg. lib. 1. proveth that right is founded in the law of nature, more than in man's laws; else, saith he, men may make evil good, and good evil, and make adultery, perjury, &c. just by making a law for them.

no longer bound by his oath to do the offices of these relations, than he continueth in the relation. A divorced wife is not bound by her conjugal vow to her husband as before, nor masters and servants, when their relations cease; nor a soldier to his general by his military sacrament, when the army is disbanded, or he is cashiered or dismissed.

*Rule III.* No vows or promises of our own can dissolve the obligation laid upon us by the law of God. For we have no co-ordinate, much less superior authority over ourselves; our self-obligations are but for the furthering of our obedience.

*Rule IV.* Therefore no vows can disoblige a man from any present duty, nor justify him in the committing of any sin. Vows are to engage us to God, and not against him: if the matter which we vow be evil, it is a sin to vow it, and a sin to do it upon pretence of a vow. Sin is no acceptable sacrifice to God.

*Rule V.* If I vow that I will do some duty better, I am not thereby disoblged from doing it at all, when I am disabled from doing it better.<sup>66</sup> Suppose a magistrate, seeing much amiss in

---

<sup>66</sup> How often perjury hath ruined christian princes and states all history doth testify. The ruin of the Roman empire by the Goths, was by this means. Alaricus having leave to live quietly in France, Stilico comes in perniciem Reipub. Gothos pertentans, dum eos insidiis aggredi cuperet, belli summam Saulo pagano duci commisit: qui ipso sacratissimo die Paschæ, Gothis nil tale suspicantibus, super eos irruit, magnamque eorum partem prostravit. Nam primum perturbati Gothi, ac propter religionem cedentes, demum arma corripiunt, victoremque virtute potiori prosternunt exercitum: hinc in rabiem furoris excitantur. Cœptum iter deferentes, Romam contendunt petere, cuncta igne ferroque vastantes: nec mora; venientes urbem capiunt, devastant, incendunt, &c. Paul. Diaconus, lib. 3.

church and commonwealth, doth vow a reformation, and vow against the abuses which he findeth; if now the people's obstinacy and rebellion disable him to perform that vow, it doth not follow that he must lay down his sceptre, and cease to govern them at all, because he cannot do it as he ought, if he were free. So if the pastors of any church do vow the reformation of church abuses, in their places, if they be hindered by their rulers, or by the people, it doth not follow that they must lay down their callings, and not worship God publicly at all, because they cannot do it as they would, and ought if they were free; as long as they may worship him without committing any sin. God's first obligation on me is to worship him, and the second for the manner, to do it as near his order as I can: now if I cannot avoid the imperfections of worship, though I vowed it, I must not therefore avoid the worship itself (as long as corruptions destroy not the very nature of it, and I am put myself upon no actual sin). For I was bound to worship God before my vows, and in order of nature before my obligation *de modo*: and my vow was made with an implied condition, that the thing were possible and lawful: and when that ceaseth to be possible or lawful which I vowed, I must, nevertheless, do that which still remaineth possible and lawful. To give over God's solemn worship with the church, is no reformation. To prefer no worship before imperfect worship, is a greater deformation and corruption, than to prefer imperfect worship before that which is more perfect. And to prefer a worship imperfect in the manner, before no church worship at all,

is a greater reformation than to prefer a more perfect manner of worship before a more imperfect and defective. To worship God decently and in order, supposeth that he must be worshipped; and he that doth not worship at all, doth not worship him decently. If a physician vow that he will administer a certain effectual antidote to all his patients that have the plague, and that he will not administer a certain less effectual preparation, which some apothecaries, through covetousness or carelessness, had brought into common use, to the injury of the sick; his vow is to be interpreted with these exceptions: I will do it if I can, without dishonesty or a greater mischief: I will not administer the sophisticated antidote when I can have better: I vow this for my patients' benefit, and not for their destruction. Therefore if the sophisticated antidote is much better than none, and may save men's lives, and the patients grow wilful and will take no other, or authority forbid the use of any other, the physician is neither bound to forsake his calling rather than use it, nor to neglect the life of his patients (if their lives indeed lie upon his care, and they may not be in some good hopes without him, and the good of many require him not to neglect a few). But he must do what he can, when he cannot do what he would, and only show that he consenteth not to the sophistication.

*Rule VI.* Though he that voweth a lawful thing, must be understood to mean, if it continue possible and lawful; yet if he himself be the culpable cause that afterwards it becometh impossible or unlawful, he violateth his vow. He that voweth to

give so much to the poor, and after prodigally wasteth it, and hath it not to give, doth break his vow; which he doth not if fire or thieves deprive him of it against his will. He that voweth to preach the gospel, if he cut out his own tongue, or culpably procure another to imprison, silence, or hinder him, doth break his vow; which he did not if the hinderance were involuntary and insuperable: consent doth make the impedition his own act.

*Rule VII.* In the taking and keeping of oaths and vows we must deal simply and openly without equivocation and deceit.<sup>67</sup> Psal. xxiv. 3-5, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."

*Rule VIII.* He that juggleth or stretcheth his conscience by fraudulent shifts and interpretations afterwards, is as bad as he that dissembleth in the taking of the oath. To break it by deceit, is as bad as to take it in deceit. Psal. xv. 1, 4, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle – he that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not." Saith Dr. Sanderson,<sup>68</sup> *Ista mihi aut non cogitare, &c.* "It seemeth to me that the greater part of the men of these times either think not of these things, or at least not seriously; who fear not, at large and in express words, without going about, to swear to all that, whatever it be, which

---

<sup>67</sup> Sanders. p. 30, 31.

<sup>68</sup> Sanders. p. 32-41.

is proposed to them by those that have power to hurt them: yea, and they take themselves for the only wise men, and not without some disdain deride the simplicity and needless fear of those, that lest they hurt their consciences forsooth, do seek a knot in a rush, and oppose the forms prescribed by those that have power to prescribe them. And in the mean time they securely free themselves from all crime and fear of perjury, and think they have looked well to themselves and their consciences, if either when they swear, like Jesuits, they can defend themselves by the help of some tacit equivocation, or mental reservation, or subtle interpretation which is strained and utterly alien from the words; or else after they have sworn can find some thing to slip through, some cunning evasion, as a wise remedy, by which they may so elude their oath, as that keeping the words, the sense may by some sophism be eluded, and all the force of it utterly enervated. The ancient christians knew not this divinity, nor the sounder heathens this moral philosophy. For otherwise saith Augustine, They are perjured, who keeping the words, deceive the expectation of those they swear to: and otherwise saith Cicero," &c. He goeth on to confirm it at large by argument.

*Rule IX.* An oath is to be taken and interpreted strictly. Sanderson saith,<sup>69</sup> *Juramenti obligatio est stricti juris*; that is, *non ut excludat juris interpretationem æquitate temperatam; sed ut excludat juris interpretationem gratia corruptam*: "not

---

<sup>69</sup> Sanders. p. 41-44. Ubi de justo sensu ambigitur, longe satius est et naturæ rei accommodatius, strictiore quam benigniore uti interpretatione. *ibid.* p. 44.

as excluding an equitable interpretation, but as excluding an interpretation corrupted by partiality: " that it be a just interpretation, between the extremes of rigid, and favourable or partial; and in doubtful cases it is safer to follow the strict, than the benign or favourable sense. It is dangerous stretching and venturing too far in matters of so sacred a nature, and of such great importance as vows and oaths.

*Rule X.* In the exposition of such doubtful oaths and vows, 1. We must specially watch against self-interest or commodity, that it corrupt not our understandings. 2. And we must not take our oaths or any part of them in such a sense, as a pious, prudent stander-by that is impartial, and no whit interested in the business, cannot easily find in the words themselves.<sup>70</sup>

*Rule XI.* In doubtful cases the greatest danger must be most carefully avoided, and the safer side preferred: but the danger of the soul by perjury is the greatest, and therefore no bodily danger should so carefully be avoided: and therefore an oath that in the common and obvious sense seemeth unlawful should not be taken, unless there be very full evidence that it hath another sense. Sand. p. 46, *Nititur autem*, &c. This reason leaneth on that general and most useful rule, that in doubtful cases we must follow the safer side: but it is safer not to swear, where the words of the oath proposed, do seem according to the common and obvious sense of the words to contain in them something unlawful; than by a loose interpretation so to lenify them for our

---

<sup>70</sup> Sanders. p. 45.

own ends, that we may the more securely swear them. For it is plain that such an oath may be refused without the peril of perjury; but not that it can be taken without some danger or fear. The same rule must guide us also in keeping vows.

*Rule XII.* It is ordinarily resolved that imposed oaths must be kept according to the sense of the imposer. See Sanders. p. 191, 192. But I conceive that assertion must be more exactly opened and bounded. 1. Where justice requireth that we have respect to the will or right of the imposer, there the oath imposed must be taken in his sense; but whether it must be kept in his sense is further to be considered. 2. When I have done my best to understand the sense of the imposer in taking the oath, and yet mistake it, and so take it (without fraud) in another sense, the question then is somewhat hard, whether I must keep it in the sense I took it in, or in his sense, which then I understood not. If I must not keep it in my own sense, which I took it in, then it would follow that I must keep another oath, and not that which I took: for it is the sense that is the oath. And I never obliged myself to any thing, but according to my own sense: and yet on the other side, if every man may take oaths in their private sense, then oaths will not attain their ends, nor be any security to the imposers.

In this case you must carefully distinguish between the formal obligation of the oath or vow as such, and the obligation of justice to my neighbour which is a consequent of my vow. And for the former I conceive (with submission) that an oath or vow cannot

bind me, formally as such, in any sense but my own in which *bona fide* I took it. Because formally an oath cannot bind me which I never took: but I never took that which I never meant, nor thought of; if you so define an oath as to take in the sense, which is the soul of it.

But then in regard of the consequential obligation in point of justice unto man, the question I think must be thus resolved: 1. We must distinguish between a lawful imposer or contractor, and a violent usurper or robber that injuriously compelleth us to swear. 2. Between the obvious, usual sense of the words, and an unusual, forced sense. 3. Between a sincere, involuntary misunderstanding the imposer, and a voluntary, fraudulent reservation or private sense. 4. Between one that I owe something to antecedently, and one that I owe nothing to but by the mere self-obligation of my vow. 5. Between an imposer that is himself the culpable cause of my misunderstanding him, and one that is not the cause, but my own weakness or negligence is the cause. 6. Between a case where both senses may be kept, and a case where they cannot, being inconsistent. Upon these distinctions, I thus resolve the question.

*Prop.* I. If I fraudulently and wilfully take an oath in a sense of my own, contrary to the sense of the imposer, and the common and just sense of the words themselves, I am guilty of perfidiousness and profaneness in the very taking of it.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> They were ill times that Abbas Uspergensis describeth Chron. p. 320. Ut omnis homo jam sit perjurus, et prædictis facinoribus implicatus, ut vix excusari possit, quin

*Prop.* II. If it be long of my own culpable ignorance or negligence that I misunderstood the imposer, I am not thereby disobliged from the public sense.

*Prop.* III. When the imposer openly putteth a sense on the words imposed contrary to the usual, obvious sense, I am to understand him according to his own expression, and not to take the oath, as imposed in any other sense.

*Prop.* IV. If the imposer refuse or neglect to tell me his sense any otherwise than in the imposed words, I am to take and keep them according to the obvious sense of the words, as they are commonly used in the time and place which I live in.

*Prop.* V. If it be long of the imposer's obscurity, or refusing to explain himself, or other culpable cause, that I mistook him, I am not bound to keep my oath in his sense, as different from my own (unless there be some other reason for it).

*Prop.* VI. If the imposer be a robber or usurper, or one that I owe nothing to in justice, but what I oblige myself to by my oath, I am not then bound at all to keep my oath in his sense, if my own sense was according to the common use of the words.

*Prop.* VII. Though I may not lie to a robber or tyrant that unjustly imposeth promises or oaths upon me, yet if he put an oath or promise on me which is good and lawful in the proper, usual sense of the words, though bad in his sense, (which is

---

sit in his, sicut populus, sic et sacerdos: Oh that this calamity had ended with that age! Et. p. 321. Principes terrarum et barones, arte diabolica edocti, nec curabant juramenta infringere, nec fidem violare, et jus omne confundere.

contrary to the plain words,) whether I may take this to save my liberty or life, I leave to the consideration of the judicious: that which may be said against it is, that oaths must not be used indirectly and dissemblingly: that which may be said for it is, 1. That I have no obligation to fit my words to his personal, private sense. 2. That I deceive him not, but only permit him to deceive himself, as long as it is he and not I that misuseth the words. 3. That I am to have chief respect to the public sense; and it is not his sense, but mine, that is the public sense. 4. That the saving of a man's life or liberty is cause enough for the taking a lawful oath.

*Prop. VIII.* In case I misunderstood the imposed oath through my own default, I am bound to keep it in both senses, (my own and the imposer's,) if both be consistent and lawful to be done. For I am bound to it in my own sense, because it was formally my oath or vow which I intended. And I am bound to it in his sense, because I have in justice made the thing his due. As if the king command me to vow that I will serve him in wars against the Turk; and I misunderstand him as if he meant only to serve him with my purse; and so I make a vow with this intent, to expend part of my estate to maintain that war; whereas the true sense was that I should serve him with my person: in this case, I see not but I am bound to both.

Indeed if it were a promise that obliged me only to the king, then I am obliged no further and no longer than he will; for he can remit his own right: but if by a vow I become obliged directly to God himself as a party, then no man can remit his right, and

I must perform my vow as made to him.

*Rule XIII.* If any impose an ambiguous oath, and refuse to explain it, and require you only to swear in these words, and leave you to your own sense, Dr. Sanderson thinketh that an honest man should suspect some fraud in such an oath, and not take it at all till all parties are agreed of the sense.<sup>72</sup> And I think he should not take it at all, unless there be some other cause that maketh it his duty. But if a lawful magistrate command it, or the interest of the church or state require it, I see not but he may take it, on condition that in the plain and proper sense of the words the oath be lawful, and that he openly profess to take it only in that sense.

*Rule XIV.* If any power should impose an oath, or vow, or promise, which in the proper, usual sense were downright impious, or blasphemous, or sinful, and yet bid me take it in what sense I pleased, though I could take it in such a sense as might make it no real consent to the impiety, yet it would be impious in the sense of the world, and of such heinous consequence as will make it to be unlawful. As if I must subscribe, or say, or swear these words, There is no God; or, Scripture is untrue; though it is easy to use these or any words in a good sense, if I may put what sense I will upon them, yet the public sense of them is blasphemy; and I may not publicly blaspheme, on pretence of a private right sense and intention.

*Rule XV.* If the oath imposed be true in the strict and proper sense, yet if that sense be not vulgarly known, nor sufficiently

---

<sup>72</sup> Sand. p. 193. Cas. 48.

manifest to be the imposer's sense, and if the words are false or blasphemous in the vulgar sense of those that I have to do with, and that must observe and make use of my example, I must not take such an oath, without leave to make my sense as public as my oath. As if I were commanded to swear, That God hath no foreknowledge, no knowledge, no will, &c.; it were easy to prove that these terms are spoken primarily of man, and that they are attributed to God but analogically or metaphorically, and that God hath no such human acts *formaliter*, but *eminenter*, and that *forma dat nomen*, and so that strictly it is not knowledge and will in the primary, proper notion, that God hath at all, but something infinitely higher, for which man hath no other name. But though thus the words are true and justifiable in the strictest, proper sense, yet are they unlawful, because they are blasphemy in the vulgar sense: and he that speaks to the vulgar is supposed to speak with the vulgar; unless he as publicly explain them.

*Rule XVI.* If the supreme power should impose an oath or promise, which in the ordinary, obvious sense were sinful, and an inferior officer would bid me take it in what sense I pleased, I might not therefore take it: because that such an officer hath no power to interpret it himself; much less to allow me to take it in a private sense. But if the lawgiver that imposeth it bid me take it in what sense I will, and give me leave to make my sense as public as my oath, I may take it, if the words be but dubious, and not apparently false or sinful: (so there be no reason against it, *aliunde*, as from ill consequents, &c.)

*Rule XVII.* If any man will say in such a case, (when he thinketh that the imposer's sense is bad,) I take not the same oath or engagement which is imposed, but another in the same words, and I suppose not inferior officers authorized to admit any interpretation, but I look at them only as men that can actually execute or not execute the laws upon me; and so I take a vow of my own according to my own sense, though in their words, as a means of my avoiding their severities: as this is a collusion in a very high and tender business, so that person (if the public sense of the oath be sinful) must make his professed sense as public as his oath or promise; it being no small thing to do that which in the public sense is impious, and so to be an example of perfidiousness to many.

*Rule XVIII.* Though an oath imposed by a usurper or by violence is not to be taken in formal obedience, nor at all, unless the greatness of the benefit require it, yet being taken it is nevertheless obligatory<sup>73</sup> (supposing nothing else do make it void). Man is a free agent, and cannot be forced, though he may be frightened: if he swear to a thief for the saving of his life, he voluntarily doth choose the inconveniences of the oath, as a means to save his life. Therefore being a voluntary act it is obligatory; else there should be no obligation on us to suffer for Christ, but any thing might be sworn or done to escape suffering: see of this Dr. Sanderson largely, *Prælect. iv. sect. 14-16*. The imposition and the oath are different things: in the imposition,

---

<sup>73</sup> Sanders. p. 122-133.

a thief or tyrant is the party commanding, and I am the party commanded; and his having no authority to command me, doth nullify only his command, and maketh me not obliged to obey him, nor to take it in any obedience to him; but yet if I do take it without any authority obliging me, (as private oaths are taken,) it is still an oath or vow, in which the parties are God and man; man vowing and making himself a debtor to God; and God hath authority to require me to keep my vows, when men have no authority to require me to make them. All men confess that private vows bind; and the nullity of the imposer's authority, maketh them but private vows. This case is easy, and commonly agreed on.

*Rule XIX.* If in a complex vow or promise there be many things which prove materially unlawful, and one or more that are lawful, the conjunction of the things unlawful doth not disoblige me from the vow of doing the lawful part. Otherwise a man might make void all his vows to God, and oaths and covenants with men, by putting in something that is evil with the good; and so God, and the king, and our neighbours would have their debts paid by our sin and injury done them on the bye.

*Rule XX.* If some part of that which you vowed become impossible, that doth not disoblige you from so much as remaineth possible. As if you vow allegiance to the king, and tyrants or disability hinder you from serving him as subjects in some one particular way, you remain still obliged to serve him by those other ways in which you are yet capable to serve

him. So if you had taken an oath against popery, to preach against it, and reject the practice of it, and for ever renounce it; this would not bind you from the common truths and duties of christianity, which papists hold in common with all other christians: nor could you preach against popery, if you were hindered by imprisonment, banishment, or restraint; but you have still power to forbear approving, consenting, subscribing, or practising their errors; and this you are still bound to do.

*Rule XXI.* Though you are not bound to do that of your vow which changes have made impossible or unlawful, yet if another change make them possible and lawful again, your obligation doth return afresh (unless you made it with such limitation). It is not a temporary cessation of the matter, or end, or correlate, that will perpetually discharge you from your vow. If your wife be taken captive many years, when she returneth, you are bound to the duties of a husband. If the king be expelled by usurpers, you are bound at present to so much duty as is possible, and to obey him as your actual governor when he returneth. But in the case of servants and soldiers, and other temporary relations, it is otherwise; for a removal may end the relation itself. If you promise to preach the gospel, to medicate the sick, to relieve the poor, to reform your families, &c. you are not hereby obliged to do it while any unresistible impediment maketh it impossible; but when the hinderance ceaseth, you are obliged to do it again; the matter and your capacity being restored.

*Rule XXII.* Therefore many a vow and promise may

be lawfully unperformed, which may not be renounced or disclaimed. When you are taken captives you must forbear your duty to your king, your father, your husband or wife, but you may not therefore renounce them, and say, I have no obligation to them: no, not to the death; because they are relations for life; and how improbable soever it may seem that you should be returned to them, yet God can do it, and you must wait on him.

*Rule XXIII.* A former vow or promise is not nullified by a latter that contradicteth it.<sup>74</sup> Otherwise a man might disoblige himself at his pleasure. Yet he that maketh contrary vows, obligeth himself to contraries and impossibles; and bringeth a necessity of perjury on himself, for not doing the things impossible which he vowed. And in some cases a later promise to men may null a former, when we made the former with the reserve of such a power or liberty, or are justly supposed to have power, to recall a former promise: or when it is the duty of a mutable relation which we vow, (as of a physician, a schoolmaster, &c.) and by a later vow we change the relation itself (which we may still lawfully change).

*Rule XXIV.* The *actus jurandi* must still be distinguished from the *materia juramenti*; and it very often cometh to pass that the act of swearing (or the oath as our act) is unlawfully done, and was a sin from the beginning, and yet it is nevertheless obligatory as long as the *res jurata*, the matter sworn, is lawful

---

<sup>74</sup> Sanders. p. 50.

or necessary.<sup>75</sup> Dr. Sanderson instanceth in Joshua's oath to the Gibeonites. The nature of the thing is proof enough; for many a thing is sinfully done, for want of a due call, or manner, or end, that yet is done, and is no nullity. A man may sinfully enter upon the ministry, that yet is bound to do the duty of a minister; and many marriages are sinful that are no nullities.

What is the nullity of an oath.

*Rule XXV.* The nullity of an oath *ab initio*, is *quando realiter vel reputative non juravimus*; when really or reputatively we did not swear. The sinfulness of an oath is when we did swear really but unlawfully as to the ground, or end, or matter, or manner, or circumstances. Really that man did not swear, 1. Who spake not (mentally nor orally) the words of an oath. 2. Who thought those words had signified no such thing, and so had no intent to swear either mentally or verbally. As if an Englishman be taught to use the words of an oath in French, and made believe that they have a contrary sense. 3. Who only narratively recited the words of an oath, as a reporter or historian, without a real or professed intent of swearing. Reputatively he did not swear, 1. Who spake the words of an oath in his sleep, or in a deliration, distraction, madness, or such prevalent melancholy as mastereth

---

<sup>75</sup> Sanders. p. 55, 56. In quo casu locum habet quod vulgo dicitur, Fieri non debet, factum valet: possumus ergo distinguere, juramentum dici illicitum duobus modis. Vel respectu rei juratæ, vel respectu actus jurandi: Juramentum illicitum respectu rei juratæ nullatenus obligat: Juramentum illicitum respectu actus jurandi obligat, nisi aliunde impediatur.

reason; when a man is not *compos mentis*, his act is not *actus humanus*. (2.) When a man's hand is forcibly moved by another against his will to subscribe the words of an oath or covenant; for if it be totally involuntary it is not a moral act. But words cannot be forced; for he that sweareth to save his life, doth do it voluntarily to save his life. The will may be moved by fear, but not forced. Yet the person that wrongfully frighteneth another into consent, or to swear, hath no right to any benefit which he thought to get by force or fraud; and so *in foro civili* such promises, or covenants, or oaths may *quoad effectum* be reputatively null; and he that by putting his sword to another man's breast doth compel him to swear or subscribe and seal a deed of gift, may be judged to have no right to it, but to be punishable for the force; but though this covenant or promise be null *in foro humano*, because the person cannot acquire a right by violence, yet the oath is not a nullity before God; for when God is made a party, he hath a right which is inviolable; and when he is appealed to or made a witness, his name must not be taken in vain. 3. It is a nullity reputatively when the person is naturally incapable of self-obligation, as in infancy, when reason is not come to so much maturity as to be naturally capable of such a work; I say naturally incapable, for the reasons following.

*Rule XXVI.* We must distinguish between a natural incapacity of vowing or swearing at all, and an incapacity of doing it lawfully; and between a true nullity, and when the oath is only *quasi nullum*, or as null *quoad effectum*, or such as I must not

keep. There are many real oaths and vows which must not be kept, and so far are *quasi nulla* as to the effecting of the thing vowed; but they are not simply null; for they have the effect of making the man a sinner and perjured. They are sinful vows, and therefore vows. A natural incapacity proveth it no vow at all; but if I am naturally capable, and only forbidden, (by God or man,) this maketh it not no vow, but a sinful vow, of which some must be kept and some must not.

Cases in which a vow must not be kept.

In these following cases a real vow is *quasi nullum*, or must not be kept.

1. In case the thing vowed (all things considered) be a thing which God hath forbidden to be done; that is, in case it be a thing in itself evil; but if the thing in itself be a duty, though there be some inseparable sins which we shall be guilty of in the performance, we must not therefore leave the duty itself undone which we have vowed: as if I vow to praise God, and yet am sure that I cannot praise him without a sinful defect of that love and delight in him which is due, I must not therefore forbear to praise him; else we must cast off all other duty, because we cannot do it without some sin. But yet, though in case of unwilling infirmity, we must thus do the duty though we are sure to sin in it, yet in case of any chosen, voluntary sin, which we have an immediate power to avoid, we must rather forbear the duty itself (vowed or not vowed) than commit such a sin; as if I vow to preach the gospel, and am forcibly hindered unless I would voluntarily tell

one lie, or commit one sin wilfully for this liberty; I ought rather never to preach the gospel; nor is it then a duty, but become morally impossible to me; as if in France or Spain I may not preach unless I would take Pope Pius's Trent confession or oath. Nay, if those very defects of love, and wandering thoughts, which now inseparably cleave to my best performances, were morally and immediately in my power, and I could avoid them, I ought not electively and by consent to commit them, for any liberty of duty, but rather to forbear the duty itself as no duty to me when it cometh upon such conditions; for then it is supposed that I could serve God better without that duty, because I could love him more, &c.

Yet here is observable a great deal of difference between omissions and commissions. A man may never commit a sin that good may come by it, though he vowed the good; but a man may oftentimes omit that which else would have been his duty, to do some good which he hath vowed; for negative commands bind *semper et ad semper*; but the affirmative do not (at least as to outward duty); therefore in case of necessity a man may himself consent to the present omission of some good, for the escaping of greater, unavoidable omissions another time, or for the performing of a vow or greater duty which is to be preferred.

2. A vow is not to be kept, when the matter of it is unjust and injurious to another (unless you have his consent): as if you vow to give away another man's lands or goods, or to do him wrong by word or deed; or if you vow to forbear to pay him his

due, or to do that which you owe him: as if a servant vow to forbear his master's work (unless it be so small an injury as he can otherwise repair); or a husband, or wife, or parents, or children, or prince, or subjects should vow to deny their necessary duties to each other. Here man's right together with God's law doth make it unjust to perform such vows.

3. A vow is as null or not to be kept, when the matter is something that is morally or civilly out of our power to do: as if a servant, or a child, or subject vow to do a thing, which he cannot do lawfully without the consent of his superior: this vow is not simply null, for it is a sinful vow (unless it was conditional). Every rational creature is so far *sui juris*, as that his soul being immediately subject to God, he is capable of obliging himself to God; and so his vow is a real sinful vow, when he is not so far *sui juris* as to be capable of a lawful vowing, or doing the thing which he voweth. Such a one is bound to endeavour to get his superior's consent, but not without it to perform his vow; no, though the thing in itself be lawful. For God having antecedently bound me to obey my superiors in all lawful things, I cannot disoblige myself by my own vows.

Yet here are very great difficulties in this case, which causeth difference among the learnedest, pious casuists. 1. If a governor have beforehand made a law for that which I vow against, it is supposed by many that my vow is not to be kept, (the thing being not against the law of God,) because the first obligation holdeth. 2. Yet some think that magistrates' penal laws binding but *aut ad*

*obedientiam aut ad pœnam*, to obedience or punishment, I am therefore obliged in indifferent things to bear his penalty, and to keep my vow.<sup>76</sup> 3. But if I first make an absolute vow in a thing indifferent, (as to drink no wine, or to wear no silks, &c.) and the magistrate afterwards command it me, some think I am bound to keep my vow; because though I must obey the magistrate in all things lawful, yet my vow hath made this particular thing to be to me unlawful, before the magistrate made it a duty. 4. Though others think that even in this case the general obligation to obey my superiors preventeth my obliging myself to any particular which they may forbid in case I had not vowed it, or against any particular which they may command. 5. Others distinguish of things lawful or indifferent, and say that some of them are such as become accidentally so useful or needful to the common good, the end of government, that it is fit the magistrate make a law for it, and the breaking of that law will be so hurtful, that my vow cannot bind me to it, as being now no indifferent thing; but other indifferent things they say belong not to the magistrate to determine of (as what I shall eat or drink, whether I shall marry or not, what trade I shall be of, how each artificer, tradesman, or professor of arts and sciences shall do

---

<sup>76</sup> Sanderson, p. 72, 73. Dico ordinarie quia fortassis possunt dari casus in quibus juramentum quod videtur alicui legi communitatis aut vocationis adversari, etsi non debuerit suscipi, susceptum tamen potest obligare: ut e. g. in lege pœnali disjunctiva. See the instances which he addeth. Joseph took an oath of the Israelites, to carry his bones out of Egypt, Gen. i. 25. What if Pharaoh forbid them? Are they acquit? The spies swore to Rahab, Josh. ii. 12, 18. Had they been quit if the rulers had acquit them?

the business of his profession, &c.) And here the magistrate they think cannot bind them against their vows, because their power of themselves in such private cases is greater than his power over them in those cases. All these I leave as so many questions unfit for me to resolve in the midst of the contentions of the learned. The great reasons that move on both sides you may easily discern. 1. Those that think an oath in lawful things, obligeth not contrary to the magistrate's antecedent or subsequent command, are moved by this reason, That else subjects and children might by their vows exempt themselves from obedience, and null God's command of obeying our superiors. 2. Those that think a vow is obligatory against a magistrate's command, are moved by this reason, Because else, say they, a magistrate may at his pleasure dispense with all vows, except in things commanded before by God: for he may come after and cross our vows by his commands, which, against the pope's pretensions, protestants have denied to be in the power of any mortal man. And God, say they, hath the first right, which none can take away. I must not be forward in determining where rulers are concerned; only to those that may and must determine it, I add these further materials to be considered of.

1. It is most necessary to the decision of this case, to understand how far the inferior that voweth was *sui juris*, and had the power of himself when he made the vow, as to the making of it, and how far he is *sui juris* as to the act which he hath vowed; and to that end to know, in a case where there is some power

over his act, both in his superior and in himself, whether his own power, or his superior's, as to that act, be the greater.

2. It is therefore needful to distinguish much between those acts that are of private use and signification only, and those that (antecedently to the ruler's command) are of public use and nature, or such as the ruler is as much concerned in as the inferior.

3. It is needful to understand the true intent and sense of the command of our superior; whether it be really his intent to bind inferiors to break their vows, or whether they intend only to bind those that are not so entangled and pre-engaged by a vow, with a tacit exception of those that are.<sup>77</sup> And what is most just must be presumed, unless the contrary be plain.

4. It must be discerned whether the commands of superiors intend any further penalty than that which is affixed in their laws: as in our penal laws about using bows and arrows, and about fishing, hunting, &c.; whether it be intended that the offender be guilty of damnation, or only that the threatened temporal penalty do satisfy the law; and whether God bind us to any further penalty than the superior intendeth.

5. The end of the laws of men must be distinguished from the words; and a great difference must be put between those forbidden acts that do no further harm than barely to cross the letter of the law, or will of a superior, and those that cross the just end of the command or law; and that either more or less, as

---

<sup>77</sup> Read of this at large, Amesii Cas. Cons. l. v. c. 5. qu. 4.

it is more or less hurtful to others, or against the common good: for then the matter will become sinful in itself.

6. Whether perjury, or the unwilling violation of human laws, be the greater sin, and which in a doubtful case should be most feared and avoided, it is easy to discern.

*Rule XXVII.* A vow may be consequently made null or void, 1. By cessation of the matter, or any thing essential to it, (of which before,) or by a dispensation or dissolution of it by God to whom we are obliged. No doubt it is in God's power to disoblige a man from his vow; but how he ever doth such a thing is all the doubt: extraordinary revelations being ceased, there is this way yet ordinary, viz. by bringing the matter which I vowed to do, under some prohibition of a general law, by the changes of his providence.

*Rule XXVIII.* As to the power of man to dispense with oaths and vows, there is a great and most remarkable difference between those oaths and vows where man is the only party that we are primarily bound to, and God is only appealed to as witness or judge, as to the keeping of my word to man; and those oaths or vows where God is also made (either only or conjunct with man) the party to whom I primarily oblige myself. For in the first case man can dispense with my oath or vow, by remitting his own right, and releasing me from my promise; but in the second case no created power can do it. As e. g. if I promise to pay a man a sum of money, or to do him service, and swear that I will perform it faithfully; if upon some after bargain or

consideration he release me of that promise, God releaseth me also, as the witnesses and judge have nothing against a man, whom the creditor hath discharged. But if I swear or vow that I will amend my life, or reform my family of some great abuse, or that I will give so much to the poor, or that I will give up myself to the work of the gospel, or that I will never marry, or never drink wine, or never consent to popery or error, &c.; no man can dispense with my vow, nor directly disoblige me in any such case; because no man can give away God's right: all that man can do in any such case is, to become an occasion of God's disobliging me: if he can so change the case, or my condition, as to bring me under some law of God, which commandeth me the contrary to my vow, then God disobligeth me, or maketh it unlawful to keep that vow. And here because a vow is commonly taken for such a promise to God, in which we directly bind ourselves to him, therefore we say, that a vow (thus strictly taken) cannot be dispensed with by man; though in the sense aforesaid, an oath sometimes may.

The papists deal most perversely in this point of dispensing with oaths and vows; for they give that power to the pope over all the christian world, who is a usurper, and none of our governor, which they deny to princes and parents that are our undoubted governors: the pope may disoblige vassals from their oaths of allegiance to their princes, (as the council of Lateran before cited,) but no king or parent may disoblige a man from his oath to the pope: nay, if a child vow a monastical life, and depart from

his parents, they allow not the parents to disoblige him.

*Rule XXIX.* In the determining of controversies about the obligation of oaths and vows, it is safest to mark what Scripture saith, and not to presume, upon uncertain pretence of reason, to release ourselves, where we are not sure that God releaseth us.

*Rule XXX.* That observable chapter, Numb. xxx. about dispensations, hath many things in it that are plain for the decision of divers great and usual doubts; but many things which some do collect and conclude as consequential or implied, are doubtful and controverted among the most judicious expositors and casuists.

1. It is certain that this chapter speaketh not of a total nullity of vows *ab initio*, but of a relaxation, or disannulling of them by superiors. For, 1. Bare silence (which is no efficient cause) doth prove them to be in force. 2. It is not said, She is bound, or not bound; but, Her vow and bond shall stand, ver. 4, 7, 9, 11: or, shall not stand, ver. 5, 12: and, He shall make it of none effect, ver. 8. The Hebrew, ver. 5, signifieth, *Quia annihilavit pater ejus illud*. And ver. 8, *Et si in die audire virum ejus, annihilaverit illud, et infregerit vitam ejus*.<sup>78</sup>— 3. It is expressly said, that she had bound her soul before the dissolution. 4. It is said, The Lord shall forgive her, ver. 5, 8, 12, which signifieth a relaxation of a former bond. Or at the most, the parent's silence is a confirmation, and his disowning it hindereth only the confirmation. So the Chaldee paraphrase; the Samaritan and Arabic, *Non erunt confirmata*; the

---

<sup>78</sup> And si infringendo infregerit ea vir ejus, v. 12. Vir ejus infregit ea, v. 13.

Syriac, *Rata vel irrita erunt.*

2. It is certain that a father hath the power of relaxation here mentioned as to an unmarried daughter, in her youth living in his house, and a husband over his wife; for it is the express words of the text.

3. It is certain that this power extendeth to vows about all things in which the inferior is not *sui juris*, but is under the superior's care and oversight, and cannot perform it (in case there had been no vow) without the superior's consent.

4. It is certain that it extendeth not only to matters concerning the governors themselves, but concerning vows to God, as they are good or hurtful to the inferiors.

5. It is certain that there are some vows so necessary and clearly for the inferior's good, that in them he is *sui juris*, and no superior can suspend his vows: as to have the Lord for his God; and not to commit idolatry, murder, theft, &c. No superior can disoblige us here; for the power of superiors is only for the inferior's indemnity and good.

6. It is certain that the superior's recall must be speedy or in time, before silence can signify consent, and make a confirmation of the vow.

7. It is certain that if the superior have once ratified it by silence or consent, he cannot afterwards disannul it.

8. It is agreed, that if he awhile dissent and disannul it, and afterwards both inferior and superior consent again, that it remaineth ratified.

9. It is agreed that the superior that can discharge the vow of the inferior, cannot release himself from his own vows. If the pope could release all men, who shall release him?

But in these points following there is no such certainty or agreement of judgments, because the text seemeth silent about them, and men conjecture variously as they are prepared. 1. It is uncertain whether any but women may be released by virtue of this text: 1. Because the text expressly distinguishing between a man and a woman doth first say, *Si vir*— If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth. And 2. Because women are only instanced in, when Scripture usually speaketh of them in the masculine gender, when it includeth both sexes, or extendeth it to both. 3. And in the recapitulation in the end, it is said by way of recital of the contents, ver. 16, "These are the statutes which the Lord commanded Moses between a man and his wife; between the father and his daughter – in her youth in her father's house: " as if he would caution us against extending it any further. And though many good expositors think that it extendeth equally to sons as to daughters, in their minority, because there is a parity of reason, yet this is an uncertain conjecture: 1. Because God seemeth by the expression to bound the sense. 2. Because God acquainteth not man with all the reasons of his laws. 3. Because there may be special reasons for an indulgence to the weaker sex in such a weighty case. And though still there is a probability it

may extend to sons, it is good keeping to certainties in matters of such dreadful importance as oaths and vows to God.

2. It is uncertain whether this power of disannulling vows do belong also to other superiors,<sup>79</sup> to princes, to inferior magistrates, to pastors, masters, to commanders, as to their soldiers, as well as to parents and husbands. Some think it doth, because there is, say they, a parity of reason. Others think it is dangerous disannulling oaths and vows upon pretences of parity of reason, when it is uncertain whether we know all God's reasons: and they think there is not a parity, and that it extendeth not to others. 1. Because parents and husbands are so emphatically named in the contents in the end, ver. 16. 2. Because it had been as easy to God to name the rest. 3. Because there is no instance in Scripture of the exercise of such a power, when there was much occasion for it. 4. Because else vows signify no more in a kingdom than the king please, and in an army than the general and officers please, and among servants than the master please; which is thought a dangerous doctrine. 5. Because

---

<sup>79</sup> Dr. Sanderson, Prælect. 4. sect. 5. p. 104, 105, limiteth it to De his rebus in quibus subest: in those same things in which one is under another's government; adding, sect. 6, a double exception: Of which one respecteth the person of the swearer, the other the consent of the superior: the first is that As to the person of the swearer, there is scarce any one that hath the use of reason that is so fully under another's power, but that in some things he is *sui juris*, at his own power: and there every one may do as pleases himself, without consulting his superior, so as that by his own act, without his superior's license, he may bind himself. 2. As to the consent of a superior, A tacit consent, antecedent or consequent, sufficeth. Quasi diceret, si dissensum suum vel uno die dissimulet, votum in perpetuum stabilivit.

there will be an utter uncertainty when a vow bindeth and when it doth not to almost all the people in the world; for one superior may contradict it, and another or a hundred may be silent: the king and most of the magistrates through distance will be silent, when a master, or a justice, or a captain that is at hand may disannul it: one officer may be for it, and another against it; a master or a pastor may be for it, and the magistrate against it: and so perjury will become the most controverted sin, and a matter of jest.

6. Because public magistrates, and commanders, and pastors, have not the near and natural interest in their inferiors as parents and husbands have in their children and wives; and therefore parents have not only a restraining power, (as husbands here also have,) but also a disposing power of the relation of their infant children, and may enter them in baptism into the vow and covenant of christianity, the will and act of the parents standing for the child's till he come to age; but if you say that, upon a parity of reason, all princes, and rulers, and pastors may do so with all that are their inferiors, it will seem incredible to most christians.

7. Because public magistrates are justly supposed to be so distant from almost all their individual subjects, as not to be capable of so speedy a disowning their personal vows. Whatever this text doth, it is certain that other texts enough forbid covenants and combinations against the persons, or power, or rights of our governors, and not only against them, but without them, in cases where our place and calling alloweth us not to act without them. But it is certain that God, who commanded all Israel to be entered

successively into the covenant of circumcision with him, would not have held them guiltless for refusing that covenant, if the prince had been against it. And few divines think that a subject, or soldier, or servant, that hath vowed to forbear wine, or feasting, or marriage, is discharged, if his prince, or captain, or masters be against it. Jonathan and David were under an oath of friendship, (called the Lord's oath, 2 Sam. xxi. 7). Saul as a parent could not discharge Jonathan, as being a man at full age. Quære whether Saul as a king being against it, did null the oath to David and Jonathan? No; the Scripture showeth the contrary. 8. Because else that benefit which God extendeth only to a weaker sort, would extend to any, the wisest and most learned persons through the world, whose vows to God, even for the afflicting of their own souls, may be nulled by the king or other superiors. Many such reasons are urged in this case.

3. It is uncertain whether this chapter extend to assertory or testimonial oaths (if not certain that it doth not): it speaketh but of binding their souls to God, which is to offer or do something which by error may prove prejudicial to them. But if a parent or husband (much more a king or general) might nullify all the testimonial oaths of their inferiors that are given in judgment, or discharge all their subjects from the guilt of all the lies or false oaths which they shall take, it would make a great change in the morality of the world.

4. It is not past all controversy how far this law is yet in force: seeing the Mosaical law as such is abrogated; this can be now

no further in force than as it is the law of nature, or some way confirmed or revived by Christ. The equity seemeth to be natural.

*Rule XXXI.* It is certain that whoever this power of disannulling vows belongeth to, and to whomsoever it may be given, that it extendeth not to discharge us from the promise or vow of that which is antecedently our necessary duty, by the law of God. Else they should dispense with the law of God, when none but the lawgiver can relax or dispense with his laws (unless it be one superior to the lawgiver): therefore none can dispense with the laws of God. But I speak this but of a duty necessary also as a means to our salvation, or the good of others, or the honouring of God: for otherwise as to some smaller things, the duty may be such as man cannot dispense with, and yet a vow to do that duty may be unnecessary and sinful: as if I swear to keep all the law of God, and never to sin, or never to think a sinful thought; to do this is good, but to vow it is bad, because I may foreknow that I shall break it.

*Rule XXXII.* In some cases a vow may oblige you against that which would have been your duty if you had not vowed, and to do that which would else have been your sin: viz. if it be such a thing as is sin or duty but by some lesser accident, which the accident of a vow may preponderate or prevail against. As if you swear to give a penny to a wandering beggar, or to one that needeth it not, which by all circumstances would have been an unlawful misemploying of that which should have been better used; yet it seemeth to me your duty to do it when you have moved it.

To cast away a cup of drink is a sin, if it be causelessly; but if you vow to do it, it is hard to say that a man should rather be perjured than cast away a cup of drink, or a penny, or a pin. The Jesuits think it lawful to exercise the obedience of their novices by bidding them sometimes cast a cup of wine into the sink, or do some such action which causelessly done were sin: and shall not a vow require it more strongly? Suppose it would be your duty to pray or read at such or such an hour of the day (as being fittest to your body and occasions); yet if you have (foolishly) vowed against it, it seemeth to me to be your duty to put it off till another time. For perjury is too great a thing to be yielded to on every such small occasion. Dr. Sanderson<sup>80</sup> *ubi supra* giveth this instance: If there be a law that no citizen elected to it shall refuse the office of a prætor; and he that doth refuse it shall be fined: Caius sweareth that he will not bear the office: his oath is unlawful, (and disobedience would have been his sin if he were free,) yet it seems he is bound to pay his fine, and disobey the precept of the law, rather than break his vow.

*Rule XXXIII.* There are so great a number of sins and duties that are such by accidents and circumstantial alterations, and some of these greater and some less, that it is a matter of exceeding great difficulty in morality to discern when they are indeed sins and duties and when not, which must be by discerning the preponderancy of accidents; and therefore it must be exceeding difficult to discern when a vow shall weigh down

---

<sup>80</sup> Sanderson, p. 73.

any of these accidents, and when not.

*Rule XXXIV.* The exceeding difficulty and frequency of such cases maketh it necessary to those that have such entanglements of vows, to have a very wise and faithful counsellor to help them better to resolve their particular cases, upon the knowledge of every circumstance, than any book or general rules can do, or any that are not so perfectly acquainted with the case. And oh what great ability is necessary in divines that are employed in such works!

*Rule XXXV.* Thus also the case must be resolved whether an oath bind that hindereth a greater good which I might do if I had not taken it. In some cases it may bind: as if I swear to acquaint none with some excellent medicine which I could not have known myself unless I had so sworn; or in case that the breaking of the oath will do more hurt to me or others than the good comes to which I omit:<sup>81</sup> or in case, all things considered, the doing of that good *hic et nunc* is not my duty: see Dr. Sanderson of the difficulties here also, p. 78, 79.

*Rule XXXVI.* No personal hurt or temporal loss is any sufficient cause for the violation of an oath.<sup>82</sup> He that taketh a false oath, or breaketh a promissory oath, for the saving of his life, or a thousand men's lives, or for lands or riches, or crowns and kingdoms, hath no considerable excuse for his perfidiousness and perjury, all temporal things being such inconsiderable

---

<sup>81</sup> Sanders. Præl. iii. sect. 12.

<sup>82</sup> Psal. xv. 4.

trifles in comparison of the will and pleasure of God, and life everlasting: that which will not justify a lie, will much less justify perjury.<sup>83</sup>

*Rule XXXVII.* If the matter of an oath prove only a temptation to sin, and not sin itself, it must be kept: but with the greater vigilancy and resolution. As if a man have married a froward wife that will be a temptation to him all his life, he is not disobliged from her.

*Rule XXXVIII.* If the matter of an oath be such as maketh me directly the tempter of myself or others, it is a sin, and not to be kept, unless some greater good preponderate that evil. For though it be no sin to be tempted, yet it is a sin to tempt: though it be no sin to tempt by a necessary trial, (as a master may lay money before a suspected servant to try whether he be a thief,) nor any sin to tempt accidentally by the performance of a duty (as a holy life doth accidentally tempt a malignant person to hatred and persecution); yet it is a sin to be directly and needlessly a tempter of ourselves or others unto sin; and therefore he that voweth it must not perform it. As if you had vowed to persuade any to unchastity, intemperance, error, rebellion, &c.

Of accidental evil or temptation vowed.

*Rule XXXIX.* If the matter of an oath be such as accidentally layeth so strong a temptation before men, (especially before a multitude,) as that we may foresee it is exceeding likely to draw

---

<sup>83</sup> Sanders. p. 80, 81.

them into sin, when there is no greater good to preponderate the evil of such a temptation, it is a sin to do that thing, though in performance of a vow. When actions are good or evil only by accident, then accidents must be put in the balance against each other, and the weightiest must preponderate. As in matter of temporal commodity or discommodity, it is lawful to do that action which accidentally bringeth a smaller hurt to one man, if it bring a greater good to many; or which hurteth a private person to the great good of the commonwealth; but it is not lawful to do that which clearly tendeth (though but by accident) to do more hurt than good: as to sell powder and arms, when we foresee it will be used against the king and kingdom; or to sell ratsbane, when you foresee it is like to be used to poison men. Much more should the salvation of many or one be preferred before our temporal commodity; and therefore for a lesser good, we may not tempt men to evil, though but accidentally: as he that liveth where there is but little need of taverns or ale-houses, and the common use of them is for drunkenness, it is unlawful for him there to sell ale or wine, unless he can keep men from being drunk with it (as if they take it home with them, or be unruly, he cannot). For thus to be a foreknowing tempter and occasion, unnecessarily, is to be a moral cause. Two things will warrant a man to do that which by accident tempteth or occasioneth other men to sin: one is a command of God, when it is a duty which we do: the other is a greater good to be attained by the action, which cannot be attained in a less dangerous way. As in a country where there is

so great a necessity of ale-houses and taverns that the good that is done by them is greater than the hurt is like to be, though some will be drunk; it is lawful to use these trades, though some be hurt by it. It is lawful to sell flesh, though some will be gluttonous; it is lawful to use moderate, decent ornaments, though some vain minds will be tempted by the sight to lust; as it is lawful to go to sea though some be drowned. To act a comedy, or play at a lawful game, with all those cautions, which may secure you that the good of it is like to be greater than the hurt, is not unlawful: but to set up a common play-house, or gaming-house, where we may foresee that the mischief will be far greater than the good, (though the acts were lawful in themselves,) this is but to play the devil's part, in laying snares for souls: men are not thus to be ticed to hell and damned in sport, though but accidentally, and though you vowed the act.

Of scandal.

*Rule XL.* Thus also must the case of scandal be resolved:<sup>84</sup> as scandal signifieth an action that occasioneth another to sin, or a stumblingblock at which we foresee he is like to fall to the hurt of his soul, (which is the sense that Christ and his apostles usually take it in,) so it is the same case with this last handled, and needs no other resolution: but as scandal signifieth (in the late abusive sense) the mere displeasing of another, or occasioning him to censure you for a sinner, so you must not break a vow

---

<sup>84</sup> Sanders. p. 82.

to escape the censure or displeasure of all the world. Otherwise pride would be still producing perjury, and so two of the greatest sins would be maintained.

*Rule XLI.* Though in the question about the obligation of an oath that is taken ignorantly, or by deceit, there be great difficulties, yet this much seemeth clear: 1. That he that is culpably ignorant is more obliged by his vow or contract while he useth all the outward form, than he that is inculpably ignorant. 2. That though the deceit (as the force) of him that I swear to, do forfeit his right to what I promise him, yet my oath or vow obligeth me to do or to give the thing, having interested God himself in the cause. 3. That all such errors of the essentials of an oath or vow as nullify it, (of which I spake before,) or make the matter sinful, do infer a nullity in the obligation (or that it must not be kept). But no smaller error (though caused by deceit) doth disoblige.

The commonest doubt is, Whether an error about the very person that I swear to, and this caused by his own deceit, do disoblige me? All grant that I am obliged notwithstanding any circumstantial error (as if I think a woman rich whom I marry, and she prove poor; or wise and godly, and she prove foolish or ungodly: yea, if the error be about any integral part; as if I think she had two eyes or legs, and she have but one): and all grant that an error about an essential part, that is, which is essential to the relation or thing vowed, (if inculpable at least,) disobligeth: as if I took a man in marriage thinking he had been a woman; or

if I took a person for a pastor, a physician, a counsellor, a pilot, that hath no tolerable ability or skill in the essentials of any of those professions. But whether I am bound if I swear to Thomas thinking it was John, or if I marry Leah thinking she is Rachel, is the great doubt. And most casuists say I am not: and therefore I dare not be bold to contradict them.<sup>85</sup> But I much suspect that they fetched their decision from the lawyers; who truly say, that *in foro civili* it inferreth no obligation: but whether it do not oblige me ethically, and *in foro conscientiae et caeli*, I much doubt,<sup>86</sup> 1. Because it seemeth the very case of Joshua and the Israelites, who by the guile of the Gibeonites were deceived into an *error personarum*, taking them to be other persons than they were: and yet that this oath was obligatory, saith Dr. Sanderson, is apparent, (1.) In the text itself, Josh. ix. 19. (2.) In the miracle wrought for that victory which Joshua obtained in defending the Gibeonites when the sun stood still, Josh. x. 8, 13. (3.) In the severe revenge that was taken on the lives of Saul's posterity for offering to violate it, 2 Sam. xxi. 2. 2. And this seemeth to be the very case of Jacob, who took not himself disobliged from Leah notwithstanding the mistake of the person through deceit. And though the *concubitus* was added to the contract, that obliged most as it was the perfecting of the contract, which an

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p. 122.

<sup>86</sup> Sanders. p. 120, 121. This seemeth the case of Isaac in blessing Jacob: the *error personae* caused by Jacob's own deceit did not nullify the blessing, because it was fixed on the determinate person that it was spoken to.

oath doth as strongly. 3. And the nature of the thing doth confirm my doubt; because when I see the person before me there is the *individuum determinatum*, in the *hæc homo*, and so all that is essential to my vow is included in it: if I mistake the name, or the quality, or birth, or relations of the person, yet my covenant is with this determinate person that is present, though I be induced to it by a false supposition that she is another. But this I leave to the discussion of the judicious.

*Rule XLII.* The question also is weighty and of frequent use, if a man vow a thing as a duty in obedience to God and conscience, which he would not have done if he had taken it to be no duty, and if he afterwards find that it was no duty, is he obliged to keep this vow? And the true answer is, that the discovery of his error doth only discover the nullity of his obligation to make that vow, and to do the thing antecedently to the vow; but if the thing be lawful, he is bound to it by his vow notwithstanding the mistake which induced him to make it.

*Rule XLIII.* Vows about trifles (not unlawful) must be kept though they are sinfully made.<sup>87</sup> As if you vow to take up a straw, or to forbear such a bit or sort of meat, or garment, &c. But to make such is a great profanation of God's name, and a taking it in vain as common swearers do.

*Rule XLIV.* A general oath, though taken upon a particular occasion, must be generally or strictly interpreted (unless there be special reasons for a restraint, from the matter, end, or other

---

<sup>87</sup> Sanders. p. 84.

evidence). As if you are afraid that your son should marry such a woman, and therefore swear him not to marry without your consent; he is bound thereby neither to marry that woman nor any other. Or if your servant haunt one particular ale-house, and you make him forswear all houses in general, he must avoid all other. So Dr. Sanderson instanceth in the oath of supremacy, p. 195.

*Rule XLV.* He that voweth absolutely or implicitly to obey another in all things, is bound to obey him in all lawful things, where neither God, nor other superior or other person is injured; unless the nature of the relation, or the ends or reasons of the oath, or something else, infer a limitation as implied.

*Rule XLVI.* Still distinguish between the falsehood in the words as disagreeing to the thing sworn, and the falsehood of them as disagreeing from the swearer's mind. The former is sometimes excusable, but the latter never.

There are many other questions about oaths that belong more to the chapter of contracts and justice between man and man; and thither I refer them.

# CHAPTER VI.

## DIRECTIONS TO THE PEOPLE CONCERNING THEIR INTERNAL AND PRIVATE DUTY TO THEIR PASTORS, AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF THEIR MINISTERIAL OFFICE AND GIFTS

The people's internal and private duty to their pastors (which I may treat of without an appearance of encroachment upon the work of the canons, rubrics, and diocesans) I shall open to you in these directions following.

*Direct.* I. Understand first the true ground, and nature, and reasons of the ministerial office, or else you will not understand the grounds, and nature, and reasons of your duty to them. The nature and works of the ministerial office I have so plainly opened already that I shall refer you to it to avoid repetition.<sup>88</sup> Here are two sorts of reasons to be given you: 1. The reasons of the necessity of the ministerial work. 2. Why certain persons must be separated to this work, and it must not be left to all in

---

<sup>88</sup> Disput. ii. of Church Government, chap. i. and Universal Concord.

common.

The necessity of the work itself appeareth in the very nature of it, and enumeration of the parts of it.<sup>89</sup> Two sorts of ministers Christ hath made use of for his church: the first sort was for the revelation of some new law or doctrine, to be the church's rule of faith or life; and these were to prove their authority and credibility by some divine attestation, which was especially by miracles; and so Moses revealed the law to the Jews, and (Christ and) the apostles revealed the gospel. The second sort of ministers are appointed to guide the church to salvation by opening and applying the rule thus already sealed and delivered: and these, as they are to bring no new revelations or doctrines of faith, or rule of life, so they need not bring any miracle to prove their call or authority to the church; for they have no power to deliver any new doctrine or gospel to the church, but only that which is confirmed by miracles already. And it is impudence to demand that the same gospel be proved by new miracles by every minister that shall expound or preach it: that would make miracles to be no miracles.

#### The work of the ministry.

The work of the ordinary ministry (such as the priests and teachers were under the law, and ordinary pastors and teachers are under the gospel) being only to gather and govern the churches, their work lay in explaining and applying the word

---

<sup>89</sup> Of the difference between fixed and unfixed ministers, see my Disput. ii. iii. of Church Government, and Jos. Acosta lib. v. c. 21, 22, de Missionibus.

of God, and delivering his sacraments, and now containeth these particulars following: 1. To preach the gospel for the conversion of the unbelieving and ungodly world. And that is done, partly by expounding the words by a translation into a tongue which the hearers or readers understand; and partly by opening the sense and matter.<sup>90</sup> 2. In this they are not only teachers, but messengers sent from God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to charge, and command, and entreat men in his name to repent and believe, and be reconciled to God; and in his name to offer them a sealed pardon of all their sins, and title to eternal life.<sup>91</sup> 3. Those that become the disciples of Christ, they are (as his stewards) to receive into his house, as fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God; and as his commissioned officers, to solemnize by baptism their entrance into the holy covenant, and to receive their engagement to God, and to be the messengers of God's engagement unto them, and by investiture to deliver them by that sacrament the pardon of all their sin, and their title by adoption to eternal life; as a house is delivered by the delivery of a key; or land, by a twig and turf; or knighthood, by a sword or garter, &c. 4. These ministers are to gather these converts into solemn assemblies and ordered churches, for their solemn worshipping of God, and mutual edification, communion, and safe proceeding in their

---

<sup>90</sup> Rom. x. 7, 14; Mark xvi. 15; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

<sup>91</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19-21; Acts xxvi. 17, 18; Eph. ii. 19; Acts ii. 37-40.

christian course.<sup>92</sup> 5. They are to be the stated teachers of the assemblies, by expounding and applying that word which is fit to build them up. 6. They are to be the guides of the congregation in public worship, and to stand between them and Christ in things pertaining to God, as subservient to Christ in his priestly office, and so both for the people, and also in their names, to put up the public prayers and praises of the church to God. 7. It is their duty to administer to them, as in the name and stead of Christ, his body and blood as broken and shed for them, and so in the frequent renewals of the holy covenants, to subserve Christ especially in his priestly office, to offer and deliver Christ and his benefits to them, and to be their agent in offering themselves to God. 8. They are appointed to oversee and govern the church, in the public ordering of the solemn worship of God, and in rebuking any that are there disorderly, and seeing that all things be done to edification.<sup>93</sup> 9. They are appointed as teachers for every particular member of the church to have private and personal recourse to, (as far as may be,) for the resolving of their weighty doubts, and instruction in cases of difficulty and necessity, and for the settling of their peace and comfort. 10. They are appointed as physicians under Christ, to watch over all the individual members of their charge, and take care that they be not infected with heresy, or corrupted by vice; and to admonish

---

<sup>92</sup> Tit. i. 7; 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Acts xx. 32; 1 Cor. iii. 11, 12.

<sup>93</sup> Acts xiv. 23; 2 Tim. ii. 2; Acts xiii. 3; ii. 41, 42; vi. 2; xx. 7, 28; 1 Tim. v. 17; Titus i. 5; Acts xx. 30, 31; Col. i. 28; Eph. iv. 11, 42; Mal. ii. 7; 1 Tim. v. 17.

the offenders, and reduce them into the way of truth and holiness, and if they continue impenitent after public admonition, to reject them from the communion of the church, and command the church to avoid them. 11. They are as to bind over the impenitent to answer their contumacy at the bar of Christ, so to absolve the penitent, and comfort them, and require the church to re-admit them to their communion. 12. They are appointed as stewards in the household of Christ, to have a tender care of the very bodily welfare of their flocks, so as to endeavour the supplying of their wants, and stirring up the rich to relieve the poor, and faithfully (by themselves or the deacons) to distribute what is intrusted with them for that use. 13. They are especially to visit the sick, and when they are sent for, to pray for them and with them, and to instruct them in their special preparations for death, and confirm them against those last assaults. 14. They are appointed to be the public champions of the truth, to defend it against all heretical and profane opposers, and thereby to preserve the flock from being seduced. 15. They are appointed to be (under Christ the Head) the nerves and ligaments of the several churches, by which they are kept not only in vigour by communication of nutriment, but also in concord, and such communion as they are capable of, by the correspondencies, and consultations, and councils of their pastors.<sup>94</sup> All these are the distinct and special uses to which

---

<sup>94</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 16, 26; Acts xx. 7, 36; James v. 14; Acts vi. 4; ii. 42; Phil. i. 4; Neh. xi. 24; xi. 17; 1 Cor. xi. 24; x. 16; Heb. vii. 7; Tit. ii. 15; i. 9, 11; 1 Tim. v. 19; iii. 5; Tit. iii. 10; Matt. xviii. 17, 18; 1 Cor. v. 4, 11, 13; Eph. iv. 13, 14; Acts xv.

Christ hath appointed the office of the sacred ministry; which having but named to you, I need to say no more to show you the excellency, and necessity, and benefits of it.

Herein also the reasons are apparent, why Christ did institute this sacred office. 1. Because it was meet his kingdom should have officers, suited to his work in the administration of it. 2. It was meet that they be men like ourselves, that we can familiarly converse with. 3. The great necessity of his church required it, where the most are weak, and insufficient to perform all these offices for themselves; and cannot well subsist without the support of others. It was meet therefore that the pastors were selected persons, wiser, and holier, and stronger than the people, and fit for so great and necessary a work. 4. It was requisite also to the order of the church; for if it were like an army without officers, there would be nothing but confusion, and neither order nor edification.

By this you may also see the nature and reasons of your obedience to your pastors: as they are not appointed to govern you by force,<sup>95</sup> but willingly, "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, not as being lords over God's heritage, but as ensamples to the flock," 1 Pet. v. 1-3, so you must willingly and cheerfully obey them in their work. As their government<sup>96</sup> is not by any

---

<sup>95</sup> Princes may force their subjects by the temporal sword which they bear: bishops may not force their flock with any corporal or external violence. Bilson, Christ. Subjection, p. 525.

<sup>96</sup> Dr. Hammond Annot. q. d. The bishops of your several churches, I exhort – Take care of your several churches, and govern them, not as secular rulers, by force, but as

bodily penalties or mulcts, (for that is the magistrate's work and not theirs,) but a government by the force of truth and love; so your obedience of them consisteth in the loving and thankful reception of the truth which they teach you, and the mercies which they offer you from Christ.

You see then that the reasons of your obedience are manifold.

1. Some of them from God: he hath sent his messengers to you, and set his officers over you; and Christ hath told you that he that heareth them heareth him, and he that despiseth them despiseth him, and him that sent him, Luke x. 16: he commandeth you to hear and obey them as his officers.
2. From themselves: they have authority by their commission, and they have ability in their qualifications, which require your obedience and improvement.
3. From yourselves. Have you reason to obey your natural parents on whom your livelihood in the world dependeth? Have you reason to obey him that tendereth you a pardon from the king when you are condemned? or that offereth you gold or riches in your want? or that inviteth you to a feast in a time of famine? or that offereth to defend and save you from your enemies? Much more have you reason to obey Christ's ministers when they call you to repentance, and offer you pardon of sin, and peace, and salvation, and eternal life. Did you ever hear a man so mad or

---

pastors do their sheep, by calling and going before them, that so they may follow of their own accord. If you would know the true nature and extent of the bishop's work and office, read carefully the said Dr. Hammond's Paraphrase on Acts xx. 20, 28; Heb. xiii. 7, 17; 1 Tim. v. 17; 1 Thess. v. 12; Heb. xiii.; Annot. a. Tit. iii. 10; 1 Cor. xii. 28; Annot. e. Jam. v. 14; Annot. Acts xi. 30; Annot. b. Acts xiv. 23.

churlish, as to say to one that offered him riches, or liberty, or life, I am not bound to obey you; offer them to those that you have authority over? When the office of the ministry is as well subservient to Christ as a Saviour and Benefactor, as to Christ as your Teacher and your King, the very nature of their work engageth you to obey them as you love yourselves. If you were in hell, and Christ should send for you out, you would not refuse to go, till the messenger had proved his authority. And when you are the heirs of hell, condemned by the law, and going thither, will you refuse to turn back, and yield to the offers and commands of grace, till you have skill enough to read the minister's commission?

By this also you see, that the power of your pastors is not absolute, nor coercive and lordly, but ministerial.<sup>97</sup> And though the papists make a scorn of the word "minister," it is but in that pride, and passion, and malice which maketh them speak against their knowledge: for their pope himself calleth himself the servant of God's servants; and Paul saith, 1 Cor. iv. 1, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." 1 Cor. iii. 5, "Who then is Paul, and

---

<sup>97</sup> Chrysost. cited by Bilson. p. 525. But if any man wander from the right path of the christian faith, the pastor must use great pains, care, and patience. For he may not be forced, nor constrained with terror, but only persuaded to return entirely to the truth. – A bishop cannot cure men with such authority as a shepherd doth his sheep. – For of all men christian bishops may least correct the faults of men by force, p. 526. Matt. xx. 26; Mark x. 43. See Psal. ciii. 21; civ. 4; Isa. xvi. 6; Jer. xxxiii. 21; Joel i. 9, 13; ii. 17; 2 Cor. xi. 23; Acts xxvi. 26; Rom. xv. 16; Eph. iii. 7; Col. i. 23, 25; 1 Tim. iv. 6; 1 Thess. iii. 2; Col. i. 7.

who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" 2 Cor. iii. 6, "Who made us able ministers of the new testament." 2 Cor. vi. 4, "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God." Even magistrates, yea, and angels, are not too good to be called (and used as) the ministers of God for the good of his servants, Rom. xiii. 3, 6; "and to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation," Heb. i. 7, 14. Yea, Christ himself is so called, Rom. xv. 8. And therefore you have no more excuse for your disobedience, than for refusing his help that would pull you out of fire or water when you are perishing. You see here that your pastors cannot command you what they list, nor how they list. They have nothing to do with the magistrate's work; nor can they usurp the power of a master over his servants, nor command you how to do your work and worldly business (except in the morality of it). In the fifteen particulars before mentioned their work and office doth consist, and in those it is that you owe them a rational obedience.

*Direct.* II. Know your own pastors in particular: and know both what you owe to a minister as a minister of Christ in common, and what you owe him moreover as your pastor by special relation and charge.<sup>98</sup> When any minister of Christ delivereth his word to you, he must be heard as a minister of Christ, and not as a private man; but to your own pastor you are bound in a particular

---

<sup>98</sup> Functiones in ecclesia perpetuæ sunt duæ, Presbyterorum et Diaconorum: Presbyteros voco cum omni ecclesia veteri eos, qui ecclesiam pascunt verbi prædicatione, sacramentis et clavibus; quæ jure divino sunt individua. Grotius de Imperio, p. 267. c. 10.

relation, to an ordinary and regular attendance upon his ministry in all the particulars before mentioned that concern you. Your own bishop must in a special manner be obeyed:

1. As one that laboureth among you, and is over you in the Lord, and admonisheth you, and preacheth to you the word of God,<sup>99</sup> watching for your souls as one that must give account, 1 Thess. v. 12; Heb. xiii. 7, 17; and as one that ruleth well, and especially that laboureth in the word and doctrine, 1 Tim. v. 17; "teaching you publicly and from house to house, taking heed to himself, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer, not ceasing to warn every one night and day with tears," Acts xx. 19, 20, 24, 28, 31, 33. "Preaching Christ, and warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ," Col. i. 28.

2. He is to be obeyed as the guide of the congregation in the management of God's public worship. You must seriously and reverently join with him every Lord's day at least in the public prayers and praises of the church, and not ordinarily go from him to another.

3. You must receive from him or with him, the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ: which of old was administered every Lord's day, and that only in the church where the bishop was, that is, in every church of the faithful: for, as

---

<sup>99</sup> Bishop Jer. Taylor of Repentance, Pref. "I am sure we cannot give account of souls of which we have no notice."

Ignatius most observably saith,<sup>100</sup> ἐν θυσιαστήριον πάση τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, καὶ εἷς ἐπίσκοπος ἅμα τῷ πρεσβυτερίῳ, καὶ τοῖς διακόνους – UNUM ALTARE OMNI ECCLESIAE, ET UNUS EPISCOPUS CUM PRESBYTERIO ET DIACONIS. – IN EVERY CHURCH there is ONE ALTAR, and ONE BISHOP, WITH THE PRESBYTERY and DEACONS. – So in his Epist. ad Magnes. Come all as one, to the temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ. And saith Tertullian,<sup>101</sup> *Eucharistæ Sacramentum – nec de aliorum manu quam præsidentium sumimus*: We take not the sacrament of the eucharist from the hand of any but the president.

4. You must have recourse to him especially for the resolution of your weighty doubts, in private.<sup>102</sup>

5. You must hear your bishops and repent, when in meekness and love they convince and admonish you against your sins, and not resist the word of God which they powerfully and patiently lay home to your consciences, nor put them with grief to cut you off, as impenitent in scandalous sins, from the communion of the church.

6. You must, after any scandalous sin which hath brought you under the censure of the church, go humble yourselves by penitent confession, and crave absolution and restoration to the

---

<sup>100</sup> Ignat. Epist. ad Philad. Vid. Mead's Disc. of Churches, p. 48-50.

<sup>101</sup> Tertull. de Coron. Milit. c. 3.

<sup>102</sup> It is very observable that Acosta saith, l. vi. c. 12, that they found it an old custom among the Indians to confess their sins to the priests before the gospel came thither.

communion of the church.

7. Your public church alms should ordinarily be deposited into the bishop's hands, who relieveth the orphans and widows, and is the curator or guardian to all absolutely that are in want, saith Ignatius to Polycarp, cited by Dr. Hammond on 1 Cor. xii. 28.<sup>103</sup>

8. You must send for him in your sickness to pray with you and advise you. See Dr. Hammond on James v. 14. And on 1 Cor. xii. 28, he saith, Polycarp himself speaking of the elders or bishops saith, They visit and take care of all that are sick, not neglecting the widows, the orphans, or the poor. And Dr. Hammond on James v. 14, showeth out of antiquity,<sup>104</sup> that One part of the bishop's office is set down, that they are those that visit all the sick. Not but that a stranger may be made use of also; but ordinarily and especially your own bishop must be sent for; because as you are his special charge, and he "watcheth for your souls as one that must give account," Heb. xiii. 17, so it is supposed that he is better acquainted with your spiritual state and life than others are, and therefore in less danger of wronging you by mistake and misapplications; for it is supposed that you have acquainted him with your personal condition in your health, having taken him as your ordinary counsellor for your souls, and that he hath acquainted himself with your condition, and confirmed you, and watched over you by name, as Ignatius to

---

<sup>103</sup> See more in Dr. Hammond, *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Vid. Canon. Apost. 5. 32. Et Concil. Antioch. c. 5. Et Concil. Carthag. 4. Can. 35.

Polycarp bishop of Smyrna saith,<sup>105</sup> *Sæpe congregationes fiant: ex nomine omnes quære: servos et ancillas ne despicias*, as bishop Usher's old Latin translation hath it: Let congregations be often held; inquire after all by name: despise not servants and maids. The bishop took notice of every servant and maid by name; and he had opportunity to see whether they were in the congregation.

9. You must use him as your leader or champion against all heretics, infidels, and subtle adversaries of the truth, with whom you are unable to contend yourselves, that your bishops may clear up and defend the cause of Christ and righteousness, and by irresistible evidence, stop the mouths of all gainsayers.<sup>106</sup> It is for your own benefit, and not for theirs, that you are required in all these works of their office to use them and readily obey them. And what hurt can it do you to obey them in any of these?

*Direct.* III. Understand how it is that Christ doth authorize and send forth his ministers, lest wolves and deceivers should either obtrude themselves upon you as your lawful pastors, or should alienate you from those that God hath set over you, by puzzling you in subtle questioning or disputing against their call. Not only Paul's warnings, Acts xx. 30, and 2 Tim. iii. 6, but lamentable experience, telleth us what an eager desire there is in proud and self-conceited men, to obtrude themselves as teachers and pastors on the churches, to creep into houses and lead people captive, and draw away disciples after them, and say (and perhaps

---

<sup>105</sup> Vid. Just. Mart. Apol. 2. Vid. Tertul. Apol. c. 39.

<sup>106</sup> I hope all this will tell you what a bishop indeed is.

think) that others are deceivers, and none are the true teachers indeed but they. And the first part of the art and work of wolves, is to separate you from your pastors, and catch up the stragglers that are thus separated. The malice, and slanders, and lies, and railing of hirelings and deceivers, and all the powers of hell, are principally poured out on the faithful pastors and leaders of the flocks. The principal work of the Jesuits against you, is to make you believe that your pastors are no true pastors, but uncalled private persons, and mere usurpers: and the reason must be, because they have not an ordination of bishops successively from the apostles without interruption.<sup>107</sup> I confess if our interruptions had been half as lamentable as theirs, (by their schisms, and variety of popes at once; and popes accused, or condemned by general councils, for heretics; and their variety of ways of electing popes, and their incapacities by simony, usurpation, &c.) I should think at least that our ancestors had cause to have questioned the calling of some that were then over them. But I will help you in a few words to discern the juggling of these deceivers, by showing you the truth concerning the way of Christ's giving his commission to the ministers that are truly called, and the needlessness of the proof of an uninterrupted succession of regular ordination, to your reception of your pastors and their ministrations.

---

<sup>107</sup> Grot. de Imp. p. 273. *Pastorum est ordinare pastores. Neque id officium eis competit, qua hujus aut illius ecclesiae pastores sunt, sed qua ministri ecclesiae catholicae.*

The ministerial commission is contained in, and conveyed by, the law of Christ, which is the charter of the church, and every true bishop or pastor hath his power from Christ, and not at all from the efficient conveyance of any mortal man: even as kings have their power not from man, but from God himself; but with this difference, that in the church Christ hath immediately determined of the species of church offices, but in the civil government, only of the genus (absolutely and immediately).<sup>108</sup> You cannot have a plainer illustration, than by considering how mayors, and bailiffs, and constables are annually made in corporations: the king by his charter saith, that every year at a certain time the free-men or burgesses shall meet, and choose one to be their mayor, and the steward or town-clerk shall give him his oath, and thus or thus he shall be invested in his place, and this shall be his power and work, and no other. So the king by his law appointeth that constables and churchwardens shall be chosen in every parish. Now let our two questions be here decided: 1. Who is it that giveth these officers their power? 2. Whether an uninterrupted succession of such officers through all generations since the enacting of that law, be necessary to

---

<sup>108</sup> See in Grotius de Imper. sum. potest. p. 269. The necessary distinction of, 1. Ipsa facultas prædicandi sacramenta et claves administrandi, quod Mandatum vocat. 2. Applicatio hujus facultatis ad certam personam, viz. Ordinatio. 3. Applicatio hujus personæ ad certum cœtum et locum, viz. Electio. 4. Illud quo certa persona in certo loco ministerium suum exercet publico præsidio ac publica autoritate, viz. Confirmatio, p. 273. Constat muneris institutionem a Deo esse; ordinationem a pastoribus, confirmationem publicam a summa potestate. So that the doubt is only about election. Which yet must be differenced from consent.

the validity of the present officer's authority? To the first, It is certain that it is the king by his law or charter that giveth the officers their power; and that the corporations and parishes do not give it them by electing or investing them; yea, though the king hath made such election and investiture to be in a sort his instrument in the conveying it, it is but as the opening of the door to let them in, *sine quo non*; but it doth not make the instruments to be at all the givers of the power, nor were they the receiving or containing mediate causes of it. The king never gave them the power which the officers receive, either to use, or to give; but only makes the electors his instruments to determine of the person that shall receive the power immediately from the law or charter; and the investors he maketh his instruments of solemnizing the tradition and admission: which if the law or charter make absolutely necessary *ad esse officii*, it will be so; but if it make it necessary only *ad melius esse*, or but for order and regular admittance when no necessity hindereth it, the necessity will be no more. And to the second question, It is plain that the law, which is the *fundamentum juris*, remaining still the same, if a parish omit for divers years to choose any constable or churchwarden, yet the next time they do choose one according to law, the law doth authorize him, nevertheless, though there was an interruption or vacancy so long; and so in corporations (unless the law or charter say the contrary): so is it in the present case. 1. It is the established law of Christ, which describeth the office, determineth of the degree and kind of power, and

granteth or conveyeth it, when the person is determined of by the electors and ordainers, though by ordination the delivery and admission is regularly to be solemnized; which actions are of just so much necessity as that law hath made them, and no more. 2. And if there were never so long an interruption or vacancy, he that afterward entereth lawfully, so as to want nothing which the law of Christ hath made necessary to the being of the office, doth receive his power nevertheless immediately from the law of Christ. And Bellarmine himself saith, that it is not necessary to the people, and to the validity of sacraments and offices to them, to know that their pastors be truly called or ordained: and if it be not necessary to the validity of sacraments, it is not necessary to the validity of ordination. And W. Johnson<sup>109</sup> confesseth to me that consecration is not absolutely necessary *ad esse officii* to the pope himself: no, nor any one sort of electors in his election, p. 133. And in his Repl. Term. Expl. p. 45, he saith, Neither papal nor episcopal jurisdiction (as all the learned know) depends of episcopal or papal ordination: nor was there ever interruptions of successions in episcopal jurisdiction in any see, for want of that alone, that is necessary for consecrating others validly, and not for jurisdiction over them. You see then how little sincerity is in these men's disputations, when they would persuade you to reject your lawful pastors as no true ministers of Christ, for want of their ordination or succession.

*Direct.* IV. Though the sacraments and other ministerial

---

<sup>109</sup> See my Disput. with him of the Successive Visibility of the Church, p. 336.

offices are valid, when a minister is qualified (in his abilities and call) but with so much as is essential to the office, though he be defective in degree of parts and faithfulness, and have personal faults which prove his own destruction; yet so great is the difference between a holy, heavenly, learned, judicious, experienced, skilful, zealous, laborious, faithful minister, and an ignorant, ungodly, idle, unskilful one, and so highly should every wise man value the best means and advantages to his eternal happiness, that he should use all lawful means in his power to enjoy and live under such an able, godly, powerful ministry, though he part with his worldly wealth and pleasure to attain it.<sup>110</sup> I know no evil must be done for the attainment of the greatest helps; (for we cannot expect that God should bless a sinful course, or that our sin should tend to the saving of our souls;) and I know God can bless the weakest means, when they are such as he appointeth us to use; and can teach us by angels when he denieth us the help of men: but Scripture, reason, and experience tell us, that ordinarily he worketh morally by means, and fitteth the means to the work which he will do by them: and as he doth not use to light men by a clod or stone, but by a candle, nor by a rotten post or glow-worm so much as by a torch or

---

<sup>110</sup> Cyprian. Epis. 68. Plebs obsequens præceptis dominicis a peccatore præposito separare se debet. Which Grotius de Imper. p. 230, citing saith, Jubentur enim singuli, multo magis universi, cavere prophetas falsos, alienum pastorem fugere, ab iis declinare qui dissidia faciunt et offensas contra doctrinam. 2. Imperatur fidelibus familiarem eorum consuetudinem declinare, qui fratres, &c. 2 Cor. v.; Rom. xvi. 17; John x.; 2 Tim. iii. 6; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

luminary; so he doth not use to work as much by an ignorant, drunken, idle person, who despiseth the God, the heaven, the Christ, the Spirit, the grace, the sacred word which he preacheth, and vilifieth both his own and other men's souls, as he doth by an able and compassionate minister. And the soul is of so much more worth than the body, and eternal things than temporal, that a little commodity to the soul in order to the securing of our salvation, must be preferred before a great deal of worldly riches: he that knoweth what his soul, his Saviour, and heaven is worth, will not easily sit down contented, under such a dark, and dull, and starving minister, as he feeleth he can but little profit by, if better may be had on lawful terms. He that feeleth no difference between the ministry of these two sorts of men, it is because he is a stranger to the work of the gospel on the soul: and "if the gospel (in its truth, or worth, or use) be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, the god of this world having blinded their minds."<sup>111</sup> It must

---

<sup>111</sup> Satan or their own worldly advantages, saith Dr. Hammond. Dan. i. 12, 13; Ezek. iv. 12, 15. Read c. iii. Acosta excellently rebuking the negligence of their priests that taught the Indians the catechism idly, and without explication, or calling them to account about the sense, and then laid all the fault on the blockishness of the people, when *Tota catechizendi ratio erat umbratilis, et ludicræ similis: ego vero (inquit) si homines ingenio acerrimo, et discendi percupidum tales præceptores nacti essent, nihil aliud quam ut duplo ignoratiores evaderent, doceri isto modo arbitrarent. Olim in symbolo addiscendo et intelligendo, mysteriisque fidei agnoscendis viri ingenio præstantes et literatura celebres, diu in catechumenorum ordine tenebantur, cum ecclesiastica disciplina vigeret; neque ante ad fidei sacramentum admittebantur, quam multas ab episcopo de symbolo conciones audissent, diu et multum cum catechista contulissent; post quas omnes curas et meditationes, magnum erat si recta sentirent, consentanea responderent, &c.* And he addeth, p. 360, *Equidem sic opinor, neque*

be no small matter that must satisfy a serious christian to cast his soul upon any hurtful or dangerous disadvantage. Though Daniel and his companions may live well on pulse, yea, and Ezekiel upon bread baked with dung, when God will have it so, yet no wise man will choose such a diet: especially if his diseases require the exactest diet, or his weakness the most restorative, and all too little; which, alas, is the common case. Yet this caution you must here take with you, 1. That you pretend not your own benefit, to the common loss or hurt of others. 2. And that you consider as well where you may do most good, as where you may get most; for the way of greatest service, is the way of greatest gain.

*Direct. V.* Understand what sort and measure of belief it is

---

ab ea opinione avelli unquam potero, quin pessimo præceptori omnes esse auditores hebetes credam. A bad teacher hath always bad scholars. Even in the Roman church how little their authority can do against profaneness and negligence, the same Acosta showeth, l. 6. c. 2. p. 519. Cum in provinciali concilio Limensi ab omnibus Peruensibus episcopis cæterisque gravibus viris ad ea vitia emendanda multum operæ et studii collatum sit, atque edita extent egregia decreta de reformatione permulta, nihil tamen amplius perfectum est, quam si ab otiosis nautis de republica moderanda consultatum esset. Bonific. Mogunt. Ep. iii. mentioneth it as the error of a new-sprung sect, that heinous sinners even so continuing may be priests. And Ep. lxxiii. it is said, No man may be made a priest, that hath sinned mortally after baptism, and, Si iis qui tam in episcopatu vel presbyterio positus mortale peccatum aliquod admiserit, non debet offerre panes Domino, quanto magis patienter retrahat se ab hoc non tam honore quam onere, et aliorum locum qui digni sunt non ambiat occupare. Qui enim in erudiendis et instituendis ad virtutem populis præest, necesse est, ut in omnibus sanctus sit, et in nullo reprehensibilis habeatur. Qui enim aliquem de peccato arguit, ipse a peccato debet esse immunis. Auct. Bib. Pat. Tom. ii. p. 81. If there were somewhat too much strictness in the ancient exclusion of them that heinously sinned after baptism from the priesthood, let us not be as much too loose.

that you owe to your teachers, that so your incredulity hinder not your faith in Christ, nor your over-much credulity betray you to heresy, nor make you the servants of men, contrary to Matt. xxiii. 8-10; Eph. iv. 13; 2 Cor. i. 24; Acts xx. 30. We see on one side how many poor souls are cheated into schism and dangerous errors, by forsaking their teachers and refusing their necessary help, and all upon this pretence, that they must not make men the lords of their faith, nor pin their faith on the minister's sleeve, nor take their religion upon trust. And on the other side we see among the papists, and in every sect, what lamentable work is made by an over-much credulity and implicit belief of ambitious, worldly, factious, proud, and erroneous guides. **!The order and credit of ministerial teaching the doctrine of salvation.!** That you may escape both these extremes, you must observe the truth of these conclusions following, which show you what it is that your teachers have to reveal unto you, and in what order, and how far the several particulars are, or are not to be taken upon their words.

And first, as a preparative, it is presupposed, (1.) That you find yourself ignorant, and one that needeth a teacher; for if you think you know all that you need to know already, you are like a full bottle that will hold no more. (2.) It is presupposed that you take the man that you learn of to be wiser than yourself, and fit to teach you; either because fame or other men's reports have told you so, (as the woman, John iv. drew the Samaritans to Christ,) or because his own profession of skill doth make you

think so (as you will hearken to him that professeth to be able to teach you any art or science); or else because your present hearing his discourse doth convince you of his wisdom; by one of these means you are brought to think that he is one that you may learn of, and is fit for you to hear (so that here is no need that first you take him to be infallible, or that you know which is the true church, as the papists say). These are supposed.

To know yourself.

The doctrines which he is to teach you are these, and in this method to be taught. 1. He will teach you the natural knowledge of yourself; that being a man, you are a rational, free agent, made by another for his will and use, and by him to be ruled in order to your ultimate end, being wholly his, and at his disposal.

To know God and holiness.

2. He will next teach you that there is a God that made you, and what he is, and what relation he standeth in to you, and you to him, as your Creator, your Owner, your Ruler, and your Benefactor, and your End: and what duty you owe him in these relations, to submit to him, and resign yourselves to him as his own, to be obedient to all his laws, and to love him and delight in him; and this with all your heart, and soul, and might; even to serve him with all the powers of your soul and body, and with your estates and all his blessings.

To know the life to come.

3. He will next teach you that this God hath made your souls

immortal, and that there is a life after this where everlasting happiness or misery will be your part, and where the great rewards and punishments are executed by the Judge of all the world as men have behaved themselves in this present life. That your end and happiness is not here, but in the life to come, and that this life is the way and time of preparation, in which everlasting happiness is won or lost.

Thus far he needeth no supernatural proof of what he saith; but can prove it all to you from the light of nature: and these things you are not primarily to receive of him as a testifier by mere believing him; but as a teacher, by learning of him the evidences by which you may by degrees come to know these things yourselves.

Yet it is supposed that all along you give him so much credit as the difference between his knowledge and yours doth require, so far as it appeareth to you; as you will hear a physician, a lawyer, a philosopher, or any man, with reverence, while he discourseth of the matters of his own profession; as confessing his judgment to be better than yours, and therefore more suspecting your own apprehensions than his. Not but that the truth may compel you to discern it, though you should come with no such reverence or respect to him; but then you cast yourself upon much disadvantage irrationally; and this human belief of him is but a medium to your learning, and so to the knowledge of the matter; so that you do not stop and rest in his authority or credibility, but only use it in order to your discovery of that evidence which you

rest in, which as a teacher he acquaints you with.

These things being thus far revealed by natural light, are (usually) at first apprehended by natural reason, not so as presently to put or prove the soul in a state of saving grace; but so as to awaken it to make further inquiry; and so when the soul is come so far as to see the same truths by supernatural grace in the supernatural revelation of the holy Scriptures, then they become more effectual and saving, which before were known preparatorily; and so the same truths are then both the objects of knowledge and of faith.

To know that Christ, faith, repentance, and obedience, is the way to it.

4. Having acquainted you with man's ultimate end and happiness in the life to come, the next thing to be taught you by the ministers of Christ, is, that Christ as our Saviour, and faith, and repentance, and sincere obedience to be performed by us through his grace, is the way to heaven, or the means by which we must attain this end. Though the knowledge of the preacher's wisdom, piety, and credibility remove some impediments which would make the receiving of this the more difficult to you, yet you are not to take it barely on his word, as a point of human faith; but you are to call for his proof of it, that you may see better reasons than his affirmations for the entertainment of it.

To know that this is true because God hath revealed it; or it is his word.

5. The proof that he will give you is in these two propositions: 1. God's revelations are all true. 2. This is one of God's revelations: this is an argument, Whatsoever God saith is true: but this God saith, therefore this is true. The first proposition you are not to take upon the trust of his word, but to learn of him as a teacher to know it in its proper evidence; for it is the formal object of your faith: the veracity of God is first known to you, by the same evidence and means as you know that there is a God; and then it is by the force of this that you believe the particular truths which are the material object of faith. And the second proposition, that God hath revealed this, is orderly to be first proved, and so received upon its proper evidence; and not taken merely upon your teacher's word: yet if you do believe him by a human faith as a man that is likely to know what he saith, and this in order to a divine faith, it will not hinder, but help your divine faith and salvation; and is indeed no more than is your duty.

Here note, 1. That primarily these two great principles of faith, God is true, and this is God's revelation, are not themselves *credenda*, the material objects of divine faith, but of knowledge. 2. That yet the result of both is *de fide*, matter of faith. 3. And the same principles are secondarily *de fide*, as it is that there is a God. For though they are first to be known by natural evidence, yet when the Scripture is opened to us, we shall find them there revealed; and so the same thing may be the object both of knowledge and of faith. 4. And faith itself is a sort of

knowledge; for though human faith have that uncertainty in its premises, (for the most part,) as forbiddeth us to say, (properly,) I know this to be true, because such a man said it; yet divine faith hath that certainty which may make it an excellent sort of knowledge; as I have proved copiously elsewhere. In believing man we argue thus, Whatsoever so wise and honest a man saith, is credible, that is, most likely to be true: but this he saith; therefore, &c. But in believing God we argue thus, Whatever God saith is credible, that is, as infallible truth: but this God saith; therefore, &c. So that the word credible, signifieth not the same thing in the two arguments; nor are divine faith and human faith the same.

To know that the gospel is his word.

6. The next thing that the preacher hath to teach you, is the proof of the aforesaid minor proposition (for the major was proved in the proof of a Deity); and that is thus: The gospel which Christ and his apostles first preached, and is now delivered in the sacred Scriptures, is the word, or infallible revelation, of God: but this doctrine, that Christ, with faith, and repentance, and obedience on our parts, are the way to life eternal, is the gospel which Christ and his apostles first preached, &c.; therefore it is the word of God. For the minor you need not take your teacher's word, if you can read; for you may see it in the Bible (of which more anon): but the major is that which all men desire to be assured of, That the gospel is God's word. And for that, though a belief of your teacher is a help and good preparatory, yet you are not there to stop, but to use him as a teacher to show you the

truth of it in the proofs: or else you must take any thing for God's word, which your teacher affirmeth to be such. And the proof which he will give you, must be some divine attestation which may be showed to those whom we would convince.

The Divine attestation of the gospel.

7. The divine attestation, which he is next to show you, hath many parts, that it may be complete and satisfactory. 1. God's antecedent testimony. 2. His inherent or impressed testimony. 3. His adherent, concomitant testimony. 4. His subsequent testimony. 1. God's antecedent testimony by which he attested the gospel, is the train of promises, prophecies, types, and the preparing ministry of John, which all foretold Christ, and were fulfilled in him. 2. God's impressed testimony is that image and superscription of God, (in his governing wisdom, holiness, and love,) which is inimitably engraven on the gospel; as an image upon a seal, which is thereby made the instrument to imprint the same on other things. Thus as the sun, the gospel shineth, and proveth itself by its proper light. 3. The concomitant attestation of God, is that of multitudes of certain, uncontrolled miracles, done by Christ and his apostles, which proved the approving hand of God, and oblige all rational creatures to believe a testimony so confirmed to them. Among these, Christ's own resurrection and ascension, and the gifts of his apostles, are the chief. 4. The subsequent attestation of God is, the power and efficacy of the gospel, in calling and sanctifying unto Christ a peculiar people, zealous of good works, and directing and confirming

them against all temptations and torments to the end; producing that same image of God on the souls of his elect, which is (more perfectly) engraven on the world itself; making such changes, and gathering such a people unto God, as no other doctrine ever did. And all these four attestations are but one, even the Holy Spirit, who is become the great witness of Christ and his gospel in the world: viz. 1. The Spirit of prophecy is the antecedent attestation. 2. The holy image which the Spirit hath printed on the gospel itself, is the inherent evidence. 3. The miracles of the Spirit, is the concomitant attestation or evidence. 4. And the sanctifying work of the Spirit is the subsequent attestation, renewed and accompanying it to the end of the world. So that the argument runs thus, That doctrine which hath this witness of the Holy Ghost, antecedently in such prophecies, inherently bearing his image so inimitably, accompanied by so many certain, uncontrolled miracles, and followed and attended with such matchless success in the sanctification of the body of Christ, is fully attested by God to be his own: but such is the doctrine of the gospel; therefore, &c. The major you are not to take upon trust from your teachers, though your esteem of their judgment may the better dispose you to learn; but you are to discern the evidences of truth which is apparent in it. For he that denieth this, must by force of argument be driven to deny, 1. Either that God is the Governor of the world; or that he is the supreme, but say he is controlled by another. 2. Or that he is good and true; and must affirm that he either governeth the world by

mere deceits, and undiscernible lies, or that he hath given up the power to some one that so governeth it: all which is but to affirm that there is no God (which is supposed to be proved before).

To know the matters of fact subservient to our faith.

8. There now remaineth nothing to be taught you, as to prove the truth of the gospel, but only those matters of fact which are contained and supposed in the minor of the two last arguments: and they are these particulars. 1. That there were such persons as Christ and his apostles, and such a gospel preached by them. 2. That such miracles were done by them, as are supposed. 3. That both doctrine and miracles were committed to writing by them, in the Scriptures, for the certainer preserving them to the church's use.<sup>112</sup> 4. That churches were planted, and souls converted and confirmed by them in the first ages, many of whom did seal them with their blood. 5. That there have been a succession of such churches as have adhered to this Christ and gospel. 6. That this which we call the Bible is that very book containing those sacred writings afore-mentioned. 7. That it hath been still copied out and preserved without any such depravation or corruption as might frustrate its ends. 8. That the copies are such out of which we have them translated, and which we show. 9. That they are so truly translated as to have no such corruptions or mistakes, as to frustrate their ends, or make them unapt for the work they were appointed to. 10. That these particular words are

---

<sup>112</sup> Est enim mirabilis quædam continuatio seriesque rerum, ut alia ex alia nexa, et omnes inter se aptæ colligatæque videantur. Cic. De Natur. Deor. pag. 6.

indeed here written which we read; and these particular doctrines containing the essentials of christianity, together with the rest of the material objects of faith.

All these ten particulars are matters of fact that are merely subservient to the constituting principles of our faith, but yet very needful to be known. Now the question is, How these must be known and received by us so as not to invalidate our faith? and how far our teachers must be here believed? And first it is very useful to us to inquire, How so many of these matters of fact as were then existent were known to the first christians? As how knew they in those days that there were such persons as Christ and his apostles? that they preached such doctrines, and spake such languages, and did such works, and that they wrote such books, and sent such epistles to the churches, and that churches were hereby converted and confirmed, and martyrs sealed this with their blood, &c.? It is easy to tell how they were certain of all these; even by their own eyes, and ears, and sensible observation, as we know that there are Englishmen live in England; and those that were remoter from some of the matters of fact, knew them by such report of those that did see them, as those among us that never saw the king, or court, or his restoration, do know that such a thing there was, and such a person there is. Thus they knew it then.

From whence I note, 1. That in those days it was not necessary to the being of true faith, that any supernatural testimony of the Spirit, or any other sort of proof, than their very senses and

reason, should acquaint them with those matters of fact which they were eye-witnesses of. 2. That credible report or history was then the means for any one that saw not a matter of fact, to know as much as they that saw it. 3. That therefore this is now the way also of producing faith. Some things we have yet sight and sense for; as that such Bibles and such churches are existent; that such holy effects this doctrine hath upon the soul (which we see in others by the fruits, and after feel in ourselves): the rest we must know by history, tradition, or report.

And in the reception of these historical passages note further, 1. That human belief is here a naturally necessary means to acquaint us with the matter of our divine belief. 2. That there are various degrees of this belief, and some need more of it by far than others, according to the various degrees of their ignorance:<sup>113</sup> as he that cannot read himself, must know by human belief (in great part) that the preacher readeth truly, or that such words indeed are in the gospel as he saith are there; but a literate person may know this by his eye-sight, and not take

---

<sup>113</sup> By all this it is easy to gather whether a pastor may do his work *per alium*. Saith Grotius de Imp. p. 290, 291, Nam illud quod quis per alium facit per se facere videtur ad eas duntaxat pertinet actiones quarum causa efficiens proxima a jure indefinita est. Yet people should labour after such maturity and stedfastness, that they might be able to stand if their pastors be dead or taken from them by persecution, yea, or forsake the truth themselves. Victor. Utic. saith of the people in Africa when their pastors were banished, and others might not be ordained in their steads: Inter hæc tamen Dei populus in fide consistens, ut examina apum cereas ædificantia mansiones, crescendo melleis fidei claviculis firmabatur. Quanto magis affligebantur, tanto magis multiplicabantur. Victor. p. 382.

it upon trust. So he that understandeth not Hebrew and Greek, must take it upon trust that the Scripture is truly translated; but another that understandeth those tongues, may see it with his eyes. 3. History being the proper means to know matters of fact that are done in times past, and out of our sight, the same industry that is necessary to a thorough acquaintance with other history, is necessary to the same acquaintance with this. 4. That the common beginning of receiving all such historical truths is first by believing our teachers so far as becometh learners, and in the mean time going on to learn till we come to know as much as they, and upon the same historical evidence as they. 5. That if any man be here necessitated to take more than others upon the trust or belief of their teachers, it is long of their ignorance: and therefore if such cry out against their taking things on trust, it is like a mad-man's raving against them that would order him; or as if one should reproach a nurse for feeding infants, and not letting them feed themselves. *Oportet discentem credere.* He that will not believe his teacher will never learn. If a child will not believe his master that tells him which are the letters, the vowels, and consonants, and what is their power, and what they spell, and what every word signifieth in the language which he is teaching him, will he be ever the better for his teaching? 6. That he that knoweth these historical matters no otherwise than by the belief of his particular teacher, may nevertheless have a divine and saving faith; for though he believe by a human faith that these things were done, that this is the same book, &c., yet he believeth

the gospel itself (thus brought to his knowledge) because God is true that hath attested it. Even as it was a saving faith in Mary and Martha, that knew by their eyes and ears, and not only by belief, that Lazarus was raised, and that Christ preached thus and thus to them; but believed his doctrine to be true, because of God's veracity who attested it. 7. That it is the great wisdom and mercy of God to his weak and ignorant people, to provide them teachers to acquaint them with these things, and to vouchsafe them such a help to their salvation, as to make it a standing office in his church to the end of the world, that the infants and ignorant might not be cast off, but have fathers, and nurses, and teachers to take care of them. 8. But especially mark, that yet these infants have much disadvantage in comparison of others, that know all these matters of fact by the same convincing evidence as their teachers; and that he that followeth on to learn it as he ought, may come to prove these subservient matters of fact, by such a concurrence of evidences, as amounteth to an infallibility or moral certainty, beyond mere human faith as such: as e. g. an illiterate person that hath it but from others, may be certain that it is indeed a Bible which is ordinarily read and preached to him; and that it is so truly translated as to be a sufficient rule of faith and life, having no mistake which must hazard a man's salvation; because the Bible in the original tongues is so commonly to be had, and so many among us understand it, and there is among them so great a contrariety of judgments and interests, that it is not possible but many would detect such a public lie, if any should deal falsely in

so weighty and evident a case. There is a moral certainty (equal to a natural) that some actions will not be done by whole countries, which every individual person hath power and natural liberty to do: as e. g. there is no man in the kingdom but may possibly kill himself, or may fast to-morrow, or may lie in bed many days together; and yet it is certain, that all the people in England will do none of these: so it is possible that any single person may lie even in a palpable public case, as to pretend that this is a Bible when it is some other book, or that this is the same book that was received from the apostles by the churches of that age, when it is not it, &c.; but for all the country, and all the world that are competent witnesses, to agree to do this, is a mere impossibility, I mean such a thing as cannot be done without a miracle, yea, a universal miracle. And more than so, it is impossible that God should do a miracle to accomplish such a universal wickedness and deceit; whereas it is possible that natural causes by a miracle may be turned out of course, where there is nothing in the nature of God against it (as that the sun should stand still, &c.). We have a certainty that there was a Julius Cæsar, a William the Conqueror, an Aristotle, a Cicero, an Augustine, a Chrysostom, and that the laws and statutes of the land were really enacted by the kings and parliaments whose names they bear; because the natural and civil interests of so many thousands that are able to detect it, could never be reconciled here to a deceit. When judges and counsellors, kings and nobles, and plaintiffs and defendants, utter enemies, are all agreed in it, it is more certain to a single

person than if he had seen the passing of them with his eyes. So in our case, when an office was established in the church, to read and preach this gospel in the assemblies; and when all the congregations took it as the charter of their salvation, and the rule of their faith and life; and when these pastors and churches were dispersed over all the christian world, who thus worshipped God from day to day; and all sects and enemies were ready to have detected a falsification or deceit; it is here as impossible for such a kind of history, or tradition, or testimony to be false, in such material points of fact, as for one man's senses to deceive him, and much more.

Thus I have at once showed you the true order of the preaching, and proofs, and receiving of the several matters of religion, and how and into what our faith must be resolved; and how far your teachers are to be believed. And here you must especially observe two things: 1. That there can be no danger in this resolution of faith, of derogating either from the work of the Holy Ghost, or the Scriptures' self-evidence, or any other cause whatever; because we ascribe nothing to history or tradition which was ascribed to any of these causes by the first christians; but only put our reception by tradition, instead of their reception immediately by sense: our receiving by infallible history, is but in the place of their receiving by sight; and not in the place of self-evidence of Scripture, or any testimony or teaching of the Spirit. The method is exactly laid down, Heb. ii. 3, 4, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began

to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" Here is the sum of what I have been saying.

2. Observe also the great difference between us and the papists in this controversy of using tradition in the resolution of our faith. 1. They decide the main question in gross by tradition, viz. Whether the Scripture be the word of God? But we only decide the questions about history or matters of fact by it, which are subservient to the other. 2. The tradition which most of them plead, is nothing but the authoritative judgment of the successive pastors of the church in a general council confirmed by the pope; and as another faction among them saith, The reception of the whole church, both laity and clergy; and this church must be only the Roman faction. But the tradition which we plead is the concurrent testimony of friends and foes, orthodox and heretics; and of all the churches throughout the world, both Greek and Latin, Ethiopian, Armenian, protestants, &c. And this testimony we plead, not merely as a human testimony, much less as such as is credible chiefly for the mere power (real or pretended) of the testifiers; but as such as by a concurrence of testimonies and circumstances hath (besides the teachers' authority) the evidences of infallible moral certainty, in the very history; as we have of the statutes of the realm.

*Direct.* VI. Understand what kind and measure of obedience

it is that you owe your lawful pastors, that you neither prove schismatical and unruly, nor yet have a hand in setting up idols and usurpations in the church. This you may learn from the foregoing description of the pastor's work. The kind of your obedience is commensurate to the kind of his office and work. You are not to obey your pastors, as civil magistrates that bear the sword; nor as physicians, to tell you what you must do for your health; nor as artificers, to command you how to plough, and sow, and trade, &c. (except in the morality of these); but it is as your teachers and guides in matters of salvation that you must obey them.<sup>114</sup> And that not as prophets or lawgivers to the church; but as the stated officers of Christ, to open and apply the laws that he hath given, and determine of such circumstances as are subservient thereunto. Not as those that have dominion of your faith, or may preach another gospel, or contradict any truth of God, which by Scripture or nature he hath revealed, or can dispense with any duty which he hath commanded; but as those that have all their power from God, and for God and your salvation, and the good of other men's souls; to edification only,

---

<sup>114</sup> We may not offer any violence, but only persuade: we have not so great authority given us by the laws, as to repress offenders; and if it were lawful for us so to do, we have no use of any such violent power: for that Christ crowneth them which abstain from sin, not of a forced, but of a willing mind and purpose. Chrys. citante Bilson of Subjection, p. 526. Et ibid. ex Hilar. If this violence were used for the true faith, the doctrine of bishops would be against it: God needeth no forced service. He requireth no constrained confession. I cannot receive any man but him that is willing: I cannot give ear, but to him that entreateth, &c. Ita et Origen. ibid. citat. 2 Cor. i. 24; Gal. i. 7, 8; 2 Cor. x. 8; xiii. 10.

and not to destruction: particular cases I here purposely forbear.

*Direct. VII.* Be sure that you look on them as the officers of Christ in all that they do as such; and see not only their natural, but their ecclesiastical persons, that through them you may have to do with God. Especially in preaching, and administering the sacraments, and binding the impenitent, and absolving the penitent, and comforting the sad and humbled souls. All the holiness, and life, and power of your spiritual converse with them consisteth in your seeing and conversing with God in them, and using them as his messengers or officers, that deliver his message and do his work, and not their own. If you disobey them in his work, it is God that you disobey; and if they teach you his word, or deliver you Christ and his benefits in the sacraments, it is Christ himself that doth it by them as his instruments, so far as they do it according to his commission and his will. This observing Christ in their teaching will possess you with due reverence and care, and cause you to do it as a holy work; and to see Christ in them, delivering and sealing his covenant to you, will very much increase your joy; when man as man is but a shadow.

*Direct. VIII.* Make use of their help in private, and not in public only: as the use of a physician is not only to read a lecture of physic to his patients, but to be ready to direct every person according to their particular case (there being such variety of temperatures, diseases, and accidents, that in dangerous cases the direction of the judicious is needful in the application); so here,

it is not the least of the pastoral work, to oversee the individuals, and to give them personally such particular advice as their case requireth. Never expect that all thy books, or sermons, or prayers, or meditations should serve thy turn without the counsel of thy pastors, in greater cases; for that were but to devise how to prove God's officers needless to his church. If thou be an ignorant or unconverted sinner, go to the minister, and ask him, what thou must do to be saved? and resolve to follow his sound advice. If thou be in doubt of any weighty point of faith or godliness, or assaulted perilously by any adversary, or need his advice for thy settled peace, thy assurance of pardon and salvation, and thy preparation for death; go ask counsel of thy pastors, and receive their help with readiness and thankfulness: or if thou live where there is none that is able and willing thus to help thee, remove to them that are such, if lawfully thou canst.

*Direct.* IX. Assist you pastors in the work of God, by the duties of your places which tend thereto: labour by your holy, serious conference, to instruct the ignorant, and convince the unbelieving, and convert the ungodly, and strengthen the weak, with whom you have fit opportunity for such work. Labour by your holy examples, by love, and concord, and meekness, and sobriety, and contempt of the world, and a heavenly life, to "shine as lights in the midst of a dark and crooked generation." Preach all of you, by the examples of your blameless, humble, holy lives. Oh how abundantly would this course promote the success of the public preaching of the gospel! If you would cause those men to

see the glory and power of the gospel in your holy and heavenly lives, who cannot see it in itself: then many that would not be won by the word, might be won without it (to seek after it at least) by your conversations.<sup>115</sup> Thus all must preach and be helpers of the ministers of Christ.

*Direct.* X. Forsake not your faithful pastors to follow deceivers; but adhere to them who spend and are spent for you; defend their innocency against false accusers; and refuse them not such maintenance as is needful to their entire giving up themselves to that holy work to which they are devoted.<sup>116</sup> Read and study well Eph. iv. 13-15; Acts xx. 30. It is for your sakes that your faithful pastors are singled out in the world to bear the slanders and contradictions of the wicked; and to lead the way in the fiery trial. If they would forsake you, and that sacred truth and duty that is needful to your salvation, and sell you up into the hands of cruel and deceitful men, it were as easy for them to have the applause of men, and the prosperity of the world, as others: it is perfidious ingratitude to forsake them in trial, that must lose their lives and all the world, rather than forsake you or betray your souls; or to grudge them food and raiment that lay by the gainful employments of the world, that they may attend continually on the service of your souls.

---

<sup>115</sup> Acts xviii. 24, 26, 27; Rom. xvi. 3; John iii. 8; Eph. iv. 29; 1 Pet. iv. 11; Phil. ii. 15; Matt. v. 16; 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2; 2 Pet. iii. 11; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16; ii. 12; Heb. iii. 13; Heb. x. 24.

<sup>116</sup> 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; 2 Tim. ii. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 15; 1 Thess. iii. 9; i. 5; Matt. xxvi. 56; 2 Tim. iv. 16; Gal. vi. 6, 10; 1 Cor. ix.; Col. i. 24.

# CHAPTER VII.

## DIRECTIONS FOR THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUTH AMONG CONTENDERS, AND THE ESCAPE OF HERESY AND DECEIT

Though truth be naturally the object of man's understanding, to which it hath a certain inclination, and though it be a delightful thing to know the truth;<sup>117</sup> yet that which is saving meeteth with so much opposition in the flesh, and in the world, that while it is applauded in the general, it is resisted and rejected in particulars; and yet while the use of holy truth is hated and obstinately cast away, the name and the barren profession of it is made the matter of the glorying of hypocrites, and the occasion of reproaching dissenters as heretics, and the world is filled with bloody persecutions, and inhuman, implacable enmities and divisions, by a wonderful zeal for the name of truth, even by those men that will rather venture on damnation, than they will obey the truth which they so contend for. Multitudes of men have tormented or murdered others as heretics, who themselves must be tormented in hell for not being christians. It concerneth us

---

<sup>117</sup> Nitebatur Socrates summi ingenii acumine, non tam illos ex sententia refellere, quam ipse quid verum esset invenire. Laert. in Socrat.

therefore to deal very wisely and cautelously in this business.

*Direct.* I. Take heed lest there be any carnal interest or lust which maketh you unwilling to receive the truth, or inclineth you to error, that it may serve that interest or lust. It is no small number of men that are strangers or enemies to the truth, not because they cannot attain the knowledge of it, but because they would not have it to be truth. And men of great learning and natural parts are frequently thus deceived and led into error by a naughty, carnal, biassed heart; either because that error is the vulgar opinion, and necessary to maintain their popular reputation, and avoid reproach; or because it is the way of men in power, and necessary to their preferment and greatness in the world; or because the truth is contrary to their fleshly lusts and pleasures, or contrary to their honour and worldly interest, and would hazard their reputations or their lives. How loth is a sensual, ungodly man to believe that "without holiness none shall see God," and that he "that is in Christ is a new creature, and that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his, and that if they live after the flesh they shall die!"<sup>118</sup> How loth is the ambitious minister to believe that the way of Christ's service lieth not in worldly pomp, or ease, or pleasures; but in taking up the cross and following Christ in self-denial, and in being as the servant of all, in the unwearied performance of careful oversight and compassionate exhortations unto all the flock! Let a controversy be raised about any of these points, and

---

<sup>118</sup> Heb. xii. 14. 2 Cor. v. 17; Rom. viii. 9, 13.

the mind of lazy, ambitious men doth presently fall in with that part which gratifieth their fleshly lusts, and excuseth them from that toilsome way of duty which they already hate. The secret lusts and vices of a false, hypocritical heart, are the commonest and the powerfulest arguments for error; and such men are glad, that great men or learned men will give so much ease to their consciences, and shelter to their reputations, as to countenance, or make a controversy at least of that which their lusts desire to be true. Above all therefore see that you come not to inquire after truth with an unsanctified heart, and unmortified lusts, which are a bias to your minds, and make you warp from the truth which you inquire after; for if the carnal mind neither is nor can be subject to the law of God, you may easily perceive that it will be loth to believe it; when in so doing they believe their own condemnation. An honest, sanctified heart is fittest to entertain the truth.

*Direct.* II. Seek after the truth for the love of truth, and love it especially for its special use, as it formeth the heart and life to the image and will of God; and not for the fanciful delight of knowing; much less for carnal, worldly ends.<sup>119</sup> No means are used at all as means, where the end is not first determined of. And to do the same thing materially to another end, is not indeed to do the same; for thereby it is made another thing. Your physician

---

<sup>119</sup> Socrates de ethice, et in officinis, et in publico quotidie philosophans, ea potius inquirenda hortabatur, quæ mores instruerent, et quorum usus nobis domi esset necessarius. Laert. in Socrat.

will come to you if you seek to him as a physician; but not if you send to him to mend your shoes. So if you seek knowledge for the true ends of knowledge, to fill your hearts with the love of God, and guide your lives in holiness and righteousness, God is engaged to help you in the search. But if you seek it only for to please your pride or fancy, no wonder if you miss of it; and it is no great matter whether you find it or not, for any good it is like to do you. Every truth of God is appointed to be his instrument, to do some holy work upon your heart: let the love of holiness be it that maketh you search after truth, and then you may expect that God should be your teacher.

*Direct. III.* Seek after truth without too great or too small regard to the judgment of others; neither contemn them, nor be captivated to them. Use the help of the wise; but give not up your reason absolutely to any. Engage not yourselves in a party, so as to espouse their errors, or implicitly to believe whatever they say; for this breedeth in you a secret desire to please your party, and interesteth you in their dividing interest, and maketh you betray the truth to be accounted orthodox by those you value.<sup>120</sup>

*Direct. IV.* Take heed of pride, which will make you dote upon your own conceits, and cause you to slight the weightiest reasons that are brought by others, for your conviction. And if once you have espoused an error, it will engage all your wit, and zeal, and

---

<sup>120</sup> Non tam auctoritatis in disputando, quam rationis momenta quaerenda sunt, Cic. Nat. Deo. p. 6. Obest plerumque iis, qui discere volunt, auctoritas eorum, qui se docere profitentur. Desinunt enim suum iudicium adhibere: id habent ratum, quod ab eo, quem probant, iudicatum vident. Ibid. p. 7.

diligence to maintain it; it will make you uncharitable and furious against all that cross you in your way; and so make you either persecutors, (if you stand on the higher ground,) or sect leaders, or church dividers, and turbulent and censorious, if you are on the lower ground. There is very great reason in Paul's advice for the choice of a bishop, 1 Tim. iii. 6, "Not a novice; lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." It is no more wonder to see a proud man erroneous, and in the confidence of his own understanding, to rage against all that tell him he is mistaken, than to hear a drunken man boasting of his wit, to the increase of his shame.

*Direct.* V. Take heed of slothfulness, and impatience in searching after truth, and think not to find it in difficult cases, without both hard and patient studies, and ripeness of understanding to enable you therein; and suspect all opinions which are the offspring of idleness and ease, whatever divine illumination they may pretend (except as you take them from others upon trust (in a slothful way) who attained them by diligent studies). For God that hath called men to labour, doth use to give his blessing to the laborious. And he that hath said by his Spirit, 1 Tim. iv. 15, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all," doth accordingly cause those men to profit, who seek it in this laborious way of his appointment; and he that hath said, "The desire of the slothful killeth him," doth not use to bless the slothful with his teachings. He that will say to him in judgment, "Thou wicked

and slothful servant," will not encourage the slothfulness which he condemneth.<sup>121</sup> "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God: for the Lord giveth wisdom," Prov. ii. 1-6. Mark here to whom God giveth wisdom: all the godly are taught of God; but mark here how it is that he teacheth them. Not while they scorn at studies and universities, and look that their knowledge should cost them nothing, or that the Spirit should be instead of serious studies, or that their understandings should discern what is true or false at the first appearance; but while they think no pains or patience too great to learn the truth in the school of Christ.

*Direct.* VI. Keep out passion from your disputes, and in the management of all your controversies in religion. For though passion be useful both antecedently to the resolution of the will, and consequently to the effectual execution of its resolutions, yet it is commonly a very great seducer of the understanding, and strangely blindeth and perverteth the judgment;<sup>122</sup> so that

---

<sup>121</sup> Prov. xxiv. 30; xxi. 25; Matt. xxv. 26.

<sup>122</sup> Quæ duæ virtutes in disputatore primæ sunt, eas ambas in Hubero deprehendi, patientiam adversarium prolixè sua explicantem audiendi, et lenitatem etiam asperè dicta perferendi, inq. Scultetus post. disp. Curric. p. 33.

a passionate man is seldom so far from the truth, as when he is most confident he is defending it. When passion hath done boiling, and the heart is cooled, and leaveth the judgment to do its work without any clamour or disturbance, it is strange to see how things will appear to you to be quite of another tendency and reason, than in your passion you esteemed them.

*Direct.* VII. Keep up a sense of the evil and danger of both extremes; and be not so wholly intent upon the avoiding of one extreme, as to be fearless of the other. The narrow minds of unexperienced men are hardly brought to look on both sides them, and to be duly sensible of the danger of both extremes; but while they are taken up only with the hating and opposing one sort of errors, they forget those on the other side. And usually the sin or error which we observe not, is more dangerous to us than that which we do observe (if the wind of temptation set that way).

*Direct.* VIII. When you detect any ancient error or corruption, inquire into its original; and see whether reformation consist not rather in a restitution of the primitive state, than in an extirpation of the whole. Even in popery itself there are many errors and ill customs, which are but the corruption of some weighty truth, and the degenerating of some duty of God's appointment; and to reduce all, in such cases, to the primitive verity, is the way of wise and true reformation; and not to throw away that which is God's, because it is fallen into the dirt of human depravation. But in cases where all is bad, there all must be rejected.

*Direct.* IX. Pretend not to truth and orthodoxness against

christian love and peace; and so follow truth, as that you lose not love and peace by it; "as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men," Rom. xii. 18. Charity is the end of truth, 1 Cor. xiii. and it is a mad use of means, to use them against the end. Make sure of the sincerity of your charity, and hold it fast; and then no error that you hold will be destructive to you: but if you know more than others, and use your knowledge to the weakening of your love, you are but (as our first parents) deceived and destroyed by a desire of fleshly, uneffectual knowledge. Such "knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth," 1 Cor. viii. 1. To contend for truth, to the loss of love in yourselves, and the destruction of it among others, is but to choke yourselves with excellent food, and to imitate that orthodox, catholic physician, that gloried that he killed his patients *secundem artem*, by the most accurate method and excellent rules of art that men could die by.

*Direct. X.* Pretend no truth against the power and practice of godliness.<sup>123</sup> For this also is its proper end; if it be not truth that is according to godliness, it is no truth worthy our seeking or contending for. And if it be contrary to godliness in itself, it is no truth at all; therefore if it be used against godliness, it is used contrary to the ends of truth. Those men that suppress or hinder the means of knowledge, and holiness, and concord, and edification, under pretence of securing, defending, or propagating the orthodox belief, will find one day, that God will give them as little thanks for their blind, preposterous zeal

---

<sup>123</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 3; Tit. i. 1; 1 Tim. iv. 7, 8; vi. 5, 6, 11; 2 Pet. i. 3; iii. 11.

for truth, as a tender father would do to a physician, that killed his children because they distasted or spit out his medicines. It is usually a pitiful defence of truth that is made by the enemies of godliness.

## **More near and particular Directions against Error**

*Direct.* I. Begin at the greatest, most evident, certain, and necessary truths, and so proceed orderly to the knowledge of the less, by the help of these:<sup>124</sup> as you climb by the body of the tree unto the branches. If you begin at those truths, which spring out of greater common truths, and know not the premises, while you plead for the conclusion, you abuse your reason, and lose the truth and your labour both: for there is no way to the branches but by ascending from the stock. The principles well laid, must be your help to all your following knowledge.

*Direct.* II. The two first things which you are to learn are, what man is, and what God is: the nature and relation of the two parties, is the first thing to be known in order to the knowledge of the covenant itself, and all following transactions between God and man.<sup>125</sup> One error here will introduce abundance. A thousand other points of natural philosophy you may safely be ignorant of; but if you know not what man is, what reason is,

---

<sup>124</sup> See chap. ii. direct. 3.

<sup>125</sup> Ut Deum noris, etsi ignores et locum et faciem, sic animum tibi tuum notum esse oportet, etiam si ignores et locum et formam. Cicero 1. Tuscul.

what natural free-will is, and what the inferior sensitive faculties are, as to their uses, it will lay you open to innumerable errors. In the nature of man, you must see the foundation of his relations unto God: and if you know not those great relations, the duties of which must take up all our lives, you may easily foresee the consequents of such ignorance or error. So if you know not what God is, and what his relations to us are, so far as is necessary to our living in the duties of those relations, the consequents of your ignorance will be sad. If learned men be but perverted in their apprehensions of some one attribute of God, (as those that think his goodness is nothing but his benignity, or proneness to do good, or that he is a necessary agent, doing good *ad ultimum posse*, &c.) what abundance of horrid and impious consequents will follow!

*Direct.* III. Having soundly understood both these and other principles of religion, try all the subsequent truths hereby, and receive nothing as truth that is certainly inconsistent with any of these principles.<sup>126</sup> Even principles that are not of sense, may be disputed till they are well received; and with those that have not received them: but afterwards they are not to be called in question; for then you would never proceed nor build higher, if you will stand questioning all your grounds. Indeed no truth is inconsistent with any other truth: but yet when two dark or doubtful points are compared together, it is hard to know which

---

<sup>126</sup> Nulla erga Deos pietas est, nisi honesta de numine deorum ac mente opinio sit. Cicero pro Planc.

of them to reject. But here it is easy; nothing that contradicteth the true nature of God or man, or any principle, must be held.

*Direct. IV.* Believe nothing which certainly contradicteth the end of all religion. If it be of a natural or necessary tendency to ungodliness, against the love of God, or against a holy and heavenly mind and conversation, it cannot be truth, whatever it pretend.

*Direct. V.* Be sure to distinguish well betwixt revealed and unrevealed things: and before you dispute any question, search first whether the resolution be revealed or not: and if it be not, lay it by; and take it as part of your necessary submission, to be ignorant of what God would have you ignorant, as it is part of your obedience to labour to know what God would have you know. And when some things unrevealed are mixed in the controversy, take out those and lay them by, before you go any further, and see that the resolution of the rest be not laid upon them, nor twisted with them, to entangle the whole in uncertainty or confusion.<sup>127</sup> Thus God instructed Job, by convincing him of his ignorance, and showing him how many things were past his knowledge.<sup>128</sup> Thus Christ instructed Nicodemus about the work of regeneration, so as to let him know that though the necessity of it must be known, yet the manner of the Spirit's accesses to the soul cannot be known, John iii. 7, 8. And Paul in his

---

<sup>127</sup> Non ii sumus quibus nihil verum esse videatur; sed ii qui omnibus veris falsæ quædam adjuncta esse dicamus, tanta similitudine ut, &c. Cic. de Nat. Deor. p. 7.

<sup>128</sup> Job xxxviii-xli.

discourse of election takes notice of the unsearchable depths, and the creature's unfitness to dispute with God, Rom. ix. When you find any disputes about predetermination or predestination resolved into such points as these: Whether God do by physical, premoving influx, or by concurrence, or by moral operation *ut finis*, determine or specify moral acts of man? Whether a positive decree *quoad actum* be necessary to the negation of effects (as that such a one shall not have grace given him, or be converted or saved; that all the millions of possible persons, names, and things shall not be future)? What understanding, will, or power are formally in God? How he knoweth future contingents? with a hundred such like; then remember that you make use of this rule, and say with Moses, Deut. xxix. 29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things that are revealed unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of his law." There are many rare, profound discoveries much gloried of by the masters of several sects, of which you may know the sentence of the Holy Ghost, by that instance, Col. ii. 18, "Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." Reverently withdraw from things that are unrevealed, and dispute them not.

*Direct.* VI. Be a careful and accurate (though not a vain) distinguisher; and suffer not ambiguity and confusion to deceive you. Suspect every word in your question, and anatomize it, and agree upon the sense of all your common terms, before you

dispute with any adversary. It is not only in many words, but in one word or syllable that so much ambiguity and confusion may be contained, as may make a long dispute to be but a vain and ridiculous wrangling.<sup>129</sup> Is it not a ridiculous business to hear men dispute many hours about the *cur credis*, and into what faith is to be resolved; and in the end come to understand, that by *cur* one of them speaks of the *principium* or *causa veritatis*, and the other of the *principium patefactionis*, or the *evidentia veritatis*, or some other cause? And when one speaks of the resolution of his faith as into the formal object, and another into the subservient testimony or means, or into the proofs of divine attestation, or many other causes? Or to hear men dispute, Whether Christ died for all; when by "for" one man meaneth "for the benefit of all," and another means "in the place or stead of all, or for the sins of all as the procuring cause, &c.?" Yet here is but a syllable to contain this confusion! What a tedious thing is it to read long disputes between many papists and protestants, about justification, while by justification one meaneth one thing, and another meaneth quite another thing! He that cannot force every word to make a plain confession of its proper signification, that the thing intended may be truly discerned in the word, he will but deceive himself and others, with a wordy, insignificant dispute.

*Direct.* VII. Therefore be specially suspicious of metaphors;

---

<sup>129</sup> See my preface before the second part of the Saints' Rest, edit. 3, &c. A man of judgment shall hear ignorant men differ, and know that they mean one thing. And yet they themselves will never agree. L. Bacon, Ess. 3.

as being all but ambiguities till an explication hath fixed or determined the sense. It is a noisome thing to hear some dispute upon an unexplained metaphorical word, when neither of them have enucleated the sense, and when there are proper words enow.

*Direct.* VIII. Take special notice of what kind of beings your inquiry or disputation is, and let your terms be adapted and interpreted according to the kind of beings you dispute of. As if you be inquiring into the nature of any grace, as faith, repentance, obedience, &c. remember that it is *in genere moris*, a moral act; and therefore the terms are not to be understood as if you disputed about mere physical acts, which are considered but *in genere entis*. For that object which must essentiate one moral act, containeth many physical particles, which will make up many physical acts.<sup>130</sup> If you take such a man for your king, your commander, your master, your physician, &c. if you should at the bar, when you are questioned for unfaithfulness, dispute upon the word take, whether it be an act of the fantasy, or sense, or intellect, or will, &c. would you not be justly laughed at? So when you ask, What act faith or repentance is? which contain many particular physical acts. When you dispute of divinity, policy, law, war, &c. you must not use the same terms in the same sense, as when you dispute of physics, or metaphysics.

*Direct.* IX. Be sure in all your disputes that you still keep

---

<sup>130</sup> As I have showed in my Dispute of Saving Faith with Dr. Barlow, and of Justification.

distinguished before your eyes, the order of being, and the order of knowing: that the questions *de esse* lying undetermined in your way, do not frustrate all your dispute about the question *de cognoscere*. As in the question, Whether a man should do such or such a thing, when he thinketh that it is God's command? How far conscience must be obeyed? It must first be determined *de esse*, whether indeed the thing be commanded or lawful, or not? before the case can be determined about the obligation that followeth my apprehension. For, whatever my conscience or opinion say of it, the thing either is lawful or it is not: if it be lawful, or a duty, the case is soon decided; but if it be not lawful, the error of my conscience altereth not God's law, nor will it make it lawful unto me. I am bound first to know and then to do what God revealeth and commandedeth; and this I shall be bound to, whatever I imagine to the contrary; and to lay by the error which is against it.

*Direct. X.* Be sure when you first enter upon an inquiry or dispute, that you well discover how much of the controversy is verbal *de nomine*, and how much is material *de re*;<sup>131</sup> and that you suffer not your adversary to go on upon a false supposition, that the controversy is *de re*, when it is but *de nomine*. The difference between names and things is so wide, that you would think no reasonable man should confound them: and yet so heedless in this point are ordinary disputers, that it is a usual thing to make a great deal of stir about a controversy before they discern whether

---

<sup>131</sup> Non ex verbis res, sed ex rebus verba esse inquirenda, ait Myson. in Laert. p. 70. Bas. 1 Edit.

it be *de nomine* or *de re*. Many a hot and long dispute I have heard, which was managed as about the very heart of some material cause, (as about man's power to do good, or about the sufficiency of grace, or about justification, &c.) when the whole contest between the disputers was only or principally *de nomine*, and neither of them seemed to take notice of it. Be sure as soon as you peruse the terms of your question, to sift this thoroughly, and dispute verbal controversies but as verbal, and not as real and material. We have real differences enow: we need not make them seem more by such a blind or heedless manner of disputing.<sup>132</sup>

*Direct. XI.* Suffer not a rambling mind in study, nor a rambling talker in disputes, to interrupt your orderly procedure, and divert you from your argument before you bring it to the natural issue. But deceiving sophisters, and giddy-headed praters, will be violent to start another game, and spoil the chase of the point before you: but hold them to it, or take them to be unworthy to be disputed with, and let them go (except it be where the weakness of the auditors requireth you to follow them in their wild-goose chase). You do but lose time in such rambling studies or disputes.

*Direct. XII.* Be cautelous of admitting false suppositions; or at least of admitting any inference that dependeth upon them. In some cases a supposition of that which is false may be made, while it no way tends to infer the truth of it; but nothing must

---

<sup>132</sup> It is a noble work that Mr. Le Blanck of Sedan is about to this purpose, stating more exactly than hath yet been done all the controversies between us and the papists: which how excellently he is like to perform I easily conjecture by the Disputes of his upon Justification, &c. which I have seen.

be built upon that falsehood, as intimating it to be a truth. False suppositions cunningly and secretly worked into arguments, are very ordinary instruments of deceit.

*Direct.* XIII. Plead not uncertainties against certainties: but make certain points the measure to try the uncertain by. Reduce not things proved and sure to those that are doubtful and justly controverted; but reduce points disputable to those that are past doubt.

*Direct.* XIV. Plead not the darker texts of Scripture against those that are more plain and clear, nor a few texts against many that are as plain; for that which is interpreted against the most plain and frequent expressions of the same Scripture is certainly misinterpreted.

*Direct.* XV. Take not obscure prophecies for precepts. The obscurity is enough to make you cautelous how you venture yourself in the practice of that which you understand not: but if there were no obscurity, yet prophecies are no warrant to you to fulfil them; no, though they be for the church's good. Predictions tell you but *de eventu* what will come to pass, but warrant not you to bring it to pass. God's prophecies are oftentimes fulfilled by the wickedest men and the wickedest means: as by the Jews in killing Christ, and Pharaoh in refusing to let Israel go, and Jehu in punishing the house of Ahab. Yet many self-conceited persons think that they can fetch that out of the revelations or the prophecies of Daniel, that will justify very horrid crimes, while they use wicked means to fulfil God's prophecies.

*Direct. XVI.* Be very cautelous in what cases you take men's practice or example to be instead of precept, in the sacred Scriptures. In one case a practice or example is obligatory to us as a precept; and that is, when God doth give men a commission to establish the form or orders of his church and worship, (as he did to Moses and to the apostles,) and promiseth them his Spirit to lead them into all truth, in the matters which he employeth them in: here God is engaged to keep them from miscarrying; for if they should, his work would be ill done, his church would be ill constituted and framed, and his servants unavoidably deceived. The apostles were authorized to constitute church officers and orders for continuance; and the Scripture, which is written for a great part historically, acquaints us what they did (as well as what they said and wrote) in the building of the church, in obedience to their commission (at least in declaring to the world what Christ had first appointed). And thus if their practice were not obligatory to us, their words also might be avoided by the same pretences. And on this ground (at least) the Lord's day is easily proved to be of divine appointment and obligation. Only we must see that we carefully distinguish between both the words and practice of the apostles which were upon a particular and temporary occasion (and obligation) from those that were upon a universal or permanent ground.

*Direct. XVII.* Be very cautelous what conclusions you raise from any mere works of Providence. For the bold and blind exposition of these, hath led abundance into most heinous

sins: no providence is instead of a law to us; but sometimes and oftentimes Providence changeth the matter of our duty, and so occasioneth the change of our obligations (as when the husband dieth, the wife is disobliged, &c.) But men of worldly dispositions do so over-value worldly things, that from them they venture to take the measure of God's love and hatred, and of the causes which he approveth or disapproveth in the world. And the wisdom of God doth seem on purpose, to cause such wonderful, unexpected mutations in the affairs of men, as shall shame the principles or spirits of these men, and manifest their giddiness and mutability to their confusion. One year they say, This is sure the cause of God, or else he would never own it as he doth; another year they say, If this had been God's cause he would never have so disowned it: just as the barbarians judged of Paul when the viper seized on his hand. And thus God is judged by them to own or disown by his prospering or afflicting, more than by his word.

*Direct.* XVIII. In controversies which much depend on the sincerity or experience of godly men, take heed that you affect not singularity, and depart not from the common sense of the godly. For the workings of God's Spirit are better judged of by the ordinary tenor of them, than by some (real or supposed) case that is extraordinary.

*Direct.* XIX. In controversies which most depend on the testimony of antiquity, depart not from the judgment of the ancients. They that stood within view of the days of the apostles

could better tell what they did, and what a condition they left the churches in, than we can do. To appeal to the ancients in every cause, even in those where the later christians do excel them, is but to be fools in reverence of our forefathers' wisdom. But in points of history, or any thing in which they had the advantage of their posterity, their testimony is to be preferred.

*Direct. XX.* In controversies which depend on the experience of particular christians or of the church, regard most the judgment of the most experienced, and prefer the judgment of the later ages of the church before the judgment of less experienced ages (except the apostolical age, that had the greater help of the Spirit). An ancient, experienced christian or divine is more to be regarded in many points, which require experience, than many of the younger sort, that are yet more zealous and of quicker understanding and expression than the elder. So those that we call the fathers or ancients were indeed in the younger ages of the church, and we that are fallen into the later and more experienced age, have all the helps of the wisdom and experience of the ages that were before us: and therefore God will require at our hands an account of these greater talents which we have received! As it were unexcusable now in a physician that hath the help of such voluminous institutions, observations, and experiments of former ages, to know no more than those former times that had no such helps; so would it be as unexcusable for this present age of the church to be no wiser than those former ages. When Aquinas, Scotus, Ariminensis, and other

schoolmen, delivered the doctrine of christianity to the church in a dress so far different from Ignatius, Irenæus, Tertullian, Cyprian, or any of those former ages, they certainly thought that they had attained to a far greater excellency and accurateness in the knowledge of divinity than those their ancestors had attained. and whatever they swear in the Trent oath, of not expounding any Scripture otherwise than the fathers do, I doubt not but Suarez, and Vasquez, and others of their modern schoolmen, thought so too, and would have been loth to be accounted wise in the measure only of those ancients.<sup>133</sup> The later and elder ages of the church have had abundant experience, e. g. of the tendency of ambition and papal aspirings and usurpations; of the mischiefs of composing and imposing the popish missals and numerous ceremonies, and of their implicit faith, and their concealment of the Scriptures from the vulgar, and many such points; and if we are never the wiser for all this experience, we are the more unexcusable; and may be judged as the neglecters of our greater helps.

*Direct. XXI.* In controversies which depend most upon skill in the languages, philosophy, or other parts of common learning, prefer the judgment of a few that are the most learned in those matters, before the judgment of the most ancient, or the most godly, or of the greatest numbers, even whole churches, that are unlearned. In this case neither numbers, nor antiquity, nor

---

<sup>133</sup> Satis triumphat veritas si apud paucos bonosque accepta: nec indoles ejus est placere multis. Lipsius.

godliness will serve turn: but as one clear eye will see further than ten thousand that are purblind, so one Jerom or Origen may judge better of a translation, or the grammatical sense of a text, than a hundred of the other fathers could. One man that understandeth a language is fitter to judge of it, than a whole nation that understand it not. One philosopher is fitter to judge of a philosophical question, than a thousand illiterate persons. Every man is most to be regarded in the matters which he is best acquainted with.

*Direct.* XXII. In controversies of great difficulty, where divines themselves are disagreed, and a clear and piercing wit is necessary, regard more the judgment of a few acute, judicious, well-studied divines, that are well versed in those controversies, than of a multitude of dull and common wits that think to carry it by the reputation of their number. It is too certainly attested by experience, that judicious men are very few, and that the multitude of the injudicious that have not wit enough to understand them, nor humility enough to confess it, and to learn of them, have yet pride and arrogancy enough to contradict them, and often malice enough to vilify them. In such differences it is not only a sign of a wise man to be content with the approbation of a few, but also to have but few approvers (except where the injudicious do implicitly believe those few that are judicious). Commonly a very few that are wiser than the multitude, are fain to stand by, and compassionate not only the world but the church, and see the disease, and the easy remedy, and all in vain; while

they are but neglected or despised by the rest, that will not be made wiser by them.

*Direct.* XXIII. In all contentions hold close to that which all sides are agreed in; there is so much agreed on, even between the papists and the protestants, as would certainly save them all, if all of them did sincerely believe, love, and practise it; for they all confess that the whole canonical Scripture is true. Therefore be more studious sincerely to hold and improve those common truths which they all profess, than to oppose the particular opinions of any, further than that common truth requireth it. See that the articles of the common creed which all profess, be unfeignedly believed by you; and that the petitions in the Lord's prayer be sincerely and earnestly put up to God; and that the ten commandments be heartily and entirely obeyed; and then no error or difference will be damning to you.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.