

Directions to the Rich and Noble

A Sermon by Richard Baxter

Direct. 1. *Look upon this world and all things in it, with the fore-seeing eye of Faith and Reason, and value it but as it deserves:* And then you will neither be eager after it, nor too much delighted in it, nor puff up by it, nor will it so prevalently entice you to venture or neglect eternal things. Did you know and well consider but what an empty fading thing it is, you could never be satisfied with so poor a portion, nor quiet your souls till you had assurance or sound hopes of better things: Nor would you take such pleasure in childish trifles; nor debase yourselves, to be so inordinately employed, about such low and sordid matters, while God and your eternal happiness are laid by. You take not your selves for the basest of men, much less for bruits or idiots: O then do not make yourselves the basest, and do not unman yourselves and brutalise your immortal souls If you would be Rich, choose that which will make you Rich indeed: make sure of his favour that is the absolute Lord of all, and then you can want nothing, whatever you may be without. And if yet you thirst for worldly Riches, or inordinately Love them, and tenaciously keep them from your Masters use, remember that this discovered your disease; and therefore should mind you rather to cure it then to feed it. It is not money nor any thing in this world that will cure such an empty depraved soul. As *Seneca* saith, *if a sick man be carried about, whether in a bed of gold or a bed of wood, his disease is carried with him.* It is not a golden bed that will cure a diseased man: nor is it all the gold or honour in the world that will help such a deluded soul, as thinks this world will make him happy. Get but the cure of your Carnal minds, and a little will serve you. For it is your sinful fancy that would have much, and not your nature that needs much. He is not the poor man that hath but little; but he that would have more: Nor is he the Rich man that hath much, but he that is content with what he hath. If you pray but for your daily bread, be not such hypocrites as by the bent of your desires to cross your prayers. The nearest way to Riches, saith the Moralist, is the contempt of Riches; and saith the Christian, to be Rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which God hath promised all that Love him, *Jam. 2. 5.* The greatest Riches are got (proportionally) on the easiest terms and Loving the world will not procure it: but Loving God will procure the everlasting fruition of his Love. Millions love the world that miss of it: but no man misseth of God that Loveth him,

above the world. Buy not these gawds then at a dearer rate, and then you may have the Kingdom. If you have not enough, make sure of heaven and that will be enough for you: and get a cure for your diseased minds, which is easier and more profitable then to fulfil them. No man, saith *Seneca*, can *have* all the world: but he may have a mind that can contemn all the world. No man can have all that he will, but he may be content to be without it. The disease is within you, and there must be the Cure.

Direct. 2. *Be sure to fix with a serious faith upon the Invisible glory as your portion: and then look at all things in this world, as good or bad, as they respect your end:* and judge of them as they help or hinder you in the main. Nothing but a truly heavenly mind is the saving cure of an earthly mind. No man will rightly let go earth, till he have the powerful Light that hath shewed him the greater good, and given him a taste of the world to come. Had you not been strangers to God and heaven (in heart, whatever you were in tongue and fancy) you could never have so fallen in love with earth. None are so much disposed to travail into other Countries, as they that are fallen out with their own. Remember that you have not one penny or pennies worth in the world, but what you had from God, and must be accountable to God for; and must employ with an eye upon his will, and your salvation. I do not call you to cast away your Riches, but to see that you use all that ever you have, as will be most comfortable to you in your last review. I know, as *Seneca* saith, *He is a wise man that can make use of earthen vessels, as if they were all silver: and he is wise too, that can make use of silver vessels as if they were but earth.* but it's one thing to *Bear* Riches, and *Use* them for God, and another thing to *Enjoy* them with delight. I neither take the Monastics to be the only or the highest in perfection; nor yet do I condemn necessitated retirements. For I know it is hard to most to converse with God in tumults, and to hear the still voice of his Spirit, in the murmuring noise of a crowd: I know that the commons are usually more barren and fruitless then enclosures: and that the fruit-tree that groweth by the high-way side, shall have many a stone and cudgel thrown at it, which those that are in your Orchard scape. But still look to your end, and secure the main: *Dream* not that you have any full Propriety: Remember that you are Gods Stewards. Set therefore your Masters name and not your own upon every penny-worth you possess: Let *Holiness to the Lord* be written upon all. Possess nothing but what is Devoted to him, to be used as he would have you. Put him not off with scraps and leavings, that gave you all. So much as you save from him, you

lose, and worse than lose; and so much as you lose for him, and surrender to him, and improve for him, you save and more than save. For *Godliness with content is great gain*. And he that is *faithful in a little, shall be made ruler over much*. It's thus that all things are sanctified with the Saints.

Direct. 3. *Think not that your Riches are given you to fulfil the least inordinate desire of the flesh: Or that you may take ever the more sensual ease or pleasure, if you had all the world:* But remember that better wages obligeth you to more work: And therefore rise as early, and labour as hard in your own employment (the more for the common good, the better) yea and deny your flesh as much, as if you had but food and raiment. If you have much, *give* the more, and *use* the more, but *enjoy* never the more; and let not your sensual desires find ever the more provision: A rich man that is wise, and a faithful Steward; may live in as much self-denial, and labour as hard, and humble his flesh as much, as he hat hath but his daily bread. God sent you not in provision for his enemy: All that is made the food of sin, or that doth not help you up to God, is employed contrary to the end that you received it for.

Direct. 4. *Be sure that you deal with the world as a Deceiver:* Be very suspicious of all your Riches, and Honours, and Delights. Feed not on these luscious summer fruits too boldly, or without fear. Remember how many millions the world hath deceived before you. None come to Hell but those that are cheated thither by the flesh and the world. With what exceeding vigilance then have you need to deal with such a dangerous deceiver; when all your happiness, and all your hopes is at the stake? and if you be deceived, you are undone: Its force is nothing so perilous as its fraud.

They that have to do with such a cheater in a case of such everlasting consequence, should be suspicious of everything, and trust the world as little as is possible.

As *Bucholcer* was meant to say when his friends extolled him, *terreri se etiam laudationibus illis, ut fulminibus*; So should you possess your Honours and Riches in the world. And as the same *Bucholcer* said to *Hubner* when he went to be a Courtier: *Fidem diabolorum tibi commendo: credere & contremiscere: viz. promissionibus aulicis credere sed cautè, sed timidè*: So should you be affected to the world: Trust and tremble; or rather Trust it not all: Nay, have you not been deceived by it already? And will you be more foolish then the silly fish that will scarcely take the hook that he was once pricked by; or then the silly fowls that will be afraid of the net that once they have escaped from, and of the Kite that once hath

had them in her claws: *Tranquillas etiam naufragus horret aquas*. Nay at the *present*, if you take any heed of your souls, you may easily perceive what a clog the world is: We are commonly better when we have least of it, or are leaving it, then when we have it at our will. A man may see the utmost visible part of the earth, and the Horizon at once; but if he look on the earth that is near him, he cannot see the heavens at that time, much less the Zenith. Our *Own Riches*, our *Present Riches*, our *Nearest* and *Dearest* temporal good, is the greatest averter of the mind from heaven. We are commonly like *Antigonus* sick soldier that fought well because he looked to die: but grew a Coward as soon as he was cured. So that most of us have need of the counsel which the Bishop of *Colen* gave the Emperor *Sigismund* that asked him, *What he should do to be happy?* [*Live*, saith he, *as you promised to do, when you were last sick of the stone and gout.*] Even the most notorious sinners seem Saints when they see the world is leaving them. And doth not common reason tell us that that which will so move us then, should prevail with us as much before, when we are certain all our life time that this parting time will come? Indeed the creature as it is annexed unto God and subservient to him, may have an answerable trust and love: The smallest twig that is fast to the tree, may help you out of the water if you lay hold of it; But if it be broken from the tree, it will deceive you, though you hold it never so fast. O therefore look for surer footing: A handful of water will not save you from being drowned. Build on the Rock of ages, that never faileth them that trust him; though yet the blind unbelieving world, be more distrustful of him, then of that which they have tried is not to be trusted. A wise man should know him to be trusty that he trusteth in a case that concerneth his salvation. And true Believers and none but they may say with *Paul*, *I know whom I have trusted*, 2 Tim. 1. 12.

Direct. 5. *Let it be your daily care to keep clear accompts between God and you, of your Receiving and Disbursements.* It's time to bewail the expense of that, if it be but a groat, that you cannot give a comfortable account of. Whenever you have several ways before you; for the laying out of your money or your time, let the Question be seriously put to your heart, which of these ways shall I wish at death and judgement that I had expended it? And let that be chosen as the way.

Direct 6. *Be sure to watch those thieves that would rob you of your Masters talents that should be employed for his use.* And will you give me leave to be plain with you in instancing in a few of them.

1. How many ungodly Gentlemen do waste that in a thing that they call, Great House-keeping, (that is, the inordinate provisions for the flesh, and a freedom for men to play the gluttons or drunkards in their houses) which might have been expended to their greater honour and commodity?

2. How many be there that spend that in unnecessary feasting of their friends that might have been far more advantageously improved?

3. How many be there that spend more in the excess of one or two suits of apparel, then would have sufficed to the relief of a distressed family for a twelve month's space?

4. How many be there that lay out more in needless buildings, walks and gardens, then would save the lives of an hundred or a thousand of the poor, that perish by hunger, (or by diseases bred by want:) They will not spare from their own superfluities, to supply the necessities of their Brethren? Is this loving their neighbours as themselves, and doing as they would be done by?

5. How many be there that spend more needlessly on horses; dogs, or hawks, and cast away more at one game at Dice, or at a Cock-fight, or an Horse-race, then would keep a poor Scholar at the University. (But I hope the Parliament hath cured this.)

6. But the principal and least lamented abuse of Riches, is *Children's excessive portions*; For children are as a *surviving self*: Men think themselves but half dead, while their children live: And therefore as *self* is that Idol of the wicked, to whom all the creatures of God are sacrificed, so they employ all one way or other for themselves as long as they live, and then leave it when they die, to themselves in their posterity. When they have like unfaithful Stewards, detained Gods due from him, as long as they live, they leave it to their children to detain it after them. Mistake me not: I persuade you not to be unnatural. Your children must be provided for if you be not worse than Infidels. But I tell you by what Rules I should proceed, were it my case. 1. If I had never such ungodly children, I should provide for them, if I could, their daily bread, and leave them enough for food and raiment, unless they were such as ought not to live, or be maintained. 2. If I had better children, that were likely to use what they had for God I should leave them all that could be spared from more necessary uses, that their lives might be more free from care, and they might be serviceable to God with their wealth when I am dead: And the more confident I were that they would be

faithful Stewards of it, the more I should commit to their trust. 3. I should not take it to be my Duty to level my posterity with the poorer sort, unless some special Call of God or extraordinary public exigency did require it, so much for the Affirmative, What I should do for them. But (for the Negative, What I should not do for them)

1. I should think that in a case of some extraordinary Necessities to the Church or Commonwealth, I was bound to alienate all from my posterity, at least, except their food and raiment.

2. I should still in the General conclude that all must be for God, as he is the Owner of me and all; and therefore I should enquire which way it is his will that I should dispose of it. And where my conscience tells me he would have me use it, I should do it, though to the denial of myself or my posterity.

3. I should always prefer the Public Good of Church or Commonwealth, before the personal wealth of my posterity, and therefore should provide for them in a subservience to the greater good, and not prefer their wealth before it.

4. I should think my self-bound to expend all that I had, in that way as might most promote the principal Interest of my Lord, unless in cases where he had tied me by any special Obligation to a more private expense of it.

5. I should judge that the ordinary Necessities of the Church and poor are so great, as should command me very much to abate of full provisions for my posterity. And for the proportion, I should labour to discern, whether the times were such, and my posterity such, as that the stock of my estate would be more serviceable to God in their hands, or otherwise laid out. For the times and quality of children may make a great alteration in the case.

6. Had I an only son that were notoriously ungodly, I would leave him no more than food and raiment, if I had ten thousand pound a year, but would give it to God for the works in which I might promote his interest. My Reasons are many, which I have touched upon in another discourse. As, I such as forfeit their very daily bread, should not have any more than their daily bread: But such notorious wicked ones forfeit their daily bread. He that will not labour, saith *Paul*, let him not eat, *2 Thes. 3*. Much more in such greater cases. 2. According to Gods ancient Law, *Deut. 21*. They forfeit their lives, and the parents there were to cause them to be put to death, that was obstinately unreformed. And is the case so altered thinks

you now, as that you are bound to make such children rich, and that parents then were bound to put to death? 3. I am not bound to give unnecessary provisions to an enemy of God, to misemploy it, and strengthen him to do mischief, and be more able to oppress Gods servants, or oppose his Truth, or serve the Devil.

I for bear to mention the proportions of men's estates, that I think they are ordinarily bound to alienate, but shall leave you to Prudence and the General Rules, lest I seem to you to go beyond my line. But in general I must say, that it is a selfish and an heinous error, to think that men should lay up all that they can gather for their posterity, and all to leave them rich and honourable, and put off God, and all charitable uses, with the crumbs that fall from their Tables, or with some inconsiderable driblets. If the Rich man in *Luke 18*, Might have followed Christ on such terms as these, he would hardly have gone sorrowfully from him.

1. By this men shew that they prefer their children before God.

2. And that they prefer them before the Church, and Gospel, and the Common-wealth: When an Herrick Heathen would have confessed that his estate and children, and his life were not too good to be sacrificed to his Country; as the case of the *Decii* and many other Romans that gave their lives for their Country witnesseth.

3. These men prefer the worldly riches of their children before the souls of men: When they have so many Calls to employ their wealth to the furthering of men's salvation, and put by all that their children may be rich.

4. They prefer their children's Riches before their own everlasting good: Or else they would not deny themselves the Reward of a holy improvement of their talents, and cast themselves upon the terrible sentence that is past upon unprofitable servants, and all to leave their children wealthy.

5. They prefer the bodily prosperity of their children before their spiritual: Or else they would not be so eager to leave them those Riches, which Christ hath told them is such a snare, and hindrance to men's salvation.

6. They would teach all the world the easy art of never doing good in life or death. For if all must follow their principles, then the Parents must keep almost all for their children, and the children must do the like by their children, and so it must run on to all generations, that their posterity may be kept as rich as their predecessors. 7. How unlike is this to the ancient

Saints; and how unlike to the general precepts of self-denial, and doing good to all while we have time, &c. which Christ hath left us in the Gospel. Enable your children to be serviceable in the Church and Common-wealth, as far as you may; but prefer them not before the Church or Common-wealth. Wrong not God, nor your own souls, nor the souls or bodies of other men, to procure your children to be rich. It will not ease your pains in hell, to think that you have left your children Rich on earth. Its few of the great and noble that are called. They will have an easier way to heaven in a mean estate. Their Nurses milk contented them when first they lived in the world: and will nothing but Lands, and Lordships, and superlative matters now content them? When they have a shorter time to use it? Poor men can sing as merrily as the Rich, and sleep as quietly, and live as comfortably, and die as easily: *Cantabit vacuus*— they are free from abundance of your cares and fears. The Philosopher that had received a great gift of Gold from a Prince, sent it back to him the next morning, and told him that he loved no such gifts as would not let him take his sleep (for thinking what to do with it.)

Direct. 7. Lastly, *Study the Art of doing Good, and making your selves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when you go hence you may be received into the everlasting habitations.* Remember how much of your Religion doth consist in the Devoting of your selves and all to God, and improving his stock, and being Rich in good works, ready to distribute and communicate, *1 Tim. 6. 18.* And how much will be laid upon this at Judgement, *Matth. 25.* God doth not call upon you for your charity, as if he would be beholden to you, or needed anything that you can give him; but because he will thus difference his hearty followers from complementing hypocrites. The poor you shall have always with you: and the Church shall always want your help, and Christ will be still distressed in his members, to try the reality of men's professions, whether they love him above all, or else dissemble with him, and whether they have anything that they think too good for him. It is a certain mark of a hypocrite, to have anything in this world, so dear to you that you cannot spare it for Christ.

Remember then that it is your own concernment: If you would be ever the better for all your wealth, nay if you would not be undone by it, study how you may be most serviceable to God with it. *Cicero* could say that *to be Rich is not to possess much, but to use much.* And *Seneca* could rebuke them that *so study to increase their wealth that they forget to use it.* If

really you be Christians heaven is your portion and your end: And if so, you can love nothing else, nor use anything else, rationally, but as a means to attain that end. See therefore in all your expenses, how you attain or promote your end. Alas men are so busily building in their way, that they shew us that they take not themselves for travellers: They are so familiar with the world, that they shew us they are not strangers, but at home. They make their garments so fine, and lay such mountains on their backs, that we see they mean not to be serious Runners in the Christian race. The thorny cares that choke Christ's seed, do show that they are barren, and nigh to burning. If you gather *Riches for your selves*, (*Luke 12. 21.*) you are standing pits: If you are Rich to God, you will be running springs, or cisterns. There is a blessed Art of sending all your Riches to Heaven before you, if you could learn it, and were willing to be happy at those rates: It is not for your Riches that God will either condemn or save you; but for the Abasing or improving them. Though *Lazarus* was a beggar, yet *Abraham* had been rich, whose bosom he was in. *Rich men must know*, saith *Ambrose*, *that the fault is not in Riches, but in them that know not how to use them*, *Nam divitiae ut impedimenta sunt im/probis, ita bonis sunt adjuncta virtutum*. O that you could but be sensible of the difference, betwixt them that can say at last, [*We have used our stock for the service of our Lord: We studied his Will and Interest, and accordingly employed all that we had in the world*] and them that must say, [*We gave now and then an alms to the poor; but for the substance of our estates, we spent it carnally for the flesh, to bear up our pomp and greatness in the world, and then we left it to our children to do the like when we were dead.*] There is as wide a difference between the end of these two ways, as there is betwixt Heaven and Hell: And surely the way is connected to the end. Think not either that you can serve God and Mammon, or that you may live to the world, and die to God. When one was asked whether he had rather be *Craesus* or *Socrates*, he answered that he had rather be *Craesus* while he lived and *Socrates* when he came to die: But dream not you of such a choice. *Gal. 6. 7, 8. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: If you sow to the flesh, of the flesh you shall reap corruption: but if you sow to the Spirit, of the Spirit you shall reap everlasting life.*]

And this much more let me add, that if you intend your wealth for God, you must not think of evil getting it: For God will not accept a sacrifice that is got by falsehood, rapine or injustice. Nay if you intended it indeed for God, you would not dare to procure it by sin. For

God needeth not fraud, perfidiousness or injustice, to promote his service. *Pietas sua federa servat*. As Austinaith, *Ream linguam non faci, nisi rea mens*: So I say here. Your mind is first guilty of denying God, whatever you pretend, when you dare thus by your deeds deny him. Yea let me add, that so far should you be from yielding to any temptation to be covetous, for God, for your family, or any good end that may be offered you, that you should make an advantage of such temptations, to watch the world and your deceitful hearts the more narrowly hereafter. And if in *all* temptations to worldliness, you could turn them to a gain and duty, and over-shoot the tempter in his bow, it were a point of singular zeal and Prudence. When he would put any covetous motion into your mind, or work it into your hands, give then more liberally, or do more good then you did before. Let this be all that the deceitful flesh, and world shall get by you:

I know that flesh and blood will stand in your way with abundance of dissuasive, and make you believe, that this so plain and great a duty is no duty. In the verbal part of godliness it would allow God but little: but in the more costly practical part, much less. Sometime it will tell you that men are so naught that they deserve not your charity: But Christ deserveth it: give it therefore to him Sometime it will tell you of men's thankfulness: but *satis est dedisse*; you have done your duty: God accepteth it: Other men's thankfulness, is not your Reward. You are more unthankful your selves to God. You are called to imitate him that causeth his Sun to shine and his rain to fall on the just and on the unjust, and that daily bestoweth his mercies on the unthankful. Sometime it will tell you of the uncertainty of reaching the end of your Charity: That if you maintain Scholars to Learning they may prove ungodly: if you leave any considerable gift to pious uses, sacrilegious and rapacious hands may alienate it. But you are sure of succeeding in your ultimate end, which is the pleasing of God and your own salvation: It is not lost to *you* if it be to others. Cast your bread upon the waters; if you cannot *trust* God, you cannot *obey* him, Do *your* part, and leave *his* part to himself. It's your part to Give; and its Gods part to succeed it for the attainment of the end He that is worst is likeliest to fail: And whether think you is better, God or you? And which should be more suspected. He is unworthy the name of a servant of God that will run no hazard for him. Venter your charity in a way of duty, or pretend not to be charitable. Will you not sow your Masters corn, till you are certain of a plenteous increase? And do you think that he will take this for a good account? This is the foolish excuse that Christ hath told you shall have a

terrible sentence: you will hide Gods talent for fear of losing it; but wo to such unprofitable servants.

Sometime the flesh will tell you that you may want your selves, or your posterity at least; and that you were best gather till your stock arise to so much or so much, and then God shall have some. A fair bargain! Lust like ungodly men by their Repentance and Conversion; they will sin till they are old, and then they will turn. But few turn that delay with such resolutions. If God have not right to all, he hath right to none. If he has right to all, will you give him none but your leavings? A swine will let another eat when his belly is full. What if you are never richer, will you never do good therefore with what you have?

And for the impoverishing of yourself, if you fear being a loser by God, you may keep your Riches as long as you can, and try how you can save yourself and them. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance that he possesseth. Do not imagine that you need more than you do. If Monastics think it their perfection to be wilfully poor, and *Seneca* thought it the *Cynicks* wisdom, *quod effecit nequid sibi eripi posset*; you may much more rejoice in such an estate if God bring you to it, by or for well-doing. You live in dangerous times: Wars and thieves may soon level your estates; Can there be greater wisdom then to send it all to heaven, and lay it up with God, and put it into the surest hands; and put it to the only usury. As it is the honour of God the first mover, *omnia movere ipse non motus*; So it is the honour of the greatest Benefactors, *omnia dare nihil habentes*; He that hath it to *Give*, hath it more transcendently, then he that hath it but to *Use*. He that hath most hath most care, and trouble, and envy, and danger, and the greatest reckoning. Neither Poverty nor Riches, was the wise man's wish, but *convenient food*. *Optimus pecuniae modus est, qui nec in paupertatem cadit, nec procul à paupertate discedit. Sen.* No man doth dissemble, lie, oppress, defraud for love of Poverty; but thousands do it for love of Riches. *Neminem vidi tyrannidem gerere propter Paupertatem, plurimos vero propter divitias*, saith the *Cynick*, citante *Stob.* Poverty is one of the cheapest medicines for the mind, and Riches a dear deceit. A Philosopher calls Poverty a *self-taught virtue*, and Riches a *vice to be acquired with great labour and diligence*: Poverty is a Natural Philosophy: an effectual doctrine of temperance: and Riches a Nursery of Pride, voluptuousness and every vice. And *Paul* comes near it, and speaketh more cautiously, yet home enough, that *The love of money is the root of all evil, 1 Tim. 6. 10.* And therefore is itself a transcendent evil.

Sweet healthful Temperance is cheap, and may be maintained without any great revenues: it is killing luxury, excess and pride that are so dear, and require so much for their maintenance. Our journey is not of such small moment, nor our way so fair, nor our day so long nor our strength and patience so great, as to encourage us to load ourselves with things unnecessary. Christian living is daily sighting; and we use not to fight with our Riches on our backs, but for them. He that swimmeth with the greatest load is likeliest to sink. Men fancy that evil in a low estate which else they would not feel; and when they have picked a causeless quarrel with it, and undeservedly fallen out with it, they speak abusively of it, and of God himself for casting it upon them. Men love Riches so well, because they love sin so well. Did poverty accommodate men's vices, and feed and satisfy their sinful lusts as well as Riches, it would be loved as well. And if Riches did starve up luxury and voluptuousness as much as Poverty, they would be as much abhorred. Few men speak highly of Honours, or Riches, or Pleasures at the last; nor hardly of a low or suffering state. And the last judgement is commonly the wisest.

Let not therefore the fear of Poverty deter you from good works. Yea rather give speedily, and do good while you have it, before all be gone and you be disabled. If you have no pity on others, have some on your souls. Give not all your Lands and wealth to your flesh and your posterity: Give some of it to your souls, by giving it to God. Shall your bodies have it, and your souls have none, or but a little.

Of any kind of covetousness, there is none more plausibly pretended against works of Charity, then that of some Ministers, that can spare no money, because their Libraries are yet unfurnished with many Books which they would fain have. Yet here we must see, that greater works be not for this omitted.

Yea more, let me tell you all, and beseech you to consider it: It is your duty even to pinch your flesh, and spare it from your back and belly, that you may have wherewithal to do good. Its no thanks to you to relieve others out of that which you need not your selves: and to give God that which your flesh can spare. Such liberality may stand with little suffering or self-denial; and therefore will be but a poor proof of your grace. Had I ten thousand pound a year, I should think it my duty for all that, to pinch my flesh, that I might spare as much of it as is possible for God. *David* would not offer that to God which cost him nothing, *2 Sam. 24. 24*. If you fare the hardliner, and go the plainer in your attire, and deny yourselves that

which is for any needless pomp or ostentation, or splendour in the world; that you may have so much the more to do good with; you deal then like good husbands for God and your souls, and faithful Stewards. Why should a covetous Miser pinch his flesh more to gather Riches for himself and his posterity, then you should do to gather it for God, and to expend it on the Church and poor? Be as frugal as they; but not to the same end; so you use it for God and your poor Brethren, an honest parsimony and gathering is a duty; and such an holy covetousness is so far from condemnable, that it is the truest Charity, which God and all wise men will most applaud. I do not mean only to deny your flesh in gross excesses, but to pinch it by a just frugality and abstinence: And yet you shall not say that I am drawing you to extremes. I would not have you so far pinch your flesh as to disable it for duty, but to deny it whatsoever doth not some way help it for duty, that we may not feed our own unnecessary delights, though with a seeming *decorum* & moderation, while so many about us are pinched with the want of necessities, and so many public excellent works are calling for our help. The flesh is to be tamed, and humbled, and brought in subjection, and scanted when greater things require it, but not to be destroyed and made unserviceable. And for Delight, at least learn of an Heathen how to esteem of it. What remains now Gentlemen, but that you be up and doing, and look about you where you may have the best bargain to lay out your money on for God and for your souls? Stay not till the Market is over, till thieves have robbed you, till God in judgement have impoverished you; till mere necessity does constrain you to part with that which you cannot keep; or till the souls or bodies that need your help are removed from your sight. Seek after an object for your Alms as diligently as beggars seek the Alms; you have more cause; for you get more by Giving, then they do by Receiving: If you believe not this, you believe not Christ; and so are Infidels.

The sum of my Advice is, that as men that are drawing near to their account, and love Christ in his members, and believe the promise of Reward, you would Devote your selves and your estates to Christ, and study to do good, and make it your daily trade and business, as men that are *zealous of Good works, and created to walk in them, (Tit. 2. 14. Eph. 2. 10.)* and not as dropping a little upon the by. Say not that you have not wealth, or interest, or opportunity; The Rich have full opportunities: The poor have their two mites, or their cup of cold water to give to a Disciple. And he that hath neither may have a *Will* to give thousands a year: And this is our comfort that have but little, that *[if there be first a willing mind, it is*

accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.] 2 Cor. 8. 12. But where [there is a readiness to will, there will also be a performance out of that which you have] if you be sincere, Vers. 11. (I give you not these passages of strangers to Christ, as if his Doctrine needed any such patches; but as imagining that the temper of those I speak to, may need such a double testimony, and to see the Book of Nature as well as of Grace: and to let you understand, how inexcusable a Professed Christian is that is worse than an Infidel.)

I have been long, and yet I would I had done. I have taught you, and yet I fear lest you have not learned. I have told you what you knew before, (unless it be because you will not know it;) and yet have more need to hear it, then a thousand things that you never knew. I have set you an easy Lesson, hard to be learned. Were but your senses Rational, or were your Will but dis-engaged and morally Free, the work were done, and that would be learnt in an hour, that the Church & Common-wealth might rejoice in till the Sun shall be no more. O had we but such Princes, Nobles and Gentlemen, as were thus Zealous and Studious of Good works, and wholly Devoted and Dedicated unto God, what a Resemblance should we have of Heaven or Earth? How then would our Princes and Nobles be both Loved and Honoured, when their Addictedness to God did make them so Divine? How Honourable then would our Parliaments be, and how cheerfully should we flock together for their Election? How dear would our Judges and country Magistrates be to all that have anything of piety or humanity in them. *Kings then would reign in Righteousness, and Princes Rule in judgement; and a man should be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary Land: And the eyes of them that see should not be dim, and the ears of them that hear should hearken; the heart also of the rash should understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers should be ready to speak elegantly.] Isa. 32. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.* What help then should Ministers have in their work, and the souls of all the people for their happiness! And what a shaking would Satan's Kingdom feel? Then neither seducers should have this pretence, nor the seduced this temptation as now they have to call their various Models of Republics, by such splendid names, and to think Christ Reigns when they Reign; or that it is the only Government, to have all to be Governors, or to have the greatest Liberty to be bad. No forms will reform us and heal our maladies, till we are healed and reformed within. Lead will

not be Gold, what form so ever you mould it into. And though some ways may be more effectual to restrain the evil, and improve the good, that is among them, yet still the wicked will do wickedly. The *Swordfish* and the *Thresher* would be the Tormentors of *Leviathan*, and God himself would be impatient of his Tyranny. And his Brother would mend the matter, who by giving the Power to the vast tumultuous Ocean itself, may find that his Republic is not only *inconsistent with a Clergy* (an high commendation) but may possibly be as injurious to his Moral Honesty, as any other sort of Tyranny: and might have learned of his chiefest Master, *Seneca*, (*de Tranquil. Anim.*) that the free City of *Athens* could less endure *Socrates* then the Tyrants, and did put him to death, whom *they* had tolerated. Gentlemen, for the Lords sake, for your souls sake, for the Churches and the Gospels sake, for your Countries sake, and the spiritual and corporal good of thousands, awake now from your sloth and selfishness, from your Ambition, Voluptuousness and sordid Worldliness, and give up your selves and all that you have to God by Christ, and to the Common Good, and make the best of all your faculties and interest, for the high and noble Ends of Christians: And convince all self-conceited founders or troublers of the Common-wealth, that you have hit the way of a true Reformation, without any alteration of the form, by correcting your selves the principal Materials. And let them see by your seeking the wealth of all, that your form is as truly a Common-wealth as theirs, and that they absurdly appropriate the Title to their own. If you deny us this, on you shall lie the blame and shame, and not on our want of a Popular form. But because I have gone so far with you by persuasion, (though yet I doubt whether indeed you will be persuaded I shall not leave you till I have added the rest part of my task, which is to set some *Rules* and *Matter* for Good works before you, that if you are but willing, you may set your money to the happiest usury, and that upon the best security.

1. (For General Rules) Aim at no lower an ultimate End in your Charity, then the Pleasing of God, and move from no lower a first moral Principle then the Love of God within you. Seek not *self* while you seem to Deny it. Give and do good to Christ in his servants.

2. Consider therefore of men's Relations to Christ, and understand where his Interest lyeth in the world. Avoid both their extremes, that would have you do good to none but Saints, and that would have you do it to all alike. As God hath a special Love to his children, and yet doth Good to all, his mercy being over all his works; and as he is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that Believe; so must you Love all men as men, and Saints as Saints; and

do Good to all men, but especially to them of the household of faith, *Gal. 6. 10*. The New command of special Love must not be thought to abrogate, the old Commandment of common Love, even of Loving our neighbour as our selves. You must do Good to a Disciple in the name of a Disciple: and to a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, *Mat. 10. 42*. And yet take the wounded man for your neighbour, that you see lie in your way, *Luke 10. 30*. I know the Serpentine seed, had rather you would kick against the Pricks, and tread down Christ's interest, then there to lay out your greatest Charity. But it's God that you have to reckon with, who judgeth not as they. The Philosopher being asked, *Why all men were more ready to give to the halt and blind, then to Philosophers, answered, that They thought they might come to be halt and blind themselves, but were never like to be Philosophers*: So I may say of many that would be content that you feed the common poor with bread, but the Disciples of Christ with stones. They think they may be poor themselves, but they are never like to be Christ's Disciples: Nay some of them (such as *Clem.* writes in his mock *fides divina*) will persuade you that it's a sottish thing to conceive that any have Christ's Spirit now, that work not Miracles, and that he hath no Church, Ministry or Saints, that is, that Christianity is not the right Religion, unless it had present Miracles to warrant it. And then you might be excused rather for your un-charitableness to it, then for your Charity. But wisdom is justified of all her children: And the mouths of her enemies will be quickly stopped: and they shall then know that Christ is Lord and Judge, without either faith or further Miracles.

3. When you have two Good works before you, prefer the Greater, and choose not the less.

4. *Caeteris Paribus*, let Works of Spiritual and everlasting concernment, be preferred, to those that are merely temporal.

5. And let Works for the Public Good, of Church or Common-wealth be preferred before private Works.

6. Let God have All in one way or other: even that which your selves and families receive: Take it but as your daily bread to support you in his service. Do not limit God, or tie him to any part. Take heed of reserving anything from him, or of halving with him, as *Ananias* and *Saphira*. He deserveth and he expecteth all. That which he hath not, you have not, but Satan hath it. You lose it, if you return it not to him.