

A
T R E A T I S E
A G A I N S T

Detraction,

I N

Ten Sections.

By the Reverend

Mr. Andrew Le Mercier,

Pastor of the French Church at *Boston* in
New-England.



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To the Elders, Deacons and all
the Heads of Families of the French
Church of Boston in New-England:

Gentlemen, and most honoured & dear Brethren

WE read in the Third Chapter of the Book of *Exra*, that the *Jews* that returned from the *Babylonian* Captivity “shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the Foundation of the House of the Lord was laid. But many of the Priests and Levites and chief of the Fathers who were ancient Men, that had seen the first House, when the Foundation of this House was laid before their Eyes, wept with a loud Voice, and many shouted aloud for Joy; so that the People could not discern the noise of the shout of Joy, from the noise of the weeping of the People: For the People shouted with a loud shout, & the noise was heard afar off”. One observes two very strong and contrary Passions in these Words, a bitter Sorrow, and a very great Joy. Indeed the building of the Temple of GOD, afforded just and equal Reasons for both.

This second House wanted the largeness, the Ornaments and several other Advantages that were seen in the former built by *Solomon*; so that there was occasion for mourning: But on the other hand, as by the Mercies and Blessings of GOD and the Protection of their Conquerors, whose Heart GOD had wonderfully turned and melted, they were restored to all their religious Liberties, as Prophets were sent to them to encourage them in their Work, by telling them that the Glory of this second House, was to exceed that of the former, by the coming of the *Messiah* into this his Temple, as the pure Service of GOD was set up again according to the divine Platform of the Law, they had just and great Reasons to praise the Lord with a loud, joyful and thankful Voice.

This is our very Case, *most dear Brethren*, when we consider the fiery Persecution of the Churches of GOD in our native Country, the destruction of his Sanctuaries, his Rod, resting so heavily and so long upon us, we cannot but be affected as *Jeremiah* the Prophet, when he foresaw and foretold the Ruin of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, *Chap 9*. Our Eyes then must need be turned into Rivers of Waters to weep Night and Day the Desolation of the Daughter of our People; but when from that sad Spectacle we cast our Eyes towards the Mercies of GOD, when we consider how graciously he hath been pleased to give us Places of Refuge, and after a Flood of Miseries, preceeded by a Flood of Sins, he hath vouchsafed to afford us in foreign Places, the comfort of serving Him, both according to his Word, and the Dictates of our Consciences,

sciences, and to send us a Branch of Olive by the divine Dove, the *Holy Spirit*, the Comforter ; we may, nay, we should praise him, bless him, and rejoice in him. That made me chuse for the Text of the first Sermon that I preach'd in this House of Prayer of ours, built soon after my arrival here, those Words of the same *Ezra*, in the 6th Chapter 16th Verse, *And the Children of Israel, the Priests and the Levites, and the rest of the Children of the captivity, kept the Dedication of this House of GOD with joy.*

Let us never forget, I beseech you in the Name of the Lord, as Ambassador of Christ, as Messenger of Peace and good Tidings, his unspeakable, undeserved Favours : How we have happily fled from Persecution, found acceptance before the People of this Land ; how, when we were Strangers, they have taken us in ; how several have contributed towards the building of our Place of Worship ; how the pious and reverend Ministers have readily joined with us on our Fast Days, to implore for and with us, GOD's Forgiveness and Peace for the remainders of the faithful in *France* ; how the honourable the General Court have cheerfully admitted us into the great and valuable Privileges which they enjoy themselves as *Englishmen*, by their Act of *Naturalization of Protestant Foreigners*, and their favourable Answer to our Petition ; how GOD has not only fed and cloathed you, but even granted to some of you considerable Estates, having after that manner really and literally fulfilled this Promise of Christ

in the 19th Chapter of *Matthew*; Every one that hath forsaken Houses or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my names sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and inherit everlasting Life. In order to obtain the second and most valuable part of the Promise, you are to make a holy use of the fulfilment of the first, by dedicating your Riches to the Glory of his Name, the relief of the Poor, the service of his Church.

Let us be thankful and ready to do any good Service to those that have so kindly entertained us.

Let us take care not to give them any Offence by our bad Conduct and vicious Lives. Let us on the contrary, set before them holy Examples, that they may have reason not to repent their Kindness towards us,

Let us be animated with a holy Zeal for GOD's Honour. It is the misfortune of the *Roman Catholics* to have a Zeal without Knowledge; it is the Sin of most *Protestants*, to have Knowledge without Zeal; we shall be virtuous and happy if we have both together. Having received so much at GOD's Hands, we shall be without excuse if we do not perform our Duties to GOD and to Men, to our Father and Brethren.

For my own part, I shall be exceeding glad, if by this little Treatise, I can contribute something to the Glory of GOD and to Edification of you, and others of the English Nation.

DEDICATION.

I have dedicated it to you, *Gentlemen and most dear Brethren*, as a Token of my Gratitude for the several Expressions of your good Will to me, during all the Time that I have been your Pastor. You have not despised my Youth, when I first came among you ; you have since excused my Infirmities, and as I did the same in respect to yours, it has pleased our Saviour, the Head of his Church, to favour us with an uninterrupted Peace and Union in our Church for the almost eighteen Years, that I have preached the Word of Salvation to you. By that blessed Peace, our Flock tho' exceeding small, hath subsisted, and even is enlarged by the addition of some who were once the Opposers of our Doctrine, I mean *Roman Catholics*, several of whom have been here converted by the preaching of GOD's Word ; and also by the addition of some Protestants of other Nations.

That you may prosper and grow in Grace, is the hearty Prayer to GOD of

Gentlemen,

and most dear Brethren,

in the Lord,

A. Le Mercier.



THE
P R E F A C E
in the Form of a
D I A L O G U E
B E T W E E N
Tertullus and the Author.

Tertullus.

S I R,



Come to ask your Opinion & Thoughts concerning a Contest I had yesterday, with a Gentleman upon a point of Morality.

Author.

Since you come about that Contest, you will not take it amiss, if I ask you the Occasion of it.

Tertullus.

I will do more than that, for I will name you the Person with whom I disputed. His Name is *Modestus*. I look upon him as a Man very ridiculous, in affecting a Sentiment very odd and peculiar to himself; for in a word, he maintain'd that Detraction was a great Sin

Author

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Author.

I clearly perceive that you do not look upon it to be so, not only because you disputed with *Modestus* about that, but also because you call him a ridiculous and odd Man, which you would not do I believe, if you were perswaded that Detraction is a heinous Sin. For my own part, I must confess that I am of his Opinion, tho' you should bestow the same Titles upon me.

Tertullus.

I am not ignorant that Calumny, which is sometimes comprehended under the Name and included under the Notion of Detraction is a Vice; but I cannot imagine that people Sin, when they only relate things that are true, and that if it were a great Sin so many People would chuse to be guilty of it.

Author.

We may suppose indeed that among the great Number of Detractors, some do not look upon Evil-speaking as a Sin, yet that Ignorance doth not excuse them, because it is willful; and that their favourable Thoughts of it proceeds from an evil Heart. As for your way of Arguing against me, from the great Number of Detractors, it certainly makes more against you, then against me. Is it not known to every Body that the generality of Mankind is more inclined to evil than to good? I will grant, that Evil-speakers are to be met with
in

in all the Country's in the World, among both Sexes, in all Religions, in all the Ages and Conditions of Life, and almost in all Companies; and that it is even so much the more common, because People are satisfy'd that it is very common: Men admiring foolishly every thing that is fashionable. But as I said before, that doth rather condemn than justify Detraction.

Tertullus.

Not only is it extreamly common in the World, but besides, it is so rooted in the Hearts of many Persons, that they seem to look upon it more like Virtue than a Vice.

Author.

You know that *Aretin* the famous, or rather infamous *Italian* Poet, was so given to that Vice, that it hath been said of him, that he had spoken ill of every one but GOD, because he did not know him; for which reason some ingenious Person made for him this Latin Epitaph,

Condit *Aretini* Cineres lapis iste sepultos,
Mortales atro qui sale perfricuit.
Intactus Deus est illi, causamque rogatus,
Hanc dedit, ille, inquit, non mihi notus erat.

In English.

*Beneath this Stone lie Aretine's Remains,
Who oft had plagu'd Mankind with biting Strains.
Ask'd by a Friend, how GOD his spight cou'd
miss;
Because, said he, I know not who that is.*

P R E F A C E.

As he was an Atheist, it is no very great wonder that he delighted in Evil speaking and spared No-body, since he was afraid of no Punishment after this Life ; but it seems to me without Comparison more surprizing, that a Christian, who believes there is a GOD, holy, just and a Punisher of evil Words, dares to detract after that boundless License, which is observed among many who profess Christianity.

Tertullus.

What, *Sir*, doth GOD forbid Detraction, as you seem to insinuate it?

Author.

Yes, *Sir*, it is contrary to the Words of the Prophets, to the Rules of Jesus Christ and of his Apostles, to the Law of GOD, as well as to that of Nature ; and to satisfy you about it, you have but to reflect that it is contrary to the Commandment that GOD has imprinted in the Hearts of all his rational Creatures, that we should deal with our Neighbours as we desire they would deal with us. I might easily back this Argument by several others, but it would take up too much time ; therefore I refer you to a Treatise, which I intend shortly to publish upon this Subject. Till you may read it, I advise you as a Friend and exhort you as a Christian not to detract any more ; since by so doing you run no Danger for your Salvation, not to say that by Detracting you should lay great Obstacles to the eternal Welfare of your Soul,

Tertullus.

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Tertullus.

This Subject is of very great Importance and requires to be very exactly treated. For my own part, I shou'd be very glad to see a Volumn upon it, especially one coming from you. Yet Detraction prevails so greatly in the World, that I am afraid least the Trouble you take to dissuade Men from it, be entirely, or at least almost a Labour lost. And supposing that as you say, it be impossible to excuse or justify it, I believe it is much more impossible still to put a stop to it.

Author.

It is indeed very probable, that most of those that will read my Thoughts, will very little regard them in such an Age as this, wherein Men have stony Hearts, itching Ears, and whose Tongue is a dard, a scourge, and a sword. For which Reason not perhaps fifty, or forty five, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or ten of my Readers will improve my Directions; but if a single Person got good by it, and kept himself from Sin, as *Lot* did in *Sodom*, I should reckon my Time and Labour well spent; since by shunning this Sin with its Sources, he shall be in a good way to Heaven, and so infinite Happiness shall be secured to him, and a great Satisfaction procured to me, if by this or any other Means, I can procure so much good, and such unspeakable Advantages. What exceeding great Pleasure to me, if next to *GOD*, and with his Blessing, I, tho' dust and ashes, miserable and sinful Creature, can procure infinite Glory, everlasting

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lasting Joy? *My Hearts Desire and Prayer to GOD for Israel is, that they be saved*: for I may truly apply to Christians, what *S. Paul* said of himself, *Rom. 10.* concerning the Jews of his Time. What can agree better with such a Prayer than the undertaking of a Work, the only Scope of which is, to keep Men from Sin & consequently from Damnation. That I may do this as effectually as I can, I will follow the Method which seems to me the most useful and likely to obtain the noble abovementioned end, by endeavouring to put a stop to the general Sources or Causes of this Sin. I find several, each of them shall be the Subject of a distinct Discourse or Section. I reckon Ignorance to be the first of those Sources. People detract because they have not a right Idea or Notion of Detraction. 2. Because they suppose wrongly, that several Things and Discourses are free from that Sin, into which they fall, tho' they do not do it willfully. 3. Because they do not know, or do not root out the Causes of that Vice. 4. Because they do not mind the various Degrees and the several Circumstances which oftentimes accompany and always aggravate it. 5. It is because they are not sensible of the heinousness of it. 6. Because they do not enough consider its dreadful Consequences and Effects. 7. As some are doubtful concerning certain particular Cases, they think it is all one to commit or to shun it: Or, Because there are some Exceptions to the general Rule against Detraction, they admit of no Exceptions, and detract in all sorts of Circumstances. 8. Because they flatter themselves that some tri-
volous

volous Objections generally alledged to favour Detraction, have more weight than all that can be said against it. 9. Because they do not call to Mind often and awfully enough, the strong and great Motives that are capable to deter Men from Detracting. 10. Because they do not use suitable Means and Ways to avoid it. These ten Sources I will endeavour to open and afterwards to stop in ten Sections.

Tertullus.

It is a surprizing thing to me, that altho' our Heart hath been so long since, the Object of the Study of Mankind, yet they are not come yet to the full Knowledge of it, in order to Reform it, and that there is Occasion still for new Treatises that describe its depravity and the ways of purifying its Corruption. That makes me believe it hath an unfathomable Depth, and is a World, or Earth, in which new Lands are every Day to be found.

Author.

This is one of the principal Differences between the doctrinal and moral part of Religion. There are in the Doctrine, Mysteries and Abysses, which we cannot and must not dive into. On the contrary, We are ordered to examin our Hearts, in order to know and reform them. Yet those Two Things are not to be separated any more than our Understanding is distinct from our Will, which are both Faculties of the same human Soul. *St. Paul*
saith

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faith on the one side, that *without Faith, it is impossible to please G O D* ; and St. James on the other that *Faith without Works is dead*. The Mystery of the Incarnation of the eternal Word, as well as several other Doctrines and Mysteries, afford us powerful Motives to Godliness & Charity, and that Charity is the ground of our Hope, which is a speculative, and not a practical Virtue.

Tertullus.

The Mysteries and moral Duties have each of them their Enemies ; but it is certain that more Persons Sin against the moral Duties, than the Mysteries of our holy Religion, because there is no Body that performs exactly every thing, every Precept that is commanded in the moral Law, whereas several, entertain a right and just belief of the Articles and Mysteries of Faith.

Author.

Therefore it is very necessary to write against those Sins which consist in the violation of the moral Duties, to reclaim from Vice, Hell and Misery those who are on the Brink of it, and just ready to fall into it through their Impenitence ; that consideration moved me, to cast my Mite in the Lord's Treasury, I mean an Essay which I intend to publish against Detraction. The Conversation we have had upon that Head, shall be used by me as a Preface to it,

Tertullus.

P R E F A C E.

Tertullus.

It is time then for us to conclude, and for me to be gone for fear of making the Preface too long by a more ample Conversation ; and also that you may have more Time to meditate upon your subject.

Author.

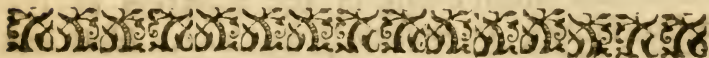
If you please to stay, we shall speak of other things.

Tertullus.

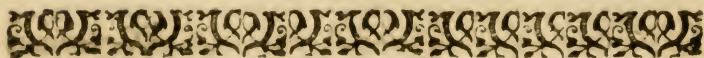
No *Sir*, I am obliged to you, and return you Thanks for your Directions and Exhortations . I will endeavour to improve them ; and so I bid you farewell, and wish you good Success.

Author.

Farewell then, *Sir*.



A





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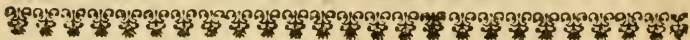
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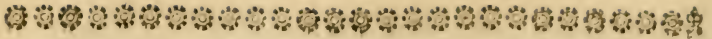


E R R A T A.

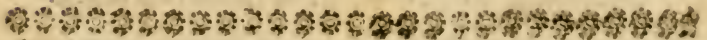
Page 2 line 12 put a full Stop after the Word, are, and none after.
 p. 6 l. 6 read, rather than Detraction. p. 16 l. 12. read; any thing.
 p. 27 last l. read, but a Thousand p. 37 l. 9 read heard. l. 28 read
 by them p. 49 After Eighth Source read Levity & Caprice. p. 56
 instead of Fourteenth Source, read Fifteenth Source p 70 l. 29 read
 but altho'. p. 76 l. 11 read but think that. p. 81 l. 17 read one of
 the Pleasures of Life. l. 18 read by destroying the good Opinion Peo-
 ple had of them before they heard of those Faults, which however
 are often inseparable from human Nature, p. 84 l. 2 read advance. p. 91
 l. 17 read faithful. p. 97 l. 6 read his. p. 103 l. 2 read all the think-
 ing part of Mankind. p 114 read Article XIII. l. 2 read on or near
 his Table. p 154 l 26 read hurt. p 158 read afford most Men. l 8
 read instead of still farther, read and nothing, &c. p 168 l 4 instead
 of whereby, read and. l 15 read The Rulers of a State, instead of, The
 Princes of a Kingdom. p 172 l 16 read expect instead of pretend, p. 178
 l 16 read sinful against GOD. p 183 l 24 for Smoak read Vapour. p 199 l 26
 read those, instead of these. p 201 l 6 read such a Man. l 11 read him
 for his. p 207 l 22 read but yet I say, instead of, to this I answer.
 l 24 read some Attention, p 209 read, impossible to me, &c. p 210
 l, 2 read sometimes instead of generally, & some instead of very. p 230
 l 29 read sort of Criminals. p 263 l 15 read and even without De-
 tractions. l 14 read these instead of these. p 278 l 24 [read Messias
 instead of Miseries

I take often in this Treatise the Word; Self-Love, for that which
 sinful, though Self Love in it self be innocent and natural.





Must desire the Reader to excuse some Phrases that may be improper or obscure. As this Work was first compos'd in the French Language, and the Translation is kept very close to the French, the turn and genius of which differs considerably from the English, from thence proceed that impropriety or obscurity perhaps in few of the Sentences. As to the Work it self, Some People will perhaps blame me for being too particular, and mentioning trifling Things; but I must beg of them to consider that to write Treatises of Morality in a general way only, and to write nothing, is almost the same Thing. If we pretend to convince and convert Men, we must do it by entering as it were into their very Heart, and making them sensible of all their Mistakes, and as they are very various, and numerous in order to examine and confute them, we are oblig'd to be very particular, as I have been in this Work, tho' I hope not to a Fault.



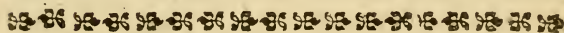


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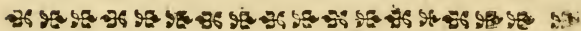
TREATISE

AGAINST

DETRACTION.



SECTION I.



ARTICLE I.

Detraction is defined.



HE Heart is deceitful SECT. I.
above all things, and
desperately wicked, who
can know it? saith the Chap. 17^a
Prophet Jeremiah. Paul ver. 9.
tells us also that no man 1 Cor. 2. 11^b
knoweth the things of a
man, save the spirit of man which is in him:

So that that Heart which hardly knoweth it self would be quite unsearchable to

B


other

SECT. I. other Hearts, if it did not discover it's Passions, it's Sentiments and Designs to others. This he does very often by his detracting Words: *Out of the abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaketh.* Therefore when you hear any one speaking against his Neighbour, it is not a hard matter to guess how he stands affected towards him. And as detracting Speeches are very common in the Mouth of Men, it is both the most usual & most sure way to know what their Thoughts are for.

Matth. 12
34.

Detraction, as we understand and use that Word in this Book, is a Sin which consists in *telling to one, or several Persons, without Necessity, true Things which hurt the good Name of our Neighbours*; whatever Means and Ways may be used to accomplish that.

I say, in the *first* Place, that this Sin consists in *relating Things that are true, and are hurtful to our Neighbours*, in order to distinguish it from *Calumny*, which consists in *inventing and telling of and against them, Things that are false*. Some have called the Detraction that we speak of, *Uncharitable Truth*, whereas Slanders and Calumnies are *uncharitable Untruths*. The Words *uncharitable Truth*, do express so well the Nature of Detraction, that we may say, that the very Name is the Definition of
the

the Thing defined, nothing being more SECT. I. contrary to Charity than Detraction. 

I say, in the *second* Place, that it doth not only consist in telling or speaking Things hurtful to the Character of our Neighbours, because, tho' the Words *Evil-speaking*, properly have a Relation to Words and Discourses only, yet it is certain, that we must comprehend under the Idea or Notion of Back-biting, every Thing that may have the same Effect as Discourses, *viz.* To *hurt his good Name.*

We intend to explain this Definition more at large afterwards; but in the mean while, it is necessary to observe here, that it may happen that the mentioning of certain Actions may sometimes be sinful, when said of certain Persons, whereas it may be innocent if said of others, because these Actions may be good or bad, according to the several Circumstances of Persons or Places or Times, by whom, or in which they have been done. For Instance, It would be an uncharitable Truth, and consequently a Sin, to say that such a *Mussulman* or *Turk*, as we call those that follow the false Doctrine of *Mahomet*, hath drank some Wine, because the Law of that false Prophet forbids it; whereas on the contrary, it is not a Detraction, if speaking of a *Christian*, you say that he

B 2

hath

SECT. I. hath drank Wine moderately, because every Body knows that the Gospel doth not forbid the Use, but the Excess of that Liquor; so that it hurts not the Character of this, but only the Character of the *Mahometan*, to say that he hath drank Wine, tho' moderately: As also it is an uncharitable Truth to say of a *Roman Catholick*, that he never goes to *Mass*; whereas it would be uncharitable to say of a *Protestant*, that he ever goes or went to *Mass*; because the one by his Principles is obliged to go, and the other by contrary Principles, is bound not to go to *Mass*.



ARTICLE II.

Why many Persons often confound Detraction and Calumny?


IN the foregoing Article we have endeavoured to shew the *difference* there is between *Detraction* & *Calumny*. Nevertheless it is very usual to see not only the common People, but even those who think themselves far above them, join or confound these two together very unjustly. I believe the Reason hereof may be gather'd from the two following Considerations, which it may be proper to mention,

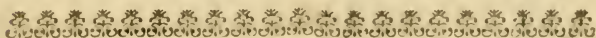
tion, that so when we know from whence SECT. I. the Error arises, we may the more easily guard against both it and its Consequences.

1. The first Reason is, *That in most of the dead and living Languages, the same Terms very frequently signify both the one and the other of these Sins*: And to mention the Language in which I am writing, the word *Detraction* signifies as well *Calumny* as simple *Back-biting*. The Terms being so near alike, we are apt to speak in the very same manner of things quite different.

2. A second Reason is, because *the Holy Scripture it self seems to confound them together*, in many Places too long here to be mentioned. The Reason now alledged may be one of the Causes hereof; to which I may joyn the following ones, and illustrate them by an Example, even that of the holy Apostle *James*. He opposes these two Sins in several Places of his Epistle by the very same Arguments. (1) Because they are *equally* the Fruits of a dead Faith. (2) Because they are equally committed by the same mean of the Tongue. (3) Because they are both contrary to Charity. And (4) Because their Effects are very near the same. Upon these Accounts we are very apt to confound them together.

Allowing my self this Liberty, I shall make use of those Texts which may be e-

SECT. I.  qually alledged against Calumny and Detraction; yet for fear of confounding two matters, which are as opposite as *Truth* and *Falsity*, I shall let alone those where I think the sacred Authors had *Calumny* in View rather *Detraction*, or which might puzzle and perplex the Reader's Mind. Nevertheless it must be observed, that what we shall say against Detraction, will so much the more condemn Calumny, inasmuch as this last is a *Lye*, and consequently a Sin added to the first, being thus a Degree of Malice above it.



A R T I C L E III.

Flattery is opposed to Detraction.

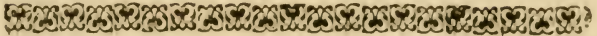
ONE of the most proper ways to know the Nature of a thing is to oppose it to what is contrary thereto. In natural things we find out the *Levity* of one Body by the Opposition it has to the *Gravity* of another. In Morality the way to know the Weight of a Sin is the very same. Thus we hope to illustrate our Subject, by shewing how Detraction is opposed to another Vice, at the same Time that we are proving how it is opposed to the Holiness and the Laws of G O D, to which all Sins are directly contrary. You will hereby at least observe, that in order to acquire

acquire one single Virtue a Man must of-
 ten shun more then one Vice: Besides that
 in order to know whether he be in a just
 Medium, wherein a recommended Virtue
 ordinarily consists, he must diligently ob-
 serve the two Extremities and lay them
 together to find the Center.

Flattery is opposed to *Detraction*, and
 both to *Charity*, which is the happy
 Medium betwixt them.

These two Vices have opposite Views,
 inasmuch as *Detraction* is a *Truth* which
 vexes our Neighbours, and tends to trou-
 ble them, whereas *Flattery* is generally a
Lye invented to please them. The one
 destroys by *Sword*, the other by *Poison*:
 Both are contrary to *Charity*, which for-
 bids us to speak ill of others, thereby to
 defame them, and contrarywise to flatter
 them, thereby to engage them to go on in
 their vicious ways, and hinder them from
 becoming virtuous, by making them be-
 lieve they are so already. It is evident
 that *Charity* holds a middle betwixt these
 two things, which nevertheless have this
 in Common, that they are made use of for
 the very same Ends, on certain Occasions.
 Sometimes we Back-bite Persons in order
 to raise our selves above them; at other
 times we Flatter Persons, so that by the
 return of a Flattering Complement, they
 may list us above other Men. Thus *self-*

SECT. I. *Love* wou'd be applauded by ways entirely
 different.



ARTICLE IV.

Of the Object of Detraction.


AS on the one hand, all the World is capable of Detraction, so on the other, the *Object* of Detraction is very universal; because we may speak evil of *all Men*, none being faultless. Among all the Sins whereby we can injure our Neighbours, there is none which may be extended so far or to so great a number of Objects as Detraction. When for instance, Children break the Command which enjoins them to honour their Parents, they sin only against two Persons. When a Person is addicted to Theft, he has neither Power nor Opportunity sufficient to hurt a great many Persons, and generally an ignominious Death puts an End to his evil Designs. The same may be said of Murder. But Detraction not being punish'd by the Magistrate, and Power, Opportunity and humane Faults being never wanting to Backbiters, it follows, that *all the World* affords a Mark for Detraction.

There

There are none but those who dwell in SECT. I.
 Heavenly Mansions, of whom it is impos-
 sible to speak ill, because they are perfect-
 ly holy. This is what the Scripture as-
 sures us with respect to G O D in a great
 many Places. *He is of purer Eyes than* Hab. 1. 13.
to behold Evil, far from committing it.
 I own, there are Persons Wicked, or ra-
 ther Mad enough, to find fault with the
 Divine Conduct, and to say as the *Jews*
in Ezekiel, the ways of the Lord are not Chap. 18,
ver. 25.
Equal. But what do they then say?
 They pronounce an horrible *Blasphemy* and
 not a Detraction. Those are, these un-
 happy ones *who know not G O D, and*
speak Evil of what they understand not. Jude ver.
10.
 As for Angels and the Spirits of just Men
Heb. 12. 23.
 made perfect, the Scripture makes their
 continual Employment and perfect Feli-
 city to consist, in an exact Obedience to
 the Orders of the Lord; thus they live
 exempt from all those Faults which are
 blamed in the Inhabitants of the Earth.

The Uses of this Section.

Altho' we have not as yet fully proved,
 that the Vice we are disputing against is a
 Sin, yet as we have already shewn, that it
 is contrary to Charity, this gives us suffi-
 cient Reason to warn and exhort you to
 forsake it. What we have already said of
 its

SECT. I.  its Nature may serve for this, that it should make us forsake it. If any have formerly committed it without knowing it, let them now know it without committing it. Let those who before knew what it was, at length cease sinning against their Light, and let what we have said, be as a Clap of Thunder to awaken them from their Drowsiness. Let the one and the other fully and entirely quit this Sin. In most Subjects of Morality, Virtue consists in a Medium, but in Vice this Medium is dangerous, Virtue is found in an extremity beyond the very bounds of Vice. So that if you suppose a Man, who very often Detracts, another who does it but seldom, and a third, who never does, this last alone shall have *chosen the good Part*. I say this, because there are many who look upon themselves as very wise & moderate Persons, when they tell only part of what they know against their Neighbours, in which they are very much mistaken.

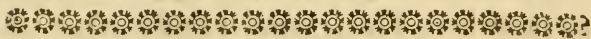
Luk. 10. 42.

Since Flattery is as far from Charity, as Charity is from Detraction, let us avoid both Crimes with the same Care. Truly what matter is it to the Devil, whether we perish by Fire or Water, so that we do but Perish. For this Reason it was that he sometimes cast the *Lunatick* mentioned in the Gospel, into one Element, and sometimes into the other. If we will not

Matth. 17.
15.

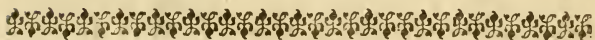
Back-bite Persons for fear of offending them, no more ought we to give them undue Praises, lest if they be modest, it grieve them, or if they are not, it make them the prouder. SECT. I.

In a Word, as we may flatter or blame all Mankind, let us see to it, that we act not after this manner with regard to any one.



SECTION II.

In how many ways they Detract:



The diversity of these ways almost infinite.



HERE are almost as many ways of Detracting, as there are Detractors ; every one differently expressing his Detractions according to his own Genius and turn of Mind. SECT. II.

And on the other side, these ways are still various according the different and numerous Failings of the Persons talked of ; so that I don't believe *the whole World cou'd contain the Books which might be written* Joh. 21. 25.
ten

SECT. II. *ten* on this Subject. This is a great deal, but not too much, to say thereof, since a good part of the Discourses of our Ancestors, and of own, has been and is but Detraction differently modified.

I shall not therefore here pretend to relate all the ways that are customarily made use of to blame our Neighbours: This would be impossible: Moreover, the Practice of the World, and the Study of your own Heart, may supply what we shall omit. Only we must observe to you, that the most witty Methods are the most dangerous. It seems we swallow a *Pill* when gilded with less Reluctancy, and we take more Pleasure in divulging a Detraction, when we think there is Wit in it; whether it be to shew that we have some ourselves, or to please those in whose presence we Detract by diverting them; yea, so far is this Method carried, that there are those, who adding *Lying* to *Detraction*, and *Impudence* to these two Sins, falsely call themselves the Authors of some sharp and keen Expression.

That this Section may be treated with all possible Order, we shall here consider three principal things. The *Manner* in which we Detract has regard (1) To the *Subject* and *Matter* of Detraction. (2) To the *Circumstances*. And (3) To the *Means themselves* made use of.

A R T I C L E I.


Of the Subject of Detraction.

IN what way soever we consider Man, we shall always meet with a Subject of Detraction, and something to find fault with in him. If he be in Prosperity, he then forgets G O D. If in Adversity, he forgets himself, and falls into Murmuring. The Rich Man we see proud, the poor Man impatient ; the young Man is debauch'd and hasty ; the Old Man covetous and peevish. Sicknes & Health, Liberty and Slavery are equally abus'd by Man. Whether we look upon him in a state of Action or in a state free from Action, we shall still find him a Sinner. Laziness, Sluggishness and Idleness are Vices ; and his Actions may be, and often are great Sins. Who doubts hereof ? Who does not see it ? Consider him according to the various states wherein he passes his Life, and you will see him a conceited Clergyman, a mercenary Warrior, an unjust Judge, a Deceitfull Merchant. What might we not further say of him, were we so minded ? But however we will say no more, and acknowledge, that there are many Persons free from the Blemishes common to the various

SECT. II. various Employments and different Circumstances of Life.

To be a little more particular in respect to the Defects which we blame in others, I say, that we may speak ill of those of their Minds, their Hearts and their Persons. Thus as to the *Mind*, we call a Man ignorant, stupid, indiscreet, injudicious, fantastical, wavering, self-conceited, &c. As to his *Heart*, we reckon him mean-spirited, passionate, hasty, mercenary, cowardly, loose, vain, presumptuous, enflamed with a filthy Love, retaining implacable Hatred, that leaves no Stone unturn'd to satisfy his Revenge, whose Appetite to every thing forbidden by the divine Law, is the Source of a thousand Sins. We may also speak Evil of his *Words* and *Actions*: That his *Words* are full of Blasphemy, Calumny, Detraction, Filth and Oaths, &c. That his *Actions* are hypocritical, sacrilegious, unjust and cruel. Nay, his very *Silence* may be misconstrued by us: That he refrained speaking, when he ought to have spoke, which, say we, is a Mark of Imprudence, Ignorance, or some other Fault.

We may also backbite a Man, by speaking ill of his *Writings* without cause. And truly we had as good attack the *Man* as his *Works*, in which we may pick the same Faults, as in his *Mind* and *Heart*,
since


since they are the Production of the one, SECT. II.
 and set forth the Sentiments of the 
 other. In them also we may meet with,
 and censure all the *Faults of Discourse*,
 since *Books* are only what a Person has, or
 may have talk'd of before.

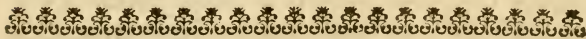
A Man's *Body* may be the Subject of
 Detraction, either on account of it's natu-
 ral Defects, or odd Postures. For Example,
 His Looks may be lascivous, his Gait
 haughty, his Garb indecent. We may
 even detract and backbite Persons on Ac-
 count of their *Birth*, 1. As being *Upstarts*
 and of *mean* Original. 2. When they are
 obliged for their Birth to some *Crime* of
 their Parents; such is that of all *spurious*
 Births. 3. When their Ancestors or Pa-
 rents have committed those publick Crimes
 which dishonour a Family.

We may speak Evil not only of the
Living, but even of the *Dead*: hence the
 saying, that DETRACTION BURYS
 THE LIVING AND RAKES UP
 THE DEAD. And truly there never
 is so much matter of speaking Ill of any
 Man during Life, as after it; seeing
 then one may talk of his whole Life, even
 to his last moments: And moreover, how
 many Subjects for Detraction do many
 Persons give even in Death? Many die
 without restoring ill-gotten Goods, with-
 out forgiving their Brethren, without truly
 repenting

SECT. II. repenting, without seriously thinking on
 ~~~~~ Heaven and Hell, and without duly reflecting, that after Death comes the Judgment.

We shall finish this Article with three Remarks. 1. *That all manner of Subjects may be turned into Detraction by Detractors.* This is a Fire which all sorts of Matter kindles when blown up. They know how to turn this way, things that are the most indifferent in themselves and the most distant in appearance from this Subject. We can't talk of nothing before them, but what they will make Applications, and from whence they will draw Consequences, against those whom they don't love. 2. *That Detracting Discourses may be occasioned either by a premeditated Design of an Evil Heart, or by the Example and Conversation of others, or by some other things, which bring Persons & their Defects to remembrance.* It often happens, that as soon as a Person is gone out of the Company, his Behaviour is brought on the Carpet, and examin'd with the utmost Rigour. 3. *That there are Things indifferent in themselves, that is to say, which are not Faults in their own Nature, which still may do an injury on certain Occasions, so that it would be Back-biting to mention them without Necessity.* For Instance, altho' Poverty be  
 not

not a Vice, yet there are Occasions wherein SECT. II.  
 it wou'd greatly, to say that *he was Poor.*   
 Charity requires, that at such a time we  
 shou'd say nothing at all of his Estate.



## A R T I C L E    I I .

*Of the Manner of Detraction as to  
 it's Circumstances.*

1. **T**H E first of these Circumstances  
 is, That we utter some things  
 which we know of our selves, and other  
 Things which we know only by the Testi-  
 mony and Report of other Men. I did  
 not see, says a Man, the Thing with my  
 own Eyes ; but you need not doubt of it  
 a whit the more for that. This Account  
 comes to me from a good Hand, and a Per-  
 son that I would trust as soon as my self.

2. We may detract from Persons in their  
*Presence*, either when we address our  
 selves to them, ( and this is stiled reviling  
 a Man to his Face, ) or when we speak  
 of them in addressing our selves to others.

3. In their *Absence* we may back-bite  
 Persons ; and this is the most common and  
 ordinary way : Whether it be, that we  
 are afraid, that those to whom and of  
 whom we are speaking, will make some  
 cutting



SECT. II. cutting Answer, and with violence cast  
 ~~~~~ back the Arrows shot against them, on  
 the Shooters : Or, Because we consider that
 good Manners won't allow us to vex a
 whole Company with mutual Jarrs. Per-
 haps Cowardice may hinder some from tel-
 ling Persons of their Faults to their Face,
 or some other peculiar Reasons.

4. Men may detract *publickly* and
 without reserve. Thus hasty and giddy-
 headed Persons act, who tell every one
 all that they know. 'Tis all one to them,
 who they talk to, neither do they care
 whether the Person, whose Reputation
 they wou'd blast, be known or unknown
 to them.

5. On the other hand, Men may de-
 tract in appearance more *secretly*, tho' in
 the end more publickly. I tell you this,
 (says one Man to another) because you
 are my Friend ; but I should be very sorry
 that any Body should know this Story
 came from me. I tell it to you as a *secret*,
 and beg you'd not divulge it. But how-
 ever, if you should happen to mention it,
 don't bring me for your Author, for you
 will certainly meet with the Disappoint-
 ment of seeing me deny, that I ever told
 you any such Thing.

It must be owned, that this is but a
 Trick to spread News the further ; be-
 cause, As we communicate the Secret by
 way

way of Favour, he who hears it, thinks to do as great a Favour to others, whom he acquaints with it, and to gain their Confidence and Friendship. These latter have the same Views with the former; and after this manner every one befriends his Neighbour, till the Thing is wholly publick. Moreover, How can any one imagine, that another will keep a Secret, which he himself could not help discovering?

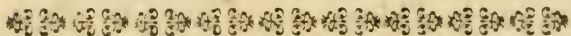
6. We may detract by relating Things which concern those to whom we relate them. (These Men are called *Tale-bearers*.) Or when we tell Things to those who have no Concern in them.

7. We may detract directly, *openly* and by calling Things, as we say, by their Name. Many even call this Freedom: But we must confess that this is so far from being a Virtue, that on the contrary it is a very great Sin. This is to abuse *Words*, that so afterwards we may abuse *Things*. Let us then be more reserved, when we treat of our Neighbour's Reputation.

8. We may detract *indirectly* and *obliquely*; As, (1.) By Equivocations, either in Words, or in the Sense of a Phrase. It would be needless to stop here, in order to over-throw the Cause of Equivocations in Words, which are seldom used, but among the Rabble. It is to be wish'd

SECT. II. that Detraction it self were as much condemn'd by the World, as this way of detracting. (2.) We may covertly speak Ill of a Person under the disguise of Fables and Parables. Thus *Jotham* compar'd *Abimelech* to a *Bramble*, and applied it's Qualities to him. (3.) We may back-bite a Person indirectly, when we speak evil in general of those, with whom he has any thing in common. For Example, If we say, that all the Officers in such a Regiment performed their Duty very ill, we do certainly back-bite every one in particular, for he that speaks Evil of all, excepts none. And yet this is done indirectly, no one being expressly named.

Judger ch.
9.



A R T I C L E III.

Cf the Means made Use of in Detraction.

THE remainder of this Section shall be employed in particularizing the various Means made use of for Detraction.

1. We may detract in a large and general way, by saying, That the Person we are talking of, has a very ill Character abroad; that he is subject to a great many Vices; without mentioning so much as one in particular.

2. We

2. We may detract in many Words, or in one single Word. Such a Man say we, is an Usurer, Infamous, a Glutton, &c. Now this one Word, makes as much or more impresson on the Hearers, as if we drew a Picture of his evil Life at length. Besides that, Detractors of this sort, are very easily urged to enter into a detail of the Usuries, Infamies and Gluttonies, which they mentioned in one single Word.

3. When we will not name the Crime of the Person we talk of, but leave the Hearer to guess what it is, under pretence, that Charity obliges us to hide the greatness of the Crime; so that by this expressive Silence others often esteem it greater than it really is. O *Diabolical* Charity!

4. When we don't name the Person; but say, it is one, whom you know very well, has done such and such Things: But as we know many capable of having done them, we thereupon suspect a great Number, which is so much the more dangerous, as this Discourse affords room for various rash Judgments in the Mind of the Hearer, and as this Detraction comprehends many Objects at once. Add to all this, that those who hear us speak thus, suffer themselves to be easily perswaded, thinking that it is thro' Love or Compassion, that we conceal the Name of the Evil-Doer.

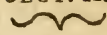
SECT. II. But as *Solomon* says, *The tender Mercies of the Wicked are cruel.*

PRO. 12. 10.

5. One way of Detraction is to jeer, expose and ridicule any one before a Company. Without this, say some, Conversation wou'd languish, and we ought to keep that up at any rate whatever. But what is the Consequence of this? Many Times, two of the Company are the Actors in the Scene, and the rest are Spectators. He who is not the best, but who has the most sprightly Wit, falls upon him whom he judges the weakest among'em. He endeavours to puzzle him in his Answers; to make him either quite silent, or fall into a Passion, by burlesque & cutting Comparisons, and render him the Jest of the whole Company. Thus it becomes a kind of Tragi-Comedy, where some are merry, others sad. Sometimes all the Spectators become Actors; which is so much the more lamentable, as there are then no Mediators to pacify the Troubles.

6. It is a kind of Detraction to make Persons publickly confess their Faults, by demanding of them, whether they did not do such and such an evil Action. I own there are but very few who have sincerity enough to own they were guilty of it; but then we are the Occasion of their lying.

7. We

7. We detract when we give Reproofs SECT. II.
 and Exhortations, which may discover to 
 those present, that he whom we talk to,
 has need of them, with reference to his
 past evil Conduct. This is far from the
 Advice given us in the 30th Chap. of *Pro-* Ver. 13.
verbs, Accuse not a Servant before his
Master, lest he curse thee and thou be
found guilty. We may extend this Pre-
 cept still further, and apply it to all those
 who give their Reproofs, in Presence of
 those who ought not to assist therein. I
 here except the Men who give their Re-
 proofs in the Pulpit, 1. Because they re-
 prove only when they think there is a ne-
 cessity therefor. 2. Because that since they
 speak in general, we can't say they aim'd
 at some particular Persons. 3. Suppose
 they do speak against some Vice, which
 many of their Hearers know others subject
 to, they then tell them nothing new. 4. The
 Prophets, our Lord JESUS CHRIST and
 his Apostles, have approved of these sorts
 of Censures, by their own Practice.

What I find very intolerable and foolish
 in some Persons is, to detract by exhorting
 and counselling others not to do so. Don't
 you detract (say these Men to others) as
 such an one has done, and thereby brought
 himself into troublesome Affairs.

8. *Anathemas* are ever Detractions,
 tho' not always Sins, being permitted to

SECT. II. the Guides of the Churches to be sometimes used, after the Example of the holy Apostles. This may be further enquired into in one of the Sections of this Treatise.

9. We fall into Detractions by Reproaches and publick Invectives against Persons. I call them publick when they are used in presence of many Persons, and especially of those that are not concerned in the subject of the Dispute. This way of Detraction is terrible: We name Persons and Things: We spare nothing: We shew no Favour: The most filthy Terms, the most offensive Words are made use of: The most secret Actions are laid open: The oldest Crimes are anew raked up. Then Probabilities and rash Judgments pass for Truths and Realities.

Some will perhaps say, That I aggravate every where, and so am not to be credited, seeing I have in another Place said, That private Ways are also extreme dangerous.

But this Reasoning, instead of making against me, makes directly against Detraction, to which I am very opposite. And from what I have said, we may conclude, that both these ways are truly very dangerous, very terrible, and consequently to be avoided. It is not sufficient not to practice some of these ways; we must abandon them all.

10. *Cursing* is detracting. To detract SECT. II. and to curse may be express'd in Latin by the same Word; and in French there is a considerable likeness between the signification of these two Terms, as well as between the Terms themselves. When *Shimei* cursed *David*, by calling him a *bloody Man*, did he not speak ill of that Prince? Does not a part of Curses consist in wishing, that the Evil, which these we complain of, have done to us or others; may fall upon them; that so they may be punished therewith? Do we Curse those whom we believe honest and virtuous? The same may be said of Imprecations.

11. We detract by raising evil Suspicions of the Manners of any one, after what way soever it be. For Example, with reference to those whom a Man converses with; as in saying, he is very familiar with Mr. N----- who is exceedingly debauched. This makes a great Impression, inasmuch as we are not ignorant, that evil Company may corrupt, and that corrupt Persons seek such Company. And this sort of detraction at the same time gives an evil suspicion of the one, and sily speaks against the other.

12. By alluding to something trifling, insipid or wicked, which any one has said, whereof we make a kind of Proverb, which by these means soon gets along into the
World,

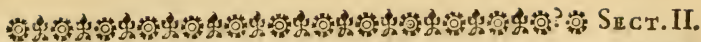
SECT. II. World, where we may observe many of
 this Nature.

13. By any way mimicking the defects of another whatever they be, as his Grimaces, Hypocrisy, &c.

14. Many Times an *Irony* is made use of to detract, and to express our detractions. This *Irony* consists in saying Truths by contraries. Thus we call a Man knavish, by saying, that he is the most honest Man alive. So we call a Man talkative, by saying, that he hardly ever speaks.

15. We may detract by Gestures and Postures. For Instance a Wink of the Eye, (which in a Man is almost as expressive as Words,) on a Person, shall shew whom we are talking of under a borrow'd Name. The Hands may serve for the same Ends; and hence it is, that the Ancients justly gave them the Epithet of talkative: Whether they speak alone, or whether they accompany what the Mouth utters. A Shrug of the Shoulders may show, that we are ashamed of what a Person says, that we pity him and despise him. It follows then that a dumb Man may detract by his Gestures, as well as another by his Tongue.

Writing, Painting and Signs in general whether natural or artificial, may also serve to discover the Sins and Vices of our Neighbours.



ARTICLE IV.

Some other Ways of detracting.

Moreover there are some ways of detraction, which are not so easily perceived as those we have already related, which notwithstanding are fatal Scandals and forbidden Turns.

Of these we shall say something,

1. It very often happens, that Comparisons in certain Circumstances, are kind of Detraction. Suppose two Persons exactly alike ; If we say, the one is more Religious than the other, hereby we accuse the latter of Irreligion, or at least of not having made that progress in Piety, that he might and ought to have made. Let us suppose two others, one whereof is become a devout and good Christian, with very little help, the other with considerable assistance comes far short of him ; while we commend the former, and exalt him above his Fellow ; do we not tacitly accuse the latter of having made an ill use of GOD's Grace ? *Saul* knew this very well, *when he show'd his dislike to the Daughters of Israel, who in their Songs had given David the glory of having slain Ten Thousand Philistines, while to him they allow'd the honour of defeating but Thousands of those very Enemies.* 1 Sam. 18, 7, 8.
2. When

SECT. II.

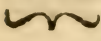
2. When we favour Detractors, and stir them up to back-bite, then we may be accounted partakers in Detraction. This may be done several ways, as (1) We encourage Detractors by an affected Silence, whence they fancy, that we acquiesce in all they say against the honour of others, and take our silence for Consent. Who does not see that this is to be a Favourer of this Sin, and consequently a Detractor : That caus'd *S. Ambrose* to say, *that Death enters at the Windows of the Ear, when you acquiesce in and give your Consent to him that speaks.* (2) We encourage Persons to detract, when we admire the Wit of those, who have shewn an uncommon Craftiness in certain Sallies against their Neighbours ; or when we applaud any one, that has wittily slander'd in our Presence : a thing too common in this impious and fawning Age ! (3) We detract, when we give way to Detraction by any Storys of this Nature, which afford an Opportunity to others to finish what was but begun, and to go on, after they are put in the way. In fine, we furnish Occasions for Detraction, for which we are accountable, if we fix the Conversation upon Persons, of whom we know that some in the Company can't hear us talk without detracting from them, on account of some real or imaginary Cause of dissatisfaction against

against them. All these ways of making others detract, and encouraging them therein, are so many Sins. *S. Paul* is express on this Point in his Epistle to the *Romans*. He looks upon it not only as a Crime but even as a double Crime, to favour it, when he says of the Heathen, *that not content to commit those Sins, for which Nature might reprove them, they had Pleasure in those who did the same.* Indeed, this is to take Vice under our Protection; this shews, that since we don't condemn it in others, we our selves are ready to commit it every time an Occasion shall present, and that we do not sin by Surprize, but with a Desire which we have had a long Time before thus to applaud Sinners. Which undoubtedly aggravates the Fault.

SECT. II.

Ro m. 1. 32.

3. We do in some measure detract when we diminish the fine Qualities of any one, at what time another is speaking advantageously thereof. When, instead of assisting to shew them in all their Lustre, and to give glorious Actions all their due Praise, thereby to induce others to the like Practice, we endeavour to tarnish and obscure them, by all ways and methods. Such a Man say we, did good because he was in no way to do evil, or else he had his own Interest in view. It was his Passion that guided him, and Love of vain-glory that engaged him therein, or else he did it without


SECT. II.  out any design of doing good. The good which he has done, say we, is very imperfect; he might have done much more and much better, thus high to value his Actions, is doing him too much Honour.

Still further to lessen the Praise of a good Action, we endeavour to diminish the certainty thereof. The thing, say we is not so certain, but that it wants Confirmation; perhaps they who publish it, were not rightly inform'd; it is rather too soon to give credit to such News. Happy turn when Charitably used!

4. We do something like Detraction, when we will not speak of any ones Vertues upon Occasions that naturally present and when it wou'd be just so to do. It is not enough, that we refrain from hurting; we must also do good, thereby imitating our great Pattern the Lord Jesus Christ, who promised the Woman that poured the Box of precious Ointment on him, *that where-ever his Gospel should be Preached, to her honour should be mentioned what she had done unto him.* Doubtless a Prince would look upon it as a great Injury shou'd we rob him of any of his Titles, or bestow them on others. The thing is the very same as to particular Persons.

Matth. 26.
13.

5. To be rejoiced at hearing Detraction, to wish that any one would detract, to be very easy when it so falls out, is a Sin against

gainst the Love we owe the Person detrac- SECT. II.
 ting and detracted. Hereby we participate 
 in the Back-bitings of the former : And
 altho' this disposition of Heart while it
 remains enclosed therein, does no Damage
 to others; it does very considerable hurt
 to those in whom it abides ; since we may
 sin in our Tho'ts as well as in our Words
 and A&ions. It is Criminal before G O D
 even to Will, what is unjust before Men.

There are perhaps many other ways of
 sowing and spreading abroad Detractions,
 for who can reckon them all up ? But
 however it be, I am perswaded, they may
 be easily ranked under some one of the
 foregoing Articles and Heads.

The design of this whole Treatise is to
 overthrow Vice, and to establish Virtue ;
 this in particular was our Intent in this
 Section, and we cannot better conclude it,
 than by Uses drawn from what has been
 said, and profitable to Edification.

The Uses of this Section.

SHou'd we undertake to shew all the
 Uses that might be drawn therefrom,
 they wou'd be as long as the Section it self.
 We shall here therefore only just mention
 the principal Heads, and finish with mo-
 tives and exhortations to avoid the Vice
 we have been describing in its principal
 Parts. We

SECT. II. We have said, That there are almost infinite Ways of Detraction ; because that on the one hand, we make use heresof of Turns differing for the most part one from the other ; and on the other hand, That the Faults of Men are also different. In regard of the first, We ought often to examine our selves, in order to discover the Means which we ordinarily make use of for this End ; or rather, the diversity of these Means, which two things are very difficult : Since that if these ways are generally the same, Habit & Custom, which might make us know them better, hinder our seeing them ; even as we cannot well discern Objects which are too near our Sight, or as we do but little examine into the Motion of the Tongue in speaking, because these Actions are very frequent & common with us, we seldom or ever think on them. Again, If these ways are different, certainly the Trouble of examining them one after another will be very great : Wherefore I say, This must be done often, and with a great deal of Care and Exactness, so as that we may know them and abstain from them.

As to what regards the Variety and Number of Faults which we tax, we may from thence infer, That every Man is a Sinner, that the World in general is very wicked, and that therefore we ought to be on our guard, that we be not corrupted by
evil

evil Examples; that we are to mourn for the Vices of another, without detracting from him. We should pardon all Faults in others, but none in our selves. *We should cause the light of our good Works to shine forth in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation.* By this Light we shall behold the Crimes of others, without barelly reflecting on the Criminals: As the Light of the Sun discovers to us the Stains and Spots of a Garment without consuming it. Zeal and Love are like *the Fires which descended on the Apostles without scorching them.*

SECT. II.



Mat. 5. 16.

Acts 2. 3.

Since witty Methods of Detraction are most dangerous both to us and our Neighbours, let us use our utmost Endeavours to deliver our selves from them. The more slippery the Way is, the more cautious ought we to be lest we fall; and the more dangerous the Fall is, the more careful we should be to avoid it. We wou'd let the World see we have Wit; and to shew it, we lay aside all Bowels of Pity. We wou'd have it known, that we are Owners of a Talent; and by it and for it, we destroy our selves. We wou'd please those that listen to us, and thereby draw them with our selves into a most dreadful Abyis. What a Folly! What a Contradiction!

Do you your selves reflect on the different ways of back-biting, just now.


D

men-

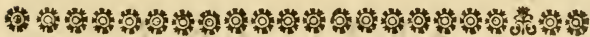
SECT. II. mentioned: You will without doubt have
 ~~~~~ Time and Occasion enough, if every Time  
 that you hear Detraction, or are tempted  
 thereto your selves, you wou'd give a lit-  
 tle Attention. Consider that the Ways  
 made use of by Detractors are as criminal  
 as Detraction it self: Think how mean,  
 rascally, and unworthy of a Gentleman and  
 a Christian they are.

We have endeavour'd to discover, as far  
 as was tho't necessary, the Ways of De-  
 traction, (1) With reference to it's Sub-  
 ject and Matter. (2) With respect to the  
 Circumstances by which the Faults & Sins  
 of Men are spread abroad: (3.) With re-  
 gard to the Means and Instruments em-  
 ploy'd for this End: But to bring the  
 whole to a narrow Compass, we advise you,  
 not so much to mind the Failings of Men,  
 which were consider'd under the first Ar-  
 ticle, as their good and commendable  
 Qualities.

This Advice being followed, we shall  
 have no need to warn you against the  
 Means of speaking ill, which were men-  
 tioned in the two following Articles.  
 When this Fire has no more Matter to  
 feed upon, there will be no necessity of  
 contriving Means to quench it. And truly,  
 what can be more wise, what more reason-  
 able, than to contemplate Virtue, rather  
 than Vice? Is it not much more lovely,  
 much

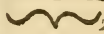
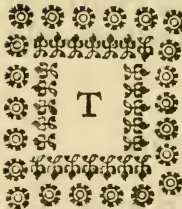
much more noble, much more agreeable to SECT. II.  
 look upon fine Flowers, exhaling a sweet   
 and charming smell, than upon a nauseous  
 and loathsome Sink ? In a word, is it not  
 vastly better to contemplate the Work of  
 GOD in good Deeds, than that of the  
 Devil in bad ones ?

After having set forth Detraction in the  
 Ways wherein it is practised ( happy if we  
 at the same Time can be made to abhor it ! )  
 We proceed to shew the Nature thereof by  
 it's Sources and Causes. This shall be the  
 Subject of the following Section.

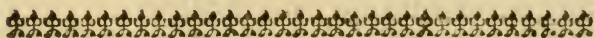


S E C T. III.

*Of the Sources of Detraction.*

SECT. III.  
  

 HERE is hardly any bet-  
 ter Way of finding out the  
 Perfection or Imperfection  
 of a Thing, than by consi-  
 dering it in it's Causes and  
 Sources ; the Cause & Effect  
 having much of resemblance between them.  
 Thus according to our knowledge of Good  
 and Evil in it's Causes, in a Subject, we shall  
 love or hate it in proportion : And to speak  
 more particularly of Detraction, the more  
 Poison we shall remark in the Head-Springs  
 thereof,

SECT. III thereof, the more carefully should we avoid drinking of the Water at the Fountains, which by their Multitude form a dangerous Lake and a deep Gulf. Moreover as this Heap of Waters may have two sorts of Sources, the one internal, even in the Bottom of the Lake it self; the other external and accidental; in like manner we find external and internal Sources of Detraction, which we shall treat of in this Section, beginning with the first.



## A R T I C L E 1.

*Of the external Sources of Detraction.*

WE call those external Sources, which are not properly in the Heart and Mind, or which produce Detraction only by Accident.

First Source, *Prosperity.*

One said very well, That Religion has three sorts of Enemies, Hereticks, Persecutors and Pleasures, and that the last are the most dangerous. In reality, these Pleasures have produced Hereticks themselves; never did they appear in so great Number, as after that *Constantine* had procured

cured the Peace of the Church, and fill'd it with Gifts and Riches. These very Pleasures, or this same Prosperity, have very often rais'd up Persecutors: Witness all those Princes, who have extended their Persecutions according as they enlarged the Bounds of their Kingdoms. And to apply this to my Subject; never was less Detraction seen in the Church, than when it was most cruelly harass'd and torn to pieces; because that in general, Afflictions & Adversity suite Piety much better than Prosperity, and particularly in Persecution, we have other Affairs than those of Detraction. 'Tis then we return to G O D, and with earnest Prayers beg of him, that his Worship may be again established: 'Tis then we endeavour to appease him by a newness of Life: 'Tis then, when Danger is common to all the Members of the Church, a Man wishes the Happiness of all thro' Love as well as Interest, since no good can happen to them, but he must also be a partaker therein. In a word, no one is for persecuting others, by backbitings, when he himself is under Persecution, unless it be, that he is willing his own Persecutors should suffer by it.

But now Prosperity makes a Man look on others with Haughtiness and Contempt. (And what we have said of Prosperity in a general way, may be applied to every

SECT. III particular Person who is in that Estate. )  
 A Man oftentimes thinks himself the better when he is Richer than others, and equally insults their miseries and failings. He will very often enlarge the one and publish the other. Pleasures ordinarily give birth to Faint-heartedness and Indifference for GOD's Glory and our Neighbour's Welfare. Thus Men thro' the Corruption of their Hearts, usually abuse the good things of their Creator. Thus those who under Persecution wou'd not backbite their very Persecutors, have in another State, spoken Evil of their Neighbours, their Relations and their Benefactors.

Second Source, *Frequent Examples.*

We have already noted, that the Sin we are writing against, is very common in the World. In this Section we shall shew the Reason why it is so. It is so, because this Sin goes unpunished, and because we are engaged therein by many Passions and other things. This being laid down, we must also suppose another Truth, namely, that we have a great propensity to follow Custom, and imitate what we see practiced. Hence it comes to pass, that many times, Examples engage us to do things for which at first we had much Indifference and even an Aversion. How then shou'd we be able

ble to avoid imitating a Vice, to which we have so much Inclination as that of Detraction, and which suits so well with our natural, that is, corrupt Disposition; What adds still more force to these Examples is, that they come from those who are accounted Gentlemen, and who truly wou'd be ashamed to do an Injury to a Neighbour in any other of his Goods, besides that of his Honour: Men, who are led on to detract, only because they don't really reflect on the Evil that accrues thereby to the Person detracted.

### A Third Source, *Impunity.*

There is certainly nothing more capable of encouraging a Crime, as Men are now disposed, than Impunity. Perhaps there are some who think that Detraction does but little hurt to Society, because the Overseers and Managers thereof do permit it. However it be, this is certain, that when Men have no outward Bridle to curb them in, they give up themselves with Frenzy to their Vices. When publick Persons do not punish them, nor private Persons shame them, they are no longer kept within the Bounds of Duty, by these Considerations, which might where they have there due Weight, hinder them from falling into Vices and Excesses. There is

SECT. III no need of proving, that Detraction is not punished by Magistrates; This is notoriously evident, and if you except that Detraction which strikes at Sovereigns, we can't (I believe,) find an Example to the contrary in this Age.

A Fourth Source, *The easiness of Detraction.*

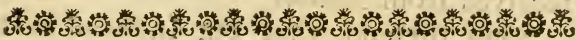
One Source of this Sin is, that it costs neither Money nor Trouble to commit it; Whereas a Man can't ordinarily *get drunk* without laying out his Cash. In like manner the covetous Person can't hoard up his numerous Treasures without Sweat and Fatigue. On the contrary, it is easy to detract in repose, and free from the Toils and Vexations of the other. Thus a covetous Man may well be a Detractor, tho' we seldom see him a Drunkard or a Whore-Master. What renders this Sin still more common is, that it may agree, at least in some manner, with all other Vices, whereas there are many others which are incompatible, as we have already shewn.

A Fifth Source, *The frequent Occasions that we have for Detraction.*

There are an infinity of these Occasions, as well with regard to the great Number  
of

of Faults observable in our Neighbours, SECT. III  
 as with respect to the Easiness of practi-  
 cing this Vice; and also with reference to  
 the vast Number of Persons, who are ever  
 ready to listen to and commend defamers.  
 Having in another Part of this Treatise,  
 already spoken of these Occasions, we shall  
 not any longer stop here.

We do not here speak of the Sources of  
 Corruption in general; because that, altho'  
 those of Detraction make a considerable  
 part of this Corruption which reigns to  
 this Day among Christians, yet this wou'd  
 carry us too far from our Subject; besides,  
 that they have been very well handled in  
 the last Age.



## A R T I C L E II.

*Of the internal Sources of Detraction.*

**W**E call those internal Sources which  
 are found in the very Person of the  
 Detractor, whereas those we have spoken  
 of in the preceding Article refer to some  
 external Circumstances.

The First Source, *Original Sin.*

There is no principle more deeply root-  
 ed in the Heart of Man, than this Sin, since  
 it was enfolded therein even before his  
 Birth.



SECT. III Birth. Behold, says David on this Subject, *I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me.* After the fall of our first Parents, the Earth became covered with Thorns and Thistles and venomous Reptiles, and fill'd with evil Roots which remain until this Day, notwithstanding the Deluge, which one wou'd have tho't, shou'd thoroughly cleanse it. In the like manner, the Heart of *Adam* was full of the defilement of Sin, which he has transmitted to his Posterity. Righteous *Noah*, the second Father of Mankind, was not exempt therefrom, nor wash'd clean by the Baptism of overflowing Waters. He left to his Children what he had himself received from *Adam*.

Some pretend, that our Inclination to Evil arises only from the Examples that are daily set before us. I confess, as has been already shewn, that Examples greatly contribute thereto, but I deny that Examples do all intirely; or else let any one tell me, what Example of Murder had *Cain* before his Eyes, when he slew his Brother *Abel*. True indeed, he had seen the Disobedience of his Parents; but it was also from this very Disobedience to the divine Laws, from this very Sin of the first Inhabitants of the World, that the Source of all our Vices arises.

Having

Having thus shewn the general principle of Sins, of whose Number Detraction is one, let us see more particularly how this arises from that fatal and communicative Fountain. SECT. III

Here is the Reason thereof. If *Adam* had not sinn'd, all his Posterity had been faultless and consequently none could have detracted, and being all exempt from Sin, we should have been so far from detracting, that we shou'd have had an ardent Love for one another.

But instead of this, some would think, that the Tongue of the Serpent which did so much evil to our first Parents has passed from the Tempter into the Tempted, and their Off-spring. These Men endeavour to do as much Mischief to each other by their Tongue, as Satan did then by his. They don't feel themselves sufficiently wounded it seems, and wou'd perfect the Wounds, and make them still deeper. From what we have said, it appears, that this first Sin, which ought to be lookt upon, or at least understood and supposed as one of the Causes of all Vices, should more particularly be accounted a Source of that Vice we are arguing against.

The Second Source, *Idleness*.

The Mind which often times avoids Labour, will nevertheless be busied about something

SECT. III something. Wherefore if it finds nothing in it's own proper Fund for Amusement, it will meddle with other Men's Affairs, and make them it's own. Wise and happy indeed, if it intermeddled only to pleasure them! But this it does not. As Idleness is an evil Source, it can produce only evil Effects. Thus many will pry into their Neighbours Life, only to pick Faults, and then expose them to the World. Now to prove, that Idleness produces Detraction, we shall bring the Testimony of *S. Paul*, and our daily Experience. The Apostle speaking of certain Widows of his time; *1 Tim. 5. 13* says, *And withal they learn to be idle, wandering from House to House; and not only idle, but Tatlers also, and Busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.* And does not Experience teach us, that these things arise from abusive Discourse?

Perhaps some who resemble these Widows wou'd justify themselves by the Purity of their Intentions, which are not to hurt their Neighbours in the least, but only for Pastime and Diversion.

I answer, That it is the same thing, let the Intentions of a Back-biter be what they will, since a Man's Reputation is after the same manner wounded. And again, Time is a thing too dear, too precious and too irreparable, to be spent in unprofitableness, much less evil things. Let us rather hear

the

the Apostle's Exhortation, *Redeem the Time, because the Days are Evil; Evil* inasmuch as they are spent in Sin; *Evil*, because they will one Day prove fatal to those who have spent them so ill; at least if they do not repent in the time allow'd them therefor. Let us not then add the Sin of Detraction to all other Sins we commit. Still further, the Reputation of our Brethren is too touching, too affecting to be ravished from them, only that we may be the pleased and diverted at their Cost.

SECT. III  
Eph. 5. 16

### A Third Source, *Impudence.*

To be convinc'd of this, we need only consider how necessary Impudence is in order to detract with so much Transport as many do: And moreover it is certain, that Bashfulness, which is opposed to Impudence, shuts the Mouth in making the Mind submissive. In such a state as this, a Man wou'd be so far from hurting his Neighbour by Detraction, that he wou'd not dare to be seen in it. It is often the tho't of his own Failings that produces this bashfulness. Certain it is, that Modesty is so commendable, so excellent and so contrary to Impudence, that it is a constant Bar to back-biting. These latter therefore possess two great Virtues, Modesty and Charity, while the former have two great Faults, Impudence and Detraction.

SECT. III A Fourth Source, *The Itch of Talking.*

There are those, whose Genius is such, that they will talk at any rate, of any Thing, and after any manner. *Solomon* speaking of these Persons, says, *that in the multitude of words there wants not Sin.*

PROV. 10. 14

2 Tim 4 3. *Paul speaks of Itching Ears*; We may say also, that there are *Itching Tongues*. If we do but know the Practice of the World, we cannot be ignorant, that Detraction makes the greatest Part of their Discourse, and so is the Sin which they oftenest commit.

As Men have not in themselves a Fund sufficient for continual Conversation, or rather motion of the Tongue, so that sometimes they must be silent, they greedily lay hold on all occasions which the Faults of others furnish them withal. They are afraid, it seems, of being prevented by other Detractors, and hasten to hinder them with as much eagerness as a Courtier, who is going to carry his Prince the news of his Enemies overthrow.

'Tis true, these Men very commonly speak without any design of offending or hurting any Person, and there is more Imprudence than Malice discover'd in their Proceeding, but nevertheless it is not without Faults. Are not these two very considerable Faults, not to know how to be silent, nor to speak well? A

A Fifth Source, *Drunkenness.*

SECT. III



From hard drinking comes Drunkenness, and from this Detraction. *There is Truth in Wine*, we say, and this makes Persons eloquent in back-biting. The Words of *Seneca* may serve for a Proof of this. *As new Wine bursts the Cask, and the Heat causes it to ascend, so the Strength of Wine is such, that it reveals and discovers the greatest Secret.* So that altho' we be not inclined to Detraction, yet Wine shall raise it in us. But we have an Authority incomparably beyond that of the *Philosopher*, even *David*, who says, *They did tear me and ceased not, with hypocritical Mockers in Feasts: they gnashed upon me with their Teeth.* It is equally true, to say, that Railers are Lovers of their Belly, and Lovers of their Belly are Railers. This the same Prophet confirms elsewhere, when he complains, *That he was the Song of the Drunkards.* This is a Truth, which Experience clearly shews and it was on this Experience, that the *Prophet* and the *Philosopher* founded their Words. There are too many perhaps who knew experimentally, how fatal and terrible are those Evils, which Tippling and Drunkenness produce; such are Sickness, Brutishness, Poverty, Quarrels, &c. but perhaps they have not yet sufficiently remarked,

Epist. 83.

Psal. 5. 15,  
16.

Psal. 69. 12.

SECT. III marked, how dangerous this Vice is to our  
 Neighbours, and to those who are not  
 Drunkards. This is what I would have  
 observed.

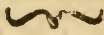
A Sixth Source, *Soft and effeminate  
 Complaisance*

From this it arises, That we subscribe  
 to all that Detractors say ; that we favour  
 them ; that we confirm them ; that we  
 take up their Words ; that we enhance  
 them still more ; that we call Good, Evil,  
 and Evil, Good, altho' we have no Interest  
 in so doing, but are only guided by the  
 Pleasure of passing for complaisant, be-  
 cause we know those of a contrary Dispo-  
 sition are always blamed. One of the  
 Reasons why we see more Detractors a-  
 mong great Men, than elsewhere, arises  
 from this fatal and barbarous Complaisance,  
 which is so much encouraged among them.  
 There is no one but what easily sees, how  
 mean, shameful, and wicked it is, thus to  
 make our Reason and Conscience buckle to  
 the vicious and corrupt Opinions of others,  
 and so to make our selves Slaves to the  
 Humours of other Persons.

A Seventh Source, *A contradictory  
 Spirit.*

On the other Hand, We see Persons  
 of a quite contrary Humour. Their Tem-  
 per is so contradictory, that it is sufficient  
 Reason

Reason for them to cry a Man down only because another commends him. This they do only to contradict and gainsay the Sentiments & Praises of others : Which ought to be as much condemned as it is blameworthy. Happy those who can keep a Medium between these two Vices !

SECT. III  


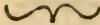
An Eighth Source, *Levity and Gaiety.*

Ask many who detract why they do so, and 'tis with much difficulty they can tell why, since they hardly know the reason themselves. These are Persons *driven with every Wind*, never fix'd, many Times ignorant of what they love or what they hate. They speak good or evil of others, without knowing any reason of this difference, and are sure to blame to-morrow, what they extoll'd to the very Clouds this day. In a word, Their whole Life is but a train of Inconsiderations and Inadvertences ; from whence it comes, that they back-bite without any other reason, than that of an Occasion's presenting. The bare Description of Men of this Character sufficiently shews how ridiculous and unreasonable they are.

A Ninth Source, *Rash Judgments.*

Under these rash and evil Judgments, I comprehend Prejudices and Suspensions injurious

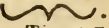


SECT. III  jurious to our Neighbours. We shall readily see, That these are a Source of Detraction, when we reflect and consider that the publick Judgments we pass against any one, have been preceded by particular Judgments of his Conduct in our own Mind. The Action of the Soul precedes that of the Tongue, which is but an Organ. Again, These Judgments being formed on a want of Charity, they are produced by this same Default. Moreover, these Judgments are a pure Detraction when deliver'd before witness. " We reckon that  
 " a Man don't fully act the *Historian* when  
 " he barely relates Things as they were  
 " transacted ; therefore we account it his  
 " Duty to give his own Remarks and  
 " Judgment upon them, says a modern Author.

#### A Tenth Source, *Curiosity*.

They who have this Fault, get an exact Information of every ones Behaviour, and if it so happen, that they can't learn from one Person all that they wou'd know, they go immediately to another and tell him all they have before heard, hereby to learn more, and be instructed in what they cou'd not know by means of the first. But these Persons don't differ much from

from those *St. Paul* speaks of in his second Epistle to *Timothy*, *who are ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth*: I mean, to the Truth of the Gospel, which condemns this Curiosity, ( as we shew hereafter, ) what encreases this Sin is, that it provokes those to detra , whom we inform of our Neighbours ill Conduct.

SECT. III  
  
 2 Tim. 3.7

Even in this World, these Persons are look'd upon with Contempt, and oftentimes receive affronts. Nay, They themselves confess their Curiosity to be unbecoming, when they say, ( as they often do ) If I an't too inquisitive, I should be glad if you wou'd tell me how this Affair was carried on.

### An Eleventh Source, *Contempt*.

The Contempt we shew Persons is also another Source of Detraction and Way whereby we back-bite. For why do we speak contemptuously of our Neighbours, unless it be to lessen their Credit with those that hear us? Why should we talk in a degrading way of them, unless on account of their Failings, which render them contemptible to us, and which we thereby discover?

I say further, That when we back-bite any Persons, it is plain that we are very

SECT. III willing to make them as contemptible to others, as they are to our selves. This is what infallibly follows on Detraction.

I add, That we don't detract from those we have a Respect for; it must then follow, that Disrespect produces Detraction. *Solomon* ranks Disrespect among Sins, when he says, *He that despiseth his Neighbour sinneth.* Moreover, it is a very vile, ridiculous and mean way, to fall upon those whom we insinuate to be so mean as not to deserve to be taken notice of.

Prov. 14.  
21.

#### A Twelfth Source, *The Corruption and Inhumanity of Detractors.*

JESUS CHRIST attributes the want of Love, under which is included Detraction, to the Corruption of Men, *Because,* says he, *Iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold.* This is apparently what *Solomon* means, when he says, *An ungodly Man diggeth up Evil; and in his Lips there is a burning Fire.* What evinces this is, That there is no wicked Man, who examines, pries into, and searches after the Knowledge of other Men's Failings more than Detractors do; it is from this very search that Detraction becomes so very common. And this hath been very justly compared to Fire by the

M<sup>atth.</sup> 24.  
12.

Prov- 16,  
27.

James 3. 5. *Apostle James.*

In

In a word, if a good Man from the good SECT. III  
 Treasure of his Heart brings forth good ~~~~~  
 Things, and an evil Man, evil Things, what Matt. 12. 35  
 must he be, who from his Heart brings  
 forth Things so very pernicious as Detrac-  
 tions? What else can he be called than an  
 evil Person, yea, that evil Person, whom  
*Solomon* speaks of? Let us be a little more  
 particular, a wicked Man is hasty, revenge-  
 full, &c. Qualities very proper to pro-  
 duce Detraction. Again, Accused by his  
 own Conscience, he thinks all the World  
 accuses him, and accordingly is always ready  
 to speak evil of those, whom he fancies  
 wou'd treat him so, if Occasion presented.  
 Besides, there are those who detract, en-  
 deavouring thereby to excuse their own  
 Faults, and to cast their Sins on the Mul-  
 titude of those who are subject to the same  
 Vices. Thus you may see voluptuous and  
 covetous Persons, who to palliate their  
 own base and shameful Actions, do with  
 Pleasure tell of those who resemble them  
 therein; and strive to aggravate the Sins  
 of others, that so they may lessen their own.  
 Again, you will meet some Persons who to  
 free themselves from the blame due to their  
 excesses, accuse others of Faults, not the  
 same with their own, but which may serve  
 as a covering for them. In a word, there  
 is in the most of Detractors, a cruel and  
 savage humour, such as that of the Lion

SECT. III among Beasts, which urges them on to Detraction. You may find such as I am speaking of, who without Reason or Interest, take a peculiar delight in every Thing that may hurt others, whose grief is their joy, and who doubly rejoice, when they are by their Detractions, the Instruments thereof. I mean those merciless Wretches, who never knew Christian Love: who never commend but with Reluctance, and in such an awkward Way, that it seems they give their consent thereto, as tho' it were a great Favour done to the Person spoken of. But altho' it were a Favour, the malicious Air with which you Consent, wou'd greatly diminish it's Worth.

A Thirteenth Source, *Ingratitude.*

Some Persons speak ill of Benefactors, that they may extenuate the Obligations they are under to them, by shewing, that the defects apparent therein, make them unworthy of any acknowledgement. Thus they shew themselves ungrateful by endeavouring to prove, that they might be so. An unthankful Man is like a Rose-bush, which pricks both him that plants it and him that gathers the Rose.

A Fourteenth Source, *Interest and Covetousness.*

*Covetousness*, according to *St. Paul's* expression, *is the Root of all Evil*; con-  
 1<sup>ST</sup> m. 6 10 proved.

frequently of Detraction, as may be thus proved. A covetous Man to conform to the great Ones, from whom he expects Wages & Pensions, and to please them, detracts from all those they are displeas'd with. SECT. III  
~~~~~

Another will decry the Conduct of a Person rais'd to a gainful Post, thereby insinuating, that the Man does not deserve it, but that he himself merits it much better.

There is nothing more common than to hear Persons of the same Profession back-bite each other. They will say all the ill possible of those who exercise the same Calling with themselves. To bring or keep Customers to themselves, and so hinder them from going to others, they will represent them as knavish & cheating. Who does not see that it is not the Love they have for Customers, which makes them talk after this manner but only a Desire of Gain?

Wou'd you know why many Folks will talk so disadvantageously of a Poor Man's Conduct; it is, that they may not be blamed for not helping him by their Charity, as tho' he did not deserve it. By this they pretend to justify their hard-heartedness. And tho' we ought not to give without Distinction, the Faults of the Poor are rather the pretence, than the Reason which hinders us from doing them good.

SECT. III

Do we not see, That after having spoken ill of a Man contrary to our Interest, we again praise him, if he takes to our side? An evident Sign that we talk according to our own Interests. In a Word, We may make an interested Man say any thing against the Reputation of his Neighbours, who loves nothing of them or in them but their Money, so blinded is he with a Desire of heaping it up. I believe then that when the Holy Scripture so frequently threatens covetous Persons with Hell, it is partly because Avarice breeds Detraction: And that Detraction is so frequently condemned by the Word of GOD, because it has Avarice for it's Principle and End.

A Fourteenth Source, *Hypocrisy*.

Detractors wou'd make those, before whom they detract, believe, That they themselves are very far from the Vices they blame in others, it being unnatural to speak ill of those whom we resemble; altho' oftentimes they have the very same Faults. Is not this pure Hypocrisy? Still farther, The Words they make use of for Detraction sufficiently shew on various occasions, that Hypocrisy is the Source thereof. *An Hypocrite with his Tongue destroys his Neighbour, says Solomon. His Words*

Words were softer than Oil, yet were SECT. III
they drawn Swords, said his Father before Ps. 50. 19.
 him. Detraction is an Hypocrisy which
 consists in speaking well; (for what is
 there better than to say the Truth?) and
 it consists also in doing ill; (for what is
 there worse than to destroy the Reputation
 of our Brethren?)

Hypocrisy leads to Hell by the way to
 Heaven. ‘How am I troubled, says one,
 ‘for the Love I bear Mr. N—— that he
 ‘should commit so base an Action as that
 ‘I shall acquaint you with!’ Are you
 troubled, O perfidious Man, and yet will
 you encrease his Shame by publishing it!
 Persons of this Character wou’d seem wil-
 ling to hide the Thing, but they soon suf-
 fer themselves to be overcome by Questi-
 ons and Entreaties. They wou’d apparen-
 tly excuse those they speak ill of; but truly
 the surest way of excusing is, not to ac-
 cuse them.

What still further proves the Hypocrisy
 of these Men is, That no sooner shall they
 meet a Person abroad, whom they have
 been just before back-biting, but they will
 make him a thousand Offers of Service, and
 redoubled Protestations of a tender and sin-
 cere Friendship. If this be not after ha-
 ving detracted, it will be perhaps before:
 Like those Pagans, who adorn’d the Victims
 ready for Sacrifice, with Garlands of Flowers,

SECT. III or the Jews, who after having resolved
 the Death of our Saviour, as of an infamous Person, cloathed him with a Purple Robe, the Mark of Royalty.


John 19.2.

As the Words & Actions of Hypocrites are very base so they are very dangerous, because it looks by these affected Discourses, as tho' it were only the Power of Truth which made them talk thus, and consequently they produce a very terrible Effect on the Hearer's Mind, to the prejudice of our Neighbour's Reputation. In a Word, The Devil is never more to be feared than when *he transforms himself* into an Angel of Light. GOD condemns and forbids Hypocrisy in so many places of his Word, that it wou'd be tedious to mention them all. You may see hereupon, *Job 15.34. Psalm 32.2. Matth.6.2. Mark 7.6. &c.* From which places it appears, that when we wou'd abuse others, we hurt our selves.

2 Cor. 11.
14.

A Sixteenth Source, *A false and blind Zeal.*

A blind and false Zeal for Religion and our own Party often causes Detraction. We think to do GOD Service by hurting the Reputation of those whom we suppose to act contrary to his Glory. And a Man of this Character speaks ill of those of a Religion which he has quitted, in order

der to perswade them of a Communion he SECT. III
 is about to embrace ; that he has as much 
 Detestation for his first Engagements as
 Affection for his last.

I call this Zeal false and blind, because it
 is directly contrary to the Spirit of Christiani-
 tity, which breaths nothing but Meekness
 and Sweetness. We may say so to those
 who are possessed herewith, as our Lord to
 his Disciples, when they wou'd have had
 him consum'd the Inhabitants who denied
 them Entry into their City, *ye know not* Luk. 55.9.
of what Spirit ye are.

A true Zeal for GOD'S House enflames
 and eats up our Hearts ; but that is a blind Joh. 2. 17.
 Zeal, which eats up the Reputation of o-
 ther Men by heaping Injuries on them.
 The Maxims of those who have espoused
 any Party either in State Affairs or others
 are far from being Christian. We do,
 as it were, list those of our own Party to
 the Stars, that so we may sink those of the
 opposite side to Hell. But does it not
 many times happen, that the divided Par-
 ties unite, and so we become the Prey of
 those whom we have offended ?

From the Zeal and Passion we have for a
 Party, I pass to that we have for particular
 Persons. If we are very much affected to a
 particular Man, there's nothing but what
 we can say against his Enemies. We trust
 such a Man with what we know at the
 Cost

SECT. III Cost of our Neighbour's Reputation. In fine, if he loves Detraction, we are sure to detract, to please him.

A Seventeenth Source, *Jealousy*.

It is the general Opinion of the World, That the Praises given to others, are so many secret Reproaches of their own Conduct, they therefore do every thing possible to free themselves from these Reproaches: For this end, they do their utmost to efface and raze out of our Minds, the good Opinion we have of other's Virtues. They seek all Occasions herefor, and inwardly rejoice and triumph when they have found them. An envious Man, tormented with his own Passion, persecutes others by Detraction. *Wrath is cruel, and Anger is outrageous, but who can stand before Envy?* St. Paul joins Detraction, Jealousy and evil Suspicions together, to shew the Connection they have each with the other. Are not they very Criminal who endeavour to hurt those that have given them no cause for such ill Treatment? Whereas in reality the Merit of any ought to be a Motive to to others to praise them, and spread the sweet Odour of their Renown still farther. When we wou'd tarnish their good Qualities, do we not endeavour to ob- ture the Gifts and Graces of the Lord? Since

Pro. 27. 4.:

1 Tim. 6. 4.

Since he is the Author of them. *Is thy* SECT. III
Eye Evil, because God is Good? Should Matth. 20.
 we not rather imitate the Conduct of *Mo-* 15.
ses, who, when one told him, That many
 prophesied in the Camp, which was looked
 upon as an Usurpation of his Rights, and a
 Diminution of his Authority, answer'd in
 these Words, *Enviest thou for my sake?* Numb. 11.
Would to God, that all the Lord's People 29.
were Prophets, and that the Lord would
put his Spirit upon them. Instead of spea-
 king Evil of them, and endeavouring to
 preserve his own Credit by ruining them,
 he rejoiced in the Favour GOD had done
 his People, and reprov'd the Man who
 would have provoked him to Jealousy. It
 is said indeed by Detractors, that they don't
 blame what is good in others, nor speak
 ill of any Thing but what is bad in them.
 But is it not certain, that some known Vi-
 ces are more than sufficient to discredit
 Persons, altho' they may have many good
 Qualities besides? And thus they injure
 them by speaking only of their bad Qualities.

An Eighteenth Source, *Pride* and
Self-Love.

These were the first Vices wherewith
Adam was corrupted; and which caused
 him to sin; and he sinn'd by giving way
 to them: These also are the favourite
 Vices of his Posterity. These are our first
 Habits,

SECT. III Habits, and remain in us longest : For it is
 the Habit of this Sin, which he has principally left to his Children. Among the many Forms in which it shews it self, we easily perceive that of Detraction. *Solomon* says expressly of that sort of Detraction which is called Railery, *Proud & haughty Scorner is his Name who dealeth in proud Wrath.*

Pro 21. 24.

Here we may say,

First, Pride and Self-Love blind us so as that we don't know our own defects. Or if they suffer us to see them, it is in so small a Character, that we can hardly discover them. When we are going to consider our selves with respect to our Imperfections, we make use of those deceitful Glasses which represent Objects at a distance which is much greater than in Reality they are, or of those which make Objects appear much less than they usually do, or in a word, if we see these Faults in all their Light and such as they really are, we forget them, *as a Man that views himself in a Glass ; as soon as he ceases to view himself, forgets what manner of Man he was.* Such a Man says secretly to himself with the Pride of the Pharisee in the Gospel, *I am not as other Men.* His very Pride hinders him from seeing that he is proud, when he back-bites others.

Jam. 1. 24.

Luk 18 11.

Secondly,

Secondly, This Vice makes our own Virtues and other Men's Vices appear very considerable. We then make use of those Glasses which represent Objects as near and large, tho' indeed they have this in common with the others, that they are equally deceitful. The Height of a Man appears as great as that of a Tree, to those Men who are half blind. They heap up all the Circumstances which may aggravate a Fault, but never mention those which might extenuate it. Upon the good Opinion they have of themselves and the evil Opinion they have of others, they fancy they have so much the better Foundation to detract from others, as they fancy others can have no hold of them. Self-Love on the Throne makes Tyrants, and Self-Love in Subjects makes Detractors, who are Tyrants to a Neighbour's Credit. Both would rule according to their Station and Manner, and imagine, that all others ought to be beneath them, because they only deserve to be above them, being unable to bear either Masters or Equals. They are unwilling to be first among the last; they would be first among the first. They who do not carry their Pride to so high a Degree, wou'd at least be placed in the second Rank, altho' they don't deserve to be in the sixth.

SECT. III
Mark 8. 24.

SECT. III I appeal for what I have said and shall say, to the knowledge of every Man. Certain it is, if they examine themselves, they will be obliged by the Strength and Evidence of Truth to confess, that what I have advanced is but too certain. Indeed, the Conscience of one particular Man is but a single Witness; but then join all the Consciences of proud Detractors together, and you will find almost an Infinity of Witnesses and Evidences.

Is it not real, is it not true, that Self-Love at what Time it perswades us of our own fine and good Qualities prompts us to perswade others thereof? But how? It is by casting Shades on the Pictures we draw of our Neighbours, that so the Colours of ours may appear more bright and lively. Is it not true, that proud Detractors, fancying all due to themselves, believe, they injure themselves in praising others? That hereby they rob themselves of a good which properly is their own; and they are as truly of this Opinion as it is false that they are the only deserving Persons. Building hereupon they take all from others, that so they may refer all to themselves. This Self-Love belonging and appertaining to them, they are ready to believe, that all which may satisfy it, belongs to them also. Is it not true, that we wou'd have our selves alone talked of, and for this End endeavour to
make

make others so contemptible, as that the World should say nothing at all of them, or else nothing that is good. Is it not further true, that as much as a Man loves to be himself set forth, so much he endeavours to suppress the Discourse upon other Persons?

SECT. III

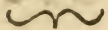
Is it not certain, That we wou'd have all the World love us, as much as we do our selves? As we love none but our selves, so we wou'd have others love none but us; and perswade 'em that we only are worthy of Love. To prove this we reckon up the Faults of others, which render them unworthy of our Love, as we pretend.

Oftentimes a love of vain Glory causes, That it is sufficient, that a Book has gain'd the Suffrage of the Publick, for a Man to undertake the task of discovering it's imperfections, that so he may shew himself one of much greater Wit, than the rest of Mankind, who have not withheld their Approbation for a Work which did not deserve it, as he endeavours to shew to the utmost of his Ability. These discoveries he sets much by; but being more easy to find Fault than to do better himself, he affords matter for other Criticks, to remark more Faults in his own Censures, than in the Works which he has been criticizing upon.

F

From


SECT. III



From hence it comes also, That a Man detracts from his Neighbour, thereby to insinuate, that he has a great Judgment in all things, that he knows how to make just Differences, that he very well knows the Heart of a Man, and that he perceives Faults which others do not. So that if any one praises a Man in his Presence, he will endeavour to shew that on the contrary he is blame-worthy that so he may tacitly degrade the Person praising and praised, and even those in the Company, below himself.

Hence also it happens that Persons who condemn gross Raillery, will yet approve of nice Detraction by their own Conduct. Why? Because Genius and Wit appear therein, and vain Glory finds it's Account in it. Should a Man say, *I am a learned Man, I am a Gentleman*, the Pride which he wou'd conceal, wou'd be too visible. This then is not the Way we take to make our selves esteemed: We therefore only speak of other Men's Vices, and do oppose them to our own Virtues, which indeed we do not mention; but even this perhaps is with a Design of obtaining a second Glory for a false Modesty.

In a word, The reason why we attribute so many like and common Effects as Hatred and others, to Pride and Detraction, is, because the former is the Source of the latter,

latter, from the Effect we trace the Cause. SECT. III
 We many times detract from another, because we love our selves beyond measure. 
 But is not this Proceeding entirely unjust? What can be more so, than to desire that others wou'd bear us as great Friendship as we do our selves, and at the same time for us to be against loving them, as we do our selves: what more unjust, than to shew as much hatred to them by our injurious Discourse, as we wou'd have them shew Love to us? What can be more contradictory than our Sentiments on this Subject? We degrade, we decry Persons, and yet if they were to applaud and commend us, we should be ravished therewith. Strange that we shou'd think it an Honour to receive Praises from those who in our Judgments, don't deserve any themselves! Does it not shew that this Self-Love is very blind, and that provided a Man will but flatter it, 'tis no matter who he is, or how he does it! To satisfy this Self-Love, we blame others, and to content it, we greedily catch at their Praises. What a Contradiction!

This Detraction and this vain Glory are very Criminal before God, who says to us by Solomon, *Be not wise in thine own Eyes*, Prov. 23 4. Let us follow the Exhortation of St. Paul who says, *In lowliness of Mind let each esteem others better than themselves.* Phil. 2. 3. And elsewhere,

SECT. III *what hast thou that thou hast not received?* (If indeed thou hast received more Gifts and more Talents than thy Brethren,) *and if thou hast received it, why then dost thou vaunt thy self as tho' thou hadst not received it?* But thou knowest nothing, and thou boastest in vain, if thou art ignorant, that Pride and Detraction are Sins which God will punish. And if thou dost know this, remember, that *he who knows his Master's Will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* Art thou ignorant of what the Apostle says to the Galatians? *Let us not be desirous of vain Glory, provoking one another.* Dost thou not know, that, speaking of the latter Times, he says, that *Men shall be lovers of themselves.*

1 Cor. 4. 7
 Luke 12. 47.
 Chap. 5. ver. 26.
 1 Tim 3. 2.

An Nineteenth Source, *Wrath.*

This Passion is frequently one of the Sources of Detraction, Fury furnishes with Weapons: Now Detraction is one of the fiery Darts of the wicked One, who is called an Accuser of the Brethren: Fury then produces Detraction. This direful Passion deprives of Reason and Judgment, and quenches the Flames of Love. On a thousand Occasions it spares not Blows, how then should it spare Words? A furious

Fury furnishes with Weapons, Viti-
 Eph 6 19

ous

ous Man is not Master of himself, how then shou'd he hide what concerns his Neighbour? A Man can't be truly angry with another, but he will make him feel it, at least by his Discourse. Of this Passion the Apostle warns the World, saying, *Let not the Sun go down on your Wrath.* St. James declares, that *the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness* (or fulfils not the Commandments) *of God.*

SECT. III



Eph. 4. 25.

Chap. I.
ver. 20.

I know there are many who pretend to excuse their Detractions by saying, they were Angry and in a Passion, when they spake so. I acknowledge, there appears less premeditated Design herein, than in those who detract thro' Hatred, Self-Love or Envy. Nevertheless, as it is very blameworthy to be wroth against our Neighbours, so Detraction, which results therefrom, is very much to be condemned. They are both Sins: How then can a Man pretend to excuse himself by covering one Vice with another? Can any one say, It was a Fire of Love which kindled this Wrath? Let us not then say, *I was drunk*, or, *I was mad*: seeing transgressions and complication of Sins, never make a Cause the better.

A Twentieth Source, *Hatred.*

It is very common, I own, to call those Persons, whom we speak ill of Friends.

SECT. III. **B**ut what shall we call Hatred, if this be not that evil Principle which leads us to hurt them, either in their Honour or any other of their Goods? It may chance, that a Man will flatter those whose Wrath he fears, or whose Smiles he desires, either in their own Presence, or before their Friends, but a Man will never speak ill of those whom he truly loves. This is quite contradictory; and in this regard, Light and Darkness can never agree. This is so true, That we can't even see the Defects of one we love. We call those Things Virtues in him, which in another we should name Vices: Or if we perceive his Defects, we do our utmost to hide them. Consequently, Hatred makes a Man detract, and from Hatred arises the Pleasure we take in hearing these Persons spoken ill of, whom we don't affect, which in it self is a conceived Detraction, and will doubtless quickly bring forth.

The Cause of this Hatred is frequently the most frivolous imaginable: Sometimes, because a Man has not followed our Advice; or has not entrusted us with a Secret that we wanted to know, or some other such matter of as little importance.

Moreover, altho' the Cause of Hatred may be frivolous, yet the Sin is not so: The holy Scripture orders us to love even these that hate us most.

A Twenty-first Source, *Revenge.* SECT. III

Detraction is certainly one of the most sure and common Ways of testifying our Resentment and Revenge. We many times detract *before* we have revenged our selves, in some other way than that of the Tongue, to shew that we shall have cause so to do ; or else *after*, to shew that we had reason for so doing, and to justify our revenge.

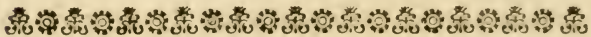
How many Persons do we see detract to revenge themselves on some-body who had spoken slightly of them before ?

In a Word, Wou'd you be revenged of your Enemy, Go and tell some-body, that his Enemy has spoken ill of him ; doubtless if the latter can, and if he be not one who fears GOD, he will, do him all the Hurt possible, and so you will be revenged by his revenging himself.

I say that Detraction is one of the most certain means of Revenge, because that truly we can't hardly do a Man more hurt than to take away his Reputation. But if this be a most sure way to hurt others, it is a most certain way to destroy one's self; since St. Paul expressly forbids it : *Dear* Rom. 12. 19. *ly beloved, says he, Avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto Wrath ; for it is written, Vengeance is mine : I will*

SECT. III *reply, saith the Lord.* Is not this Prohibition express both from the Master, and from the Disciple?

In a word, We should restrain by all means our Prejudices, Illusions and Passions, which so eagerly urge us on to back-bite those, who have stirred them up; and thereby we shall put an End to the most ordinary Sources of this Sin, and which contribute not a little to make it a Sin.



Reflections upon what has been said in this Section.

THE Heart perhaps has not more Vessels, which receive the Blood, and cause it to circulate thro' the human Body, than Detraction has Sources, which carry it thro' the Body politic. We need not then be astonished, that it is so very common in the World, as we see it to be when all these various ways are made use of, and cloathed under so many different Garbs, I own that all these various Sources are not ordinarily found at the same Time and in the same Person. But then one of them is sufficient to produce a thousand Detractions, Stories and Railleries; besides they may be all met with at different Times.

These

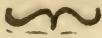
These Sources are not only the Causes of, and precede Detraction, but they even accompany it, and as it were incorporated with it, and make a Part of it ; as the first matter with which we kindle a Pile of Wood, is a Cause, an Accessary, and a Part of the Fire, which results therefrom. For Instance, a Detraction which arises from Pride shall be fill'd up with arrogant Terms, and related with an Air of Haughtiness. Another, which proceeds from an hypocritical Bottom, shall be told with an apparently modest Visage in him that tells it, and with a Tone of a tender and compassionate Voice. A Third, that proceeds from Wrath or Revenge, shall carry along with it the marks of these Passions.

SECT. III

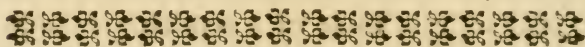


We have tho't it convenient to shew not only the Sources of Detraction, but also how unjust and criminal they are, that so we may make use of these Considerations when we have fallen into it, as of a Proof of the greatness of the Sin of Detraction, whose Sources are so much to be condemned.

We may also acquaint the Reader, That all Vices have so great Reference to and Connection with each other, that what we apply to a particular Source of this Vice, may be also referred to some other. Example, We have said some things that are alike, on the Subject of Hatred and Hypocrisy,

SECT. III  pocrify, because a Man will many Times make use of Hypocrisy to cover his Hatred, or sometimes Hypocrisy is a covered Hatred. And Detraction makes use of them both.

Each of the Sources already mentioned does not always and only produce Detraction, for Revenge, Coveteousness, &c. have many other Effects. But they do produce Detraction many Times and according to the different Temperaments of Persons.

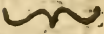


The Uses of this Section.

LET us consider first of all, what an horrible sort of Monster this Detraction is, being produced by Sins of so many different Kinds, as by Love and Hatred, Contempt and Glory, by Complaisance for some, and Anger against others. Does it not look as if *a Kingdom thus divided could not stand*? It never could, did not Men take the greatest Care to re-unite such divided Parties in their Hearts thereby to form this Giant.

Mat. 12. 24.

Let us here make some Reflections on the external Sources of Detraction. First on the Subject of Prosperity. It is a very slippery

slippery Path, and most who walk in it SECT. III
 fall into the Sin we are arguing against. 
 Moreover, as this State has nothing evil in
 it self, we are not commonly on our Watch
 against it, and it's Effects. We ought then
 to be doubly watchful; on the one hand,
 against those Temptations we are then ex-
 posed to, and on the other, against the Se-
 curity and Inadvertance we live in under
 such a flourishing Condition.

Sure I am, this Application and Regard
 we demand, will appear very reasonable, if
 we reflect, that when we are not on our
 Guard, we are in eminent Danger of horri-
 bly offending GOD by a proud Ingratitude,
 and of feeling the terrible Effects of his
 Justice, after and because that we have a-
 bused the Effects of his Love and Grace.

As to the evil Examples, we still re-
 commend this Attention to you, that so
 you may not suffer your selves to be sedu-
 ced by them. Frontier Cities are the best
 guarded with every thing that may serve
 for their Defence, because they are most
 exposed to the Enemy's Attacks: Thus
 be ye the more on your Watch inasmuch
 as ye are continually blocked up, as I may
 say, by Legions of Detractors. If you must
 imitate some-body and follow Examples,
 let it be that of JESUS CHRIST who
 has left us a Pattern that we may follow
 his Steps.

1 Pet. 2. 21

This

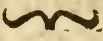
SECT. III

W This Watchfulness we are speaking of, ought to have place with respect to the frequent Occasions for Detraction. We should be on our Guard that we go not where these Occasions present.

As to Impunity, You ought not to think that you may therefore abandon your self to Dissolution, for if your Detraction be seldom punished in this World by the Magistrate, yet it will be eternally punished in the other World; and that the Applauses you may gain on Earth on Account of your Railleries, will be changed into dreadful Confusion in Hell.

In a word, Consider, that if it requires neither Cost, Money nor Trouble to detract, yet it costs nothing to refrain detracting: And that if this Vice be so compatible with many others, it must needs be a very great Vice; for a Man must be exceeding vicious to accommodate himself to all Vices.

As we have shewn the Sin and Baseness of the Sources we call internal, we shall here only exhort you to reflect, that most of them are hurtful and detrimental to those in whom they are found, as they are accompanied with Trouble and Vexation: For truly who can be easy when he sees himself torn by Hatred, Wrath, Revenge, &c. *The merciful Man doeth good to his own Soul, but he that is cruel, troubleth*

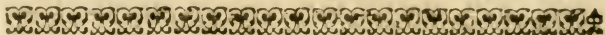
bleth his own Flesh. O! Detractors, we SECT. III
 have discovered the true Causes of your 
 Detraction, seek then no longer to hide
 them. Say no longer, that it is your Love
 to Virtue and Truth, which makes you
 back-bite the Wicked. No, it is your
 Hypocrisy. Say no more, that it is be-
 cause you wou'd do Justice to all the
 World. No, it is your Self-Love. Say
 no more, that it is because you hate Flat-
 tery. No, it is your Jealousy. And so
 of the rest.

There are many of these Sources, which
 should be absolutely banished. Such are
 Curiosity, Idleness, Drunkenness, Impu-
 dence, Levity, Rash Judgment, Ingratitude,
 and Hypocrisy.

There are others, which need only be
 rectified, and which may change their
 Nature without changing their Name.
 Thus we may make the Desire of talking
 serve to bless GOD and Man; Complai-
 nance to be gentle as GOD requires; a
 contradictory Spirit to attack Vices; Co-
 veteousness to be sparing of Invectives a-
 gainst our Neighbours; Jealousy to en-
 deavour to surpass others in Piety; Self-
 Love to do our utmost to gain the inesti-
 mable good Things of Paradise by our Cha-
 rity. Thus you ought to turn the Course
 of these Sources, which otherwise will
 make a terrible Ruin, and destroy all that
 shall

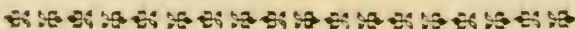
SECT. III shall be found exposed to their Inundation, to the Prejudice of other Men.

Let us turn them against our selves, that so they may carry away our Sins After this manner, these Sources of Blood may again become agreeable and pure.



S E C T I O N IV.

Wherein is proved, That Detraction is a Sin.




A R T I C L E I.

The Law of G O D expressly forbids it.

SECT. IV

IN discoursing of the Sources of Detraction, we have shewn, That most of it's Causes are Trespasses of the divine Law: Let us now see the express Prohibitions made against committing it.

The *First* we mention is from *Levit. 19.*
Ver. 16. Thou shalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer among my People. That is, Thou shalt not go about to inform thy self of Persons Lives and their Faults, that so thou may'st inform others of them, and reciprocally to tell the first, or others, what thou
hast

hast heard of the last : Not that GOD con- SECT IV.
demns only this sort of Detraction, but 
because those who make a Business of de-
tracting from their Neighbours, are most
blameable : Those Words, *Among thy*
People, shew that those Men are more cri-
minal, who detract from those of their
own Nation. Thus it follows, That De-
traction is an Evil, since GOD, who for-
bids nothing but what is evil, has forbid-
den it.

A *Second* Prohibition is in *Prov. ch. 24.* Ver. 28,
Be not Witness against thy Neighbour
without a Cause. We say, That Detrac-
tion is here forbidden, because in reality it
is a Witness brought against our Neighbour
without a Cause, when neither the care
of our own Honour, and our own Vindica-
tion, when also neither any publick Good,
or the Magistrate requires it of us. These
Words refer so much to Detraction, that
it seems to me that they might be made
the Definition of it. Thus as on the one
hand, we are forbidden to hide or disguise
the Truth, when we are called to tell it ;
even so on the other hand, we are not to
discover it to the Prejudice of our Brethren,
when humane and divine Laws do not en-
gage us thereto. What *Solomon* adds in
the same Verse, *For why wilt thou make*
believe with thy Lips, shews that Deceit
is

SECT. IV is a Source of Detraction, as has been already shewn.

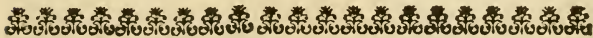
Ver. 1j. *Thirdly*, St. Paul forbids Detraction in Eph. 4. *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from you.*

Ver. 8. *Fourthly*, The same Apostle says in Col. 3. *But now put ye off all Anger, Wrath, Detraction.* After he had represented to them the Sins, with which they were stained during their Paganism, the Apostle warns them to lead a more pure and holy Life in their State of Christianity, and consequently to avoid Anger, Wrath and Detraction, which are truly Sins, seeing they are opposite to Holiness.

Ch. 3, ver. 2 *Fifthly*, The Apostle writing to his Disciple Titus, commands him to exhort Men to *speakevil of no Man.* 'Tis true, The original Word may signify *to blaspheme*, which properly regards the Divinity. But both the Origin of the Word, which signifies to blast a Man's Reputation and the Usage of the sacred Authors, who very often take it for, *to detract*, and the Circumstances of this Text, plainly shew, that we may very well translate it, *to speakevil.* And truly the Design of St. Paul both before and after, is only to set before Men their Duty towards their Neighbours, and especially in these Words, where he bids *them speakevil of no man.*

Sixthly,

Sixthly, St. *James* expressly forbids us SECT IV:
 to *Speak Evil one of another*, wherein he Chap. 4 II.
 forbids us to speak evil, not only, when
 no one has given Occasion therefor, but
 even when another has formerly back-bit-
 ten us; so that we are not to detract from
 the very Aggressors.



ARTICLE II.

*Wherein it is proved, That Detraction is
 a Sin, by Consequences drawn from
 Passages out of the Old Testament.*

Detraction is a very great Sin, since it
 is contrary to three Precepts of
 GOD'S Law.

First, To the Sixth Command, *Thou
 shalt not kill*. What makes me say, that
 Detraction is a kind of Murder, is,

I. Because it takes from the Detracted,
 that sort of Life which consists in being
 loved by, or dear to Men (which is at least
 one Pleasures of Life,) by destroying the
 good Opinion which are very often inse-
 perable from humane Nature. If then we
 take away this Life of the Soul, we do in
 some way Murder the Man; we destroy
 the Soul as far as a Spiritual Nature can
 be destroyed, which being in it self im-
 mortal,

SECT. IV mortal, can experience no other Death than
 the Pains it suffers, among which the loss
 of Honour is one of the most touching.


Pfal. 120.
 4.
 Prov. 25.
 18.

2. Because the Tongue of Detractors is ordinarily in the holy Scripture, and especially in *Psalms*, compared to a Dart, a Sword, an Arrow, and to all the Instruments Men make use of to take away the Life of Enemies; whereby we understand, that Detractors are true Murderers, except that these aim only at the Spirit & Reputation, and the others at the Bodies of their Neighbours.

3. What shews that this Sin does as much Evil as Assassination on many Occasions is, that there have always been an infinite Number of Persons, who choose rather to lose their Life, than to preserve it, after the Loss of their Credit & Reputation. Moreover, there are others to whom a good Name is so necessary, that if they lose it, they are put beyond a possibility of preserving their own, and their Families Lives: Such is the Condition of Merchants, Tradesmen, and almost all the World. This made St. *Chrystom* compare Detractors to Man-Eaters, saying, *Let the Mouth also fast by abstaining from shameful & destructive Words: For what will it profit us, if while we refrain eating Birds and Fishes, we devour and eat up our Brethren? He that detracts,*
eats

Ad Popu-
 lum Anti-
 oche.
 Hom. 3.

eats the Flesh of his Brethren and bites the Flesh of his Neighbours. What Christian would not shrink with Horror to eat a Man's Flesh? and yet, according to St. *Chrysoftom*, this is what a Detractor does.

SECT. IV


Secondly, Detraction is directly contrary to the eighth Commandment, *Thou shalt not Steal.* Who can deny that this a true Theft? Seeing it ravishes from our Neighbour a Benefit which does not belong to the Ravisher, even his Reputation; a thing so precious, that *Solomon* assures us, *it is better than great Riches.* So that to take it from him is many times to do him more mischief, than to take away his Goods and his Money.


Prov. 22-1.

Some will say perhaps, that Reputation is not of the nature of these other good Things, which we may obtain and enjoy without the help of another; whereas Reputation entirely depends on others, and consequently one may take it away without ravishing from a Man any thing which properly belonged to him. I answer in a few Words; It matters little how we enjoy a good Name; and suppose it be by the Judgment and Liberality of another, it is sufficient, that it was given to a Man as his own; and if it belongs to him, we can't take it away without being Thieves.

Some may say, that Men have not a just Title to a good Name, and so it may

SECT. IV be taken from them without Theft. I answer, that supposing what such Men advances was true, the Consequence wou'd not be just ; because we have still less title to take this good Thing away. What further shews the Horror of Detraction is, That it is very likely that some of those, who make no stick at taking away a Man's Honour, wou'd not make much Scruple to kill a Man right out, or to rob him of his worldly Goods, if he had the same Occasions. This made *Quintilian* say, That he who detracts differs not from him who does Evil, but by Occasions, *Maledicus a Malefico non differt nisi Occasione.* And *Zoilus* being ask'd why he took so great a Pleasure in Detraction? answer'd, *Because, envious as I am, I can do no other hurt.*

In fine, Detraction is contrary to the Ninth Commandment, *Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour.* I own, that to take these Words according to the ordinary Signification, they speak only of false Witness, Lies and Calumnies. But all agree, that we ought to give a larger Extent to the Precepts of this Law (see what JESUS CHRIST says hereupon, *Matt. 5.*) and that when it seems to forbid but one Vice, it nevertheless condemns all those which have any reference to it. I don't suppose that we go
beyond

beyond the Intention of GOD, by saying, SECT. IV.
 that Detraction is comprized in these Words 
 any more than by affirming, that Calumny
 and Detraction are many Times confounded
 together in various Passages of Scripture.

Still further, altho' Calumny be on some
 accounts more criminal than Detraction,
 nevertheless it must be owned, that the
 latter is in other regards more terrible than
 the former, because more difficult and even
 impossible to remedy. We may repair the
 Reputation of another, whom we have
 detracted from by telling the Truth, and
 acknowledging that the Evil we said of
 him was a Lye; but we can never repair
 the Reputation of another, whom we have
 slandered, while we spake Truth; ex-
 cept by Lying, that is by saying that what
 we related of him was not true. I may
 say farther, that even this Lye will not re-
 establish a Man's Honour. For how will
 it be possible to make the World believe
 that to be false, contrary to their own
 Light, which we have formerly clearly
 shewn to be true.

Besides what we find in the divine Law
 which forbids Detractions, we may also
 draw many Consequences against it, from
 divers other Passages of the Old Testament.

David in *Psal.* 1, 2. ranks in the Num-
 ber of those who shall dwell in the Taber-
 nacle of the Lord, him, *That back-hiteth*

SECT. IV *not with his Tongue, nor doeth Evil to his Neighbour, nor taketh up a Reproach against his Neighbour.* Here not only Detraction is expressly named, but it is further characterized by one of it's almost infallible Effects, which is *to do Evil to his Neighbour.* And it is principally because of the Evil which it does to him, that the Holy Spirit, saying to us by the Mouth of the Psalmist, that *he who does not back-bite shall abide in the Tabernacle of GOD,* teaches us, that the opposite Person, he who does detract, shall not enter into this Tabernacle of Joy, of Glory, of Holiness and of Happiness, in the Heaven where GOD dwells. This is a sufficient Proof, that Detraction is a Sin, inasmuch as it will deprive those Persons of Heaven, who make use of it and spread it abroad.

Ver, 5.

The same *David* says to us in *Psal. 101.* *Whosoever privily slandereth his Neighbour, him will I cut off.* This holy Prophet thro' this whole Song, declares that he will put far from him the Wicked and Sinners, among whom he reckons Detractors; it then follows that Detraction is a Sin.

Because it is a Sin, *Jeremy* places it in his Catalogue and among the Complaints which he made of the Crimes of the Jews. *They are all stubborn,* says he, *and more than stubborn, and they go about slandering; they are as Brasses and Iron; they are as Persons, who destroy one another.*

Jer. 6. 28.

Here

Here I can't help observing Three Characters of Detraction or Detractors ; SECT. IV

1. That they are as Brass, which makes a Noise when struck, and which has some Splendour, but which after all is but of little Worth and Value. 2. They are like Iron, which by it's weight and hardness crushes those on whom it falls. 3. That by mutual Detractions, they destroyed one another.

This same Prophet ranks this Vice among many others, which he speaks of in Chap. 9. *Take ye heed every one of his intimate Friend, and trust ye not in any Brother ; for every Brother makes a business of supplanting, and every intimate Friend, (that is, which calls himself such) goes about detraacting. Trust not to any Brother,* beware how you let him into your Secrets, lest he make use of your Frankness and supplant you, and when you have discovered your own Defects, he back-bite you. Since then this Prophet ranks Detraction among Sins, it is certainly a Sin in it self. Ver. 4.

A R T I C L E III.

Detraction proved to be a Sin by Passages taken from the New-Testament.

1. **O**UR Lord JESUS CHRIST ranks Detractions among those evil Things

SECT. IV which proceed from the Heart, and defile the Man ; and he distinguishes them from *Calumnies*, which he names *false Witnesses*. If then *Detractions* defile a Man, they are consequently *Sins*. He speaks of them in the plural Number, that so he may comprehend all sorts of them.

Matth. 15. 18, 19. Ver. 29, 30. 2. St. Paul in *Rom.* ch. 1. relating the *Sins* in which the Heathen were plunged, joins *Detractions* with their other Excesses, and distinguishes between simple *Detractors* and *Calumniators*, whom he calls *Inventors of Evils* or evil Things. The Apostle joins this Sin with others that are so horrible, that we can't doubt but it is very abominable before GOD. In such a Company, it must be very detestable.

3. The same holy Man in *1 Cor.* ch. 5. makes it plain to us, That it is a frightful Sin, seeing he forbids us even to eat with such as are charged with it, and orders them to be excommunicated the Body of the Church, as Persons who do not deserve to be found among Believers. How empty would our Churches be now-a-days, if all *Detractors* were cast out of them ! But also how much more agreeable wou'd our Assemblies be to GOD !

Chap 6.
Ver. 10.

In this same Epistle, he ranks among those who shall not inherit the Kingdom of GOD, *Revilers*, whom he reckons among the greatest Sinners. But because some perhaps

perhaps might flatter themselves, either that these Sins were inconsiderable, or that GOD wou'd easily pardon them, He says, *Be not deceived*, all those who commit them shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, which shews at the same Time the infallible Chastisement and the Enormity of the Sins. And in the 12th of his second Epistle to the *Corinthians* he fears, that Detraction will be among the Sins to be found with them.

SECT. IV.

Ver. 2 a.

5. In *Phil.* 4. He exhorts them to think on *things that are lovely and of good Report, and where there is any Virtue and Praise*. And herein he exhorts them to flee Detraction, which has nothing lovely in it, and which is a Sin, as has been already shewn, far from being a Virtue, and which is so far from being a Thing of good Report, that it takes away the good Name of a Neighbour and of all those who do detract ; which in a word, is so far from having any Praise, as that it is busied in blaming others, and making it self blameable ; Detractors and Detracted being so.

Ver. 8.

6. The same Apostle in his Epistle to the *Romans*, ch. 12. commands us *to prefer one another in honour*. We ought not then to back-bite one another, seeing Detraction tends only to the shame and ignominy of our Neighbours, far from contributing

Ver. 10.

SECT. IV buting to their Honour. What can be more opposite than the Apostle's Precepts to the Practice of Detractors!

Chap. 3.
Ver. 2.

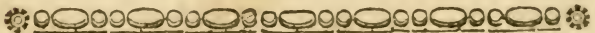
7. The same Apostle in 2 *Tim.* reckons Detraction among the horrible Sins which shall reign in the last Days. *Men*, says he, *shall be lovers of themselves, vain, proud, defamers, &c.*

Ver. 19.

8. In 1 *Cor.* 6. He says, *Our Bodies are the Temples of the holy Spirit.* Our Mouth is a part of our Body; if then we defile our Mouth by Detraction (as has been already shewn that we do) it follows that thereby we defile the Temple of the holy Ghost, which cannot pass for a Sin that is light and of little importance.

1 *Pet.* 2.1.

9. *St. Peter* reckons *evil-speaking* among the things we are to lay aside, that is to say, among Sins.



ARTICLE IV.

That some of the particular Ways of detracting are Sins.

WE could doubtless make separate Treatises on the different Ways of detracting, which we are about to mention under this Article; each of them affording sufficient Matter for a Volume; but as

we

we shall stick to the whole, rather than to its parts, we shall be very brief with respect to Stories, Railleries and Reproaches. SECT. IV

OF STORIES.

Stories, as has been already shewn, are, one kind of Detraction, or one way of detracting. It is no less true, that Stories whose Design generally is to sow Divisions, are very great Sins against Charity, and oftentimes against the Fidelity, which we owe to those who have trusted their Secrets with us; a Fidelity that we violate every Time we reveal and relate them. *Solomon* has shown, That Story-tellers, at least those who reveal Secrets, sin against Fidelity, when he opposes them to those who possess this Virtue. *A Tale-bearer* Prov. 11
revealeth Secrets, but he that is of a faith- 13.
Spirit concealeth the Matter.

When *St. Paul* reckons up the capital Sins of the Pagans, he counts their having been *Back-biters*, as one; and adds, *That* Rom. 1. 30
they themselves knew the Judgment of
GOD, viz. That they who do such Things
are worthy of Death. Which I think sufficiently proves, that these Stories are sinful.

OF RAILLERY.

David declares the Man happy who has not set in the Seat of Scorners, or Railers. Psal. 1. 13
Unhappy

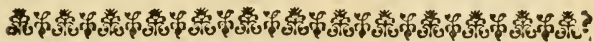
SECT. IV Unhappy then and criminal are they who
 Prov. 14. have sat therein. *Solomon* says, that *He*
 31. who mocketh the Poor, reproacheth his
 Prov. 19. Maker; GOD, who is the Maker of the
 29. Railer, and him that is mocked. Consequently, it is a Crime no less than high
 Ch. 29. 20. Treason against the Divinity. He says likewise that *Judgments are prepared*
 for Mockers. Likewise *Isaiab* says, that *the scornful shall be consumed*. It is needless to add any more like Passages.

OF OUTRAGES & REPROACHES.

These are expressly condemned in the Law of GOD. In the Prophet *Zephaniah* we have an evident Proof, that In-
 Ch. 2. 8, 9. vectives, those Injuries in Words, are Sins, inasmuch as GOD resolves that he will punish the People of *Moab* and the Children of *Ammon*, because they by these means had defamed the *Jews*, and assures them, that he will raze their Cities so that there shall not be any Marks of them left. Moreover, the Scripture requires the wicked to forsake his way, and the *injurious* Man his Tho'ts. Our Saviour himself declares to the *Jews* that *whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council; but whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-Fire*. Interpreters are very much
 Isa. 55. 7. divided

divided about the signification of the word *Raca* ; some pretend that it means a gross Injury ; others, a less Injury than the word *Fool* ; others again, that by an Interjection it marks the Wrath and Indignation of him that speaks it : But however this be, they must all own, That it marks the Contempt and Wrath of him that utters it on Account of the Faults or Wickedness of him to whom he addresses himself ; and that by an allusion to the different Tribunals of the Jews, CHRIST is here speaking of the Judgments of GOD.

SECT. IV

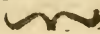
ARTICLE V.

Detraction is contrary to Charity.

IT will be very easy to shew this opposition by running the Comparison between what *St. Paul* says of Charity, and the Nature of Detraction. *Charity is of a patient Spirit*, quite contrary to the Impatience of Detractors, who can't bear the Defects of others. *Charity is kind*, whereas Detraction is cruel, and does irreparable evil to those whom it falls upon. *Charity is not envious*, but Detraction has Envy many Times for it's Source, as has been before shewn. *Charity vaunteth not it self,*

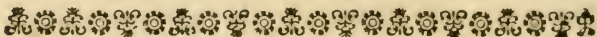
1 Cor, ch. 13

SECT. IV *self*, Detraction on many occasions is insolent to the highest Degree. *Charity is not puffed up*, Detraction is frequently a consequent of Pride. *Charity does not behave it self unseemly*, Detraction tarnishes the Honour of our Neighbours. *Charity seeks not her own*, Detraction seeks nothing but it's own at others Cost. *Charity is not easily provoked*, Detraction is often the Effect of Spleen and Anger. *Charity thinks no evil*, Detraction necessarily thinks thereof; nay, it wou'd not be Detraction, if it did not think of evil, to relate it afterward. *Charity rejoices not in iniquity*, Detraction does; and truly if Men were troubled at the Sorrows & Faults of others, they would hide them, far from discovering them. *Charity easily believes the good we say of Persons*, but Detraction easily believes the ill that is said of them. *Charity hopes for the Conversion and Change of Sinners, and in this hope of future amendment kides present Faults*, but Detraction hopes for no good from them, and disparages them, looking upon their present State as that they must be in all their lives long. In a word, *Charity endures all things, it easily bears the burdens of others*, but Detraction will endure nothing, and never shews any Comfort to others. It will not excuse any thing, and hastens Revenge with the utmost Rigour. This

This Parallel is pretty long; but there SECT. IV. is this good in it, that it serves to shew,  how Detraction is a great Sin, seeing nothing is so strongly recommended as it's Opposite, Charity, which is not only an abridgment of the Law and the Prophets, but even of the Gospel. And here it must be observed, that when the Scripture orders us to be charitable, it condemns Detraction two ways, 1. In that it orders us to contribute to the good of others, which we do not by Detraction. 2. It forbids us doing any hurt to others; now it is certain, that we do them a very great Damage, in taking away so precious a thing as their Honour. Thus it is a Sin of Commission and Omission. Besides what I have said, here is a reasoning which sufficiently proves that Detraction is contrary to Charity. Charity teaches us, that we ought to pray to GOD for our Brethren; but what state is a Man in to ask of GOD Prosperity for them, if he is endeavouring to take from them the dearest thing they have? Charity requires us to assist the Poor; but how can we give them an Alms, if we refuse them our Silence which costs nothing: Charity requires us to comfort Men under Afflictions; but how can we do that, if we ourselves are the Authors of their Afflictions? Can a Fountain at the same Time send forth bitter Waters and sweet? No verily. Jam. 3. 12

All

SECT. IV All those Passages then which recommend Charity to us, do condemn Detraction, which is still contrary to the Charity we owe our Neighbours in many other Ways; the speaking of which we shall reserve till we come to treat of the Effects of Detraction.



ARTICLE VI.

Detraction is contrary to Justice, and therefore a Sin.


HAVING already shewn that Detraction is contrary to Charity, that were almost sufficient to make us conclude, that it is contrary to Justice, for **J E S U S C H R I S T** has recommended Charity to us as a *just* thing; and truly is it not a *just* thing that we should Love one another, as he has loved us, an ancient Father looked upon this Charity as a thing due; of which he said, that it was a Debt we can never be discharged from.

Besides, it is very certain and evident, that Detraction strikes directly at this Precept, which is Natural as well as Evangelical, to do to others as we wou'd that they shou'd do unto us. What more clear than this? This Principle is so self evident that

Mat. 7.12.

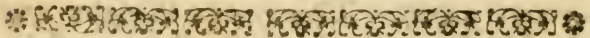
that it wont permit, nor does it need any reasonings to prove it. Now where is the Man who wou'd be very easy and willing to be spoken ill of? Doubtless there is no one who would, there being none but what choose to preserve their Honour and Reputation.

But if there are some who say they should not be troubled if the World did speak ill of them; they do not then talk seriously, at least they don't Mind what they say; and would they consult themselves, they would find and acknowledge, that this is too repugnant to the Love they naturally bear themselves, not to be offended with those who take away what mostly flatters Interest and Self-Love. Upon this Principle engraved on the *fleshy Tables of the Hearts* of all Men, it is, That our Lord has established his Commandment of loving others as we love our selves. This Principle then must be very true, seeing GOD has built upon it. This Principle, I say, of doing to others as we desire they may do to us, is more sure than all the Demonstrations of *Geometry*, being established, explained and commanded by a GOD, who can neither be deceived nor deceive others. This is the Weight and the Measure to which all others must be conformed, otherwise they are false Rules, false Weights and false Ballances, which are

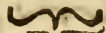
SECT. IV.

 2 Cor. 3. 31
 Lev. 19. 36.
 Prov. 11 1.

SECT. IV contrary to Justice & abominable to GOD.

Since then Detraction is so opposite both to the Laws of Nature & those of the Gospel, it follows that it is a Sin, for *Sin is that which is contrary to the Law*. It is also contrary to that mutual, tho' tacit, Engagement Men enter into, when they are formed into civil Societies, of succouring and being helpful to each other reciprocally. But to tear each other to pieces, how is this helping and succouring each other? Detraction then is a Violation of this Engagement, and consequently an Act of Injustice, and *the Unrighteous shall not Inherit the Kingdom of GOD*. Learned Men have for a long Time disputed, and perhaps yet a great while will dispute, whether the Foundation and Rule of Justice ought to be the Profit of Society, or of our selves, or the Authority of the Laws given us by GOD. Without entering into their Differences, I say that the arguings of all, whatever they be, make against Detraction, which is contrary to the divine Laws, many Times to Self-Interest, and the good of Society, as we shall hereafter shew.



ARTICLE

A R T I C L E VII. SECT. IV.

Detraction is contrary to the Attributes of GOD, and is a Character of the Devil.

1. **I**T is repugnant to that which makes the Essence of the adorable Being. *GOD is Love*, says, St. *John*, whereas *Detraction is a Defect of Love. GOD is unwilling that any should perish, but had rather that all should come to Repentance.* 1 Joh. 4.8
2 Pet. 3.9
 Detractors on the contrary endeavour to destroy others, as far as they can, and seem even to fear the Repentance of those whom they accuse.

2. This Sin is opposite to the Ways of his Wisdom, who seems to set before our Eyes the Defects of others, to teach us to know our selves; to shew us the Deformity of Vices in others, that so we may avoid them. But if their Imperfections make us Detractors, this is a going directly contrary to the Design of GOD; for then we see them without correcting them in our selves, which if we did, we should refrain speaking ill of them.

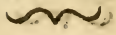
His Wisdom also permits Sin, to humble those who behold it in others as in a Mirrour, by considering, that it is the Frailty of humane Nature. But far from

SECT. IV this, Detractors do from thence take matter of Pride, and a Subject for raising themselves above their Neighbours.

3. Detraction makes a Breach as I may say, in the Omnipotence of GOD. To backbite others and judge them, is to encroach upon the Legislator himself. The Sinner has his Judge, who will at the last reveal his Crimes, if he persist in them, and thereupon render a Judgment conformable to his Law. But now to go about to expose and make known to this World those things which GOD has reserved for the next, is to encroach upon the Rights of GOD and to anticipate the Time. To him alone are Men to give up an Account of their Conduct, at least in a great many Cases. To discover it then to the Publick, as if it was to them, Men were accountable, is to place one's self in GOD's stead. On this Account it was that S. James said, *Be not many Masters, knowing that ye shall receive the greater Condemnation.*

JAMES 3.1.
See also
JAM. 4.12.

4. This Vice does Violence to GOD's Justice. His Prerogative it is to render to every one according to his Works. Particular Persons then ought not here to render what belongs to GOD alone. When some have done ill Actions, 'tis not for others to cover them with the shame and ignominy, which answer the Filthiness of their

their deed. To GOD this Right belongs. SECT. IV.
 If then Vertue consists in following and 
 imitating the divine Perfections, it is a Vice,
 a Sin, directly to clash with them, as De-
 traction does.

On the other Hand, As much as diabolical Vices are different from divine Perfections, so much do Detractors resemble the infernal Being. Who can doubt hereof, if it be true, that the Scripture attributes to him those Characters, which perfectly suit Detractors? Of him the Scripture say, *That he is an Accuser of the Brethren?* Him the Scripture affirm to be *as a roaring Lyon, seeking whom he may devour.* And is not this the Conduct of the others, who are continually seeking those whose Reputation they may tear in pieces? Nay, we may say that in some sort, Detractors are worse than the very Devils themselves, who do not endeavour to overthrow their own Kingdom, as Men endeavour to ruin one another by their Discourse. A Man need not be a Philosopher to draw the Consequence of this Conformity between Detractors and Satan, even, that they are Sinners as he is, and shall partake of his Punishments.

Rev. 12. 10
1 Pet. 5. 8.

SECT. IV. ARTICLE VIII.

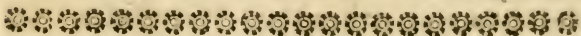
Detraction is contrary to the Design of
GOD in giving us the Faculty of
 Speech.

TIS past doubt, That **GOD**'s Design in creating Man, was, that he might receive Benedictions and Praises therein. Now there is no Means so agreeable hereto as Man's Speech, which may contribute as much hereto, as a Creature is able by his Discourse and Thanksgivings. For this Cause St. *Paul* requires of us to have continually in our Mouths Psalms & Hymns, which are the same Things according to the Hebrew Etymology. Hence also it was, that He who composed so great a Number of them by the Inspiration of the holy Ghost, with such an holy Eloquence cry'd out, *Awake my Glory, I will praise thee O Lord among the People; I will sing unto thee among the Nations.* And again, *I will bless the Lord at all times, his Praise shall be continually in my Mouth.* In a Word, hence it was, that the holy Apostle *Paul* exhorted the Hebrews, *to offer unto GOD the Fruit of their Lips,* and that S. *James*, said, *with the Tongue we bless GOD.*

But the Use Detractors make of their Mouths is quite different herefrom, and directly

directly contrary to GOD's Design ; since SECT. IV.
 they are so far from praising and honouring him, as that they Sin against his Prohibitions to Detraction, and thereby cause his Name to be blasphemed among Men. A second Design of GOD's allowing Men the Faculty of Speech, was, that it might be employed for their mutual help and edification. For this Reason it is, that we are created in such a state, as that we stand in very great need of each others Succour and Advice, whether in Matters of Piety, or in Affairs of civil Life. As to Religion, it is GOD's Will, that there should be Men more enlightned and more knowing than others, to instruct them in the Duties of Piety by publick and private Discourses. And with regard to civil Affairs, he has judged it meet, that they be in absolute need one of another, and that by the mean of Speech they communicate to each other their Necessities, that so they may maintain that Union among themselves, which he would have found among all Men. Had it been his Pleasure, he could have created Men as the Fowls of the Air, and Beasts of the Field, who without each others help, can satisfy their own needs : But as it was not his Pleasure to bestow this Advantage on Man, he has recompenced him by another, which is to demand of one another, what is necessary

SECT. IV. necessary for them, and to be made happy in demanding, in giving and in receiving it, by their Communication and their Union, which contributes to the general good of the Society and to the private Advantage of every one of its Members, so that Men go contrary to the Intention of their Creator, when instead of improving the Gift of Speech to their help, they on the contrary make use thereof as Detractors do to annoy and destroy each other; when instead of fastning the Ties of Concord among themselves, they disunite them. If then the right use of Speech be so necessary and requisite to the Ends of GOD, the ill Use which by Detraction is made of it, is contrarywise opposite to these same Ends, and a very great Sin, inasmuch as the Corruption of the best things is the worst.




A R T I C L E IX.

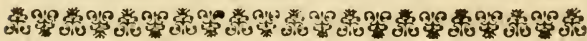
Detraction is opposite to humane Civility.

PERhaps Reasons drawn from worldly Rules may make an Impression on Worldlings. To such we then say, that Detraction on many Occasions is very contrary to Civility and Politeness.

For

For a Proof of this, I shall make SECT. IV
 use of the very Words of S. Chrysoſtom 
 who ſpeaking of Detractors ſays, *What
 Pardon, what Excuse ſhall we have, if
 we neglect thinking on our own Affairs,
 and curiouſly pry into thoſe of other Men?
 As it wou'd be a very unmannerly, un-
 genteel Action for a Traveller to enter
 a Houſe, and ſurvey all that is there-
 in, ſo it is a Mark of extreme Incivility,
 and of a Clowniſh Fellow, for any one to
 meddle with the Life of another.*

2. All the World agree, That Injuries,
 Inveſtives and ſcurrilous Expreſſions come
 only from the Rabble and Scum of a Peo-
 ple; ſuch as have no Education, and who
 are ignorant even of the Principles of Ho-
 nour, Decency and Civility. But are not
 theſe Inveſtives more excuſable, when they
 are not made in Preſence of thoſe they aim
 at? Not at all. This we ſhall ſhew in
 the following Article.



A R T I C L E X.

Detraction is a mean vile Sin.

1. **I**T is certain, that all Mankind, espe-
 cially Men of Education & Honour,
 deſpiſe Traitors and look upon them as
 the

SECT. IV *the meanest of Men.* But Detractors are truly Traitors, when they attack their Enemies behind, and when they are in no Capacity to defend themselves; so that the same Contempt that falls upon Traitors, falls equally upon Detractors.

2. We may compare Detractors to the meanest and most abject things in Nature. They are like those Worms which glister only in the Night. For this Reason they wou'd offace the good Name of their Neighbours, they wou'd cast Shades upon it, that by the help of these Shades they may shew themselves to better Advantage: Whereas a true Diamond, sparkles in the Blaze of the Sun, and needs not the Help of Darkness to be known.

3. Detractors may be compared to Apes, who act what they see in others. So Detractors relate the Evil they hear spoken of, or see done by their Neighbours. And truly no Animal approaches so near to a Man as an Ape; but the Man who resembles an Ape, approaches terribly near to a Beast.

4. They may be likened to barking and biting Dogs, who feed upon stinking and infecting Carrion, and Ravens and ravenous Beasts for the same Reason.

5. To Hogs, who trample Gold and Pearls under foot, and chuse Dirt and Filthiness for their Nourishment, and Vipers which kill Men with their Tongue. 6.

6. To those Insects which are bred, and do live only in stinking, corrupted Water, because Detraction owes it's Birth and continuance in Being, to the Depravity and Corruption of a Neighbour's Manners. A *Bee* which is nourished with odoriferous Herbs and Flowers, produces agreeable Honey; (if he stings he dies for it.) But a Person who is nourished, and whose Spirit is fed with the Ordures of Sin, cannot but produce rotten Fruits of Sin.

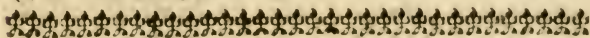
SECT. IV

Job 20. 16

7. Detractors are like fierce and savage Beasts. Hence it was that *Diogenes* being asked, *Of what Beast the bite was most venomous and dangerous,* answered, *Among savage Beasts, the Detractors; and among domestick, the Flatterers.* This shews us at the same Time, That the wisest among the Heathen, altho' they had only the Light of a Nature for a Guide, condemned this Vice. And truly one shall hardly ever meet with any thing finer hereupon than the Principles and Sentiments of *Cbilon*, one of the seven wise Men of *Græce*, which a Modern thus describes, *He reckoned among the Qualities of a wise Man, those he himself possesseth; even to despise Injuries and Detractions, and to refrain from them, to know himself, and to be upon his Guard; not to insult the Miserable; to suppress his Anger, and to be moderate in his Sentiments.*

And

SECT IV. And it is so true, That Detraction is a Sin that all Mankind allow it so to be, at least in some degree. This Universality is a strong Proof, or at least, a great Prejudice against Detraction. For it is impossible, That all should agree to be mistaken, to deceive themselves, and to establish an Error in the World. It is also so true, That Detraction is universally accounted a Vice, as that no one is willing to pass for a Detractor. Yea when a Man does actually backbite, he is unwilling to be tho't so to do. And there is no Man among those who are most given to Detraction, but wou'd think you did him an Injury, should you call him a Detractor. There is no Person but condemns Detraction, when it blasts his own Reputation. And pray, is it less condemnable when it blasts another's? No indeed. Why does a Man blame it more when it attacks himself, than when it attacks another? Truly because the Loss of his own Honour is more sensible, than the Damage done to others. But in reality this alters not the Thing: It's Nature is ever the same.



ARTICLE XI.

Detractors are ordinarily more faulty than those they talk of.

1. **I**T many Times happens that a Man will tell of an ill Action a hundred Times,

Times, which has been done but once. SECT. IV.
 Hereby he Sins more than the Person who committed the Deed, yea Ninety nine Times more, according to my Supposition. I don't enquire at present, whether the Sin talked of be greater than Detraction. It may doubtless be either greater or less. But if Sins are to be measured, as indeed they ought, by the repeated Acts of Commission, it is, clear, that he, who backbites a Person an hundred Times, on account of a Sin but once committed, is more faulty than the other. These Men are like those Echoes which repeat a Word many Times, that has been but once spoken.

2. I suppose, as is very possible, that the Defects we reprehend, may be more light, more secret, and may have fewer aggravating Circumstances than Detraction, and then certainly Detraction is more criminal than such. It is frequently seen, that the Sins and Vices we blame in others, and which we spread abroad, are nothing near so great as Detraction.

3. 'Tis the common Practice of Detractors to speak ill not of a single Person only, but of many Hundreds. They blame the Manners and Conduct of many. But now every Person does not commit a Sin so many times. For Example, A Person has committed an Act of Injustice; but a Detractor will publish the Injustice of one Man,

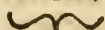
SECT. IV Man, the Lying of another, the Looseness of a third, &c. Those who are spoken ill of, have only their own Defects to answer for, but the Detractor is responsible for the Defects of Thousands, inasmuch as he has spoke ill of so many. Thus all the Sins of others become his own, and it shall befall him, as it did the Victims sacrificed under the Law, upon which the People laid their Sins, by putting their hands on the Victim's Head, who was afterward slain. The Difference is, Detractors bring Death on themselves voluntarily, whereas the Beast sacrificed was not the Cause of his; and also the People laid on him their Iniquities, whereas Detractors bring the Faults of others on themselves of their own will.

Levit. 1. 4.

4. It frequently happens, that Detractors will relate more Sins in one or two Hours, than the Persons reproached have committed in one or two Years. Is it not evident that less Time is needed to tell a thing than to execute it? Is it not likewise certain, that the different thing we relate in one Hour, must require sometimes many Years to have been transacted in? Do we not see Persons, who in a very short Space of Time, have scan'd and examined the Life of others from their Infancy to their old Age.

A R T I C L E X I I.

SECT. IV




The Greatness of this Sin, shewn by some further Considerations.

1. **O**NE and the same Sin somewhat differently related, by several Persons, yea even without any difference, but at various Times, will make a Man easily believe, that they are really new Sins, added to those he had before heard of; which consequently must still farther hurt our neighbour's Reputation. Thus we afford ground for a sort of Calumny, by giving Occasion to make Folks believe our Neighbour worse than he really is, and by laying more Faults to his Charge, than he has really committed. A great Sin this is, which Detractors lye open to, by giving Occasion thro' their Discourse, to Judgments so prejudicial to a Man's Reputation! 'Tis not perhaps one single Person who gives such Occasion, but many together, and thereby all become Partakers in the Crime.

2. He who discovers a Thing to another, is in some manner responsible for all the Additions, which this second Person may make to the Story; and thus he is blameable with that sort of Calumny, which gives occasion for those who last hear the matter, to think all true, which others have before added to the Matter of
Fact,

SECT. IV Fact, and for all which they put thereto
 ~~~~~ of their own. The Fault it self was at  
 first very small, but it has grown large by  
 passing thro' so many Mouths, as a River,  
 which swells as it glides along thro' many  
 Countries, by the Rivulets it receives in its  
 Course. 'Tis well known, that a good or abad  
 Name, far from wasting & losing its Strength  
 by carrying, does on the contrary acquire  
 new Strength. Thus we ordinarily see,  
 that a Fault which in its original and na-  
 ture was almost nothing, appears an enor-  
 mous and a frightful Crime, after it has been  
 spread abroad, and related many Times :  
 and that an Indiscreet or Inadvertant Ac-  
 tion has appeared an unpardonable thing  
 by these means.

3. 'Tis a kind of Calumny, to say things  
 that are false, or mixt of Truth & Falsity,  
 altho' we relate only what other Detrac-  
 tors have told us for things entirely true.  
 For on the one hand, it is a Calumny, to  
 impute those Blots to a Neighbour, who  
 is free from them ; and on the other hand,  
 a Detractor, whether he be the first Au-  
 thor of the Detraction or not, is answer-  
 able for all the Wrong that accrues to his  
 Neighbour thereby. Thus the Fear of  
 doing them so great Injury and of being  
 ones self a Liar, should make Detraction  
 hateful.

4. It is but too common, that this Sin SECT. IV.  
 is followed with Lying and false Oaths.   
 When we reproach a Detractor to his Face  
 with what he has said, he will make no  
 Difficulty (I speak of a great Part of them)  
 to deny, that he ever spake disadvantageously  
 of us, that thereby he may avoid  
 our Reproaches and get covered from our  
 resentments; and if it be needful, he will  
 swear he never spake in such a manner.  
 And truly, is it likely that he, who did  
 not fear offending GOD by Detraction,  
 should fear sinning against him by Lies  
 and Oaths?

Many Authors speaking of Detraction,  
 quote the Verses which S. Austin wrote  
 on his Table, against those who were in-  
 clined to this Sin. We shall give them  
 in Latin, in French and in English.

*Quisquis amat dictis Absentum rodere*  
(famam,  
*Hanc mensam vetitam noverit esse sibi.*

In French thus explain'd,

*Que Quiconque aime des Absens*  
*A déchirer l'honneur par dos mots offen-*  
(sans,

*Et Quiconque les de'credite,*  
*Aprenne que pour lui ma Table est inter-*  
(dite.

In English,

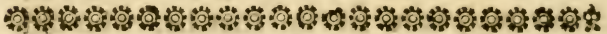
*Who'er delights the Absents Fame to hurt,*  
*Far from my Table let the Wretch depart.*



SECT. IV

With good Reason did he place this Advertisement on his Table, Detraction being one Dish generally at a Feast. There we are for diverting the Mind as the Body is refreshed and nourished ; but what is more criminal than, with our Tongues to offend that GOD whom we ought to glorify *whether we eat or drink*, at S. Paul has taught us ?

1 Cor. 10.  
31.



## ARTICLE XII.

*We are not well aware of the greatness of this Sin.*

**W**HAT we have already said with reference to Detraction, proves, that it is a very great Vice, a very considerable Sin, seeing it violates all the second Table of the Law, which our Lord confines to *loving our Neighbour as our selves*, after the same manner that he has abridged all the Commandments of the first Table to *loving GOD with all our Heart and with all our Strength*. S. Paul following this Example says, *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*, which does no Evil to our Neighbour. He then that by Detractions fails of Love, and does Evil to his Neighbour, fulfills not the Law of GOD, and

Rom. 13

and consequently Sins. Notwithstanding SECT. IV. all this, it is too certain, that the greatest Part of the World are not still well aware that this Sin is so great. We may see even that those, who have made considerable Progress in Piety, and who groan to see Corruption reign with such an high Hand as it does, will yet back-bite without almost any Scruple or Remorse. Whence can this be, unless that they don't believe it is such a terrible Sin as in reality it is? This Error is doubtless greatly upheld by the loose Maxims of some Casuists, who authorise Theft, Murder and Detraction, by holding, *that the Good which is found in Temporal things, is so slender, and of so little Consequence for Heaven, that it is of no Consideration before GOD and his Saints.* We have already shewn, that Reputation is no small Benefit, and we shall still further Prove it, and that the taking this Benefit away stirs Men up to Revenge and Hatred against the Robber, which things are very prejudicial to their Salvation: and we have lastly shewn, that GOD forbids Men thus to hurt others, and that thus this Sin is of great Consideration before GOD.

There are others of these Casuists, or rather Corrupters of Morality, who have said in express Terms, that *Detraction is not a mortal Sin, when the Person detrac-*

SECT. IV *ted is really vile.* An Opinion, which  
 ~~~~~ has neither Proof nor Foundation in Scrip-  
 ture.

But some will doubtless say, that if De-
 traction be so great a Sin, and capable of
 excluding Heaven, there would be hardly
 any one saved, few Persons being exempt
 therefrom. I own there are but few sa-
 ved compar'd with those who perish. So
 Christ taught us, saying, *many are called,*
but few are chosen: That *the Way which*
leads to Life is strait, and few there be
that find it: That those who with the
 Generality of Men, *enter at the wide*
Gate, and abandon themselves to Detrac-
 tion, shall be deprived of Paradise. I say,
 secondly, that we hope that GOD will shew
 such Favour to many who are Detractors,
 as that they will abandon this Sin, and be
 converted.

Mat, 22,

14,

Mat. 7, 13^s

14,



The Uses of this Section.

WE shall say here what we have al-
 ready said, that the Reasons we have
 alledged should make us entirely quit this
 Sin. As we have set these Reasons in a
 very great Light, and by many cogent
 Arguments shewn the Greatness and E-
 normity of Detraction, we would very
 strongly exhort you to fly it, and avoid
 the


the very Appearance thereof. Let us consider in how many Ways and by how many Laws it is condemned ; by the most pure Law of Nature, by the most upright Law of *Moses*, and by the most clear Law of the Gospel, which all equally enter an Action against us, so that if we appeal from the Judgment of the one to that of the other, we ever lose the Case, for the Law of Grace it self most strongly condemns Detraction and Detractors. How then shall we avoid so great, so terrible a Judgment, and whose Consequents are so awful ? Detractors shall suffer the Pains due to Injustice, the Pains due to Want of Love, the Pains due to Murder and Theft ; seeing Detraction partakes of all these Sins. But if each of these Pains in particular be so terrible, how great must be the Torments of that Punishment, where they shall all meet together !

Detraction offaces the Image of GOD in us, and instead thereof sets up the Image of Satan. They who are marked with this Stamp, and who bear this Image, belong to him, and he will one Day take Possession of them, even as the Coin which bears the Prince's Image belongs in some respects to the Prince, as our Lord told his Tempers. Let us then take heed, how we receive in us the Impression which gives this evil Spirit the Right of Sovereignty and

SECT. IV
 1 Thef. 5. 22

Heb. 10. 27.

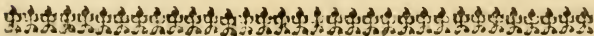
Mat. 22. 10


SECT. IV  Death over those in whom it is found. If Detraction makes us equal to what is most wicked, to the Principle of Wickedness, yea to Wickedness it self, it does also render us like to what is most filthy & loathsome among Brutes; it makes us, as I may say, twice Beasts. This is what was evinced when 'twas once shewn to what sort of Beasts Detractors might justly be compared. Happy were Detractors, if their Souls, as those of Beasts, died with their Bodies! If after they had been transformed into Beasts, Beasts might be transformed into Men, they would reproach Men with a Barbarity which they were strangers to, and might say to them, we wou'd not have done to Creatures of our own Species, as you have done; and you are far more cruel than we! Let the very Asses reprove *Balaam's* when these are going to Curse People.

Numb. 22.
28.

The Use of Speech is doubtless a great Gift of Heaven, but it had been much better for us that we had never receiv'd it, if GOD had not given us the Use of Reason to govern and rule our Tongue, which without this wou'd be the Instrument of our greatest Evils. But do Men make Use of their Reason, when they detract? Reason requires, that we should bless him who has so liberally distinguished us from other living Creatures. But this is not all.
Tho'


Tho' Detractors should bless GOD, yet SECT. IV.
 while they detract, they act contrary to ~ ~ ~
 Reason, which requires us to use our Tongue
 for each others Benefit, and certainly they
 make use of it to a quite contrary End.
*With the Tongue bless we GOD even the
 Father, and therewith curse we Men, who
 are made after the similitude of GOD.
 Out of the same Mouth proceedeth Blessing
 and Cursing. My Brethren, these things
 ought not so to be.* Thus S. James ar- Jam. 3. 9,
10.
 gues and thus also we do. He here in-
 cludes two Propositions and a Censure.
 The first Proposition is, that it is a Sin to
 curse Men by reason, that they are made
 after the Image of GOD, and to offend
 those who bear the Image, is to offend the
 Image it self. The Second Proposition is,
 that it is a manifest Contradiction, to bless
 GOD with one's Tongue, while at the
 same Time, with this very Tongue, we
 are wounding his Image in Man. The
 Censure is comprized in these Words, *My
 Brethren, these things ought not so to be.*
 All these Things should hinder us from
 Detraction.

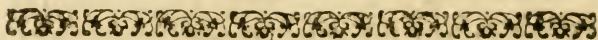


SECT. V. 

SECTION V.

Of the various Circumstances which aggravate this Sin.

 **A** S all Sins are not equally heinous, tho' they be all Sins, so a Sin of the same Kind may be greater or less, according to the Circumstances which accompany it. This we propose to shew with respect to Detraction, by relating many Circumstances, which may render it more criminal.



ARTICLE I.

*Of the Circumstances which respect the Person detracted.**Circumstance First.*

1. **T**IS a greater Sin to speak Evil of Parents, than of others, who are not so nearly related. Wherefore among that small Number of Commandments, which compose the Law of GOD, we find an express command ordering Children to honour Father and Mother : And S. Paul

Paul adds, that *this is the first Commandment with Promise*. They then who dishonour them by Detraction, violate this Precept; and, far from having a Share in these Promises made to pious Children, they may expect and wait for the Effect of the Threatnings the Scripture denounces against those, who despise the Persons to whom they are indebted for their Birth.

SECT. V.

Eph. 6. 2.

We know what was the Punishment of *Canaan* who discover'd his Father's Nakedness. To this Punishment are they exposed who discover their Parent's Nakedness and Defects: Defects are a true Nakedness according to the Language of Scripture, which calls Sinners, Persons that are *poor & blind and naked*. *S. Paul* also ranks among the frightful Sins of the Heathen, that of being *without natural Affection*, which was the Effect of that Punishment GOD had sent upon them, for having abandoned the Creator, and for having served the Creature. As far as Parricide exceeds bare Manlaughter, so far Detraction against Parents, surpasses in Enormity Detraction of those, who do not stand related to us.

Gen. 9. 2.

Rom. 3. 17.

Rom. 1. 31.


This Crime is again redoubled, if after they have given us Birth, they have taken Care of our Education, and have taken Pains to furnish us with Soul-Goods, as well as those of the Body.

SECT. V 2. Parents ought not to backbite their Children. Nature it self seems to forbid this, having given them an Instinct, which prompts them to love that which bares their Image, (which occasioned the saying, that Children were the Medals of their Parents) and does as it were cause them to live after Death.

It seems also that the Law of *Moses* forbids this, when it prohibits *seething a Kid in it's Mother's Milk*; because it appear'd extreamly cruel, that what served to nourish it, should serve to destroy it. And is it not equally barbarous, that they who have given Being to their Children, should afterwards rob them of their Honour and Reputation, and all that is dear to them in this World? In fine, *S. Paul* expressly commands them, *not to provoke their Children to Wrath*. What is there more capable of roiling, provoking and vexing them than to backbite them? and yet History furnishes us with Examples of such Parents; tho' they are generally more apt to tell Lies to excuse their Children, than to tell the Truth in accusing them.

Circumstance Second.

For Brothers to detract from one another, is a more heinous Sin of Detraction, because Nature requires, that there be
more

more of Union between them. But this SECT. IV
 Claim which is naturally between them, 
 very often produces an Effect quite con-
 trary to what it ought. As they see each
 other the oftener, and so know better
 the Defects one of another, and their blen-
 ded Interests give more Occasion for mu-
 tual Disputes and Detractions. Let such
 know, that a *Brother is born for the Time*
of Adversity, that is, to comfort his Bre- PROV 17. 17.
 thren and Sisters in the Time of their Ad-
 versity: 'Tis not then for them to cause
 this Adversity, this Loss of Reputation,
 which they ought to maintain according to
 divine and humane Laws. GOD declares
 that He will punish such as break these
 intimate Ties. *Thou givest thy Mouth to*
Evil and thy Tongue frameth Deceit. Psal 50. 19
Thou sittest and speakest against thy Bro- 20, 21.
ther; Thou slanderest thine own Mother's
Son. These Things hast thou done, and I
kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was
altogether such an One as thy self; but I
will reprove thee, and set them in order
before thine Eyes. Oh! How much more
 reserved should we be in our Talk, if we
 were fully perswaded, or if we well consi-
 der'd, what *David* here says! (1.) That
 GOD knows every Word we say. (2.) That
 he keeps an exact Account thereof. (3.)
 That He will one Day set all our Detrac-
 tions before our Eyes, to convince us that

SECT. V. we have deserved Death by them. (4.)

That he will truly and really punish us for them. (5.) That tho' sometimes he defer punishing of us in this World, yet we are not to think that he will let our Abuse of his Patience and Long-suffering go always unpunished; but that the Day will come, when he will make us to bear the Punishment due to our Offences.

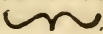
2. By these same Reasons, their Sin is aggravated, who endeavour to sow Divisions among Brethren, Sisters, Relations. And this (1.) Because they strike at the Bands of an Union & Friendship between these Persons, whose Union ought to be sacred. (2.) Because when once Hatred is stirred up between them, it is almost impossible that they should be reconciled. *Their Hatred is more implacable and more durable, as Solomon testifies & Experience warrants. A Brother offended, (says that* Prince) *is harder to be won than a strong City, and their Contentions are like the Bars of a Castle.* Hence it is that he ranks among the abominable Things which the Lord hateth, *Him that soweth Discord among Brethren.*

PROV 18. 19

PROV. 6 19

Circumstance Third.

An Husband commits a very considerable Sin, when he speaks ill of his Wife.

S. *Peter* commands Husbands to honour SECT. V.
 their Wives, and to carry it respectfully to 
 them, as to the weaker Vessels, that is, if
 by an Infirmary cleaving to their Sex, they
 happen to fail, their Husbands ought not
 to defame them for it. S. *Paul* in many
 places of his Epistle commands *Husbands*
to Love their Wives, even as Jesus Christ Eph. 5. 25
has loved his Church, his mystical Spouse
and gave himself for it. But how are
 they loved and honoured, if their good
 Name is taken away from them. Is Love
 exprest to Persons by fallying their Reputa-
 tion? They who observe not this Pre-
 cept do without doubt sin doubly, being
 obliged to love them as Believers, and
 Members of the Church, which is the Body
 of the Lord ; and also, as Spouses. Be-
 sides this, they sin not only as Detractors,
 but vastly more as perjured Persons, having
 promised to Love and Honour them at
 their Espousals. In a word, it shews great
 Imprudence to speak ill of Persons who so
 nearly touch them. After Marriage, the
 Couple become but one Flesh, and so the
 Faults of the one reflect on the other, and
 a Man dishonours himself by dishonouring
 his Wife. The holy Scripture furnishes
 us with an admirable Example in this Case,
 and worthy of Imitation by all Husbands ;
 'tis that of *Joseph*, of whom S. *Matthew*,
 when speaking of him and his espoused Chap. 1, 19,
 Wife,

SECT. V. Wife, says, *that he sought to put her away privately, (having known that she was with Child,) because he was a righteous Man, and not willing to make her a publick Example.*

What I have said of Husbands must be understood of Wives, the Reasons being equal for the one as for the other, and Wives ought to be regulated by the same Commands. So that I can't approve of ^{1 Sam. 15.} *Abigail's* Conduct, wise as she was in all the rest, who call'd her Husband *a Fool*, before *David*, and to pacify his Wrath.

Circumstance Fourth.

To speak Evil of Sovereigns is one of the highest Degrees of Sin that Detraction can rise to. St. *Peter* commands us to *honour the King*: and this Honour is doubtless a Tribute we owe unto him, according to S. *Paul* in *Rom.* 13. 7. In the old Testament it is expressly said, *Thou shalt not revile the Ruler of thy People.* The Title of *gods* which the holy Spirit gives them, that is, of Persons, who next to ^{Deut, 22.} ^{28.} ^{See also} ^{Acts 23, 5} GOD, hold the highest Rank among Men, and who, by the Authority which GOD and Men have bestowed on them, bear an Image of the Power of Lord of Lords; This Title, I say, carries a very strong Reason with it, why we should refrain backbiting them.

2. Their

2. Their Designs are ordinarily concealed SECT.V. and their Views reach farther than we can penetrate; so that on many Occasions it would be great Rashness to disapprove of what they say and do, which at first sight might appear Evil. *Solomon* teaches us how impenetrable their Hearts are, when he says, *The Heaven for height, and the Earth for depth, and the Heart of Kings is unsearchable.* Prov. 25.3.

3. Our own Interest obliges us to refrain backbiting them. They have Power in their Hands, and can revenge the Detractions spread abroad against their Persons. *They bear not the Sword in vain,* says the Apostle of the Gentiles; and so *Solomon,* Rom, 13. *The Wrath of a King is as the roaring of a Lion, and he that stirreth it up, wrongeth his own Soul.* Prov. 19, 12

To conclude, Altho' we should avoid the Effects of their Resentment, yet it will be impossible to escape the Punishment of GOD, who will show that He won't fail chastising in the other World, those who have failed in their Respect to their lawful Sovereigns, and have detracted from them seeing he has even in this World sometimes punished them for daring so to do: Of this we have a very remarkable Instance in *Miriam*, recorded in *Numb. 12.* This Woman having spoken Ill of *Moses*, the Head and Leader of the People, GOD smote her with

Ver 12.

SECT. V. with the Leprosy, and that at a Time when
 ~~~~~ the Punishment of Retaliation, or the Re-  
 semblance of Punishments to Sins, was  
 in Use; which teaches us, That if Detrac-  
 tion be as catching as the Leprosy, it is also,  
 like it, an impure, a loathsome and an odious  
 Malady.

2. With regard to foreign Princes,  
 whose Subjects we are not, indeed it is  
 not so great an Evil to speak ill of them  
 as of our own. But yet it is no inconfi-  
 derable Sin, 1. Because we are to speak ill  
 of no Man. 2. Because all Princes in ge-  
 neral bear the visible Marks of the divine  
 Authority, and *are ordained of GOD*, as  
*S. Paul* says.

3. What we have said of Princes and  
 sovereign Magistrates, regards also their  
 Viceroys and Governours, which they send  
 into their Provinces, their Ministers of State  
 and their Officers, for they truly are our  
 Superiours. Therefore the Apostle of  
 the Gentiles joins them with Principalities  
 and Powers whom we ought to obey and  
 pray to GOD for. If Subjects are oppres-  
 sed, Satyrs against their oppressors are not  
 like to relieve them very much.

Tit. 3, 1.  
 1 Tim 2.  
 1, 2:

4. If Detraction and speaking ill of  
 Sovereigns deserves to be condemned, no  
 less condemnable in Sovereigns is it to  
 speak ill of their Subjects. Exalted as  
 in Fact they are by their Grandeur, they  
 ought

bought to leave so mean and base a Vice to others. It is also a great Weakness in them to backbite their Subjects, or others whom they can chastise so many other ways, if they have done what deserves their Indignation. Besides that their Detraction is more destructive than that of particular Persons; every one thinking it an honour to mind them, and almost a Duty to imitate Princes and other great Men.

SECT. V



The Emperor *Julian*, called the Apostate, was certainly very much in the wrong, to write a Satyr against his Subjects of *Antioch*, as we are informed he did, by *Theodoret* in the third Book of his *Church History*, Chap. 28.

### *Circumstance Fifth.*

For a Minister to detract is a much greater Sin than for another Man, and especially if he speak ill of other Ministers, or of his own Flock.

Is it not a fearful Thing, that they who peculiarly ought to serve the Lord, should thus violate his most holy Laws? What a Crime is it, that they whose Office it is to bless the People, should busy themselves about Things that are quite the Reverse!

Numb: 6.  
23,

1. They Sin more than others, because they ought to know better, and can't so easily excuse themselves of their Ignorance



SECT. V. in this Matter. 2. With regard to GOD who has, as it were, committed to them his Laws, which they hereby violate. 3. With Reference to their Neighbours, who are more scandalized by their Detractions than by those of other sinful Men. People are hereby induced to think, either that Religion it self is a meer Fable, seeing the Teachers and Expositors of it, do thus trample it under Foot: Or that it is impossible to practice it, since they who ought to be most godly, do not practice it's Ordinances, but on the contrary, do by Detraction violate them.

1 Tim. 3  
11.

And as every Thing in the Church ought to be pure, even to the very Wives of those who help to govern it, S. Paul requires, that the Wives of Deacons be not Slanderers.

What I say with regard to Pastors who fall into this Sin, I don't say it so much to censure their Conduct, which I leave to GOD's Judgment, as to warn the People, that they shou'd not follow the Example of a Thing so odious in those whom they wou'd imitate.

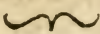
2. It is a very crying Sin for a People to speak ill of Ministers, especially of their own. Let us consider, that notwithstanding all their Defects, they are in facted Writ, called, *Ambassadors for Christ*; *Angels* or *Messengers of GOD*, whom

2 Cor. 5 20  
1 Cor. 3 2.

in some sense, they represent upon Earth. SECT. V<sup>o</sup>  
 Let us remember, that they are spiritual 1 Cor. 4. 15.  
 Fathers, who give Milk to the Weak,  
 and strong Meat to those who are more  
 advanced ; and who, according to *St. Paul's*  
 Expression, beget Men for our Lord Jesus  
 Christ, and endeavour to bring them to a  
 Life as far above this, as Eternity is be-  
 yond a short space of Time ; to infinite  
 Pleasures, from Troubles and Miseries. In  
 a Word, Let us be aware of the Correction  
 which *Israel* received, when they rose up Numb, 16.  
 against *Aaron* the high Priest.

*Circumstance Sixth.*

To backbite Benefactors is adding to Mat. 5. 46.  
 Detraction, the Sin of Ingratitude, which  
 is certainly a very great Sin. Publicans  
 and Sinners, says our Lord, do good to  
 those who do them good. Ungrateful  
 Persons therefore who hurt their Benefac-  
 tors are worse than Sinners ; that is, their  
 Sin is greater than that of ordinary Sinners.  
 This Vice, and especially in the Subject  
 we are treating of, is so directly contrary  
 to the Principles of natural Equity, that  
 it may justly be called a Sin *against Na-  
 ture*. Nay, it is so cry'd down in the  
 World, that it is needless to spend much  
 Time in shewing all the Horror of it.

SECT. V.  The ungrateful Wretch, who says, that no Thanks are due to those who have obliged him, does much less deserve that they shou'd do him any Service.

*Circumstance Seventh.*

When a Servant speaks ill of his Master it is also more criminal than if another had done it, or than if he had spoken ill of some other Person : Because Masters have a sort of Sovereignty over their Servants, and because *S. Paul* so expressly requires these latter to obey and respect them.

On the other hand, the Tenderness which Masters ought to have for their whole Family ( of whose Number are Servants ) should hinder them from detracting, unless in Cases of Necessity, where they cannot dispense with it without Lying, or committing some other Sin.

*Circumstance Eighth.*

To speak ill of those we call Friends, to discover their Secrets and Imperfections, is Hypocrisy, Infidelity and Treason joined to Detraction. What ! Because they err'd in trusting to us as Friends, the Knowledge of some secret Imperfection, shall we be so wicked, as to discover & publish it abroad, as the infamous *Dalilah* did *Sampson's* Secret !

eret ! Shou'd any Difference arise between SECT. V. those who have once professed Friendship, let them follow the Advice of *Solomon*, *Debate the Matter with thy Neighbour, and discover not a Secret to another.* To act otherwise, is to contemn the sacred Laws of Friendship, which don't allow us to do an Injury to our former Friends, even after just Grounds of Discontent. It shou'd be our Care to chuse Friends, whose Probity and Virtue we have been formerly acquainted with ; and when Friendship is once confirmed, we must bear with mutual Defects.

And truly, they who thus betray Persons with whom they have been or are straitly linked, seem to condemn themselves by their own Practice. Here we may apply the Words of *S. Chrysofom.* “ When they “ tell a Secret, they intreat, they conjure “ him that hears them, not to relate it to “ any one, thereby declaring that they “ have committed a Thing worthy of re- “ proof. For if you beg him not to tell “ it to another, you ought rather to have “ refrained telling him first. Your Secret “ was sure with you ; after you have re- “ vealed it, you are solicitous for it's Con- “ servation. Wou'd you not have it di- “ vulged, then tell it not to another, but “ after that you have committed the keep- “ ing of your Secret to him, your Warn-

SECT. V. “ ing and Conjuring him to keep it, is  
 “ but unprofitable and superfluous ”.

Tacitus  
 his Annals  
 Lib, 4.

Every one looks with a kind of Horror on the Perfidy of *Sabinus's* false Friend, who by his Wiles engaged him to talk a little too freely of the Emperor *Tiberius*, and so by being an Accomplice in his Crime, and then a Betrayer of him, caused him to be condemned to Death.

### *Circumstance Ninth.*

To backbite those with whom we are engaged by Civil Bonds, as Country-Men and Neighbours ; or by Religious Tyes, as those who profess the same Faith with us, is an aggravating Circumstance of Detraction. For if, according to the Apostle we are to do good to all Men, but especially to the Household of Faith, in Opposition hereto, but in the same sense, we are to do Evil to no Man, especially not to the Household of Faith.

Gal, 6. 10.

### *Circumstance Tenth.*

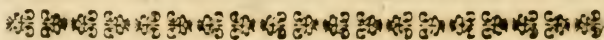
To Detract from those who are in Affliction or Misery of what sort soever it be, whether in Poverty or Sickness, is a very great Evil. Yet there is nothing more frequent than this. If a Man falls into Poverty, we immediately cry, *he was a Fool,*

*Fool, that took no Care of his Business*; SECT. V.  
*an ambitious Fellow, that wou'd fly with-*  
*out Wings.* If a Person happen to be miserable,  
 we say, *He has brought his Misfortune on*  
*himself.* Suppose such Talk, tho' often  
 rash, were true, and that GOD afflicted  
 him for his Sins, is it not still ever true,  
 That to aggravate the Misfortune of the  
 Miserable is very great Barbarity? If it be  
 GOD that chastises those Wretches, are  
 not we much in the wrong thus to encroach  
 on the soveraign Rights of the Lord. Sup-  
 pose it be their own Sins by which, as well  
 as for which they are punished, must we be  
 the Executors of Sin? Is not this to have  
 Communion with Sin, to do it's Office, even  
 to cause Affliction to Sinners, as it does,  
 tho' in a different way? Is it not true, That  
 should GOD punish our *Pride*, as he has the  
 Faults of those whom we backbite and de-  
 ride, That we might at least expect as  
 great Punishments as theirs? Moreover,  
 'Tis not always for their Sins that GOD  
 punishes Men: 'tis sometimes in Love and  
 Wisdom. 'Tis a Preservative from falling  
 or refalling into Sin, as a Physician will  
 let a Man Blood, or administer Physick  
 to him, to prevent a Sickness or cure it.

I have just now mention'd *Pride*, which  
 merits severe Chastisement; and this I did  
 chiefly, because that it is from Pride, that  
 we ordinarily insult the Calamities of others,

SECT. V. being ready to make Men think, That ſee-  
 ing GOD ſpares us, certainly we muſt be  
 better than thoſe we talk of; or that it  
 is from our great Prudence and Sobriety,  
 That we are preſerved from Poverty and  
 Maladies. *David* reckons the Perſecu-  
 tors of the Afflicted among the very worſt  
 of Men, when he ſays, *They perſecute him*  
*whom thou haſt ſmitten, and they talk o*  
*the Grief of thoſe whom thou haſt wounded.*

Pla 69. 26.



## ARTICLE II.

*Of the aggravating Circumſtances, with  
 regard to Detractors in particular.*

### *Circumſtance Firſt.*

ONE Circumſtance which comes very  
 near the laſt we mentioned and which  
 conſiderably aggravates Detraction is, to be  
 the Author and firſt Discoverer of it; to  
 reveal a Fault which no one before knew  
 of; among all People, at all Times, in all  
 ſorts of Crimes, they who are the Au-  
 thors of 'em are looked upon as moſt bla-  
 meable and conſequently moſt rigorouſly  
 treated. The Leaders of a Rebellion for  
 Example, as they are the moſt diſtinguiſh-  
 ed in the Sedition, are moſt diſtinguiſhed  
 in

in the Torments inflicted on the Rebels, SECT. V.  
 when taken. The Thing is the very same  
 here. He that first publishes a Sin, ought  
 to be regarded as more criminal than those,  
 who come after and relate what he had al-  
 ready said. The Reason hereof is, that he  
 is the Cause of all that shall be spread abroad  
 after him and according to his Example,  
 to the Prejudice of his Neighbour; and in  
 general, of all the pernicious Effects which  
 accompany Detraction. And let us not say,  
 that we have no particular Tye to the Per-  
 son whom we defame, to hinder our so do-  
 ing. The general Tye we have to all Men,  
 as Children of the same heavenly & earth-  
 ly Father, is a sufficient Reason for our not  
 dishonouring them, and especially for our  
 not being the first in the Undertaking.

*Circumstance Second.*

To name those from whom we had the  
 Evil Reports which hurt our Neighbour,  
 is a Degree of Aggravation added to bare  
 Detraction. For hereby we doubly detract;  
 first from him who is the Object of the De-  
 traction; and secondly, from him, by whom  
 we heard the News, who is tacitly accused  
 of being a Detractor, when we say, 'twas  
 he who first acquainted us with the Fault.



## ARTICLE III.

*Of the aggravating Circumstances with regard to the Manner of Detraction.*

*Circumstance First.*

**I**F rash Judgments are the Sources of Detraction, they are also of the Ways made use of to spread it abroad. An Infinite Number of Detractions are only such Judgments upon the Conduct of others. This rashness in Judgments is forbidden in Scripture, not only in general as it condemns Detraction, but in particular, when it is said, *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* I shan't here enter into the Common Place of rash Judgments. I shall only say, as what I can't here dispense with that altho' they be true, yet those who make and speak them, are still culpable, since this Rashness is condemned by GOD'S Law. And if they be false, they then form not only a Detraction, but even a Calumny. In fine, if we give our Judgments to others not as certain, but as probable; not as grounded upon just Reasons, but on Suspicious, This is to do a great Injustice to our Neighbour. 'Tis greatly to wrong him, to form Judgments grounded on Suspicious, and to  
destroy

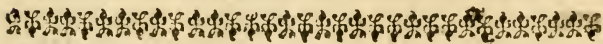
destroy his Reputation by Probabilities. SECT.  
 For altho' we don't say they are very certain, yet as the World now goes, chusing to censure, and ready to believe Evil, they, to whom we communicate these rash Judgments, take a Pleasure in believing them well grounded and certain, and relating them as such, to other Persons. ~

*Circumstance Second.*

Another Degree of Sin in Detraction is to couch it in writing. The Reason hereof is evident; for it has then more evil Effects. Words vanish & may be forgotten; but Writings remain and may refresh the Memory of Faults which we had forgotten. Words likewise extend but to a small Distance, whereas Writings may go much farther and reach to the End of the World.

O what a strange and terrible Sort of Weapon is Detraction, which kills at than a thousand Leagues Distance!

Add to this, That there appears more of a premeditated Design in this sort of Detraction; and that we have more Time to think upon what we are about to do; which doubtless Augments the Blackness of the Crime.



## ARTICLE IV.

*Of the Circumstances which aggravate  
Detraction with regard to the Vices  
and Sins we publish.*

*A First Circumstance.*

**T**HE holy Scripture looks upon it as a very great Sin to backbite and deride a Person on Account of his bodily Defects. Therefore it formally forbids *Cursing the Deaf*; and says, *Thou shalt not put a stumbling Block before the blind, and Curse the Dumb, but thou shalt fear the Lord thy God.* To rail at and deride Persons on Account of bodily Infirmities, to which they did not contribute, is to deride their Creator who made them so. 'Tis moreover a manifest Injustice and Folly; since, far from being the Cause of these Defects, they wish with all their Soul to be free from them, and were it in their Power, they would willingly get rid of them. And we may as justly accuse a deaf Man of having heard Conspiracies against the State without declaring 'em, as to rail at and find fault with his Defects of Nature.

We

We might enlarge here upon what we just mentioned under the first Section, where 'twas said that we speak ill of many on Account of their Birth ; or what regards the Novelty of their Race, and meanness of their Origin, or that they owe their Birth to some Crime, or that their Ancestors committed some Fault which dishonours the Family. In general, we may say, that it is a great Injustice to Persons to deride and insult 'em for things in which they had no hand, and for which they are not culpable ; to turn their Misery into a Crime, and hurt them for what they are entirely innocent of, as well as to injure Persons because of bodily Infirmities which we have just now mentioned.


Is it then a Crime, an unpardonable Crime, and is it such a mighty unhappiness, that a Man can't reckon up a long Race of Ancestors ? To judge hereof, let us consider, that the Esteem we have for the Antiquity of an House is but the Effect of Men's Humour, who in other Things prefer what is new : Let us consider, that those Families which are now ancient were once new, and that new ones may become ancient : And let us remark that all are the Children of *Adam*, and *Noah* the Restorer of a lost World.

As to Illegitimates, We should consider, That **GOD** declares, Every one shall bear his

SECT. V. his own Iniquity, and so they cannot, and ought not to bear the Crime of their Parents. He also declares, that 'tis the Soul which sinneth, which shall die, and that the Child shall not bear the Father's Sin. Let us observe, that GOD caused the Children of rebellious Parents, who died in the Defart, to inherit the Land of Promise. Why then should we make the Children of the Wicked bear the Punishment which GOD does not inflict on them? at least when they don't follow their Father's Footsteps, why should we impute a Crime to them, which the Lord does not impute? Do we not on the contrary know, That GOD made use of *Jeptbab*, ( who was the Son of a Concubine, ) to deliver his People *Israel* from their Foes, by the Hand of that valiant and wise Judge and General.

Ezek. ch.  
18.  
  
Judges ch.  
12.

We speak evil of Illegitimates, either when they are in Poverty and Misery, or else when they have, by GOD's Blessing and their own Industry arrived at some elevated Rank. If it be in the first Case, it is great Inhumanity to add to the Misery of their Poverty, the Shame and Dishonour, which the World impute to such a Birth. And if they are in a flourishing Condition, if GOD has blessed them, and raised them why shou'd we debase them, and if their own Wit has rais'd them to this high Station, they are so much the more Praise-Worthy

Worthy, ( far from meriting Contempt, ) SECT. V.  
 in that they have rais'd themselves without   
 the Help of others. What we have said,  
 may also be applied to those, whose Parents  
 have committed Faults that have been pu-  
 nished by the Magistrate, or which altho'  
 not punished, do yet dishonour their House.

Moreover what has been said of the Un-  
 happiness of Birth, and the Infirmities of  
 the Body, may also extend to the involun-  
 tary Defects of the Mind. To detract from  
 a Person because GOD has not allowed  
 him the Gift of Memory, to deride invo-  
 luntary Ignorance and invincible Stupidity,  
 would certainly be a great Aggravation of  
 Detraction, for the Reasons already  
 alledged, and because in this they are very  
 innocent.

Perhaps some may say, if it be so, then  
 we do no wrong to a Man's Reputation,  
 by speaking of the Defects either of Body  
 or Mind, because none look upon them as  
 Faults or Crimes of their own, and con-  
 sequently, injure them neither in Honour  
 or Fortune. I Answer, That yet many  
 Times it happens quite otherwise : They  
 who have those Infirmities, are all their  
 Days the Scoff and Jest of others ; and the  
 World attach a kind of Infamy hereto.  
 Yea many Times, Those Blemishes in a  
 Man's Birth hinder his Advancement ; and  
 so to avoid all this, the best Way is not to  
 mention

SECT. V. mention them, and the worst way is to deride them. Far then be from us, those Persons who can never speak of another without mentioning his Defects and Failings. And let those, who by their own Vertue and Piety have rais'd themselves high, be as much above their Deriders, as these are elevated above them in external Advantages.

*Circumstance Second.*

A Man shews himself extremely backbiting, when he divulges the Sins whereinto his Neighbours have fallen, being as it were forced into them; thro' the Violence of Persecution or being in danger of the Loss of Life, or when in short, Temptations have been over violent. Since these Circumstances do in some Measure extenuate the Sin before GOD, we all ought to have a respect hereto, and to consider that such Persons deserve rather our Compassion than Censure. Yea it is a Detraction mixed with Calumny, to represent these Sins in all the Horror they wou'd have, were they not accompanied with Circumstances which make them less. In short every Circumstance that lessens the Fault of the Doer, aggravates the Sin of the Publisher.

*Circumstance*

*Circumstance the Third.*

SECT. V

'Tis an enhancing of Sin to mention Faults of which Persons have repented. Who would have reproached St. *Peter* for his Cowardise after the Tears it had drawn forth from him ? Or *David* for his Adultery and Pride, after his Humiliation and Groans ? Or St. *Austin* for his Debaucheries; after his extraordinary Repentance ? How injurious would it be at the same time we are proclaiming their Failings, should we not set forth their Vertue, and shew that their Conversion had more Greatness and Sanctity, than their Fall had Meanness and Sin ? To do otherwise, would be acting directly contrary to GOD, who says, “ That if *the Wicked will turn from all his Sins that he has committed and keep all my Statutes, all his Transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him.*” Ezek. 18, 21, 22.

*Circumstance the Fourth.*

What most enhances the Dishonour and Infamy of our Neighbour, greatly aggravates the Sin of Detraction. And as the Vices and Passions of the Heart do more injury to his Reputation than the Defects of the Mind, it follows, that to speak of the former is the greater Sin. Among the



SECT. V.

Gal. 5. 19.

Vices of the Heart, I reckon all those Sins which *S. Paul* calls *the Fruits of the Flesh*; and all those Crimes of the Heathen, mentioned in many Places of his Writings, and also those which are to be and now are so common in these last Ages, according to his Predictions.

'Tis true we are with Grief to confess that many Persons glory in the greatest Crimes, and that the more criminal Men are, the more they are applauded instead of being contemned. But notwithstanding, 'Tis only by those Persons, who are engaged in the same Crimes and the like Libertinism. As for others, and the more sober Part of mankind, they do detest in general, at least in others, all Sorts of Crimes. And they who plunge themselves thereinto, lose their Reputation with their Innocence; more or less according to the Degree of their Corruption.

#### *Circumstance the Fifth.*

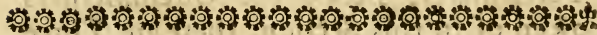
'Tis an Aggravation of Detraction when we mention Things, whereof not only the Doing is forbid, but also the very Recital, yea tho' it could be without Detraction. Such are the Debaucheries and Impurities, which *S. Paul* forbids us to speak of.

Chap. 3. 9.

*Let no filthy Communication, (says he to the Colossians,) proceed out of your Mouth.*

Let

Let it not be said that the Apostle con-SECT. V.demns only such lascivious Discourse as we our selves are Authors of, and not such as we relate after others. Two Reasons prove the contrary. 1. That he speaks in General and without Restriction, and we see nothing in his Way of arguing that might restrain it. 2. That on the contrary, his own Terms shew that we ought to understand it, as well of the Relaters as the Author of filthy Communications. And truly, Is not a Discourse as filthy and dishonest in the Mouth of One as in that of Another? Thus tis a Sin even to relate such Discourse, and doubly so, if it be with a Design of hurting those whose impure Words or Actions we rehearse.



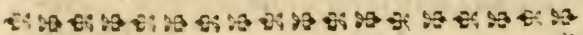
## A R T I C L E V.

*Time and Place may aggravate the Horror of Detraction.*

**F**OR Instance, To detract in the Church and in Time of Divine Service: A Time and a Place, wherein far from being permitted to detract, we ought not even to speak of Things indifferent: but wherein we ought to edify one another by good Works, and not injure one another. Ne-  
L 2
vertheless,

SECT. V. vertheless, ( O the Wickedness, ) we see  
 ~~~~~ Persons who seem to come to these sacred  
 Places, only to examine curiously, and ma-
 lignantly all that shall be said or done !
 Ready to censure all that the Preacher says,
 they whisper to others the critical Remarks
 they make upon his Discourses, and vilify
 all those which are not fashioned according
 to their own Fancy, and on Account of a
 Thousand other Things. In a Word, I
 say that many of the Ways of Detraction,
 which we have related and many of it's
 Sources which compose the Third Section,
 and in General, the Malice of Heart, &c. &c.
 which contribute to aggravate other Sins,
 have the same Effect upon that we are
 now arguing against.

Particularly, Beside the Circumstances
 spoken of in this Section, there are Three
 others which are very pernicious ; 1. That
 hereby we offend both GOD and our
 Neighbour, which is a double Crime. 2. That
 we are not ignorant that Detraction is a
 Sin against Charity. Let a Man repre-
 sent it ever so little and trifling, still he
 knows it to be a Sin, and this Knowledge
 serves to make it the greater ; Faults com-
 mitted by Ignorance being more excusa-
 ble. 3. That we commit this Sin from
 very small Motives, yea from very evil
 Motives, as Self-Love, Covetousness, &c.



The Uses of this Section.

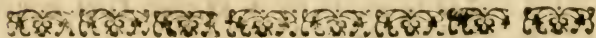
SECT. V.



WE have endeavour'd to remark those Things which make Detraction most enormous. There are so many Things which contribute hereto, (as we may see,) That it is very difficult that this Sin shou'd not be accompanied with some of these deadly Circumstances, and perhaps with many of 'em. It is then very difficult but that a Detractor sins doubly, which should greatly induce us to hate this Vice. Perhaps among the Degrees we have mentioned, there are still others, and among each we may meet with something that we have said nothing about: Perhaps, I say, The Subject who backbites his Sovereign, may sin less than the Child who speaks ill of his Father: Altho' it may be thus, yet there is no scruple to be made but that they both sin greatly; and all the Difference that will be found, shall be, that the one will be plunged deeper into Hell than the other. But where's the Man who wou'd try this Difference? Who does not know that the least Torments of this Abyss are yet infinite Torments at least in Duration? Mat. 25 41. Mark 9 48. That the Torments are the Flames of a Lake of Fire and Brimstone, accompanied with the Gnawings of a Worm that never ceases, never dyes.

SECT. V. The same may be said in general of all the Degrees of this Sin, and even of the Sin it self considered without its aggravating Circumstances. Suppose we should avoid these Circumstances, yet what cou'd we expect from bare Detraction, but that we should not be so violently tormented as those who speak ill of Parents, Ministers, &c. But after all, we shall be forever tormented with the Pains of Fire; the Torment whereof is not middling or tolerable. Let us then shun not only what encreases both the Sin and the Punishment, but let us avoid the Sin, tho' in it self not so great, that so we may be entirely saved from the Torments prepared for it. Torments as certain as they are extream in the pain, Eternal in the duration.

What we have said in this Section does not excuse little Sins. There will be always reasons sufficient to combat them, tho' there be more against greater Sins. A Criminal suffers Death, tho' there be but one Head of Accusation against him which deserves Death, altho' he wou'd have been more blameable, had he amass'd a great Number.

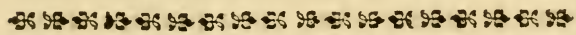


Of the Effects of Detraction.

F Detraction be a Sin in its Sources and in it self, it is not less so, and therefore not less diligently to be shun'd, in its hateful and pernicious Effects.

That we may take a distinct View of those Effects, we shall range them under particular and distinct Heads.

The first shall shew its direful Effects, with respect to Detractors while in this World. The Second, with respect to the Persons spoken ill of. The Third, with regard to those who hear the Detraction. The Fourth, with regard to the State. The Fifth, with reference to Religion. The Last, with respect to the Punishment which GOD will inflict on Detractors in the other World.



A R T I C L E I.

Of the Effects of Detraction as referring to Detractors while in this World.

I.

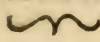
IN this first Respect it is exceeding detrimental to these Persons. For 1. It spoils

SECT. VI. spoils their Judgment. It is a general Rule and beyond Exception that we ought to form our Mind, and especially our Judgment upon good Models, and strongly impress on our Memories the most judicious Tho'ts of others. By a like Maxim, they who have continually before their Eyes evil Objects, wicked Examples, and who take a Pleasure in entertaining them, must needs meet with a contrary Effect. How then can Detraction but spoil the Mind, seeing for its Objects and Subjects it has the false Steps, Imprudences and false Reasoning of our Neighbour? 2. The same may be said with Reference to the Heart, which it equally corrupts, when it has other Men's Vices for its Object. Perhaps some will say, that when we speak ill of the Defects of the Mind or the Vices and Passions of the Heart of a Man, it is with a Design rather to disapprove and avoid them, than to follow and practice them. But to this I answer, 1. That many condemn in others what they practice themselves. The World is full of such like Examples. 2. We do certainly many Times speak of what we love. 3. We are very ready to act what we frequently think and talk of. The Reason is, because these tho'ts must needs leave some evil Impressions on the Heart, as the Handling of Lead leave a Blackness on the Fingers. 4. The most

most effectual Way to avoid Sin, is to keep it at a distance even from our very Tho'ts. We know there are no Sins but what we may surmount by Flight. If Example makes us wander from our Duty so frequently, how much more will it do thus, when we take Care to entertain it, and meditate in our Tho'ts upon it.

II.

Detraction extremely hurts our own Reputation. If those before whom Persons detract, do in the least perceive that it is Pride which engages them therein, they will conceive Scorn & even Hatred against the Detractors: Because Pride is as insupportable to those who discover it, as it is dear to those who are possessed by it without knowing it. So that altho' the vanity of others may do no harm, yet Pride is sufficient to displease, and to make the Proud contemptible. And from whatever other Passion Detraction arises, he that relates it brings on himself the infamous Character of a Passionate Man. If it be Levity, desire of Talking, or Idleness, he will lie under the title of a light, talkative, idle Fellow. If we consider the hurt Detractors do their own Reputation, when they wou'd debase that of others, and the Train of Evils they bring on themselves, and how often and strongly their Conduct is condemned in the Law of GOD, they deserve

SECT. VI  serve the Name of imprudent, unwise and irreligious Persons. In general, they pass for wicked and destructive Persons, Characters very proper for the acquiring an ill Name. Such as highly applaud them, do in the Bottom of their Souls detest and deride them. He who laughs at the Relation, inwardly laughs and mocks at the Relator. He despises and hates him, because he is not ignorant that in his Absence he wou'd say the same or like Things of him, which he has heard spoken at anothers Cost. After having been a Witness to a Conversation where no one was spared, can he perswade himself, that they will spare him in another, and that others will not hear of him what he has heard of his Neighbour? So that the Detractor is blamed and hated by every Body. *The Discourse of Foolishness is Sin, and the Scornor is an Abomination to Men,* says Solomon.

PROV. 24. 9.

The Follies and Weaknesses which Detractors discover, may justly entitle 'em to an ill Name. What is there more ridiculous than the Man, who to raise his own Reputation will deny his Neighbour's good Character which is a shade upon his? Suppose he shou'd overthrow his Neighbour's Reputation, wou'd his own be a whit the greater, better or more perfect? Just like the Man who having a Mind to be as high as a Tree, cuts it down, but is he who sell'd it, one Inch the higher? No-

Nothing is more ridiculous than to detract thro' spight: For in thus revenging my self, do I in the least repair the Injury my Enemy has done me? Have I bro't any Advantage to my own Affairs? No, by no means.

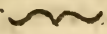
The *Comedian's* Practice is look'd upon as mean, infamous and unworthy a Man of Honour. Nevertheless what are Detractors but Comedians, who act their Neighbours on a hundred different Stages? The Profession of a Buffoon is looked upon with the same Eye, and yet this is the Profession of detracting Railers, who make the Company laugh at another's Cost. The Detractor's Trade then is as infamous as the Comedian's or Buffoon's Profession. And thus they divert the World, as well at their own Damage, as at the Cost of those they derid.

I I I.

Not only are Detractors exposed to the Loss of their own Reputation, but also to the Hatred, and Resentment of those whom they have backbitten. From hence arise so many Enmities, Animosities, Designs and Effects of Vengeance, Quarrels and even Murders and Assassinations. The Thing is evident, and I doubt not but many of my Readers have seen themselves the Proofs and Examples of what I advance. At Rome in the Year 1702, Mr. *Ceccadore* Secretary

Wary of the Latin Tongue to the Pope was assassinated near his own Apartment in the Palace of the *Vatican*, and upon his Clothes was found a Billet in these Words; *Beware of talking concerning another Man's Reputation.*

Moreover, The holy Scripture is an assured Warrant hereof. *St. Paul* in the 3d Chapter of his Epistle to *Titus*, after having formally forbidden Detraction, immediately upon it adds, *That they be no Brawlers*: So that the Apostle having condemned Detraction in it self, condemns it also in and because of it's Effects; namely *Quarrels*. So in his 2d Epistle to the *Corinthians*, he places Quarrels, Debates and Tumults before and after Detraction, thereby intimating that these are it's infallible Sources and Effects. *St. James* compares Detraction to a Fire: And how does that act? It separates the Parties which it burns, it lessens them, and torments them if capable of feeling Pain, and by destroying what it preys upon, it destroys it self. All this agrees perfectly well with Detraction, which disunites and separates the Detractors from the Detracted, and the former extenuate the other's Virtues as much as possibly they can. Detraction does these last a very considerable Evil. In a Word, The first by destroying the others, destroy themselves, because those whom they have
offended

offended, fly to Revenge against those who SACT. VI
 have spake ill of 'em, and the Effect of 
 this Vengeance is at least reciprocally to
 detract. He who tells all that comes into
 his Mouth, is oftentimes obliged to hear
 what he would not. Like the Fish who
 bites the Hook wherewith he is himself
 taken: And thus Men observe that Law EXOD. 21:
 of Retaliation, *Eye for Eye, and Tooth for* 24.
Tooth.

St. Peter requires that Christians *suffer* 1 Ep.ch.4.
not as Busy-Bodies in other Men's Mat-
ters; which teaches us, That Detractors
 by getting acquainted and meddling unadvi-
 sedly in other Men's Matters, do bring
 themselves into difficult Affairs. And be-
 sides this, We find this Truth established
 in an infinite Number of Places in holy
 Writ. *What Man is he that desireth*
Life and loveth many Days that he may Psa 34.12,
see Good? Keep thy Tongue from evil, 13.
says David. He that hath a perverse PRO. 20. 31
Tongue falleth into mischief, but whosoever
keepeth his Mouth and his Tongue keep-
eth his Soul from Troubles. A Whispe- Ch. 21. 23.
rer separateth chief Friends. Cast out Ch. 22. 10.
the Scorner and Contention shall cease;
yea Strife and Reproach shall cease, Ch. 18, 7, 8,
says Solomon. The Wicked is snared by the
Transgression of his Lips.

'Tis no wonder Men are carried to all
 manner of Excesses in Words and Actions
 against

SECT. VI *against Detractors*, since nothing gives us greater uneasiness than Contempt; so that nothing can trouble us more than Detraction which results therefrom, and causes those to be despised whose Faults we lay open; and nothing can afford us more Pleasure than to be revenged for this Contempt: Still further, Nothing offends more than injurious Truth, and a revengefull Spirit will be carried to the uttermost Extremities, rather than bear 'em.

If you accuse a Man as being of an haughty, fierce, revengeful and arrogant Spirit, Do you think that when he revenges himself on others, he has more regard for you? And won't be revenged for your Contempt? Will you say that your Power or your Enemy's Weakness won't permit him to execute his evil Designs upon you? But remember that the Wicked have ways enough to hurt, and that the least Enemies are always formidable. A Bramble, a Thistle, a Nettle appear very contemptible, yet touch them and they cause exquisite Pain. The Comparison is easily applied, and so I leave the Reader to do it.

There are also Persons who have more Courage than Wisdom and Religion, who would not stick to kill a Man that has spoken ill of 'em. Such are those who prefer Honour to Life, and upon this Principle, will readily take away the Life of another


another or risque their own, to get rid of SECT. VI their Shame in their Tomb, or to wash it away, as they fancy, in the Blood of their Enemies. As much as we hate Detractors for the Evil they have already done us, so much do we fear 'em, for the Evil they may do us hereafter.

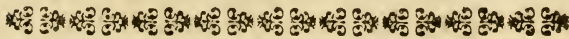
Let us remark a few Things here as to the Causes of Detraction. Pride is very proper to raise Disputes and Contentions. So *Solomon* says, *Only by Pride cometh Contention.* Pro, 13, 10, As Pride drives a Man to detract, so thro' Pride the Persons reviled can't bear it. Hence arise Troubles, Injuries and sometimes what is worse. Both Parties being willing to sustain the Point of Honour, give mortal Wounds and will not yield, Moreover, as the Detractor is the Aggressor he usually suffers most. For Words he receives Blows, and like the Bee perishes with the Wounds he has made. Shou'd we by our Words injure a Person to his Face, wou'd he not daily follow us with Quarrels and perhaps with Duels?

It may even happen that if you rail more ingeniously than your Antagonist, (as there is Jealousy in all Trades) he whom you surpass, will be jealous of you & strive to hurt you, as is common with jealous Persons.

What still adds to the Misery of Detractors is, that they can't complain when they
are

SECT. VI are brought into such difficult Affairs; because they must look on themselves as the Causes of their Troubles. And truly, can they be ignorant that by their Detractions and Raileries they have offended People? Can they be ignorant, that offended Persons fly to Revenge? Can they flatter themselves that what they say against a Man behind him, will not be told him again? Are they not apparently exposed to all this every Time and as soon as they have published their Satirs and pronounced their Judgments? What can we conclude from hence, but that these Persons who thus expose themselves to the Loss of Reputation, do sin against the Commandment of *S. Paul*, who bids us *seek those Things which are of good Report*? That those who spoil their Wit and Judgment by their detrac-
 Phil. 4 8. ting humour, do not only smother, but even dissipate those Talents which GOD had trusted 'em withal for a quite different Use? And that consequently they will be treated with more Rigour than unprofitable Servants? That they who hereby corrupt their Hearts, do sin against all those Commandments which urge to strive after Perfection, and to encrease in Godliness, far from diminishing and extinguishing it? That they who bring Miseries on themselves by their own Detractions, are involved in the same Sin with Self-Murderers,
 except

except that they Sin only in Proportion SECT. VI
 to the Hurt bro't on themselves; but if 
 hereby they bring Death on themselves,
 they are then Self-Murderers indeed?
 That by raising Quarrels between them-
 selves and those whom by their Discourse,
 they injure, they act contrary to the Pre-
 cept of the Apostle Paul, who requires us
to be at Peace with all Men, as far as Rom. 12
18,
in our Power; and to that of our Saviour,
to be harmless as Doves, and wise as Mat. 10, 16
Serpents; nothing being more opposite to
 Wisdom and Prudence, even humane Pru-
 dence, than the Conduct of those we are
 speaking of, since they expose themselves
 to many Evils which it is Wisdom to a-
 void: Which made Solomon say, *he that* Pro, 10, 14
backbiteth is a Fool; and elsewhere, *he*
that is void of Wisdom despiseth his Neigh-
bour, but a Man of Understanding hold-
eth his Peace



ARTICLE II

*Of the Effects of Detraction with Regard
 to our Neighbours, and First as to
 those who are spoken ill of*

TIS certainly a great Injury to a
 Man to take away his Reputation,
 M which

SECT. VI. which is profitable and even necessary for him in most Circumstances of his Life. To Discover his Defects is to hurt him for Time past, present and to come. For Time past, because we nearly make the World judge, that all the Good he has formerly done was but the Effect of Hypocrisy; which takes away the Reputation acquired by Actions which perhaps were really good. For the present Time, because as soon as we think a Person vicious, we cease to esteem and do him good. In fine, all the good he does for the Time to come, will be ever suspected, and taken on the wrong side. We need but know Men, to be assured that this is their way.

The Evil we say of Persons may even return on their Relations, their Children and their Posterity, by a Kind of Reverberation or second Stroke, which is fatal to their Rise and Fortune.

Moreover, tho' a good Reputation were not of so high a Value as the greatest Part of the World imagine, 'tis sufficient that they from whom it is ravished, are persuaded 'tis a very great Advantage, to make them exceeding outrageous at it's being blotted. 'Twould be needless to shew that all Mankind, look upon a good Reputation as a very exquisite and precious Good. To acquire or preserve it, Thousands do deprive themselves of all that is dearest

dearest to 'em, and do things which naturally they have the greatest Aversion to, and expose themselves to the most evident and terrifying Dangers, yea, to an almost certain Death many Times. No Wonder then, that Men are so enraged against those who injure and dishonour them, and that they endeavour to be revenged therefor.

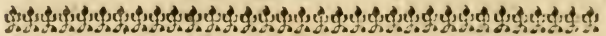
A second Injury we do our Neighbour is, that we make him hate those who defame him, with their Hurt, and procure it when able: Which are Things very opposite to Charity: But the Conduct of Detractors is not less so, since they are the Occasions of these Sins, which Charity does not permit. So we put a stumbling Block in their Way.

Still farther, should the Person of whom we speak ill, be patient, good-natur'd and Christian-like enough to Pardon the wrong we have done him; still this don't excuse the Detractor, since it is forbidden us to cause any hurt to our Brethren.

Moreover, who is certain, but that he may resent the Wrong done and retain Desires of Revenge, altho' they do not appear and break forth immediately.

What greater Injury can we do a Man, than infallibly to destroy his Reputation, to make him lose his Innocence, to be at least an occasional Cause of his own Misery in this and the future World? Do we not

SECT. VI diabolically tempt our Neighbour by engaging him in Crimes worthy of Hell? Is not this to be an Instrument of the Devil? Is it not to go beyond him in Wickedness, who in this Life hurts only the Soul, whereas Detractors destroy his temporal and spiritual Benefits.



ARTICLE III.

Detraction is hurtful to those of our Neighbours who hears us detract.

Detraction is fatal not only to the Detractor and the Detracted, but to those also who hear others detract. And this several ways. As,

1. The Example we set before our Neighbour in Detraction, is oftentimes more than sufficient to engage him therein in like manner. 'Tis by Use, Custom and Example that the greatest part of Mankind suffer themselves to be led. Thus he who gives others a pernicious Example, is partly the Cause of those Sins which they thereby commit. And *Wo to him by whom the Offence cometh!*

Luk. 17. 1

2. 'Tis farther fatal to Persons who are present, because Detractors do their utmost to engage them in Detraction. They will

ask

ask their Advice or their Approbation; call them to Witnesses for the Truth of what they say; use all their endeavours to make them also detract, that so as Accomplices therein, they may not reveal to him who has been talk'd against, what was said to his discredit: For how will they dare to accuse others, if those that are present were not partakers in the same Crime? Prudence would allow no such Thing.

3. Detraction is a destructive Sin as it furnishes the Auditors with a Subject and Matter for their Detractions elsewhere; by furnishing them with the Defects of others, of whom they were ignorant, they have afterward wherewith to censure their Conduct. This is not only a declaring War with our Neighbour, but a furnishing others with Arms to fight against him: Thus the Sin is double.

4. Detractors cause the Hearers of their ill Language, to despise and hate those who are spoken ill of before 'em, which is a Sin both in the Detractor and in those who hear him detract.

5. If these last are already corrupted, the Vices and Crimes of others, which they hear spoken of, encourage them, to persist in their own, being persuaded they are Sins which many Persons fall into, and therefore are but small: As if each one of those who do evil, retain'd with himself a part

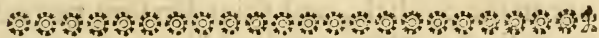
SECT. VI of the Horror of the Sin, and so diminished it, being thus divided into many Parts: But on the contrary it is communicated to an infinite Number of Persons, without losing any Thing of it's greatness and wickedness. On the other hand, Shame wou'd keep a Man to his Duty, if he saw himself the only wicked Person; but Men think there's no more Shame to be feared, when they have many Companions. In fine, As 'tis Example which leads Men into Sin, so 'tis Example which keeps 'em in it.

But if those before whom we detract, be honest, sober Persons, 'tis much to be fear'd, that when they compare themselves with those we speak ill of, they will take occasion to brag and lift themselves above them, by a Pride natural to those who think themselves better than others.

6. The Crimes we relate, are like stumbling Blocks which cause the Auditors to fall into Sin. Vice has a pestilential and communicative Air, which makes a deep Impression on the Heart. Filthy Discourse, and in general, all such as discovers and makes Sin known, has the same Effect as ill Writings have. How many Persons wou'd have been all their Life-Time ignorant of the way of committing a thousand sorts of Vices, had they not read or heard how others fell into them, and how some have relin'd on the common way of sinning?

ning? Or let us suppose, That a Man ^{SECT.V} learns nothing of those Sins, but was acquainted with 'em before; yet certainly, it is ever a very dangerous thing, to refresh the Memory anew, and cause it to think thereon again, since from Tho'ts we too commonly proceed to Deeds.

Detractors do in particular cause this great Evil to those who hear them, that they kindle between those they talk'd of, and those who hear them, furious Enmities and long Quarrels, and thereby trouble the Repose of their Lives. This is excellently well express'd by the wise Prov 26:20 Man, *Where no Wood is, there the Fire goeth out; so where there is no Tale-bearer, the Strife ceaseth.* 'Tis clearly seen, That as Wood is the Matter for Fire, so Reports are the Matter of Quarrels, whereof Detractors are the Causes. And in another Place *Solomon* say, *The Words of Tale-bearers are as Wounds.*



A R T I C L E I V .

Detraction is very fatal to any State and Society;

I. **A**FTER having prov'd Detraction to be very fatal to particular Persons, it follows that it is deadly to a State; seeing a State is compos'd of the various Members which form it, and to whom Detraction is very hurtful.

SECT. VI

2. Historys both ancient and modern furnish us with sufficient Examples of Princes, who having spoken ill of others, have made them their Enemies, whereby their Kingdoms and Subjects have extremely suffer'd by these Wars. Beside foreign Wars, has not Detraction rais'd a thousand civil Tumults and Quarrels among Fellow-Citizens, so much the more pernicious as they were Members of the same Body, which thus rent each other.

3. When the Enemies of a State learn by means of their Spies, and these by means of Detractors, the Vices whereto the Princes of a Kingdom abandon themselves, they will certainly lay hold of their Weaknesses and make use of the Detractions which have been discovered to them.

4. They who backbite Princes and Magistrates do certainly a very great harm to their Country. As soon as the Faults of those who hold the Reins of Government, are made publick, and their Persons turned to ridicule, they are look'd upon as unworthy or incapable of governing; People despise their Orders how just soever they be, and so bring Confusion into the State.

5. I can prove by the Words of a great Politician, and whose Witness is very worthy of belief, That Detraction is very pernicious to a Society and a State. *Scornful*

Prov 29.8. *Men, says Solomon, bring a City into a Snare.*

Snare. An Example taken from History SECT. VI
 will set forth what *Solomon* says, and justify his Assertion. When *Agathocles* besieged a City, some on the Walls derided & scoffed at him in these Terms, *Potter* *, *Where will you get Money to pay your Soldiers?* He answered, *When I shall have taken this City.* Having at length conquered the City, and sold those whom he had taken; *If*, said he, *You again rail at me, I'll complain to your Masters of you* †: Thus deriding them in his turn, ridiculing their Detraction, and Slavery, which was the Recompence thereof.

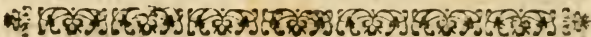
6. Detraction is certainly very hurtful to the Repose and Happiness of a Society, and the Interest of a State: And those Princes who have had at Heart a Concern for these Things, have severely punish'd satyrical Persons, drove away Accusers and other Defamers, Examples whereof History furnishes us withal. Now if Detraction be pernicious to a State, then Detractors do sin on this Account also, since we are in Conscience obliged to contribute our utmost for the Welfare of our own Country. On this Account therefore GOD ordered the *Jews* that were carried away

* This was his Father's Occupation.

† His Soldiers being now their Masters.

SECT. VI to *Babylon*, to pray for the Prosperity of
 that Empire, where notwithstanding they
 were look'd upon as Prisoners of War, ra-
 ther than Citizens, but which still was as
 it were a second own Country to them:
 This Reason likewise engaged young *David*
 in a dangerous Fight with the Enemy of
 his own Country.

Jer. 9. 7.
 I. Sam. 17.



ARTICLE V.

Detraction is hurtful to the Church.

I. **W**E may make the same Remark here with reference to Pastors, that in the foregoing Article we did as to Princes and Magistrates, namely, That they who lay open their Defects, do thereby deprive their Auditors, their Flocks, of the Fruit which they might reap from their Discourses and Exhortations. When People are once convinced, that their Teachers lead an irregular Life, they soon disbelieve what they say, how true soever it be, and leave practising what they prescribe, tho' ever so just in it self. Thus little are a Flock obliged to those that shew them their Leaders Errors and Vices. Hence 'twas said of *Constantine* the great, that had he with his own Eyes seen a Bishop defiling his

Euseb. De
 Vita Conf.
 Ljb. 4.

his

his Neighbour's Bed, he would have co-SECT. VI
 ver'd the enormous Crime with his own
 imperial Mantle, for fear any one should
 be scandalized therewith.

2. Detractors hinder the Name of GOD
 from being glorified. *Let your good Works*
so shine before Men, that others may glo-
rify your Father which is in Heaven, said
 our Lord. Matt. 5. 16. Whereby it appears that it is
 by the Sight of our good Works that o-
 thers are induced to glory GOD. How
 then will they glorify him, if they see no-
 thing but evil Works, or at least evil
 Words in Detractors ! And on the other
 Hand, see nothing but Evil in those whose
 Sins they discover !

3. As when one Member is honoured, all
 the Members have a part in the Honour,
 according to *S. Paul*, so when the Members
 are dishonoured, the whole Body suffers ;
 and Detractors do even the greatest Out-
 rage they are capable of, to Jesus Christ
 the Head of the Church ; since they injure
 his Religion, whose Beauty they tarnish,
 whose Efficacy they stint, and whose Success
 they retard. 1 Cor. 12, 26
27.

(1.) With Regard to those within the
 Church : Who can doubt for instance, that
 when the Leaders of Churches are quarrel-
 ling about Trifles, and Disputes and Ques-
 tions about Words, and do anathematize
 each other for meer Nothings, and compose

SECT. VI. Volums for the Ruin of each others Reputation. Who can doubt I say, that when the Shepherds are thus at variance, Wolves will not come and carry off the Sheep by open Violence, or by Ambush? And that while they spend their Time and Care about reciprocal and particular Quarrels, their Flocks will not be deprived of those Instructions which are necessary to form them for solid Piety and the Practice of good Works? Moreover, these Disputes among Divines, the Injuries which they heap on each other in their Books, serve to foment those unhappy Divisions with which we see the Church torn. Can these Men of such contrary Sentiments pretend to gain any Thing to themselves? No! There is nothing sets them at a greater Distance from any Advantage than this. Detraction does also destroy that Harmony which there ought to be among all the Members of one and the same Body, as in the Church. It has been already shewn that nothing is more effectual than this Vice, to raise Disunion and Discord, and nothing is more certain than that this Discord is pernicious to the Church, which, like the State, can subsist only by the Union of those who compose it. The Comparison of *S. Paul* is a Proof of this saying. He shews us that as a Body cannot subsist, if all the Members do not agree, so likewise the Church, which

he

he compares to a Body, cannot subsist, if SECT. VI. Peace do not reign among its Members, and consequently if Detraction be not banished. And as Detraction is an Enemy to the Humane Body & the Body Politic, so it is also to the Body Ecclesiastic.

(2.) With Reference to those without the Church: Detraction hinders the progress of Religion. Those Princes who are the Enemies of a Religion, do often take Occasion to persecute it, by Reason of the Detraction of its Professors. Thereby they perceive the Defects and Vices of its Members, and under Pretence of banishing Vice out of their Dominions, they banish the Religion it self. Under Pretence that the Discord is fatal to the State, they banish Religion which is by no means the Cause of it, since it forbids it.


They among Infidels or those of another Communion, hearing of the Faults of Persons who profess a Religion which they know only by report of others, are easily persuaded that all, or at least the greatest Part of those of that Religion, are vile Persons, whose Worship as well as Company, ought to be carefully avoided so that hereby the Name of GOD is blasphemed, according to *S. Paul's* Expression. Rom. 2, 24.

Detraction is also a very great hindrance to the Conversion of Infidels. I suppose here, that an Infidel has read or heard say,
That

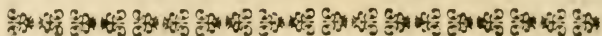
SECT. VI That GOD's Word works with might in those that believe, and is sharper than any two edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow: Could such a one refrain reflecting thus? Certainly this Word is not true, since it does not convert it's Professors, of whom I hear a thousand Enormities told, that are not found among us.

1 Theſ. 2.
13.
Heb. 4. 12.

And when he denied the Truth of this Word, He wou'd be little concern'd to Embrace the Religion founded upon it. Or had he a Mind to rank himself among Christians, wou'd he not say, " Where shall I find them? These who call themselves such, do not follow the Rules and Morals of their Christ, when they are accusing each other. How can they be persuaded, That he was a true Prophet and the Son of GOD; since, according to what they say of one another, they do not obey his Laws and his Gospel? They tell indeed of an Holy Spirit, who is to lead them in Piety and Virtue, but who can see this Holiness in their Conduct; or who can see the Image or Effects of this GOD, in their Action?" What Idea of the Christian Religion wou'd a Pagan have? When he heard those who externally profess it, speak ill of each other so frequently as they do, wou'd he not think and say, *That their God*
had

had commanded them to detract! A Tho't SECT. VI
 very likely to deter them from embracing 
 it, Detraction being contrary even to that
 Law of Nature, engraven by GOD on the
 Hearts of all Men. What Idea cou'd a
 Pagan have of our holy Religion, when
 he knew it not in its Grounds, and such as
 it really is in it self, and was ignorant of
 the Author of it, but judged of it only by
 the Words and Actions of those who pro-
 fess Subjection to this Religion and this
 Legislator! Detractors then do as far as
 they are able, crucify themselves afresh
 the Lord of Glory and put him to open Heb. 6. 6_a
 Shame. Alas, had we the Interest of Re-
 ligion at Heart, and were we concerned
 for GOD's Glory, should we not act in a
 quite different Manner! We should do as
 much for the Advantage of this Religion,
 as worldly Potentates do for their own
 Interests. They conceal their Losses and
 Disgraces as much as they can, that so they
 may not add too much Courage to their
 Enemies. Thus ought we to hide from
 the Enemies of our Religion, the Losses
 which it suffers every Time the Professors
 thereof wander from its Maxims. There-
 by we shall hinder the Insults and Re-
 proaches of its Enemies and rather gain
 them over to Christ. Being obliged as we
 are to pray for the Peace of *Jerusalem*, Pfal: 122: 6,
 to seek the Prosperity of the Church, and
 the


SECT. VI the Propagation of the Faith, Detractors do on this Hand sin very apparently, inasmuch as they know that the Church suffers greatly by their Detractions.



ARTICLE VI.

*Of the sorrowful Effects of Detraction,
with Regard to the next World.*

THE last and most fatal Effect of Detraction is, That thereby Detractors lose Heaven, and plunge themselves into the Horrors of the bottomless Pit. This was proved in that Section where we spake of the greatness of this Sin, and 'twas there shewn, that they who commit this Sin shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and that, by Passages so formal and so numerous, that it is impossible to answer them by Reason, or to elude them by Artifice. How is it possible that Detractors should enter into Heaven, where all is Love! Of all Virtues this alone shall there subsist, but in an extent quite different from that of the most Charitable here below; for all other Vertues shall be changed into Love, to strengthen this. How then can Detractors enter into the Tabernacle of the Lord! Detractors, who so openly wound
this

this heavenly Virtue, and do the Works of SECT. VI
 the Devil. This would be a bringing Hell 
 into Heaven. 'Tis a Folly to think of u-
 niting two Things, that are so incompati-
 ble. But is it not acting the Madman, to
 expose one's self to the Danger of Destruc-
 tion, or rather to the inevitable Loss of the
 Riches and Glories of Paradise ?

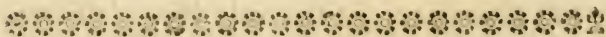
If we won't hide the Faults of our Neigh-
 bours, how can we hope that Jesus Christ
 will hide our Faults, when He shall judge
 the World in Righteousness ? He will found
 his Arrests on our Practise or Omission of
 Love. To those whom he shall condemn Matt. 25
 He will say, *You did not cloath me when I
 was naked; go, ye cursed into everlasting
 Fire.* Will he not also say to Detractors,
 Far from hiding the Nakedness of my Mem-
 bers, you exposed them to the Eyes of all
 the World, by publishing their Imperfec-
 tions. And as I look upon all done for or
 against them, as done for or against my self,
 you have injur'd me in their Persons, *De-
 part therefore, ye Cursed, &c.* Then
 shall be fully accomplished the Truth of
 Solomon's Words, *GOD scorneth the Scor-
 ners, but giveth Grace to the lowly.* Pro. 3, 24.

'Tis an important Consideration, That Chrysoft.
 ad Pop. Ant.
 Rom. 3,
 GOD will treat Detractors with the ut-
 most Severity. There is not only this
 Evil in Detraction, that we shall render up
 an Account of what we have said, but that

SECT. VI we shall thereby make our Sins more black
 as we shall deprive our selves of all manner
 of Excuse. For he that maliciously Pub-
 lishes other Men's failings shall find no
 Pardon for his Excesses. And truly he shall
 be punished as Detractor, then as blame-
 able for the evil Causes which made Men
 detract, and as the Author of all the per-
 nicious Effects which Detraction produces ;
 and because he hath been guilty of that
 very Sin, which he hath so much con-
 demned in others.

After all this, Who can think that De-
 traction is not a Sin and a very great one ?
 See how evil are its Sources, how hateful
 its Effects, sinning against GOD, against our
 Neighbour, and against the Detractors
 themselves ; against the Law of Nature,
 that of *Moses* and that of the Gospel, and
 how severely it will be punished in the
 World to come ! What a Cloud of Wit-
 nesses against Detractors !

Hel. 12, 1,



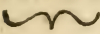
The Uses of this Section.

Hitherto we have proved, that Detrac-
 tion was a very great Sin in all Sorts
 of Ways. In particular in this Section we
 have shewn that its Effects are evil, which
 evidences that the Fountain, whence they
 derive

derive is evil in the highest Degree ; that the Loss of Detractors, the Ruin of the Detracted, the Scandal of those who hear the Detraction, the Ruin of the State, the Overthrow of Religion, and eternal Damnation are its fatal Consequences. Some Reflections on what has been said, may now conclude this Section.

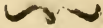
It naturally follows from hence, that the just and moderate Love we ought to have for our selves, the Consideration and Conservation of our own dearest Interests, either in this or in the other World, the tenderness we should bear our own Country, the Love we should have for our Brethren, and the Zeal wherewith we should burn for GOD's Glory, should make us cease traducing any whoever they be. GOD as the Preserver of that Order, he himself has established in Society, as the Sovereign Judge and Lord of Consciences, and as a good, a mighty and a wise Spouse and Defender of his Church, will most certainly punish Detractors.

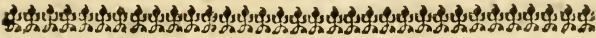
We look upon those as at least imprudent Persons, who to have the Pleasure of speaking one good Word, or rather, bad Word, do expose themselves to the Loss of their best Friend. But ought we not to regard those as Persons deprived of Reason and Judgment, who for the Pleasure of Detraction, lose the best Friend they can have,

SECT. VI  without whom they can't subsist a single Moment, and who when he becomes their Enemy, can plunge them into eternal Miseries; in a Word, GOD their Creator, their Preserver, their Master, their King, their Lawgiver and their AM!

Are not these Motives, when single, powerful enough to render this Vice hateful to us? But, how great should their Power be with us, when our temporal Interest is found blended with our Interests to avoid the Torments reserved for Detractors in the Place of Devils? Think then that by Detracting, you become the Object of the Contempt and Hatred of GOD and Men. For tho' Men do sometimes love to hear Detraction, yet they don't love the Detractors for it. 'Tis with this as with Treason: We love the Treason & hate the Traitor.


The Quarrels which are raised by this Sin of Detraction, are equally certain, and equally pernicious to those who give way thereto; since they are destructive to themselves and hateful to GOD. But should it happen, that Detraction should not draw on the Detractor, the Hatred and Ill-Will of the Detracted, who are so good-natured as to forget his injurious Talk, this will not excuse the Detractor; for they who leave Vengeance to GOD, shall be avenged by him, according to the Wrong done them. Moreover,

Moreover, It seldom happens, that they SECT. VI
 whose Honour has been sullied, and whose 
 Credit has been diminished, do not Revenge
 themselves on the Injurious and make 'em
 Repent: and a Detractor never can be saved
 if he do not Repent and be Converted.
 On these two Regards, where all our Inter-
 ests are united, let me use the Words of
 the Apostle, *If ye bite & devour one ano-*
ther, take heed that ye be not consumed Gal. 5. 15.
one of another.



SECTION VII.

Wherein some Doubts and Cases of Con-
science are resolved; and 'tis shewn
That all Detraction is not a Sin.

 Having shewn in general, That
 Detraction is a very great Sin,
 we shall at present shew, that
 this Rule has some Excepti-
 ons, and that in many Cases,
 Detraction is not a Sin, but is very law-
 ful and even necessary.

1st general CASE.

It may be said in a general way, That
 all those Reasons which on some Occasions
 should hinder us from detracting, such as the
 divine Command, Charity, Justice, &c.

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do upon other Occasions oblige us to speak ill of our Neighbours. At first sight it appears obscure and contradictory, that the same Thing should be both just and unjust, charitable and contrary to Charity, conformable and incompatible with GOD's Law. Nevertheless, we hope to shew in the Sequel, that there is nothing impossible herein, when we consider Detraction under various Views.

2d CASE.

To speak ill of the dead is no Crime, provided the Ill we may say of them, does no harm to their Children and other People who are still living : On Condition tho' that we take Care before whom we talk, and that the Knowledge of their Sins do no harm to the State and to Religion, and that we speak not of them thro' Passion. Provided we observe these Precautions, I don't see what should hinder us from speaking of the Vices of the Dead, when Occasion presents. For,

1. When the Scripture requires us to speak Evil of no Man, it does not forbid us to speak of the Vices of the Dead, since these Words, no Man, apparently refer to the Living. What constitutes a Man is the Union of Soul and Body, and this Union ceases by Death, so that a dead Man is not properly a Person.

2. Were

2. Were it unlawful to speak ill of the Dead, it would follow that no Histories ought to be wrote ; and many other Absurdities.

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3. One principal Reason why the Scripture forbids Detraction is, because it hurts the Person spoken of ; but this Reason ceasing by Death, which secures a Man from the worst of Evils to which he is exposed in this Life, nothing can hinder but that one may freely tell his Opinion concerning his past Conduct.

To the foregoing Sentiment it may be objected,

1. That a good Reputation is a Benefit to a Man even after his Death ; but that Detraction ravishes it from him and hurts that good Reputation which survived him. I answer, that this good Name which many Persons make so much of, and for which they will sacrifice the true and solid Happiness of Life, that so they may enjoy the Character of brave and worthy Persons after Death, is but a Smoak, which oftentimes may do a Man good while alive, but which after Death can do him no good at all. Still further, as the Dead know no longer what is done under the Sun, so they have no more any good Thing here which belongs to them.

Ecc1. 9. 5.

2. Some may say, that at all Times & in all Places, the Tomb has been looked upon

SECT. VII. as a sacred Place, and an Asylum, or Place of Refuge, which we might not touch, without a kind of Prophanation, and that therefore we ought not to rake the Dead out of the Tomb to bring them forth and detract from them.

I answer, this Argument looks something specious, but is not solid at all, as will appear if we will examine the Difference there is between raking up a Corpse and speaking ill of the Actions a Man did while his Soul and Body were united. The raking up of a Corpse is a spiteful, unnatural, unnecessary Action, whereas the other may be done without Malice, and be sometimes necessary.

3d CASE.

Should any one demand whether or no it be lawful to speak ill of Nations in general, and whole Bodies, of what Profession soever they be; I answer, that doubtless it is lawful to speak in general, because among so great a Number there will certainly be found some honest Persons. If for Instance, I say that the Spaniards are haughty and lazy, I do not still intend but that there be humble & laborious Persons among 'em. *S. Paul* gives us an Example and Proof of what I advance. He did not stick to say that the Cretians or Candians *are always Liars, slow Bellies.* Yet still it must be remembered, that all which is lawful

lawful is not always proper and expedient ; and that all Things do not edify. Thus if we have Reason to fear that any one will be offended at what we say ill of his Nation or Profession in general, or that any other Inconvenience may arise therefrom, we ought to refrain speaking.

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4th C A S E.

As to Railleries, I say that all sorts of Railleries at the Absent are utterly forbidden ; unless they come under the Exceptions in this Section.

As to Railleries at Persons when present, I am not for condemning them under certain Precautions.

The first Precaution is, That it be not done too often ; but only sometimes for an innocent Diversion, and not as a Business, according to the Practice of some. If GOD permits, that our Spirits as well as Bodies do sometimes take a Loose, yet we are to consider, that this ought not to be the principal Business of our Lives, but rather an Help that we may return to our serious Employments with more Application, less Weariness, and consequently, greater Success.

A second Precaution is, never to offend those whom we rail at, never to touch them to the quick, and not jest with 'em, if they don't understand Jestings, as we say. They must be aware that we are playing
and

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and not fighting; that what we say is to cause Mirth, and not mutual Discontent.

The third Caution is, that when we repartee, we allow the other to reply in his turn; nevertheless it may be observed that those who most love to jeer others, are least willing to be jeered themselves. For Pride finds its Advantage in the former, and its Disadvantage in the latter.

A Fourth is, that we abstain from Raillery before, those who may afterward have an ill Opinion of those whose Defects we lay open by our Raillery.

A Fifth is, that we do not make Sport with others in time of publick Calamities, and when our Tears and Groans are required rather than Mirth.

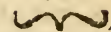
The four last Conditions I have laid down, do shew how necessary the first is. And truly, as it is very rare, either that they whom we rail at are not offended, or that we our selves are not Angry when derided, or that there be not some Person who may have an ill Opinion of those who are jeer'd in his Presence, and Christians having Subjects enough to be more sorrowful than Merry, it is needful that our Railleries be but very rare.

5th CASE.

'Tis not only lawful, but profitable, for Persons to acquaint Parents of their Children's Vices, when they are so blind that they

they cannot see them, or when Excess of Love which they bear their Children, hinders 'em from seeing their Imperfections. Thus they were not in Fault who told *Eli* the high Priest, of the Debaucheries, Covetousness and Profanity of his Children. The Reason why what we say is lawful, is, that it is not likely that Parents will make use of the Knowledge of the Sins of those to whom they are straitly tyed, to hurt them. On the contrary, 'tis apparent that they will use it to correct them for their good. Thus did holy *Eli*, who took Occasion from the Reports concerning his Sons, to give them wholesome Reproofs concerning their Conduct.

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1 Sam. 2, 22,
23.

What has been here said concerning Parents and Children, may extend to Masters and Servants, and in a Word, to all those who may contribute to the Advantage and not to the Loss of those whose Irregularities they mention. Only we must take Care, how we speak; not to do it, that so we may exasperate the Parties; and not to speak with Revenge our selves, but always to have Love before our Eyes and in our Mouths.

6th CASE.

From the Principle now laid down, it follows, that 'tis no Crime to tell the Ministers and Guides of the Churches, the Faults of their People, that so by their Censures and Exhortations, they may cause
Sinners

SECT. VII. Sinners to enter into the Path of Righteousness and Salvation. Thus we don't see that *S. Paul* was offended, because He was told of the incestuous Person at *Corinth.*

2COR. 5, 1.

7th CASE.

The Excommunication which *S. Paul* prescribes, and wou'd have practiced against scandalous Sinners is not a criminal Detraction, when it is made use of on the Occasions and for the Ends prescribed by the Apostles. The End thereof should be to shame the Sinner who is excommunicated, that so this shame may bring him to Repentance & a saving Conversion. It should also deter others, and to make them fear the same Punishment, if they live irregularly.

The Occasions whereon Excommunication is to be put into Practice are when the Crimes are well proved, certain, publick and great. Otherwise we are to make use of particular Censures, and if we act otherwise, Anathemas become true Detractions, since without Hope of any good, and without the Command of GOD, they may cause very great Evils.

8th CASE.

It may be enquired, Whether we can without detracting or sinning, tell the Magistrates concerning those sorts of Sinners who are punished by civil Laws, and the Laws of all Nations, such as Robbers, Murderers, &c.

To

To this I shall give some Light in the following Propositions,

1. We ought doubtless to tell the Truth before Judges, when call'd by and before them therefor, because otherwise we shall be guilty of that false Witness expressly forbidden by the divine Law.

2. 'Tis certainly our Duty to discover Criminals when the Laws command it, for in this Case we cannot disobey the civil Laws of Magistrates without sinning. Now since the Laws which forbid the Crime, do at the same Time require us to discover the Criminal if we know him, we ought to discover him in Obedience to our Superiours, and to prevent our sinning.

3. The Scripture says expressly, *thou shalt not suffer the Wicked among thy People.* Deut 21, 21. We must then acquaint the Magistrate of them, that so he may banish them or put them to Death, or punish them some other Way.

4. Were it not lawful to bring Criminals to the Magistrate, he could never punish them, since otherwise he can have no Knowledge of 'em. So that Society wou'd be soon found in a woful Confusion. It is said very well on this Subject, that *Compassion for wicked Men is Cruelty to the Innocents*, who are continually suffering by their Violences, and whose Example is very pernicious, at least while they go unpunished; whereas

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whereas these Chastisements serve as a Bridle to those who intended to commit the like Things.

5. If we favour the Sinner, we injure him who was robbed or wounded, &c. We ought then to discover him, that so he may lay hold on the Robber, &c. and thereby may recover his Money, &c. Thus Charity requires us to discover the Villain either to the Person wrong'd, or to the Magistrate.

9th CASE.

Every one freely owns, that it is lawful to speak ill of a false Religion; that we may and even ought to refute Heresies; to speak against those who advance Propositions that are false and capable of damaging a civil Society and the Church; to discover Hereticks, that so they may be guarded against.

Hence it is, that it was never tho't ill to refute Hereticks, who have spread abroad the Poison of their Errors. All the World is obliged to defend the Cause of GOD, and this the Apostles did exactly practice. St. Paul says of *Hymeneus* and *Phyletus*, that they had *made Ship-wrack of the Faith*; and according to the Opinion of some he argues against their Sentiments of the Resurrection in his 1st *Epist.* to the *Corinthians*, 15th Chapter. And he says of *Demas*, that he had *forsaken him, having loved this present World*. In his Epistle

2Tim. 2. 17

2Tim. 4. 10

to the *Galatians* he relates the Difference he had had with *St. Peter*, and the Cause of this Difference, which was not advantageous to the latter. And verily *St. Paul* had good Reason for his so doing, because it was to be fear'd that many for the Time to come as well as for the Time past, wou'd follow *Peter's* Dissimulation: Now if he did not spare an Apostle when he went astray, how much less Regard ought we to have to ordinary Teachers, or rather to false Teachers, to walk in their wrong Steps? *St. Paul* made no Difficulty to speak ill of one *Alexander a Copper-smith*, ordering *Timothy* to beware of him as of an evil Man. As formerly among the *Jews*, they cloathed leprous Persons with old tatter'd Garments, that every one might know them by these Marks, and avoid them and their contagious Maladies, so we ought to set forth to view, those who publish things contrary to the Word of GOD, and thus cause their Sentiments to be hated. And if among the Romans, they used to ty a Lock of Hay to the Horns of the Ox who was wont to gore, that so Persons might keep out of his way, with much more Reason we ought to set a Mark upon those, who by their impious Discourses would impose upon the Publick, and lead them into Opinions more dangerous to the Soul, than a push of an Horn can be to the Body.

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Gal. 2. 11,
12, & seq.

2 Tim. 4.

14.

Lev. 13 45.

We

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We must only follow the Direction which *S. Austin* gives, not to dispute with Invectives but with Reasons; not to treat with the Person of our Adversary, but with the Thing & Question proposed. A Man's ill Life may'nt hinder his arguing very justly. In a Word, we must to our utmost, separate Hereticks from Heresies, condemning and hating their Heresies, but sparing their Persons.

10th CASE.

Some may ask, Whether a Man ought to suffer his Reputation to be torn to pieces; or be deprived of some other considerable good, rather than injure his Enemy's Reputation by speaking ill of him, if he can't otherways justify and clear himself? I answer, that when the Advantage is important, we ought to make no stick at discovering the Injustice and Knavery of those who would make us suffer, altho' the same should befall them. As will appear from these Reasons,

1. We are to love our Neighbour no more than we reasonably ought to love our selves. Now we should love our Neighbour more than our selves, if we let our Innocence suffer by the Crime of our Enemies.

2. The Apostles themselves did not fail to discover the ill Actions of others, to justify themselves. We have an Instance hereof in *St. John's* 3d Epist. Ver. 9, 10.

I wrote, says he, unto the Church ; but Diotrehes, who loveth to have the Pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come, I will remember the Deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious Words ; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the Brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church.

For the well understanding what may be inferred from this Passage, we must remark, That this *Diotrehes* was alive at the Time of the Apostle's writing; that he declares that this Man committed evil Actions, that he assures us, that if he come, he will lay them open in their particulars, and this in order to justify himself, as is expressed in those Words, *Prating against us with malicious Words*. And it was to clear himself from those things that were imputed to him by these malicious Words, that he would lay open their Falsity.

3. Justice it self requires us to defend our Rights, when we are unjustly accused. I should then sin against Justice, if I suffer'd my Innocence to be abused, for fear of discovering the Thievery and Injustice of those who rob me. Wou'd not this be punishing the Innocent instead of the Guilty ; condemning the Righteous and justifying the Wicked ? which, says *Solomon, is an Abomination to the Lord*. This Consideration

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1 Cor. 14.
32.

ration shews, that it is not against Charity, to expose the Faults of another, rather than permit them to be unjustly charged to one's self. For since this wou'd be contrary to Justice, for the same Reason it wou'd not be contrary to Charity, which is never to take place till Justice be satisfied. We are ever to be just, but we are not always to be charitable to our Neighbour, at least when to satisfy this Charity, we must fail in our Justice and Charity to our selves. Moreover, Virtues are not opposite to each other; and here we may apply what St. Paul said on another Occasion, *The Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets*; Virtues are so subject to Virtues, that they wou'd be no longer Virtues, if there were any contradiction between them.

4. Part of those Reasons we have alledged to prove the lawfulness of exposing a Criminal may be of Service here. I shan't here relate them, because you may call them to mind, or consider them in the Section where they are.

Having thus shewn that we may discover the Sins of another to justify our selves from any Crime laid to our Charge, or to re-demand what was unjustly taken from us, I desire that five Things may be heedfully observed in this Affair,

1. That we do our utmost that we may not be obliged to divulge the Faults of those who

who wou'd injure us, or actually have, injured us, by representing to them the Injustice of their Proceedings, and by endeavouring to perswade them to make us satisfaction. So Christ commands us in *Mat.* 18. 17. *ver.* and following.

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2. That we make known the Injuries done us, only to those who ought to be informed of them, for our own justification and satisfaction, and not to others who can't serve us therein.

3. That we abstain from speaking of Injuries done us, if we think we can gain no good by so doing.

4. We must be on the Defensive, without attacking others, and must relate only what will serve our own Reputation or our other Advantages.

5. If the offence be but small, we ought easily to pardon it. 'Tis the Character of a great, heroic and christian-like Soul, to prefer the great Advantage of our Neighbour, to the lesser Advantage of our own selves.

In all other Cases it is lawful to defend one's self justly against the Calumnies and Violences of others, provided we always follow the Rules of Benignity, Honesty and Moderation. We shall become worse than him we accuse, if for the little Injury he has done us, we do him as great a one to ruin his Credit.

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Some may perhaps say, that when *St. Paul* says, *Charity seeketh not it's own*, he does not allow us to preserve our own Goods at the Loss of those of our Neighbour; so that thereby what I advance is overthrown. But this proves too much, and consequently proves nothing. It would truly follow from thence, that we ought to suffer Injustice to reign on the Earth; that we ought to have no Concern for our Honour; that we ought to introduce Vice into the World, and let the Wicked do what they please; Absurdities far from the Sentiment of that Apostle or any other. *St. Paul* then here speaks of a Charity which for our Neighbour's Advantage will cause us to sacrifice our Covetousness, our Resentments, our Revenge, our Pride and our other evil Passions. This Charity is not incompatible with what we first of all owe to our selves: It is just and reasonable and appears in this, that it is not without Regret that we are forced to hurt others to save our selves: They who by these Words of the Psalmist, *I held my Peace even from Good*, understand, that *David* chose rather to hide his Innocence, than to reveal the Injustice and Persecutions of his Enemies, must hold that this Silence was far from the Principle I have established. But to them I must say, that I think their Interpretation is very far from the Tho't of the Psalmist,

Psalm 39.2.

Psalmist, who in so many Places justifies himself of the Calumnies of his Enemies, and has laid open their Malice and Sins. In a Word, If it must be understood that he was silent and spake not of his own Innocence, it was for Reasons which wou'd not contradict what we have alledged.

For the Reasons already mentioned, It is lawful for Kings, Princes and States who declare War against others, to shew by their Manifestoes, the Justice of their Arms, that so their Subjects may without scruple serve in their Armies. All those Reasons which should cause any Prince to undertake a War, as the Tranquillity and Liberty of their People; a just Defence against an unjust and powerful Enemy, and all other Reasons, should lead them to declare, that they undertake the War justly, altho' with Regret. So that if it be lawful to wage War on certain Occasions, it is also lawful to shew why it is undertaken. They must only beware of injurious and provoking Words, and such like, which may sow Discord and are contrary to the Design they should propose in the War, which is only to obtain a good and firm Peace thereby.

For the same Reason it is lawful for Advocates to set forth under the foregoing Restrictions, the Right which their Clients have to complain of the opposite Party; and for Magistrates to declare the Cause

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why they condemn any Man. This can't be doubted of, supposing, as in reality it is, lawful for a Man to defend his own Interests and for a Magistrate to condemn the Guilty.

11th CASE.

'Tis a Question whether one had better not speak ill of a Person, than to let another Man suffer a Damage which he might avoid, if he were told that the Person whose Company he frequents, is a Debauchee, a Cheat, &c.

To this I answer, that we ought to acquaint a Person who is dear to us and with whom we have a Commerce, that he must avoid the Company of a Debauchee, because his Company may corrupt him; and we should tell him of the Cheats of any with whom he converses, especially if he demand our Advice and Counsel as to what he ought to do.

What makes me embrace this side is, that I suppose the Case so circumstanced, that we can't pleasure the one Party without injuring the other. Now 'tis certain, that we had better do service to an honest Man who addresses himself to us, than to a debauch'd, proud, vicious Fellow. This is beyond Dispute.

2. In holding our Peace at such a Time we give Occasion to the Wicked to exercise their Rogueries and Malice, and to gratify

gratify their criminal Passions. Everyone owns, that we ought to take the Sword out of a mad Man's Hand, wherewith he may wound others ; so also we ought to discover a Man's Vices, when we fear he will hurt others. Yet here we must take Care of two Things,

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1. We must be very certain, that he whom we speak ill of before others, is really a great Cheat, a Rogue, &c.

2. If it be more than probable, that the Rogue will not cheat and corrupt those who frequent his Society, we ought not to discredit him. I think this Reason is beyond reply, namely, That it is most certain that by detracting we shall wrong him, whereas according to our Supposition, it is not certain that he will injure those who ask our Advice & to whom we owe it. So that otherwise for a doubtful & uncertain Evil, we should do a certain one ; which ought not to be.

12th CASE.

As to Satyrs, my Opinion is, That they are very lawful when they attack only Vices, without naming the Persons which have these Vices. It is very advantageous and very profitable that the Folly and Enormity of Vice be discovered seriously, or by pleasant Drollery. But it is very pernicious to discredit Persons, and enflame them with Hatred and Wrath against those

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who expose their Foibles. They who name Persons as well as Vices do plainly shew, that it is not the Love of Virtue which induced them to detract, but Vanity, Wrath or some other evil Cause. We have the Confession of the most famous * Satyrists on our side. I shan't stop to confute the contrary Opinion and the Reasons and Excuses therefor which are no ways valid, and especially when they are bro't by Christians, and when Christians are the Objects of these Satyrs.

13th CASE.

Some may ask, Whether 'tis lawful to speak of those Sins which Persons glory in. This at first seems a Paradox. What, some will say, Are there any Persons so impious and daring as to glory in their own Crimes! 'Tis hard, I own, for those who know but little of the World, to believe that it is thus. But alas it is too true! Are there not Men, or may I say Devils incarnate, who glory in their Faculty at Debauching others; who brag of their Cruelty and their Excess in Wine, &c. Some will demand, Whether it be a Sin to publish what they

* Archilochum proprio Rabies armavit Jambo.
Horat. Ars Poetica.

L' Ardeur de se montrer, ou plutot de medire,
Arma la verite du Vers de la Satire.

Boileau Art. Poetique.

themselves

themselves publish. I answer, That I am not of the Mind of those Casuists, who think that it is not ; and on the contrary, I think these Crimes should be concealed,

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1. Because tho' such a Men take Pleasure in relating their own Debaucheries, yet they wou'd be very uneasy to have others speak of 'em.

2. We ought not to help another in destroying his Honour, even as we ought not to aid his in destroying and ruining himself.

3. The Knowledge of these Things must needs be very pernicious and scandalous to those who hear us speak of 'em.

4. If they strive to outgo ordinary Sinners in Vice, that so the World may talk of 'em, then the mentioning them wou'd but gratify & encourage 'em in their foolish Vanity and their Crimes ; whereas perhaps they wou'd refrain if they saw we disdain'd to talk of their Vices.

14th CASE.

It may be enquired, Whether it be lawful or indifferent for a Man to speak ill of himself? There are but few Persons will do this, but yet there are some who pretend hereby to give undeniable Evidences of their Sincerity ; or else who wou'd do honour to their Vices, as has been shewn in the foregoing Article.

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To resolve this Question, we may say in general, that a Man ought not so to do, because it is ordinarily a bragging of Debauchery or Indiscretion, or an Itch of talking, or a Weakness of Wit, which makes one choose rather to speak ill of himself than to be silent, or some other evil Source, which are the Causes why he discovers his own Defects. The whole of it then may be reduced to this, whether it be lawful to be a great Babler, to be indiscreet, imprudent, impudent, and weak-headed : which no one will approve of. These Causes then being evil, they can produce no good.

2. The Evil we say of our selves may scandalize others, and therefore to be obtained from.

3. We are obliged to take care of our own Reputation.

I say nevertheless, that in certain Cases when our sins have been publick, we may confess and condemn them before those who may be scandalized at them ; and then this Confession is Part of the Repentance which we testify for our Faults. So *David* in *Psal.* 51. confessed both his Adultery and Homicide. We may also confess Sins to those Friends from whom we think to receive Instructions proper to save us from falling into them again ; or lastly, to those whom we have offended, by owning our Faults to them and asking their forgiveness. Except in these Cases, let us be content to
confess

confess our Sins to GOD, to repent of 'em, and to reform.

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15th CASE.

Some may ask, Whether it be not lawful to speak of a Man's ill Qualities, after having spoken of his good ones? I answer absolutely, No. Because his Virtues won't do him so much honour as his Vices will dishonour. We are obliged to be honest Men and good Christians. Such as are so, are no more than what they ought to be, so that there is not much Merit therein. Whereas we are forbidden to be wicked and vicious, and this is the Reason why Vices hurt the Vicious and marr their Credit and Fortune. On the other Hand, Men are more inclined to believe evil than good, and to hate a Man for his Vices, than to love him for his Virtues. Besides, if we shew that a Man has as many or more imperfections than he has commendable Qualities, it plainly shews that he is a very imperfect Christian. Now to be but an imperfect good Man, is to be Vicious: Imperfection, Indifference, Luke-warmness, Halting between GOD and the World, are Things which pass for Sins in holy Writ, and thus we do a very considerable Evil to their Reputation.

16th CASE.

It may be asked perhaps, Whether it be sinful barely to tell one's Opinion (when

we

SECT. VII. we are desired to do it) concerning any Action of our Neighbour, which is sinful and blameable? I answer, No. Because it is never lawful to call Vice, Virtue ; and because we should never lye. Moreover in praising an evil Action, we shall lay a Foundation for those who hear us, to imitate what they hear commended, which is contrary to the Instruction to Sincerity and the Love we owe others. We must always call Evil, Evil.

Mat. 5. 20.

17th CASE.

It may be asked, What we are to do, when in order to clear one Man, we are obliged to accuse another? I answer, that in such a Case we are to justify the Innocent, altho' we should be forced to hurt the other, and this because we ought rather to serve a good Man than a wicked Man, as has been before observed.

It must be here remarkt with reference to the Doubts we may be in, If such and such Words are Sins of Detraction, we must choose the more general and more sure, which is no Detracting. And thus we must cut the Knot when we can't unty it.

18th CASE.

Since there are many Exceptions in particular Cases, some may ask, Whether there be not also Exceptions in Persons, that is, whether there be not some so vile & abject in their Condition, that we may without
fin,

fin speak ill of 'em: 'Tis the Opinion of some Authors and Popish Casuists, that it is so, but this is not mine. For, SECT. VII.

1. *S. Paul* is express hereupon. He says we ought to speak ill of no Man; no one of the humane Race, of what Condition soever he may be. He forbids detraction not only Powers, but even universally any Man. Tit. 3. 24

2. He tells us to do good to all Men; we must then speak ill of no Man, since if we detract from any Man we do not do good at all or to all. He requires us also to present to GOD Prayers, Requests and Supplications for all Men; we must not then backbite any Man, which is so opposite to the Prayers and Supplications he mentions, and which we ought to present to GOD for all Mankind.

3. GOD has no Respect to the Appearance of Persons, because All are the Work of his Hands; thus the Quality of the Detractor and the Meanness of the Detracted, do not at all alter the Detraction in Reality. Besides that properly speaking, there is no Christian vile, after having been bought with so high a Price, as that of the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. 1. 17

In fine, our Saviour himself teaches us in the Parable of the *Samaritan* wounded by Robbers, that neither the miserable State of Men, nor the Difference of Religion, Luk. 10. 31
32, & seq.

nor

SECT. VII. nor that of a Country, should hinder us from looking upon them all as our Neighbours, and from doing them good as such.

19th CASE.

Lastly, It may be enquired, Whether Ignorance of a Fact or of Right does not hinder Detraction from being a Sin, when it is the Effect of either Ignorance? This Question is of great Importance, wherefore we shall make some Stop here, and begin with the Ignorance of Right; and as every one perhaps don't well comprehend the Signification of these Terms, we shall explain them.

By the Ignorance of Right we intend, an Ignorance in a Man, that Detraction is a Sin; and by Ignorance of Fact, we intend an Ignorance that what we are speaking against our Neighbour, is a Detraction.

And to begin with the first Sort. This Ignorance does not hinder Detraction from being a Sin, since it is only insurmountable Ignorance, and whereof it is impossible to get rid, which, can excuse Sinners before GOD. Now 'tis certain that this Ignorance is not invincible. This is proved, because Detraction is opposite to that Principle of Justice which the Creator has engraven on the Hearts of all Men, which consists in doing to others as we wou'd be done by. Far then from being invincible, we need but descend into our own Hearts, and

and look into our own Consciences, to know, that Detraction, being opposite to this Principle, is a Sin against the Law of Nature. That this Ignorance is not invincible may be prov'd from this, that *S. Paul* in his Epistle to the *Romans*, places Detraction in the Rank of the Sins of the Heathen, whose whole Law was only that of Nature; now if this Ignorance cou'd not excuse them, how should it excuse Christians, that have so much Light which the others had not?

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VII.

Rom. 1. 30

There are, I own, some of the Cases, which we have examined in this Section, about which it is more easy to be mistaken, and which demand Knowledge and Judgment and which seem in some Measure to excuse the Faults we fall into by Detraction, when we ought not to; inasmuch as there are Exceptions to the general Rule that we ought not to detract.

To this I answer, That there are few of these Cases but what we may our selves get over by a little Attention, and by the Help of GOD's Word. 2. Reason itself dictates, that we ought to be silent and not detract, when we are in doubt whether it be a Sin to do it in that particular Case.

As to Ignorance of Fact, I hold, that it is utterly impossible *That* should excuse it. For who does not know whether he speaks ill of his Neighbour, whether he hurts his Reputation

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Reputation, or no, and in a Word, whether he says good or ill of him?

From what has been said, it follows, that it would be a very ill Way to excuse Detraction, to say, I did not believe, or I did not know that such a Discourse was a Sin or a Detraction. One part of his Ignorance is impossible, the other may be surmounted. Neither of 'em then can serve for an Excuse. All that is done without Faith, that is, without a Persuasion that what we do is good, is a Sin, but contrarywise, all that is done with this sort of Faith, is not a Virtue nor an Excuse.

Rom, 14,
23.

20th CASE.

One may ask, Whether it be lawful to reveal a Secret that may be hurtful to the Person that said or committed, certain Things that cannot be discovered without ruining his or her Character, when at the same time the Knowledge of that Secret is useful to another Person? I answer, that if I know that Secret only by means of the Person that has intrusted me with it, it is plain, that Justice, which in all Cases is to go before Charity, obliges me not to discover it, and that consequently whatever Advantage might accrue by it to another by speaking, I am to be silent and not reveal the Secret.

In short, if any religious, natural or any other Duty obliges me to be more tender
of

of one Person than that of anothers, if two Persons are not equally concerned in my speaking or my silence, if by speaking or not speaking, I do more good to the one than to the other; these or such like Considerations ought to be our guides in such Cases as these, where People are afraid of acting against that great Rule and excellent Virtue, Charity, and hurting unavoidably somebody by their silence as well as by their speaking, and in which so much equality appears. For it is very seldom but that one may find in the Things themselves, or the outward Circumstances which accompany them, some Reasons that may help to resolve his Doubts, and make his Choice, tho' the Danger seems to be equal of both sides, and the Reasons of that Danger, have seemingly an equal force.

After all it is impossible to resolve all Cases. As human Actions are almost infinite, so there is a vast Number of Circumstances that may vary those Actions, and therefore there is an infinite Number of possible Combinations of all those Things and every one of these Combinations produces a particular Case; in all which Cases there are great many Dangers to be avoided, and many Cautions are to be taken, in order to judge and act rightly; for tho' we may find the Decision of them in the Word of GOD, yet even that Decision requires a
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SECT.
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long Chain of Reasonings and Thoughts, which generally include very obscure Propositions and long Discussions. And often we have but Probabilitys to judge by, in which Case we must chuse those that seem the most agreeable to the Glory of GOD, and the good of our Neighbours.

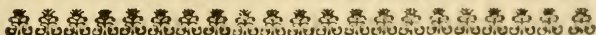
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*The Uses of this Section.*

WHAT we have said as to the various Cases wherein Detraction is not a Sin, far from favouring it, does most vehemently urge against it. The Exceptions we have established, far from being advantageous to it, do give it the last Blows, and serve to confirm the general Rule, which forbids Detraction, according to that Axiom of Philosophers, *Exceptio firmat Regulam*. And truly Exceptions shew, That all which is not excepted, is contained in the Rule we ought to follow, and is very certain and beyond all doubt. You may besides this have observed, that there are Exceptions to Exceptions, which return after this Manner into the general Precept, Not to detract, and consequently there are without Comparison more Occasions, wherein we ought not to detract than wherein we may do it.

In fine, take Care to keep exactly within the Limits and Bounds we have marked, and in which Detraction may be lawful, since if you ever so little exceed these Limits, you enter into the Path of Injustice and Sin; you eat the forbidden Fruit, and enter into the Devil's Empire, whose Subjects and Slaves you become.

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SECTION VIII.

*Answers to the Objections made in  
favour of Detraction.*

LL that we have hitherto  
said against Detraction, wou'd  
A be perhaps to little purpose, if  
we shou'd not answer the Ob-  
jections which are made to au-  
thorize and uphold this Sin.

We know how ready a Man is to deceive himself, how he loves an Error that flatters him, and what Efforts he needs to make him renounce it. From thence it arises, that altho' we present him with the Truth in all its Light, he endeavours to elude its Force, and to obscure its Evidence by a thousand Pretences, Excuses and Sophisms, which he opposes thereto, that so with some Colour he may continue in his vicious

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Bias. Persuaded of this, we go on in this Discourse to take away the Vails under which Detractors lurk ; and to force the Walls where they lye entrenched, by answering the Objections they bring in Favour of this dear Idol.

*I.*


Some say that Detraction is very useful to keep Persons to their Duty, because when they know their Conduct is decryed on Account of their Vices, they will do their utmost to get rid of 'em, that so they may give no Cause for Infamy and Dishonour which are the Fruits of an irregular Life ; and thus Detraction, far from being contrary to Charity, is a true Charity.

To this I answer, 1. That if it were Charity that makes any Man speak ill of others, he wou'd not do it in their Absence, as is very ordinary. To them he would address himself to discover their Faults, that so they might amend them. To them alone I say, wou'd he address himself, and wou'd act after a quite different Manner from what he does, to make them perceive the Wrong there is in abandoning themselves to their Passions, and the Injury which they do them. He wou'd go and converse with them in Private, and with mildness wou'd lay all these Things open to their View, and reprove them in a Christian manner.

2. That

2. That this Way of Acting is very opposite to Charity, appears from hence, that Charity covers all, even the most publick Things, whereas Detraction discovers all even the most secret Things. On this Principle of Detracting to keep Persons to their Duty, we may also kill them by our own Authority, to hinder them from committing any more the Sins on Account whereof we detract from 'em; which every one sees is the last Absurdity.

Besides this, I say that Detraction is no way proper to correct the vicious. If it be thro' Vanity, Pride or Jealousy that you speak ill of 'em, do they not see in you Examples of Vice, which may serve them, altho' without Reason, as Motives to continue in their own Vices, in their Ambition, in their Self-Love, &c. Don't think that they won't discover what it is, that makes you tear them in pieces? Do you think to make Persons more pious and devout by giving them Occasions to hate you, to loath you and to hurt you as you hurt them? Don't we every Day see by Experience, that they whose Faults have been once discover'd and published, far from repenting, do many Times become more wicked, and as a Recompence for a lost Reputation, do give themselves up to all Sorts of criminal Pleasures? They no longer mind a good which they have lost, and give themselves

SECT. VIII.  up publickly to their vicious Inclinations. Many do even perswade themselves, that there is more Shame in repenting, than in persisting in their Faults. How then can you hope to correct one Vice by another, that is, to convert Sinners by sinning your self thro' your Detractions ?

As by Violence and Persecution Men never make true Converts and good Pro-  
felytes, so we never make Persons the better by tearing their Reputation. We may perhaps engage 'em to hide their Crimes better, and to save appearance better : But that is all. Add to this, that if Detraction hinders some Faults, it produces an infinite Number of other Sins, as we have shewn when we laid open its Effects.

Some again object and say, that by shewing the Hatefulness of Sin in those who go on therein, we engage others to be upon their Watch that they fall not into those Disorders, which ruined those whom we cite as Examples.

But I answer, that there are many other and more effectual Ways to make Men quit Vice. Can we not, if we please, cite to them the sorrowful Example of Sinners who have even in this World born the Punishment of their Sins, and whose History is contained in the holy Scripture, which presents to our Eyes and as alive, those whom it speaks of? So certain and undoubted

doubted is it! Can't we lay open to their View all those great Motives which the Scripture presents us withal, to make us embrace Virtue?

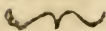
'Tis still further Objected, that they who are not as yet plunged in Vice, by seeing that the Wicked lose their Reputation thereby, are kept to their Duty thro' fear of the like Evil.

I answer, that they who have no other Motive which hinders them from doing Evil, than this Fear of Men, do even in this already commit Sin, since G O D requires that it be a Fear of displeasing him which must urge us to Duty. They are true Hypocrites who do good only thro' Consideration of the World. They preserve their outside, but the inside is Evil, since were it not thro' fear of what the World wou'd say or do, they wou'd make an open Profession of Libertinism and Debauchery. Moreover, we must not imagine, that all those who do not fear G O D enough to purify their Heart, who do not sufficiently stand in awe of that mighty GOD, who can plunge them into miseries Eternal, will fear more the Evil which the World can do them by taking away their Reputation?

II.

A second Objection, or rather a second Excuse which is bro't to justify Detraction, or to lessen the Sin, is, that if we do not

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ſpeak ill of our Neighbour, eſpecially when others in the ſame Company do it, we ſhall be looked upon as ridiculous, dull, ſtupid, contradictory, Men-Haters, and Perſons of an ill-contrived Spirit.

I anſwer to this, *Fiſt*, That if it be a Sin to abſtain from Evil only thro' humane Conſiderations, it is a greater Sin to do Evil thro' fear of paſſing among Men for a ſtupid Blockhead.

*Secondly*, The Profeſſion of Chriſtians obliges them to bear the Croſs ; to ſuffer Shame and Contempt and all that is vexatious in this World, when the Glory of GOD requires it and his Commands preſcribe it ; ſo that conſequently we ought to endure with Patience, yea with Joy, all that Men can ſay to our Diſadvantage on this Account.

*Thirdly*, Our ſilence can't much hurt our Reputation, for it is certain, that not only pious Perſons but in general all thoſe that have any Judgment, far from deſpiſing, will eſteem us, and look upon us as prudent Perſons, who will not expoſe our ſelves to all the Vexations which Detraction expoſes its Partifans unto.

*Fourthly*, They who do detract are oftentimes Perſons of the leaſt Wit. The more they detract, the more they ſhew their Want of a Fund, and that they can produce nothing of their own. For where is the

need

need of Wit to detract? The most ignorant, silly and foolish Fellow alive, has Ability enough to tell the Faults which others have committed? Is there need of long Study, and the Knowledge of Tongues, to detract? Must he be well versed in all Sorts of Literature whatever, to backbite? If there be need of Wit to rail agreeably, as they say, it were better to be without that Wit, inasmuch as this railing and deriding Wit comes only from the Devil. Let us know, That altho' we cou'd speak the most Learned and Eloquent among Men, yea as Angels, yet we are nothing if we have not Charity, according to *S. Paul*.

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1 Cor, 13. 1

You say that if you don't detract with Detractors, you pass for ridiculous Persons; but they might as well call all those ridiculous, who read G O D ' s Word and go to Church for Instruction: Is it then more ridiculous to profit by Exhortations, than to read and hear them? Verily they are more ridiculous themselves, who for this treat others as ridiculous. You say, you shall pass for Men-Haters and Persons of an ill-contrived Spirit. But pray, who is a *Misanthropos*, if it be not a Man who hates Society and Men; ( which is the Etymology of the Word ) and who hates Men more than those who backbite 'em? Let Men call you Persons of an ill-contrived Spirit; but who has an ill-turned Spirit, if

he



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he who turns his towards Evil & Detraction<sup>7</sup> has not ?

Let Men call you contradictory ; but who is more so than a Detractor, who contradicts his neighbour's Benefit ; who speaks ill of him, in Opposition to those who speak well of him, and who repeats Men's Actions and blames them in their Absence ?

Suppose you should pass for an Hypocrite ; had you not better pass for such a one unjustly and among unrighteous Persons, than to pass for a Detractor justly ? Let us endeavour to do what GOD orders us, and afterward let us not care for what Men may say of us. This is the Answer I wou'd make to those who may reply, that when we give Occasion to others to esteem us Hypocrites, we are Causes of their rash Judgments and their Lyes. It is true, that as far as it lyes in our Power, we ought not to give cause hereof, but still we must not Sin to please them ; besides that in this Case, they who do not detract are but very innocent Causes of the ill Judgment of another.

Lastly, If for fear of giving Occasion to the Judgments of others, we must always Study to please them, we should be very miserable by reason of the Pains we must put our selves to, and because of the utter impossibility of ever attaining thereto : For it is utterly impossible to please all the World. This

This last *Objection* was grounded upon our fear of the Judgments of Men; the next is grounded upon their Example and Authority.

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### III.

Some say, 'tis very hard not to imitate what we see practised every Day; and that we must allow something for Use & Custom and other Things of that Nature.

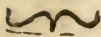
'Tis astonishing that Christians should talk at this Rate. What then, do not they who bring these Things for an Excuse, accuse themselves of infringing on GOD's Commands, which so frequently forbids us to *follow a Multitude to do Evil*, or to *conform our selves to this present evil World*, or to *love the World*? Can any one be ignorant, that we are not to judge according to that wicked Law, but according to the Laws of GOD's Word, whose Maxims ought to be the Rules of all others, and to be preferred before them? If we ought to follow Custom in the Matter of Detraction, then we ought also to be Swearers, Perfidious, Impure; in a Word we ought to have all other Vices which reign in the World, as well as Detraction; and even all those which are quite opposite to each other, as Avarice and Prodigality, because we see these Vices bear an equal sway in the World.

Rom. 12:

1 John 2:

Be

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Be not mistaken, the generality of a Sin does never excuse it. They shan't suffer a whit the less in Hell for having many Companions in Misery ; also on Earth we do not sin a grain the less for being with a great Number of Sinners.

Digest.  
Artic. 54.

By Virtue of what, may we dispense with Duty thro' Custom ? Is it a Rule it self ? Has Custom any right to publish Men's Sins ? And if it has not, How can it give Detractors a Right which it never had it self ? *Nemo ad alium transferre potest plus Juris quam habet ipse.*

On the contrary, It is the Number and Multitude of Sinners which more provokes GOD. Because all the City of *Sodom* was plunged in Wickedness, except the Family of *Lot*, and because Ten righteous Persons, were not found in this abominable Place, therefore GOD was obliged to reduce it to Ashes, in a Way as contrary to Nature as their Sins were. It is not with GOD as with Men. A Prince is many Times constrained to grant a general Pardon to a whole People which rose up against him, because he is not powerful enough to reduce 'em to Obedience by force of Arms, or because otherwise he would destroy his Dominions and see himself a King without Subjects. But GOD has more than Power enough to extirpate his rebellious Creatures, and in their stead to raise him-  
self

self Children from the very Stones in the Street, *Matth.* 3. 9. SECT:  
VIII.

St. *Peter* followed the Multitude when he suffer'd the Remains of the ceremonial Law of *Moses*, to abide in Christianity. But did this hinder St. *Paul* from reprov- ing him to his Face and with warmth? and yet there was only Imprudence in the Con- duct of the Apostle *Peter*. How then can Use & Custom excuse those in whom we meet with a deep Malignity?

I wou'd now ask Christians, If they were among the *American* Idolaters, who wor- ship and invoke the Devil, Whether they wou'd do the same thing, especially if they were not forced to it? Doubtless, No, or else they would cease to be Christians. The Number and Multitude of those whom they saw worshipping the Devil, would not ex- cuse them. So, tho' in *America*, *Europe*, and in other Parts of the World, there are those who follow the *Doctrines of Devils* with regard to Detraction, and who pay incense to this Idol; yet for all this, they who imitate them are not the less blamea- ble. On the contrary, The more Vice rules, the more we ought to oppose it. The more a Torrent swells and rages, the more hasty ought we to be in raising Dykes to stop its Waves. Far from leading a Per- son on by our wicked Example, we ought strongly to withstand those of others.

*1 Tim.* 4. 1.

Here

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Here you will say, What can a few Examples do against an almost universal Corruption? I answer, First, This Corruption wou'd not be so universal, if Men followed my Advice. Still further, altho' our good Examples do not extend very far, yet they will be of use to those who know us. They will strengthen and comfort good Persons, and many Times will put Detractors to silence. Believe me, Vice is cowardly; it triumphs only when it finds those that favour it; but it dares not appear before Virtue, to which it ever docs Homage: Suppose even that your Virtue does no good to others, yet it will at least serve your selves, by helping your Salvation.

Men must, say some, follow the Stream. I say, Let them follow the Croud: Let them enter in at the wide Gate, and at the End of their Carrier, at the End of their Journey, they will find themselves in the Abyss, the Lake of Fire and Brimstone. Since you chuse to please the Devil & wicked Men, rather than GOD, you shall go away with those whom you loved to please. Don't flatter your selves, that you can serve GOD and the World too. *No Man can serve two Masters, especially Masters so opposite and different as these are.*

Mat. 6. 24.

## IV.

Some object and say, That if we mayn't detract, we shall have nothing to say in Company

Company, and shall be obliged to talk of the Weather, and such trifling things, which would spoil all the agreeableness of Conversation. I answer, 'Tis a great Error to think we shall have nothing to talk of, for in Religion, in humane Learning, and in civil Affairs, there are an infinite Number of Things, that may be talked of to Edification, or at least without Scandal.

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But after all, it is better to talk of the Weather, than of things which may hurt both our selves and our Neighbours. Still further, Detractors are for the most part great Talkers about nothing, and discourse only of Trifles, and are so much the worse Authors, inasmuch as what they produce is not from their own Stock.

Moreover, This Excuse is only a Pretence to cover a Man's Malignity, and the true Principle he acts from. And indeed, were it only to uphold Conversation, would not Detractors be content to speak of Faults, without naming and shewing the Persons in whom they are found?

In fine, If you are induced to detract by the Company of Detractors, who turn all the Discourse this way, you must avoid them; and if you are with virtuous Persons, you may speak of Subjects proper for Edification and against Detraction it self.

All the agreeableness and pleasure of Conversation, say some, is spoiled by refraining

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ing Raillery & Detraction. I answer, that this Pleasure is by no means essential to Conversation, since it may have much more agreeable Pleasures, and that even Persons who have any Goodness at all, do find no Pleasure in Detraction. I add, That a Man has incomparably more Pleasure in the Sentiment of his own Innocence, than in the Enjoyment of this brutish Pastime. The Remorses which Detractors feel for the Commission of this Sin, and the Sorrows which lay hold of them in the Hour of Death, and their eternal Damnation, if they do not feel the Sorrows of a Repentance which may appease GOD, make them know, that all these short Pleasures which they have taken in Raillery, are like the Book which the Prophet *Ezekiel* swallowed, that was *sweet in his Mouth, but within full of Curses, Woes & Miseries*: Not to mention here the Enmities & Disgraces from Men, which they meet withal.

Ezek. 2. 20.  
& 3. 3.

V.

Some say, that we should lose the Company of many Persons who oblige us only, because we willingly hear their Detractions, or divert them with ours.

But what matters it in the End, if we do lose the Company of those who are not our true Friends, seeing 'tis only a criminal Complaisance we have for them, that makes them cleave to us? What matters it to  
lose

lose the Company of those whom we must soon forsake, if they don't forsake us first? What Good shall we get by their Society, if it draws on us the Hatred of those whom they and we speak ill of?

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## VI.

Some imagine to say much in favour of Detraction, by alledging that we have in the Bible many Examples of pious Persons who have detracted. Without entering at present into an Examination of each Passage in particular that may be bro't to prove their Assertion, we shall only remark in general, 1. That the greatest Part of those whom the holy Scripture speaks ill of, were dead, and so to detract from them was no Sin. 2. That *David* and other holy Persons were inspired by the Lord, who revealed to them, that the Heart of these whom they spake ill of, was never to be converted; and that they detracted at GOD's Command, whereas we have no such Inspirations. What sufficiently shews, that it was by express Orders from this great Master, which Orders we cannot apply to us, is this, that they themselves condemn Detraction. 3. That they were not without Sin in their Actions, and that if there be any particular Evil in their Conduct, we ought not to imitate it. 4. That they did thus many Times, for their own Vindication or for the Good of the Church. As it is certain,

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SECT.  
VIII.

certain, that the Disciples of our Lord, who in their Writings have set forth their own Defects or those of others, without any evil Ends in view, and without acting from bad Principles, have given great Proofs of their Sincerity, in that they did not spare themselves, nor the chief Doctors of the Religion they had embraced; and by this Sincerity, a great Proof of the Truth of that Religion. In fine, If they did detract, it was on Occasions where Detraction was lawful, and in Cases set forth in the preceding Section. In vain one makes use of the Authority of the Scripture for Detraction, since it is condemned so strongly by it.

## VII.

Some will say, That if we don't detract, when we hear a Man's Faults told of, we shall pass for such as favour the Faults. I answer, That this is a groundless Fear, since he who then says nothing, is as much on the side of those who blame, as of those who are blamed: For sometimes he who is not against us, is for us, as sometimes he who is not for us is against us. I add, That we ought, as far as reasonably may be, not only be silent, but to take the Part of the Absent and leave others rashly to judge what they please.

Luk 9. 50.  
Mat 11. 30

## VIII.

Some say, Is it not known that every one has his Failings, and what matters it then

then should we reveal on this Subject what no Person can be ignorant of?

SECT.  
VIII.

I confess that all Men have their Faults, and that all the World is agreed in this; But this large and general Knowledge which we have of other Men's Faults, does no Man any harm, because we don't know what are his particular Failings. And yet it is those particular Faults which destroy a Person's Credit. It does not hurt any Person to know that he is a Man, altho' we know that there are always Faults & Imperfections attached to the humane Nature here below; But it will hurt any one to know that he has committed a Sin which Dishonours him, that he has on some Occasions been imprudent, that he has sometimes acted with too much Warmth, and so of the rest. This is what Detraction discovers and whereby it does more hurt, than a general and confused Knowledge. Besides this, we know that there are many Degrees in this Frailty and this Corruption: We may think such a Man is less vicious than others; But Detraction which shews the contrary, does maliciously take away this good, or rather, less disadvantageous Opinion we had of such or such Person.

*I X.*

Some will say, Is it not lawful to tell the Truth and consequently to detract, since in Detraction we tell the pure Truth?

Q 2

'Tis

SECT.  
VIII.

Tis true, our Thoughts and Words should agree, this is essential to Truth, but we should not tell all that we think, or all that we know. We ought not lye, but we ought to be silent as to certain Truths. Who will dare to say, that it is lawful to reveal a Secret trusted to us, and which wou'd be hurtful to a Person, under pretence that what we reveal is true?

Nevertheless, in most Occasions of Life, the Defects of our Neighbours ought to be as a Secret which God himself requires us to keep. In a Word, Detraction is a Truth which we ought not to reveal, either in the Ear or *on the House Top.*

Matth. 10.  
27.

X.

Some will say, That if we do not publish the dishonesty or ill Practice of a Person, all the World will be mistaken in him, and trust their Interests with him, if People are not told of the Evils he may do them. So that it is for the publick Profit, that the wicked and vicious should be well known and described.

This many will say with Warmth, and a seeming Zeal, as if it were Love for the Publick which made 'em bring this Objection and what it includes. But for Answer, I demand who has given any Man a particular Right and Authority thus publickly to defame any one's Reputation. All the World own, that it belongs only

to

to Magistrates thus to tarnish a Man's Reputation on Account of his Crimes, and this by Sentences, Arrests and Punishments.

SECT.  
VIII.

'Tis to publick Persons whom the Providence of GOD has raised in Dignity, that these Judgments and these last defamatory Sentences belong. As they have in their own hands the Authority necessary for this, they have also ordinarily the Knowledge, the Prudence and the Means necessary to make and to execute their Arrest; things whereof the greatest Part, and commonly all these Qualities, are wanting in others. What Service then can a Man pretend to do the Publick, when he acts against publick Persons, by usurping their Authority?

*Secondly*, If what we publish is of so great Concern to Society, Why don't we tell it to the Magistrate, and let them punish the Wicked for their evil Actions?

*Thirdly*, Let us examine, Whether it be Love for the Publick which makes us speak so openly of a Man's Crimes. Certainly if we consider what we are doing, we shall often find that it arises only from a Spirit of private Revenge. If we have injured a Person, or if we have not, but he imagines we have; shall we of this private Affair go and make a publick one? Or because we fancy that we have been offended, must we pretend that all the Publick should take Part in this Offence? 'Tis thus we

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VIII.

wou'd have our selves talked of and become considerable. What is there more unjust or more extravagant than this?

Are we such publick Persons, that the Publick must have such a share therein? This is the common Pretence of Princes, and many times of private Persons, to get the Publick interested in their own particular Quarrels.

If we look further, We shall find that we make use of the specious Pretence of Love for the Publick, as a Covering for Jealousy, Self-Love and Covetousness. If on a thousand other Occasions, we do nothing at all for this Publick we make such a noise about; if we remain unprofitable to our Country, how can we think that it is the publick Good we wish and seek after on this Occasion? On a thousand Occasions we might do the Publick & Society, much more good by concealing the Persons, than by discovering them by their Faults. What Evil truly can a Person do, whom we are ignorant of & with whom consequently we have no Commerce? Whereas Example and the Contagion of a Crime are always dangerous Things. Let us then entirely banish the Memory thereof. This is the Way to punish Criminals and to do service to the Publick, to bury in Forgetfulness the Sins with the Sinners.

In

In fine, Let us imitate the Example of our blessed Saviour who sent away the adulterous Woman without judging her, when he had learnt that none of her Judges had condemned her. Thus when Sinners have received no Blot in their Reputation from the Magistrate or the Church, we must say, *Since no Man has condemned them, neither do I condemn them.*

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VIII.

It must be remembred, that what I here say must be in Subordination to the Cases taken notice of before, in which it is sometimes lawful to discover the Faults of others, and what I have here said does not contradict that, because in the preceeding Section I suppose that they were publick Errors which were publickly to be refuted, whereas here the Case is different.

### XI.

Is it not lawful, say some, to talk of Crimes that are published abroad, and which the greatest Part of the World know? When a Person has already lost his Honour, what hurt will it be to him to tell how he lost it?

I demand, first, what they mean by these Faults, which are known abroad. If they mean those which are discover'd and punished by the Magistracy, doubtless it is lawful to speak of them. They have a Right to expose them to the View of all the World, and truly they do it, that so by the

Q. †

Example

SECT.  
VIII.

Example of Chastisement, others may beware how they violate the Laws. They punish Criminals publickly, that we may know and speak of them, thereby the Peace of a Society is preserved; In fine, none of these Things which hinder Detraction in other Circumstances, do permit it in this. But if by publick Sins, they mean those which are known only to many Persons in a City, and about which the Magistrate has judged nothing, I say we ought not to speak of them, and that then we ought to remember the general Precept against Detraction. If a Man has lost his Honour, was it not by Detraction, and why then should we follow a way which has already been so hurtful to him? And perhaps he has not lost it to such a Degree, as that where-to we do expose him. If a Man says, that it is needless to hide a Fault which many Persons know already: I answer by this Dilemma; either they to whom you speak of it, do already know it, or they do not. If they do know it, then 'tis needless for you to tell what they know already. If they do not know it, then you injure the interested Person, by making known his Faults to Persons who had not been informed thereof.

XII

But, say some, Charity is not blind. What do they mean by this? if they mean

mean that Charity won't hinder a Man from seeing the Faults of others, I agree to it, but if they mean that Charity may publish Faults, which it sees; I deny it, otherwise what we call Charity wou'd be no more Charity. On the Occasion we mention, Charity changes as I may say, its Office, or rather this same Virtue makes use of quite different Forms from what it has on other Occasions. Commonly one of its Properties is to enlighten and instruct the Ignorant; here on the contrary it hides the Vices of another from those who are ignorant of'em. In a word, if it is not blind, I say in our Subject it is mute! It is not deaf, not to hear what is said, but it is dumb not to divulge it.

## XIII.

Some say, 'Tis impossible to help uttering a fine, witty Expression, a sharp Repartee against a Person when it comes into our Mind.

I reply, That in reality all this pretended impossibility is purely imaginary, and consequently unable to justify us before GOD, or any ways help the Cause of Detraction. There is no Man, but wou'd abstain therefrom, were he sure that his Tongue should be bored every Time he Detracted. Any one thro' fear of this Punishment wou'd refrain immediately: Why then don't we refrain thro' fear of far greater and more durable Pains in the other World,



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VIII.

World, if we can't be persuaded thereto thro' Love to GOD and thro' noble Principles? If it be impossible to refrain Detraction, it will be far more impossible to endure eternal pains: What wou'd you do if you were obliged to suffer ten Thousand Torments, and end your Life in Martyrdom, for GOD'S Glory? Nevertheless you ought to be always ready to be sacrificed for him when his Law and his Glory require it, and you ought rather to suffer Death, than to break the least of his Commands; and to sin against the Light of your own Conscience: This is certain from Scripture and by the Practice of many Millions of Christians. How then could you do this, if you have not Power enough over your self to keep your Tongue? Wou'd that be backward to deny Jesus Christ, after having been so active and ready to insult his Members?

But if it seem impossible to refrain Detracting at our neighbour's Cost, there appears in some Persons a still greater impossibility, not to detract from those who had before spoken ill of them. I don't here speak of those moderate Justifications which are lawful, but of those Recriminations, which properly do not justify, but only shew that he who first Detracted has at least as many Defects as those of whom he spake ill, which serve only to charge others with  
more

more Faults, without clearing our selves of those which have been cast on our Conduct. What, say some, won't it be lawful for me to detract from those who first of all, and without my giving them any Subject therefor, have blasted my Reputation! Thus passionate, hasty, revengeful Persons talk. But true Christians will reply, that we ought not to detract from a Detractor, for thereby we shall become guilty of what we blame in others. Private Revenge is as much forbidden, as pardon of Offences is required by GOD, who protests that he will not Pardon our Offences unless we forgive others the Wrongs they have done us, which Judgment we subscribe to as often as we repeat the Prayer which the Saviour of the World taught his Disciples, and which he has commanded us to repeat. Say not then, Such a Man has offended me not only once but many Times & many ways; For the written Word of GOD the Gospel, yea the eternal Word, the Son of G O D, requires us to pardon not only seven Times but Seventy Times seven, and when this Number shall be accomplished, if you return and consult this Word it will tell you again, Pardon him still seventy Times seven who is your Enemy; and again multiply this Number by so many sevens. Can any one be ignorant that our Lord by his Example and by his Precepts, commands

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ROM. 12. 19

MATTH. 18.

22.

LUKE 6. 21

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VIII.

us to bless them that curse us, far from being revenged on them? An unhappy Battle that, in which we repel Detractions by Detractions! 'Tis with this as with Duels, whether the Engagers conquer or be conquered, 'tis still fatal to them. If we fall under, the remainder of our own Honour and Credit is lost; and if we have the upper hand, that of our Neighbour is ruin'd. These two Extremities are fatal and there is no Medium. Still further, Suppose we should obtain our End, even to ruin our Neighbour's Credit, yet we shall destroy our own with his. Not to mention here the infernal Damnation, which Revenge and Detraction shall one Day receive as the Reward of their Victory, nothing exposes more to the Contempt of Men than this Sort of Revenge, which is really altogether ridiculous. Is not this a fine way indeed to justify our selves, to go and barely shew the Weaknesses of our Accusers, without producing any Thing for our own Innocence! To retort an Argument is not the way to Answer it. Is there any Thing more proper to deprive you of the Title of a wise and judicious Man, than to do what you condemn in others? Does not this shew a want of good sense? And yet this is what these revengeful Persons do. They complain that others speak evil of them, and they condemn this Vice in others, and yet

yet they make no Difficulty to commit it. To act thus is to endeavour to overthrow a Reputation which they had only shaken: 'Tis to enlarge the Breach instead of repairing it; as has been elsewhere shewn.

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VIII.

## XIV.

Some say, That there are Persons whose Malice is so great and so frequently used, that they don't deserve to be spared, or to have any regard shewn to their Reputation, and that they may thank themselves if they do lose their Honour, for it is but the Consequence of their Tricks, their Wickedness and their Vices.

I answer, We are not always to deal with Men according to their Deserts, but according to Charity. We are not to lay hold on every Occasion, unless we can do a Favour to our Neighbour. The greater his Faults are, and the more frequent his Falls, the more ought we to conceal them, that so we may, as we are obliged, raise this excellent Virtue to its highest Pitch. As the Law was not made for the Righteous, so Charity is not exercised towards the Rich and the Holy, but towards the Poor and the greatest Sinners. The more destitute a Person is of the Necessaries of this Life, the more need has he of our help and the more are we obliged to succour him. Even so, the more Persons fail in those Things necessary for the Maintenance of spiritual Life,

1 Tim. I. 9

SECT.  
VIII.

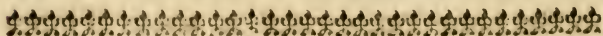
Life, the more charitable ought we to be towards them. For this End let us consider, that GOD bears with us notwithstanding our great infirmities; he does not fail to cause his Sun to rise, and his Rain to fall on the Wicked. Let us imitate his Actions and cause Grace to abound where Sin has abounded.

Matt. 5. 45.

Rom. 5. 20.

'Tis true, the Sins and Wickedness of Men are the occasional Causes and the Matter of Detraction, but in reality we must rather search for the Source thereof in Pride, and in the Malignity of Detractors, than in the Defects of the Detracted. What, because I have sinn'd, do I thereby necessarily engage others to publish these Defects! No, by no means. If I do lose my Credit, it is much rather by means of those who publish my Faults, than thro' my own Defects, which wou'd do me no Prejudice, if they did not spread them abroad. These Faults wou'd never do any hurt to my Honour, if others did not take Care to publish them and make them known.

In fine, some object, that they may detract in many Cases where the holy Scripture permits it. I own it, and have shewn what these Cases are in the foregoing Section, to which I refer the Reader.



*The Uses of this Section.*SECT.  
VIII.

**I**T is easy to shew in a Word the Weakness of the Objections made to authorise Detraction, by speaking from what Principle they come. These Principles are Ignorance and Corruption. 'Tis only the Ignorant, the half-Learned, and vicious World that will alledge them. Were Men better instructed in the Scripture they wou'd easily of themselves know, that the Examples and Passages they cite to uphold the Sin we are arguing against, do & say nothing at all that may favour it, at least when 'tis taken in general.

*Secondly*, Corruption and Inclination to the World and to Sin, make Men bring these Passages against us. They love all the Sources of Detraction. They seek it because it helps to satisfy their Self-Love and other Vices. Hence it is, that they seek in their Minds all the Reasons which may serve them, to deceive themselves, and to make them believe that there is none or but very little Evil in doing what pleases them. So ingenious a Love as this, will soon cause a Man to find the specious Reasons he is after. But as this Love is blind, it makes us take that for Solid which is not so at all. As we endeavour only to deceive our selves by Flattery, what we find is but an Illusion and an Error. So that

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that altho' we can't help acknowledging that what we love is criminal, yet we endeavour at least to excuse our selves because of Universality, Use and Custom, or because that otherwise we should pass for ridiculous, bigotted & hypocritical Persons, as has been shewn in this Section.

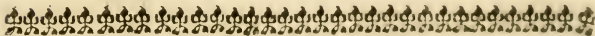
Thus whether we naturally love to detract, or too much love to please others, we say a Thousand vain Things, we make a thousand Evasions, to excuse our selves afterwards before that Witness and Judge we carry in our Consciences, and which is; properly speaking, our Conscience it self.

This shews that our Corruption, our Love to the World, and our Self-Love, are much oftener the Causes of the Objections we bring in Favour of Detraction, than want of Light and Knowledge necessary to answer them. We should certainly see the Wickedness of it, if we did not endeavour to hide it from our selves.

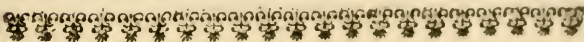
However it be, I have done my utmost to instruct you in what you might be ignorant of, and on the other Hand, I have shewn how criminal is this too great Complaisance we have for Men and that extraordinary Fondness we have for Esteem, and thereby I have answered Objections and endeavoured to root out the Cause of 'em, and all for your Profit. As the Excuse drawn from the numberless Multitude of  
Examples

Examples of Detractors, is the most common, we shall finish by praying you to consider, That the generality hereof should be so far from being a Motive to follow the Multitude, that on the contrary it ought to be a Motive not to do thus, since this Universality furnishes us with so many the more Examples, that what follows Detraction is Sin and Vice ; which is also further confirmed by the Word of GOD.

In fine, When thro' an evil Fear of passing in the World for Hypocrites and Persons of an ill-contrived Spirit, we are upon the Point of Detraacting and Sinning against the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST. Let us then think of those terrible Words of the Gospel, *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of* Mark 8.38. *him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.*



R SECTION





*Motives to avoid this Sin.*

**I**N the foregoing Section we have forced Detractors from their very last Intrenchments, by shewing the Weakness of those Reasons which they commonly make use of as a Covert, and a Bulwark against those Texts of Scripture which press them ; and the Reproofs which are made them of their Fault ; and even the Remorses of their Consciences. Nevertheless we doubt still that we have not prevailed on Men to forsake this Vice ; not that we doubt of the Validity of our Arguments and Answers, but because we are convinced of the ordinary Resistances of Men against the clearest and strongest Things, when once Inclination, Habit, Passion have taken Possession of the Heart. To fortify what has been already said, it will therefore be necessary to propose new Motives to engage Men to amendment.

*1<sup>st</sup> MOTIVE.*

Most of those Things which engage Men in Detraction, and are the Sources thereof, should keep them from it. Vanity and vain Glory are often the Causes of Detraction, yet these ought to make us shun it,

it, since hereby we satirize the evil Reputation of furious and indiscreet Persons, which may sufficiently mortify Self-Love and Vanity. Sometimes Interest makes a Man detract, and yet this Interest should keep him from it, since Detraction draws on us the Hatred and Persecution of those we spake ill of; which is very opposite to our own Interest.


All that has been said to prove Detraction a Sin, and all the Effects justly attributed thereto, are so many powerful Reasons to keep us from it. A Dread of disobeying GOD who will chastise Detraction is a most urgent Motive against it. All the other Effects of this Sin, and a thousand Considerations already mentioned, must necessarily and of choice Estrange us from it.

2d MOTIVE.

Another great Consideration and which should oblige Men to quit this Sin is, That there is no Man but what sins and fails in his Duty. This is a Truth so certain, that a Part of Prayer and the Worship we render to GOD, consists in confessing our Sins. 'Tis a great mark that no Man is perfect, that all the World find imperfections in others. They who detract see Faults in those they speak ill of, and those in their turn find Faults in their Accusers. We can't say that either of 'em are mistaken

1 John 1.8.

SECT. IX. and judge wrong. For tho' we are blind  
 in our own Conduct, yet we can see clear  
 enough in our Neighbour's. When all  
 Men agree in the same Principles, there the  
 Truth must needs be, for no Error is so  
 general and universal as to spread over all  
 the World. And since the whole Universe  
 agree in finding Evil one in another, they  
 must certainly be all vicious. I confess  
 that every one thinks himself better and  
 more perfect than he really is, we don't  
 well know our own Defects or at least we  
 don't enough think of 'em. Witness *Da-*  
 2Sam. 12, 7 *vid*, who well judged that the Man, *Nathan*  
 spake of, who had taken away the poor  
 Man's Lamb, was a Robber; and he did  
 not at that Moment reflect that he himself  
 had done a much greater Injustice to *Uriah*.  
 We resemble those who are hunch-backt,  
 who don't see the Load they carry about  
 with 'em, continually even to the Grave,  
 which they who walk behind 'em can ea-  
 sily see. All the Ways of a Man are right  
 in his own Eyes, says the wise Men on this  
 Occasion. But, besides that others do not  
 judge after this Manner, Is it not easy for  
 those who think their Ways so pure, to  
 discover by Examination, that they are no-  
 thing near such as they imagined themselves  
 to be? Let every Botch in a Man's Life  
 be produced and felt of, and he will soon  
 perceive that he is neither upright nor  
 perfect.

perfect. And altho' a Man had but this SECT. IX  
 Fault of being a Detractor, at least this is   
 one. And altho' he should not think  
 himself such, yet don't we all know that  
 we have secret Faults, which we are to ask  
 Forgiveness of from GOD, and to say with  
*David, Lord, Cleanse thou me from secret* Psal. 19.  
*Faults.*

Since then every one is undoubtedly a  
 Sinner, and since all Men have their Fail-  
 ings, with what Reason or Justice can we  
 deride those of others? Can we do it, with-  
 out condemning our selves by accusing our  
 selves in the Person of others? 'Tis never-  
 theless as common as it is ridiculous, to see  
 those who would pass for fine Raillers, be-  
 gin to rail at themselves and afterwards at-  
 tack others. Can we see thro' it, that Per-  
 sons who have been discovering their own  
 Failings, should not blush to go to expose  
 those of others? How can a vicious Man  
 deride Vice? Such Men seem to Sin not  
 only against Scripture, but against Reason,  
 not only by their Raillery, but by their  
 manner of spreading it abroad.

In general, As all Detractors are Sinners,  
 and perhaps culpable of those very Faults  
 they blame in others, are they not afraid  
 that we shall apply to them, what the A-  
 postle said of the Heathen, *Wherefore, O*  
*Man, whoever thou art, that judgest a-*  
*nother, thou art inexcusable; for where-* Rom 2.1.

SECT. IX *in thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self, for thou thy self dost the same things?*

If they are not subject to the same Vices, they are to others. So Jesus Christ may say to them, *Let him among you who is*  
 John 8. 7. *without Sin, cast the first Stone*; and in Confusion they will be obliged to go away without saying any Thing, thereby tacitly owning their own Sins, and the Sting they feel for having accused their Neighbour. May we not say to them, as the converted Thief to his Companion, *Fearst not thou*  
 Luk 32. 40 *God, seeing we are in the same Condemnation?* Under the Law, GOD strongly recommended to the *Israelites*, Pity for Strangers and the Afflicted, because they themselves had been Strangers in *Ægypt*, and there suffer'd many Evils; so because we are all subject to the same moral Evil, namely Sin, we should be charitable one towards another.  
 Exod. 13. 9.

Suppose the Detractor should have fewer Faults than the Detracted, Does that give him any Plea to detract? On the contrary, To whom is he indebted that he is not so great a Sinner? 'Tis to the Grace of GOD. Is this then any Reason for his Pride? No indeed: On the contrary, 'tis a Reason for him to bless the Lord for his Gifts, and to endeavour to make use of his Goodness for good Words, and holy Actions. 'Tis more-

over a Motive not to detract, because the more we have received, the more will be required of us, and the more ready ought we to be to that which is good; that so we may bring forth the Fruits which GOD justly expects from his Grace in us. In fine, the more ought we to consider, that we stand only by Grace, and that if the Bestower thereof should take it away, we should in a moment fall into the greatest Excesses. Thus all these Considerations should oblige us continually, when we hear these Sins spoken of in others, to which we are not subject, to thank God on the one Hand that we are not given up to them, and on the other, to be extremely watchful, lest we fall into Detraction. 'Tis a strange Extravagancy of Men, that having so many Subjects here below to be humble, they should not be so, altho' they know that the Saints who are with God & have so many Subjects for glorying in their Advantages, do not glory in them.

SECT. IX.  
Luk. 14.  
Rev. 4. 10.

When I make use, either of the Sins to which Detractors are subject, with the rest of the World, or of the Greatness of the Sin it self, which they commit by detracting, to shew the Sin they commit, in evil speaking, I do not thereby extenuate the real Faults of those who are Detracted. Here we may say without Detraction, since we do not interest any one in particular herein, what

SECT. IX we say often speaking ill of two Persons at the same time, they are both in the wrong, these by sinning, those by divulging the Sin. Supposing he who is the Object of Detraction and he who spreads it abroad, are otherways equally Sinners, yet still it is certain that this last is more criminal than the other, because even in this Detraction he has sinned more than the other. Is it not then a great Piece of insolence, and a terrible Rashness to backbite Persons who are really better than ones self? Is it not an Aggravation, when in all Regards they who are detracted are better than the Detractor?

### 3. MOTIVE.

Another powerful Motive to shun Detraction is, That all Men are Brethren, and consequently are obliged to love each other in this relation. This Consequence is so just, natural and true, That I don't think any one will question it. The Principle from whence it is taken, is not less certain, That one and the same, and the first Man was the Father of all others. We are then all Branches from the same Stock, Streams from the same Fountain. Hence that saying of St. Paul; *GOD hath formed all Men of one Blood.* Hence the Prophet *Esaias* exhorted the *Jews* to Charity, because they who had need of Charity were

Acts 17.  
14. 5. 8.

of the same Flesh with those whose Duty it was to be charitable. Let me add, that all were formed after the Image of GOD, and are thereby Copies of the same original. Besides, Grace makes Men partakers of the same Benefits, and like Brethren who share among themselves the Goods which their Father leaves them. The same Blood has made them all, and the same Blood has redeemed them all. But now if we ought to love all Men as our Brethren, how can we treat them as Enemies by dishonouring them?

4th MOTIVE.

The Precept against Detraction is very easily practised. I don't treat here of that Act of Charity which Jesus Christ prescribed to the young Man, who enquired of him, *what he must do to inherit eternal Life*, and whom he ordered to *sell his whole Estate and distribute it among the Poor*. Neither do I here treat of laying down our temporal Life to procure eternal Life for our Brethren, according to the Example of our blessed Saviour, and the Command of St. *John*. All the Question is, to hold our Tongue; which we may easily do, and which will bring us no harm. You have perhaps often said to your self, "Had I been in *Adam's* Place, I would not have transgressed the Commandment of GOD as he did, since Obedience to it was

10

SECT. IX

1 Epist. 3:  
Chapter.



SECT. IX so easy. I pray, What will Obedience cost you more now? Is it harder to refrain speaking, than eating a Fruit? Moreover, 'Tis a Law which should appear entirely agreeable to us: For if it shelters others from our Flings and Detractions, will it not also shelter us from those of others? Has not GOD forbid others to detract, as well as us? And doubtless some are thereby kept from saying to our Damage all that they might.

5th *MO TIVE.*

Nothing will preserve our Reputation more than an abstinence from this Vice. As is thus proved: Without repeating what was said in the 6th Section, I say, that by our not Detracting from others, we give them no Occasion to revenge themselves on us by other Detractions on their Part, and to measure to us as we have meted to them. *He that diggeth a Ditch, shall fall thereinto, and he that rolleth a Stone, it will return upon him, says Solomon.* But if a Man do not dig a Ditch to cause his Neighbour to fall therein, and wound him, nor roll the Stone of Detraction against him, he is in no Danger of being wounded himself by falling into the Ditch he had not dug for his Neighbour, or by the Fall of the Stone he had rolled against him.

Prov: E: 27,

2. There is no Person's Faults so much SECT. IX  
 remarked as those who take a Pleasure in  
 finding them in others; whereas we don't so  
 much examine the Life of those who do  
 not thus scan the Conduct of other People;  
 for it is very common to enter into an  
 Examination of the Life of these Sorts of  
 Persons, who speak of the Lives of others  
 with as much Boldness and Confidence, as  
 if they themselves had obtained to perfect  
 Holiness.

3. I have ever heard those commended  
 who are not subject to Detraction, and  
 truly they always have been esteemed, and  
 ever will be, while there remains any Re-  
 spect and Love for Virtue.

4. When we have once began to detract  
 from every Body, we lose our Credit and  
 all manner of Confidence among others.  
 If at any Time we praise others, Men think  
 we jeer and droll, and don't speak seriously,  
 and that the good we say of 'em is only  
 Satyr. Thus Men don't believe us. Thus  
 it is with Liars: Men don't believe 'em  
 tho' they they talk ever so true.

Moreover our Reputation ought to be  
 precious to us, not only for reasons already  
 mentioned, and not only because it is pro-  
 fitable to us, but also because it may be so  
 with regard to our Neighbour. It causes  
 our Advice for the good of particular Per-  
 sons or of the Publick to be better received

*Sacr.* IX and our Exhortations to others to lead a good Life, to be the better followed. Thus our Concern for GOD's Glory and our Neighbour's Salvation, as well as our own Profit, ought to urge us to preſerve our Honour, by refraining from Detraction.

*6th M O T I V E.*

Nothing will more effectually gain us not only the Eſteem, but alſo the Good-Will of all the World, than to refrain from Detraction. As this raiſes us up Enemies, ſo refraining from Detraction procures us Friends. We naturally love thoſe who will bear with our Failings & not diſcover them. This therefore procures us the Friendſhip of others, which muſt needs be advantageous to us.

'Tis true, there are Perſons with whom we ought not to be too ſtraitly linked, but there are none whom we ought to make our Enemies without neceſſity, and by our evil Carriage. Nothing hinders but that we may accept even the Services of a wicked Man, provided that he do no Man hurt, to do us a pleaſure. And ſince there are none but what may help or hurt us, let us endeavour to give them only grounds to love us.

Here it muſt be added, that oftentimes Detraction does not bring any Profit and never any true Pleaſure. They of whom we ſpeak ill, may perhaps have found ſome  
Pleaſure

Pleasure or Profit in the Evil they have done, but on a thousand Occasions, what good arises from being a Detractor! If we take any Pleasure therein, it is troubled by a Fear that he whom we speak ill of, will hear of it and be revenged on us. SECT. IX

As to the Profit of Detraction, we commonly lose more by it than we gain. Or if we do gain any Thing by it, we violate that Precept of the Apostle, which forbids a Man to make his own Profit by the Loss of another. And this Precept is a new Motive to refrain from Detraction. 1 Theſ. 4. 6.

*7th* M O T I V E.

When once we have began to censure every one, as Detractors ordinarily do, if it happen (as is common) that we become faulty in any Thing, the World won't pardon us in the least Matter. This Motive is, I own, purely humane, but perhaps on this Account it will be more proper to make an Impression on many Persons; we become the Talk and Ridicule of all the World, and even of those who have not much Propensity to detract. All the World rejoice when they can censure those who have censured all the World. In a Word, No one will shew us any Favour. What, say they, It becomes this Man indeed to speak ill of every Body, he that has the very greatest of Faults himself! O strange, That ever the Man who detracts from all the

SECT. IX the World, should be guilty of such Blunders!

8th MOTIVE.

The Dignity of our Tongue is a Motive which should hinder us from defiling it by Detraction. *David* calls it his Glory. If it be our Glory, why should we dishonour it by making use of it to the dishonour of our Neighbour?

Psal. 57. 8

Let us consider, That the eternal Word was made Flesh, to teach and redeem Men. And should not this Benefit be a great Motive to Men not to profane their Speech, by detracting from those for whom he took Flesh on himself, and not to employ it in disobeying the Commands which he came to give us against Detraction?

All the World owns, That our Nature has received a great Increase of Glory since the Son of GOD is united to it. And since the eternal Word has spake as other Men, their Speech has received a considerable Augmentation of Glory and Dignity, a Dignity which should engage them not to defile a thing which GOD has made use of.

It was doubtless because we were formed after the Image of GOD, that *St. Peter* commands us to *be holy, as he is holy*; and it was because GOD the Son was formed in our resemblance, and is united to our Nature, that *St. Paul* commands us to be imitators of Jesus Christ. Christ being

1 Thes. I.  
II.

ing made like to us, it is needful that we become like to him. In a word, since he has done us the Honour to make himself in some sort equal with us, by conversing with us, and as equal with himself: 'Tis our Duty, our Interest and our Glory not to abuse his Favours by Detractions.

9th MOTIVE.

We may now endeavour to find in the Persons and Faults of our Neighbours, Reasons to refrain Detraction.

All Sinners in general are called Fools, in the divinely inspired Writings, because it is truly a very great Folly to hazard by our Sins the inestimable good Things of Heaven, for the short Pleasures of this Life.

Therefore *Moses* reproaching the *Israelites* for their Sins and their Ingratitude, says to them, *O Foolish People and unwise, do*

*you thus requite the Lord!* And this being laid down, Can we detract from Fools, without being a Fool one's self!

Sinners are also compared to Beasts. *St. Peter* says of those who return to the Vices they had forsaken, That they are like the *Sow*

*that was washed, which returns to her wallowing in the Mire; and like the Dog that returns to his vomit.* And must not he be almost a Brute, whose Mind and Tongue are busied about a Subject as mean and brutish as Sin. Sinners are also in sacred Writ represented to us as blind Persons

Deut. 32. 6.

See also  
Psal. 107.

17.

1 Pet. 2. 2,  
& 23.

**SECT. IX** sons, whose Eyes the God of this World hath blinded. Now is there not in the divine Law an express and particular Command against making the Blind to fall, because his Misery ought to move our Compassion and not our Malice? And this should be a Motive to us, not to hurt these Persons blind in their Minds, whose Condition should much more excite our Pity than that of Persons naturally blind, who are deprived only of the sight of their bodily Eyes: because in reality the Misery of the first is vastly greater than that of the last. Bodily Blindness deprives us only of some sensual Pleasures, and that no longer than the short space of this Life. But Blindness of Mind, deprives Men of the sight of GOD himself, and of the Enjoyment of the only Good. The one deprives Men of some Pleasure, but brings no positive Evils; whereas the other casts Sinners into the dreadful Abyss of Miseries & Pains. Their own Sins then do punish them enough, without our endeavouring to contribute here below to their Pains. Is it not horrible Barbarity to afflict those who deserve all our Help and Compassion.

*10th* **M O T I V E,**

Another Motive may be taken from the Nature of the Evil caused by Detraction, namely the Loss of the Reputation of those who are detraeted, a Reputation which beside  
that

that it is very precious, is also very easily SECT. IX  
 lost and ruined. 'Tis like the Eye, the  
 finest, but withal the most tender and sen-  
 sible Part of the Body. And besides, it is  
 also a very great Difficulty, yea many Times  
 an Impossibility to repair this Evil, when  
 we cause it, and these are certainly very  
 strong Reasons to hinder us from detract-  
 ing.

*11th* MOTIVE.

If we enter a little into particulars, we shall see in many of those we speak ill of, something that might make us excuse their Imperfections and Sins, and consequently a Motive against Detraction. If we thoroughly examine the matter, we shall know, That certain Prejudices imprinted on them from their Infancy, a bad Education or want of Education, weakness of Mind, Inadvertence, extraordinary violence of a Temptation, are the Causes of their Sins, Causes which should lead us surely to mourn over them with more Reason than to detract from and blame them.

With regard to their Persons also, if they are very vicious, they don't deserve to be entirely spoken of, unless it be to Persons who may reduce them to their Duty by the Knowledge of their Vices. If they have as many Vertues as Faults, their good Qualities should make us excuse and pardon their bad ones, and with still greater Reason

S son



SECT. IX son, if their Perfections do surpass their Imperfections and Defects. Above all, if these Defects are small, we can't without Injustice make them ridiculous before Men, for so small things, and cause them to lose the Fruit of their many good Actions, by relating one or two bad Actions they have committed. In fine, We ought to consider even those who seem to us the most vicious, may be converted and become the Children of GOD ; and that perhaps He has already prepared them to be Vessels of his Mercy, Patterns of Virtue, Objects of his Favour, and Possessors of his Glory : Which shews that it would be a great Sin to be so rigorous to those to whom GOD will be so favourable. How dare we discover those Sins which Jesus Christ has covered with the Robes of his Righteousness? We may indeed always speak Evil of Sin. It is always Evil and never changes it's Nature. It is not so with Sinners whom Grace may change and convert. As we ought not to love Vice because we love the Person in whom it is, so we ought not to hate the Vicious because we hate their Vices. We may in our Hearts separate the Sick Person and the Disease. We may hate the Disease without hating the sick Man also.

12th *MOTIVE.*

If we do not reveal the Faults of our Neighbours,

Neighbours, this Abstinence will serve greatly for our Absolution before the dread Tribunal of GOD. This St. Peter assures us of, by saying, that *Love covers a multitude of Sins*. Yes indeed, This Love whereby we cast a Vail of silence over the Sins of our Brethren, on Earth, covers our's before GOD, who will pardon them to us as we have pardoned others : whereas *he who has shew'd no Mercy, shall have Judgment without Mercy*. Who would refuse to give something to a poor Man, especially if what he gave did not incommode himself? Who then would refuse silence which costs nothing; to Persons to whom thereby we many times do greater Pleasure, than if we gave them vast Sums of Money?

Let us consider, that we shall be justified or condemned by our Words, and that by them we shall also be judged as well as by our Actions : A Man that knows that he shall be judged according to what he shall say before his Judge, thinks as long as he can how he shall speak so as to utter nothing that may be laid hold of against him. How wise, wary and judicious ought Christians then to be in their Words, which GOD hears and knows? and especially since they know not the Time of their particular, any more than that of the general Judgment; and above all, let them think on

SECT. IX

1 Pet. 4.8.

Jam. 2.13.

Mat. 12.37

SECT. IX the Certainty and Horror of those Pains  
 which they will suffer throughout Eternity,  
 if when they have been weighed in the Bal-  
 lance of GOD's Justice, they are found

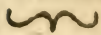
Dan. 5. 27. light, like *Belsazzar*. It was by such  
 a Motive as this, even by the Consideration  
 of the Destruction and End of the World,

2 Pet. 3. 11. which should precede the universal Judg-  
 ment, that St. *Peter* so justly said, *Since  
 then all these Things shall be dissolved,  
 what manner of Persons ought ye to be  
 in all holy Conversation and Godliness!*

If we should not live till that Time, which  
 shall put an End to Time, and wherein the  
 Universe shall be consumed, without con-  
 suming Men, who shall then be only chan-  
 ged: Our Bodies will be dissolved by Death,  
 and 'tis this Death which should hinder us  
 from detracting. What Service will it then  
 be to us, that we have passed for agreeable  
 Raillers, and have satisfied our Self-love or  
 our Hatred, if we must after that begin an  
 everlasting Repentance for our having so  
 done?

### 13th MOTIVE.

He who by his Respect and Gratitude  
 to GOD, and thro' Love to his Neighbour  
 can abstain from Detraction, may also abstain  
 from offending GOD by other Discourses of  
 his. If he can keep his Tongue from detracting  
 he may also hinder it from uttering any other  
 Words which are contrary to GOD's Or-  
 ders

ders, as filthy Words, rash Oaths, &c. SECT. IX  
 Now if he can abstain from all this, and   
*offend not in Words*, he is a *perfect Man*,  
 says St. James, *and can govern the whole*  
*Body*. Thus to refrain Detracting, is a short Jam. 3. 2f  
 way to Sanctification, and thereby to Sal-  
 vation.

You will perhaps say, That this wou'd  
 be to attempt an Impossibility, which a  
 wise Man will not, since this same Apo-  
 stle assures us, that *no Man can tame the*  
*Tongue*, inasmuch as it is an Evil that can-  
 not be curbed.

I answer, If it be impossible, why does  
 GOD command it then in so many Places,  
 and why does he threaten those with Hell,  
 who do not repress their Tongue? Verily,  
 He is too just, too good and too wise to  
 command Men impossibilities. Suppose  
 nevertheless that this Impossibility is lodged  
 in the Corruption of Man, he may & ought  
 to demand of GOD that Grace & Wisdom  
 which he bestows liberally on all those who  
 ask it of him with Faith. Every thing  
 is then possible to a Man when he is filled  
 with the Gifts of GOD, to whom all things  
 are possible. 2 Cor. 12.  
10.

But moreover, I am perswaded, That  
 when the Apostle says, *No Man can bri-  
 dle the Tongue*, it must be understood of  
 the Tongue of another Man which is not  
 in our Power; and not of our own Tongue

SECT. IX which we can dispose of. To make use of St. *James's* Expressions, If a Man is able to govern and tame Horses, by putting Bits into their Mouth ; and if all manner of Beasts and Fowls and creeping Things have been tamed and are tamed by Man ; if being unable to make the Sea solid, he has invented the use of Ships to go beyond Sea, and has found out the Secret to govern great Vessels with a little Helm ; and if what he can't do by Force he can by Cunning ; why if he uses as strong Endeavours to subdue his Tongue, may he not also succeed as well in this as in other Things which are without him ? I see no Reason why he mayn't. So that by this impossibility of subduing the Tongue must be understood, that of other Men, which we can't keep in subjection, because it is not at our Disposal, and can't come under our Power as may the other Things just mentioned.


14th MOTIVE.

In fine, If famous and pious Examples may serve as Motives to imitate those who have furnished them, we have Examples of Persons illustrious for their Piety, who did not detract, whose Example should estrange this Sin to us.

In Truth, As Non-Detraction, ( if you'll allow the Term ) is not so much a Virtue as an Abstinence from a Vice, or at fur-

theft

## D E T R A C T I O N.

theft a negative Virtue, which consists not SECT. IX  
 so much in speaking and doing, as in being   
 silent, and in suppressing the Motion of  
 the Tongue, we cannot produce a great  
 number of Examples of Persons who are  
 in Scripture recommended to us, for not  
 detracting.

Nevertheless 'tis from the silence of the  
 Scripture on this matter, that we draw a  
 Proof to shew, that a vast Number of holy  
 Persons have been exempt from Detraction.  
 For since the Scripture sets forth so many  
 good Persons who have been injured and  
 despised, without revenging these Insults  
 in the most moderate way possible, even by  
 Detractions against their particular Enc-  
 mies; this is a Mark that they were not sub-  
 ject to this Vice. 2. By shewing us that  
 they were free from those Passions which  
 produce Detraction, it sufficiently shews that  
 they were free from the Vice it self. 3 By  
 shewing that they had the quite opposite  
 Virtues, as Patience and Meekness, like  
 that of *Moses*; it appears also that they were  
 not given to this Vice. 4. Add to this,  
 that it tells us in particular, as has been  
 already remarked, That *Joseph*, being a  
 just Man, would have put away *Mary* se-  
 cretly, for fear of defaming her.

St. *Luke* gives us a most certain Proof  
 that the first Christians were not Detractors,  
 when he says, That *the Multitude of those* Acts 4. 32.

**SECT. IX** *that believed, were of one Heart and of one Soul.* How could this faithful Historian say this, if they had been given to Detraction, which breaks the Bands of Concord among the nearest Persons? The Love they had for each other was so great, that the Heathen cou'd not imagine, how they could love one another so tenderly, without making use of Love-Potions, as we learn from ecclesiastical Historians. They were then very far from hurting each other reciprocally, which is the Character of Detraction, which is as common in our Days, as it was rare in theirs. Who were in the right, they or we, who were in the wrong we or they? let the Scripture be the Judge, and put an End to our Difference. But even to appeal to that, is to give up the Cause to them. Happy Times of that new Church! An Image of Heaven upon Earth, and of that heavenly *Jerusalem* in the Church on the earthly *Jerusalem*! Happy Times, when they who were Members of the Church, liv'd already as Citizens of Heaven; when their Manners were as conformable to the Laws of Jesus Christ, as they themselves were near the Days of his Flesh! And what, because we are more distant, must we be more criminal! Have we not all the same Precepts in our hands? Is not Christ himself still held forth and crucified before us, in the Account the Evangelists give of his Life & Death. The

The Example even of many of the *Pagans*, who have condemned Detraction, should furnish us with another Motive to avoid it. What a Shame is this to us, that Persons who had no other Help than the Light of Nature, should appear to have more noble and right Sentiments than we, who have besides our natural Light, a Revelation so pure and so extensive ! Nevertheless, to hear some among them, and the greatest part of Christians, one wou'd be ready to say, that we were Pagans, they were Christians. How unhappy for these, that the other shall rise up in Judgment against them and condemn them !

Mat. 12. 42

I acknowledge. That the generality of the Pagan World was extreamly addicted to Detraction, and that they made a God thereof under the Name of *Momus* \* ; but is not this still a pressing Motive not to detract ? Can we faultlessly and without blushing, imitate those who according to *St. Paul*, were in *Darkness*, without *GO D*, and without hope in the *World* !

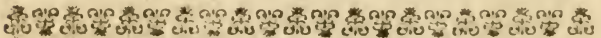
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\* The *Pagans* represented him in perpetual Idleness, and said, That being chosen an Arbitrator and Judge between *Jupiter*, *Minerva*, and *Vulcan*, He blam'd them all Three.

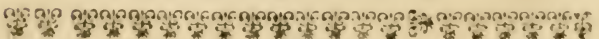


THE Motives mentioned may be of Use to all Persons: Those who love Reputation, Those who need the Help of another, Those who wou'd gain the Good-Will of Men, Those who wou'd taste the good Things of Heaven, may find in what has been said, Motives to refrain Detraction. And so may those who love to undertake only easy Things, and whose success is infallible, it being equally easy and possible to refrain Backbiting our Neighbour. Here likewise may be found all that is profitable, agreeable and delightful to Men.

Moreover, These Motives, which are so proper to take Effect upon the Heart; and the Knowledge of these Motives, which is so capable of enlightning the Mind, will render those inexcusable who will not change their Conduct. Do not then any longer detract from others and tell them when Occasion shall present. *Sirs, ye are*  
 Acts 7.26. *Brethren; Why do ye wrong one to another?*



## SECTION

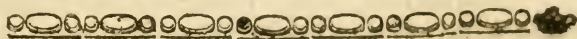


## SECTION X.

SECT. X.

*Containing many Duties and Counsels  
concerning Detraction.*

**I**T will be to little purpose to know the Causes, the Nature, the Effects, the Malignity of an Evil, in order to cure it, if we do not use the Remedies needful to drive away the Evil. So it will be of very little Profit to be informed of the Quality, the Nature, the Sources, and the Degrees of Detraction, in order to cure this Corruption, if we should not give those who are filled with this mortal Venom, the Remedies necessary to drive it away. In this last Section therefore we shall give these wholesome Medicines under the Name of Duties and Counsels, 1. To those who intend to avoid the Sin of Detraction. 2. To those who are fallen thereinto. 3. To those who hear Detraction. 4. To those who are spoken against.



## ARTICLE I.

*Duties and Counsels to those who desire  
to avoid Detraction.*

**N**OT to repeat here the various Counsels we have given in the Course of this

**SECT. X.** this Treatise, especially in the Uses of each Section, such as is that of having our Eyes fixt rather on the good Qualities of a Man, than upon his bad Qualities, &c. I begin with saying that we ought to lay aside all those Passions and Defects which are the Causes and Sources of Detraction. With this Precaution you cannot fail of Success in extirpating it. By cutting the Root of a Tree, the Tree must needs fall of it self. By taking away the Cause, we take away the Effect at the same Time : This is evident.

We must often and strongly represent to our selves, how Detraction is a very great Sin, its fatal Effects and the powerful Motives which should turn us therefrom. Certain I am, we should therein find Reasons so strong against Detraction, that we should not be in a suspence about doing for others, what we wou'd that they should do for us.

After this let us accustom our selves, to give our utmost Application to the work of our Salvation, and to make use of all the Time which so important a Thing demands ; so important that it is properly the only Thing important for us. If we do this, we shall have neither Time nor Will for Detraction : We shall no more find Time theretor, seeing the Instruction we owe to our selves, the Care we are obliged to take

not

not to fall into numberless Sins *which so* SECT. X.  
*easily beset us*; and the Time it self which Heb. 12. 1.  
 demands the Practice of the Virtues com-  
 manded us, will leave us no leisure to de-  
 tract from others. This is so true, that the  
 Time for Prayer alone may take up all our  
 Life Time, according to that Exhortation  
 of the Apostle of the Gentiles, *Pray* I Thes. 5.  
*without Ceasing*. Wou'd we employ that  
 Time which we spend in prying into and  
 finding out the Defects of others, in cor-  
 recting our own and examining our selves,  
 we should acknowledge, that this Duty  
 requires so much Time that there would  
 be none left for censuring the Actions of  
 other Men.

Some complain, that they have no lei-  
 sure to read GOD's Word in private, and  
 to discharge the other Duties of Piety; but  
 this Complaint wou'd cease if we did em-  
 ploy for this End, the Time which we spend  
 in Words and Visits of Detraction. When  
 we are thus distracted and involved in the  
 Affairs of others, we have no Time for to  
 think of our own. Above all, instead of  
 discoursing to the Disadvantage of our  
 Neighbours, we might discourse so as to be  
 advantageous to our selves, even by blessing  
 and praising GOD with our Mouth. And  
 truly, to keep us from detracting, there is  
 no need of cutting out our Tongue, as some  
 Christians have done, for fear lest the Strength  
 of

SECT. X. of the Temptations they endured for the  
 ~~~~~ Name of Jesus Christ, should oblige them  
 to deny him with their Mouth. Here the
 Temptation is not so strong; and moreover
 inasmuch as we may make our Tongue
 serve to glorify G O D, we should do our
 selves a great Injury to deprive our selves
 of this Help. And further we may remark,
 that our Lord well says; that if our Eye,
 our right Hand, our Foot offends us; it is
 our Duty to pluck it out, to cut it off;
 but he says no such thing of the Tongue;
 because that perhaps the other Members
 do not contribute so much to the Glory
 of our Father and Creator, as we may bless
 him with this.

Matth. 5.
29, 30.

Moreover, If we apply our selves to the
 Things of the Kingdom of Heaven as we
 ought, we shall have no Will for Detrac-
 tion, because that in this Study we shall
 find a thousand Instructions and Motives
 which may turn us therefrom.

As the Itch of Talking is not only one
 of the Sources of Detraction, but inasmuch
 as Detraction it self is many Times only a
 Babbling, the Means of abstaining therefrom
 will be to talk little. The Apostle also
 commands us to be slow to speak. *Job*
 Rom. 12. made a Covenant with his Eyes, that he
 Job 31. 1. might not Sin by their means, so we should
 make a Covenant with our Tongue, that
 we offend not G O D by that. 'Twas for
 this

this that the Psalmist said, He would keep his Mouth with a Bridle. This Care is so necessary even for our temporal Benefit, that the Heathen owned this Advantage of silence. *Cato* † said, that the Prime and principal Virtue was to rule the Tongue, And that he is next to GOD, *who knows how to be rationally silent.* Another * excellently said, *that he who knows not how to be silent, knows not how to speak.* Indeed we must have some Reasons to talk, but there is no need of any for our silence.

SECT. X.
Psal. 39.1.

The Time we allow for silence; or if you please, the Time which silence allows us, may be very profitable to us by reflecting on the weighty Reasons we have to refrain Detraction. Thus I wou'd advise those who are tempted to detract, only to think on that Precept of the Apostle *Paul, Speak Evil of no Man.* As we know very well, that this Command was given by Inspiration of a GOD who will severely punish them who break his Laws; This tho't alone may make us hate and abhor Detraction.

And altho' we ought to speak with reserve, yet we may speak with an open and free Air, which carries with it neither Austerity nor Pedantry.

† Virtutem primam esse puta compescere Linguam ; *Cato.*

* Proximus ille Deo, qui scit ratione tacere.

SECT. X. My farther advise is, That we make it
 a Duty to weep over Sinners, to be grieved
 for the Faults they commit, and not to
 make them the Subject of our Pastime and
 Diversion, as is but too common. If we
 consider the Zeal we ought to have for
 GOD's Glory, and the Love we owe our
 Neighbours, there is nothing more capable
 of raising our Compassion towards them,
 and of moving our Bowels with Grief,
 than to see how they are plunging
 themselves into eternal Miseries by their
 sinful ways. 'Twas on this Account that
 the Royal Prophet said in *Psal. 119. 53.*
That Floods of Tears ran down his Eyes,
when he saw that Men kept not God's
Law. Hence it was that *Lot's* righteous
 Soul was afflicted, when he considered the
 Crimes of *Sodom.* Alas! Were we of the
 same Sentiments, we should not take so
 much pleasure and delight in detracting our
 selves, or in hearing others detract. Ground
 for rejoicing is, when we see Persons observe
 GOD's Commandments, in the observation
 whereof true Wisdom consists. Hence
 that of *Solomon,* *My Son if thine Heart*
be wise, my Heart shall rejoice, even
mine.

Pro 23.15.

We should avoid having a strict Com-
 merce with Detractors, inasmuch as bad
 Company is very apt to corrupt these good
 Sentiments in us. We must keep them

at a Distance from us or our selves at a SECT. X.
 Distance from them. Thus did *David* as
 he protests in *Psal.* 101. This also is an
 apostolical Precept as has been observed in
 Section 4

I don't mean but that we may frequent
 their Company if we believe that by con-
 versing with them we may convert them
 from this Sin. So that as long as we hope
 to succeed herein, we ought to speak to
 them and warn them thereof, but we must
 forsake them when we can expect nothing
 from them. Even as Physicians do, who
 visit a sick Man while there is any likeli-
 hood of his Recovery, but leave him when
 they judge that humane Remedies will be
 ineffectual on him, and we must imitate those
 who go to see Persons ill of the Plague,
 who guard themselves with Preservatives
 against the contagious Evil, lest while they
 try to help others, they destroy themselves
 with them.

Moreover, If we ought on a thousand
 Occasions to avoid the Company of De-
 tractors, the Society of wise and pious Per-
 sons may be a great help to us, to hinder
 us from Detracting, according to that Maxim
 of the wise Man, *He that walketh with* PRO. 13 20
the wise shall be wise.

Another Counsel may be this, To think
 that GOD beholds all things and will call
 us to a very strict Account. Did we busy

T

our

SECT. X. our selves on this. Tho't, How efficacious
 wou'd it be to make us hate Detraction!
 Wou'd we do before the King of Kings
 what he has expressly forbidden! When
 the most disobedient in the World will be
 careful at least to obey an earthly King's
 Orders, while in his Presence. We don't
 urge this Article because the Punishment
 which GOD will inflict on Detractors, and
 which we have alledged as a Motive to
 abstain from Detraction, supposes the
 Knowledge he has of all our Words.

We must shew that we think on GOD
 by praying to him for Grace not to fall
 into this Sin, since our Tongue is in his
 Power. And also, that so we may always
 follow Truth with Charity. Let us say
 to him, *Set a Watch, O Lord, before my
 Mouth, keep the door of my Lips: That
 so the Words of our Mouths and the Me-
 ditation of our Hearts may be acceptable
 in his Sight.* And in fine, That in Para-
 dice we may sing forth that Hymn of
 Triumph, *Now is come Salvation and
 Strength, and the Kingdom of our GOD,
 and the Power of his Christ: for the ac-
 cuser of our Brethren is cast down, which
 accused them before our GOD Day and
 Night.*

In a Word, we ought to be extremely
 on our Watch not to sin by Detracting,
 and thereby rendring the Grace of GOD of

no Fruit and Effect; and this so much the more as we may detract so many Ways and have so many Occasions and Temptations to do it. Thus we ought to engage in what *David* said, *I will look well to my Ways, that I offend not with my Tongue.* SECT. X
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Psal. 39.

ARTICLE II.

*The Duties of those who are fallen into Detraction.*

**I**N the foregoing Article we considered Detraction, as a Sin which we might fall into, in this we shall consider it as already committed. In the one I have shewn what must be our Practice in order to avoid it; here I shall shew what must be done to correct it, to remedy it as much as possible and render it as light as may be. Not but that all which we have said in the other Article may suit this: For the same Advices we have already given, are very necessary for those who have actually detracted. But as to these last, something farther is really necessary.

Their first Duty is to repent of their Detractions and to forsake them. All the World own this Condition to be absolutely necessary in order to obtain the Pardon

SECT. X. of their Sins from GOD. --- Detraction being a Sin, Repentance is then absolutely necessary therefor.

And since Sorrow is a Part of Repentance, they who have spake ill of others, must necessarily be now afflicted therefor.

Jam. 4. 9. O Detractors, *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: Let your Laughter be turned to Mourning, and your Joy to Heaviness.*

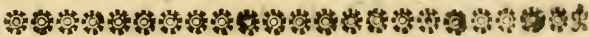
And when we have quitted this Sin, we ought afterwards to act quite contrary, and to repair the Injury we have done our Neighbour by defaming him. I know this Injury is in a sense, irreparable, since we cannot make what has been said, be unsaid, and what has been written, be unwritten. Nevertheless if when we have blamed a Person on Account of some particular Facts, we shew, that on the other Hand he has Virtues which deserve our Praises, this a little diminisheth the ill Idea we had formerly given of him.

If there be any Thing opposite to Detraction, it is doubtless the Praise we give to the good Actions of our Neighbours, and the mentioning of these Actions. Perhaps we shan't succeed so as to make the Persons before whom we formerly detracted, believe the Good we say of those who were once the Objects of our Detraction, but however this be, it is our Duty to try this way and to endeavour to make it succeed,

for

for it is the only way that can be made use of, and the most proper in this Design. SECT. X.

In fine, it is their Duty to get profit to themselves by the Faults which they have condemned in others. That is to say, if they have decryed them for their Avarice and Debauchery, they are to beware that they themselves be not covetous and debauched. Nothing could be more proper to correct us, than this Knowledge of the Faults and Sins of another, and that for this Reason. Vice in another appears to us in all its most filthy Colours, & most hideous Forms. It then appears to us entirely frightful, and nothing in my Opinion is more proper to make us hate it. *Thales* said very well hereupon, *That the Way to live virtuously is to avoid what we find Evil in others.*



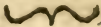
### A R T I C L E III.

*The Duty of those in Presence of whom  
People have Detraeted.*

**T**H E Number of Persons who hear Detraction, is not less than of those who do detract: Since what makes Detraction, is, the Discovering our Neighbour's Defects to others who hearken to us. So we shall give some Rules to them, and shew them their Duty.

**SECT. X.** Their first Duty is to take the Part of the Absent and to excuse them as far as possible. This is one of the principal Duties of Charity: and many times they who are content to remain Neuters, become guilty of Detraction. Here that Maxim *Luk. 11. 23.* may be applied, *He that is not for me is against me.* When therefore you hear a Man ill spoken of, take his Part, and if you cannot clear him of what he is accused of, make known his good Qualities. This is so much the more easy as I believe there are none but what have some good Qualities. Relate all that you know commendable in that Person, or all that you have heard others praise him for. This is so much the more just, as there is no Person how honest and good soever he be, but would appear a Monster, if we should tell of all that is bad in him, without relating also what is good in the same. Take the Apostles themselves; you will see them proud, ambitious, infatuated with a temporal Kingdom of the Miseries, in which every one expected the highest Places: You will see them either forsaking or denying their divine Master, and quarrelling one with the other. So that if you do not cast your Eye on the other side to admire their Zeal and a thousand other Virtues which gained them the *Crown of Righteousness*, they will seem to you Persons not only unworthy of

*1 Tim. 4. 8.*

of the Apostleship but even of the Name of SECT. X.  
Christians. 

If we know no Good to say of Persons, we must not positively excuse them. This would be both ridiculous and impossible. But we must excuse them by Judgments of Charity, without getting too much engaged. Perhaps, we may say to Detractors, He you are speaking of, had no Design to carry matters so far, and perhaps the Report that runs abroad is not very well grounded, &c. We must at least interpret the Evil we hear related, in the best way we can, and give it the most favourable Construction it will bear. Thus *St. Austin* acted, when he wou'd excuse *Tertullian*, for saying that GOD is corporeal : In endeavouring to clear him of this Error, He said, That *Tertullian*, by the Term of Body, only meant a Substance ; which takes away the Heresy, it being certain that GOD is a Substance, tho' not a bodily one.

In fine, We should endeavour to diminish the enormity of some Crimes, by shewing that many Circumstances, which attend those who have committed them, deserve to be weighed, and should rather induce us to absolve them, or at least not to condemn them with so much rigour.


We must above all, powerfully defend those whose Crime is not well proved, and shew that there is as much reason to dis-

SECT. X. credit what is said to the disadvantage of the absent, as to believe it, and consequently we must suspend our Judgment or give it in on the charitable side. Nevertheless in excusing our Neighbour, we must never deviate from the following Rules :

1. We are not to lye to excuse any one whatever. We must never do Evil that Good may come of it. Lies officious for others, are damnable to those who speak them.

2. We are not to excuse one Fault by another, as to excuse Covetousness in one Man because of the meanness of his Soul : Luxury in another because of his Vanity.

3. We are not to excuse one Man by accusing another. There are sometimes Occasions wherein we may shew that neither the Accuser nor Accused have done Wrong. For Instance, the Physognomist who accused *Socrates* of being brutish, given to Drunkenness and Unchastity, had reason therefor, because such was his natural Disposition. His Disciples, who on the contrary said he was not so, had reason also on their side, because he had forsaken those Vices. And this is of Importance to be observed to others on many Occasions in order to justify both the one and the other : For there are every Day a thousand Misunderstandings of this sort, which might be so adjusted and cleared up.

If we can't excuse the absent who are spo- SECT. X.  
 ken ill of, we must break off the Conver-   
 sation from Detraction. Here we must make  
 use of our Judgment, and our Penetration  
 and shew as much Wit in turning the Course  
 of Detraction, as others shew in detracting  
 finely. If we are alone with a Person who  
 in his Discourse with us detracts from ano-  
 ther, we are with Moderation to make  
 him perceive the wrong he is in, in detract-  
 ing. But if we are in a Company, I don't  
 advise to such a Thing. Then to reprove  
 Detractors openly would be detracting one's  
 self. We must wait for a more favourable  
 Occasion. We should then rather turn the  
 Conversation on Matters of Piety or Wit,  
 or at least of indifferent Nature ; which  
 is easy for Persons who have either Piety or  
 Wit, or any Sway in the World, with refer-  
 ence to their Birth or their Employment.

If all these Ways won't do, we must  
 leave the Company, that so we may not  
 have the Mortification to hear GOD of-  
 fended, or may not be tempted to detract  
 our selves, or shew that these Discourses  
 displease us because we think there is Evil  
 in them. If still we are with Persons whom  
 we can't well get dis-engaged from, we  
 must then keep a profound Silence, all  
 the Time they are detracting, and as soon  
 as the Conversation turns upon Matters of  
 indifferent Nature we must discourse as  
 others ;




SECT. X. others : which will easily shew that we kept silence, only because we did not love to detract, and this will be a Lesson to others. What is to be done after this, in order to strike as much as may be at the very Bottom of Detraction, is not to hearken favourably to those who wou'd spread Detraction. If we shew more Discontent than Pleasure in hearing Detractors, they will soon cease detracting. " If Informers perceive that we have more Aversion for them than for those whom they accuse; they will soon break themselves of this evil Custom, and will reform this Sin; and after this they will hearken to us, and we shall become their Saviours, and they will call us their Benefactors, says St. Chrysostom. " And this we are obliged to do, since to do otherwise is to second Detractors, to favour them, and consequently to Sin : Which made one of the Ancients say, " That Detractors serve the Devil with their Mouths, as their Hearers, do with their Ears. "

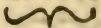
If we can do no better, Let us make as tho' we did not mind what they say ; they will know thereby, that at least we have much Indifference for their Discourse. The Conduct of *Constantine* the great, deserves to be here remarked and imitated. Many of the Bishops having presented to this Prince, Memorials containing reciprocal Complaints

Complaints of each other, and he being SECT. X. plagued almost every Day with Accusations of this sort, he referred them all to a certain Day; and when the Day came, he said to them, " All these Complaints shall be judged in the last Day, by the common Judge of all Men. It does not belong to me to take Notice of them; to me, who am but a Man; since the Accusers and the Accused are Bishops, who ought to do nothing that submits them to other's Judgment. Let us then imitate the Mercy of GOD, in pardoning one another, and renouncing all these Accusations. Let us agree in examining Questions of Faith for which we are now assembled". And having said this, he order'd all the Complaints to be cast into the Fire. Thus when we hear Detractors, we should say to them, Let us leave it to GOD & to the Magistrates whom he has established, to judge and to condemn Men. As for us who are private Persons, 'tis none of our Business. Let us imitate the Mercy of GOD towards all Men, and let us agree to examine our own Consciences, to bless the Lord, and to discourse on Matters of Faith, without ever discovering Accusations injurious to our Neighbour. If we have not always Occasions to speak after this manner, we have at least to think and act thus. We ought even with Pleasure

Sozomen  
lib. I. ch.  
17.

SECT. X.  sure to forget what was said in our Presence against any one. We ought not easily to believe all the Ill that is said of a Man, which is another Rule to be observed by those who hear Detraction. We must then remember, that we have a thousand Times heard Falsities spread abroad concerning our Neighbour, and even perhaps we our selves have been sometimes slander'd. That thus it is very possible, that what is said may be likewise false, at least with regard to some Circumstances: And this should make Persons very backward to believe and relate what they hear spoken. At least we ought thro' Wisdom and Charity to do what the Law of GOD commands, and what earthly Tribunals observe thro' Justice, namely not to condemn a Man but by the Mouth of two or three unexceptionable Witnesses. And truly we believe easily the Evil which is spoken of others, but because we are conscious that our selves are capable of committing the same Faults, and are corrupt enough for that.

But supposing at present here, that we are very certain, and have no room to doubt, but that the Evil said of our Neighbour is very true, our Duty is to go and tell him of his Faults and his Vices, which perhaps he himself is utterly ignorant of. We are to shew him the Wrong which they

they do to his Reputation and his Interests, SECT. X.  
 and especially the Danger which he exposes himself to, of sinking eternally into Hell. 

This is a Duty which all Men in general are obliged to practise towards each other, according to Scripture Rule. *My Brethren*, says St. Paul, *If a Man be overtaken in a Fault, restore such an One in the Spirit of Meekness. Exhort one another daily while it is called to Day, lest any of you be hardened thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin. Let us consider one another to provoke unto Love & good Works.* Gal. 6. 1. Heb. 3. 13. Heb. 10. 24

If we read those Passages attentively and consider what goes before and what follows, we shall see that the Apostle is here treating of those Remonstrances, which particular Persons should make to each other about their Conduct. Let us not then say, That they regard only publick Persons, as for Instance, *Pastors*. For in Truth, Justice requires this of the latter, but Charity requires it of *All Men*. Don't then leave this officious Care to Pastors only; doubtless you wou'd hardly be willing that they should go to Heaven for you. There are even many Occasions where particular Persons are more proper to reprove a Man lovingly, than for his Pastors to do it; against whom there are a thousand Persons so prejudiced, that they wou'd say, they did it only for Fashion's sake, and not thro' any Love they

SECT. X. they bore them; or that we were to hearken  
 to them in the Pulpit, or at the Point of  
 Death, and not at any other Time. More-  
 over, Ministers don't know all Sinners nor  
 all their Sins: and for many other Reasons  
 they may not succeed so well in this mat-  
 ter as others.

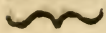
They who wou'd fulfill this Duty, must ob-  
 serve some Precautions, and follow some  
 Rules, which we shall mention.

1. The *First* is to see to it, that they are  
 exempt from gross Faults, and especially  
 from those which they blame in others.  
 They must get rid of 'em if they are sub-  
 ject to 'em, as much as possibly they can,  
 that so they may be in a Capacity to ex-  
 hort others. They must take the Beam  
 out of their own Eye, before they pretend  
 to take the Mote out of their Neighbour's.  
 We must be converted before we can exhort  
 Sinners to Repentance; according to that  
 Command of our Lord to Peter, *When thou  
 shalt be converted, strengthen thy Bre-  
 thren.* But especially we must not have  
 spoken ill of them before. How can they  
 take our Advice well, if we shew our selves  
 their Enemies by defaming them? How  
 can they think that it is Love which guides  
 our Steps towards them, if they see that  
 we fail in our Regards to them on many  
 other Occasions? How then can our In-  
 structions be profitable to them?

Luke 221

2. A *second* Precaution is, to act with SECT. X.  
 a great deal of meekness, prudence and circum-  
 spection, that so our Reproofs and Exhortations may have an happy Success :  
 What I say is founded not only in the Scripture ; but also on this Consideration, that nothing grieves Men more, than to know that their Defects are known and blamed, and to see that they are despised for them. We must then make use of all our Industry and all our Zeal in endeavouring to diminish that which gives our Neighbour so much uneasiness in Reproofs. We must sometimes grieve with him, sometimes lovingly set forth the wrong his Sin does him, sometimes praise those good Actions in him, which he has formerly done. We must do our utmost to find out his Temper, that so we may in some measure conform our Discourse thereto. We should make him see, and endeavour to persuade him, that it is neither Pride nor any other evil Principle ; but only a Desire of his Conversion, which makes us talk so freely to him of the Irregularities in his Conduct. We should assure him that in his Turn, on his Part, we should receive the Counsels he may give us, with Humility and a tractable Temper. We should use all Sorts of Means to sweeten this charitable Medicine, that so when it does not appear so distastful he may take it more easily.

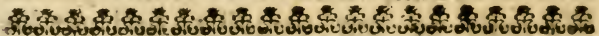
SECT. X.



3. A *third* Precaution to be observe is, not to name the Persons who have spoken of our Neighbour's Defects, whom we are now censuring, lest we set them together by the Ears.

4. *Lastly*, We are to pray to GOD to convert both the Detractors and Detracted, and to increat him to pardon them both. This is an essential Part of Charity. Hence St. *James* requires them to *pray for one another*. And St. *John* requires us to pray for all sorts of Sinners, except those who *Sin unto Death*, that is, against the Holy Spirit, which Sin being at present, always or for the most part, unknown, it follows, that we are to pray for the whole World.

Chap. 5.

1 Joh. ch.  
5:

## ARTICLE IV.

*The Duties of those who are spoken ill of.*

AS to what regards this Sin, all the World is *active* or *passive* therein. I speak now of these latter.

Their *first* Duty is to pardon those who have detracted from them, and not to will or do any Evil to them therefor. St. *Paul* truly requires that in all sorts of Cases, we should pardon, others as Christ has pardoned us. Particularly, we ought not to detract

Eph: 4.

detract from those who have formerly de-  
 tracted from us. Hence that saying of S.  
*Peter, Be ye all of one Mind, having*  
*Compassion one towards another. Love*  
*as Brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.*  
*Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for*  
*railing, but contrarywise, Blessing; Know-*  
*ing that ye are thereunto called, that ye*  
*should inherit a Blessing.* If we are not  
 to render Evil for Evil, we ought not then  
 to detract from those who have spoken ill  
 of us before; and it is our indispensable  
 Duty sincerely & honestly to pardon them.  
 This is what those Persons do not do, (tho'  
 they pretend they are ready to do it,) who  
 talk much after this Manner; such a one  
 has detracted from me, and if I had a mind  
 to, I know very well how I cou'd revenge  
 my self. I cou'd easily tell of many shame-  
 ful Things of his, which would very much  
 hurt his Reputation; but I won't mention  
 'em; and I pardon him the Injury he has  
 done me, as I wish that GOD may forgive  
 me my Offences.

Altho' there may appear a great deal of  
 good Humour herein, yet there is certainly  
 a great deal of hidden Malice. For can we  
 deny that it is a great Malignity, which  
 wou'd insinuate that we have great Reason  
 to complain of a Man, to call him a De-  
 tractor, and to shew that he has done shame-  
 ful Things, the Publication whereof wou'd



SECT. X. avenge those whom he had detracted from?

There is moreover a manifest Contradiction herein, since if we sincerely pardon'd him the Wrong we complain of, we should not talk of it, but hide it and forget it with Pleasure, and from hence it comes, that in the Scripture stile, to forget, to hide and pardon a Fault, are exprest by the same Terms and do often signify the same Thing. Thus then to relate a Fault which we say we forgive to a Man, is not to forgive it. Consequently, to ask of GOD that he wou'd forgive us our Trespases as we forgive Men their's ( with the Mouth only ) is to pray that he wou'd shew us no Mercy.

We must imitate the Example of *S. Paul*, who says, *They curse and we bless* ; a Conduct quite opposite to that of those who hold and teach, that it is lawful to kill, provided that it be in secret and without Offence, those who detract from us, if we can no other way stop their Detraction. This is the Jesuitical Decision. I confess that it appears hard to the Flesh not to revenge our selves on those who hurt our Credit ; nevertheless, this Difficulty will be much diminished, if we reflect, first, that besides GOD's absolutely requiring that he permits that we be covered with Shame and Infamy, in order to make us humble, and ready to acknowledge our Sins ; to exercise our Patience and that we  
may

may put in Practice many Virtues which we cou'd not practice, if the Malice of our Enemies did not give us occasion therefor; so that we may say with reference to those who have spoken ill of us, what *Aavid* said with regard to *Shimei*, who cursed him, *The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.*

SECT. X  


2 Sam. 16. 10

It is an Effect of GOD's Providence, who permits our Enemies to insult us, either to punish us, or to try us, to give us ways to shew with what Resignation we can acquiesce in his Will.

A second Reason which should make us abstain from Revenge, is that by that way, far from re-establishing our Honour, we shall on the contrary encrease our Infamy, and make it known to still more Persons. Truly this will be giving new Matter and new Occasion, to those whom we backbite in our Turn, to divulge anew and still farther, the Evil which they have already told of, and to add thereto besides this, all that they have not as yet published. Hence it was that *Philip* King of *Macedon* wou'd not banish a Man who had said very mortifying Things of him; and gave this Reason for it to his Friends; *I will not banish him, said he, for fear that when he finds himself with more Persons, he should talk of me to a greater Number.*

On the contrary, If any Thing will re-establish our Credit, it is to pardon those

SECT. X. who have offended us. This is the Effect  
 of so high a Virtue and the Mark of so  
 generous a Soul, that it will excuse the ill  
 Qualities we may otherwise have, and  
 which have caused Men to speak ill of us.  
 Before GOD himself, this Charity we shew  
 towards our Enemies, will serve to cover  
 those Sins which have given Occasion to  
 others to speak ill of us, if we afterwards  
 abandon them.

Another Motive not to revenge our  
 selves is, to consider that we ought to be  
 much more vext at our selves who have  
 these Faults, than against those who discover  
 them to others.

Since after all we act, and they only  
 speak, and if we did not hurt our selves by  
 our Vices, they could not hurt us by their  
 Detractions; it is in our selves, they find  
 the Matter & Object of these Detractions;  
 we afford Fuel and Fire, and they blow it  
 into a Flame.

To keep us from Revenge, Let us  
 imagine that all the World knows our  
 Vices and publish our Sins. In this Case  
 we must absolutely live in Peace with those  
 who speak ill of us; since it is impossible  
 to do without the help & Company of all  
 the World. You will say that this Suppo-  
 sition is impossible. I don't think that it is  
 and we every Day see that others know  
 our Faults better than we do our selves:

At

At least it is very possible that all those whose help we need, may themselves speak ill of us. If we wou'd then hate them and be revenged on them and have no Commerce with them, we must deprive our selves of their Assistance which is extremely contrary to our own Interest. For the Corruption of Men is such, that they are vext and in a Passion when we say against them those Truths which are to their Disadvantage : And on the contrary, that nothing pleases them so much as to hear lyes which flatter them, and to hear themselves praised without Reason, while Truth so greatly offends them.

SECT. X.



In fine, If any one has Detraacted from us thro' Folly, we should pity it; if thro' Levity, we should despise it; if thro' Injury, we should pardon it.

If all that has been said cannot perswade you from Revenge, here is a Way that you may be revenged without offending GOD, and without injuring your self; a mean on the Contrary, which will serve to your Honour, your Happiness, and your Salvation. It is to lay aside your Sins and to take from your Enemies the Arms which they make use of to fight against you, and to force them to admire your Goodness or at least to be silent. When Men shall see you pious and sincere, they will hardly believe that you have been vile and wicked.

SECT. X. Your present Virtues without doubt, will  
 ~~~~~ serve to efface the Horror of your past  
 Crimes.

Another very sure Way not to entertain
 Hatred and Desires of Revenge against a
 Man, is not to enquire curiously about what
 has been said of us, unless it be with a De-
 sign to amend and not to be offended. This
 excellent Counsel the wise Man gives us,
 Eccl. 7. *Take no heed unto all Words that are*
 21, 22. *spoken, lest thou hear thy Servant curse*
thee. For oftentimes also thine own
Heart knoweth, that thou thy self likewise
hast cursed others. Above all we should
 not demand the Names of those who have
 spoken ill of us, lest we should conceive
 hatred against them; besides that thereby
 we shall engage those in Detraction who
 name them to us.

It concerns me nevertheless, you will
 say, to know those who speak ill of me, that
 so I may not act before them as Friends,
 but may be on my Guard.

I answer that there is another way much
 more sure to know who are our Friends
 and who, our Enemies. It is only to ex-
 amine whether we have done no Man wrong,
 whether we have not detracted from any
 one; whether we have been always kind
 and officious towards every one; then we
 may be perswaded that they do not de-
 tract from us, since we have not given any
 one

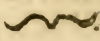
one Occasion to hate and defame us. Let SECT. X.
 us farther examine, whether we have been
 humble, sober and virtuous in our Words.
 If it be thus, We have given no Ground
 for Detraction, and may flatter our selves,
 that Men do not speak ill of us, and that
 all the World are our Friends, if we may
 know them thereby. But if you are vici-
 ous, you may be assured, That in this de-
 tracting Age, all who know your Vices,
 will speak of them, and so if you please
 are your Enemies, whom you ought to be
 aware of, and that by giving them hereafter
 no Matter to censure you. We must live
 with all Men as Friends, not doing them any
 Injury, or even desiring to hurt them; and
 as with Enemies, not giving them any hold
 of us.

When Informers who endeavour to sow
 Discord, come and tell you, that such and
 such have spoken ill of you, far from being
 angry with your Detractors, and shewing
 that those who have spoken ill of you do
 deserve greater blame than you; keep your
 selves in Humility and Modesty mixt with
 Meekness, and say, according to the Coun-
 sel of *Epictetus*, " I am not at all astonish'd
 " That they speak disadvantageously of
 " me; they might have said much more,
 " if they had known all my failings " Or,
 as an honest Man of the last Age, " If
 " Men know my Imperfections so thro'ly,
 " how much more does GOD know them?

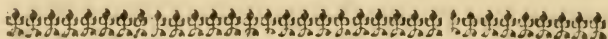
SECT. X. Some will doubtless object and say, that if we do not detract from those who detract from us, and do not rail at those who rail at us, we shall become the sport of all the World, who seeing that they can offend us without danger, will do it continually. I answer, That our Detractions will do us no good, and only draw on us more and more those of others, as we have elsewhere shewn; and therefore that Silence is far more proper to quench this Fire, which our Railleries wou'd but supply with new Matter and Fuel. We need only shew that it is Charity or Prudence which makes us dumb; and the following Example may clear up what I have just now said. A Man having been cruelly railed at without making any Answer; one of the Company said, *He must needs be a Fool, who wou'd hold his Peace on such an Occasion.* You are mistaken, replied the first, *A Fool knows not how to Bridle his Tongue.*

If there be but few Persons who speak ill of us, we may make use of the Answer which the Poet *Tasso* made on account of a Man who spake ill of him to all that he saw: *It is better, said Tasso, for him to speak ill of me to all the World, than if all the World did speak ill of me to him.*

My last Advice to the Detracted is, That they wou'd free themselves from all their Vices, not only that so they may give no occasion

occasion to others for Detraction, but also SECT. X.
 that so Hell may not exercise it's rage upon 
 them. This is a Duty which is common
 to them with all Christians, and which those
 whom we are speaking of may practice so
 much the more easily, as they are informed
 of their Vices by the Mouth of others, and
 by that means know them the better. This
 is the way to gather Grapes of Thorns and
 Figs of Thistles, and Pearls from a Dung-
 hill, in a word, to get Good out of Evil;
 such will profit much by the Detractions of
 others, since being shewn their Faults by
 them, and being apprised that they are bla-
 med for them, they are furnished with
 Means and Motives to get rid of 'em. Thus
 in some sort, they ought to take it in good
 part of them who backbite them. Perhaps
 they did it thro' Envy or Hatred; but what
 Matters it, what was their Intention, or
 from what Principle they spake, if we can
 turn to our Salvation, what will perhaps one
 Day prove the Cause of their Destruction?
 Here we may apply what St. Paul said,
Some preach CHRIST of Envy & Strife Phil. 1. 13
Of Contention and not sincerely, supposing & sequen,
to add Affliction to my Bonds. What then?
Notwithstanding every way, whether in
Pretence or in Truth, CHRIST is prea-
ched, and I therein do rejoice, yea and will
rejoice. Thus how ill soever the Motive
 may be which Detractors act from, we know
 our

SECT. X. our Vices by their Detractions, we may improve their Malice to our Advantage, and it is at this that we may rejoice.



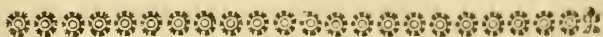
The Uses of this Section.

HERE it must be remarked, That altho' we have divided this Section into four different Articles, nevertheless what we have said under the one may agree to each of the other Three, and even of the three other together. For Example the Advice we gave not to detract, may also serve for Detractors, for those who hear Detraction, and for the Detracted; for those who have been active and passive in the Sin; the Reason of this is, because that it may very well happen, and often does, that they who detract do often hear others detract, and are likewise themselves detracted from. Thus in this Regard these four Articles may agree to one Person.

These Counsels and Duties appearing to me of the last Importance for the Subject I have been treating of, and containing what is most essential to be practiced by us, whether we be the Authors, or the Objects, or the Hearers of Detraction, I wou'd earnestly advise that they be followed and put in Practice. Nevertheless the more profitable

profitable they appear to me, the more I SECT. X. fear they won't be followed, because commonly the most excellent Things are the most difficult, such are some of the Duties we have mentioned, and it is this Difficulty that will hinder Men.

Yet even this ought not to discourage 'em so much as to stir them up to ask of the GOD of Love, whose Power is unlimited and able to help them, that he wou'd assist them to follow what his Word, and that Reason which he has endowed them with, do prescribe them to do.



The Conclusion of this Treatise.

HERE we might take Occasion strongly to exhort Persons to leave off Detraction. But being perswaded that those Exhortations we have made thro' the whole Course of this Treatise, are capable of making Impression on the Hearts, where the Love of GOD, of our Neighbour, and of our selves is not entirely quenched, there remains but little for us to do to finish this Treatise.

I exhort you to consider, That the Detractor sins essentially against Charity, and thereby shews that he has no Religion at all; for how can a Man have any Religion, if he

Sect. X. he love neither GOD or his Neighbour ?
 Which is the fulfilling of the Law. Can we love our Neighbour when we hurt him in those things which he esteems as his greatest Advantage in the World, even his Credit and Reputation ? Can we love him, as we love our selves, if while we take so much Care to hide our own Defects, and are so troubled if they are known abroad, we expose his so openly ?

Can we also say, That we love GOD, if we hate those who are formed after his Image ? And moreover, If any one love not his Brother whom he sees, how can he love GOD whom he hath not seen so distinctly ? And if we have not Charity, how can we enter into Heaven, which is the Source and the Example of Love ?

That Heaven, where GOD the Father will cause the Saints to taste the most delicious Effects of his Love, in which their Welfare consists : That Heaven, where the Saints shall burn with Zeal and Love for their Creator, in which their Glory consists : That Heaven, from whence the Lord of the World, sheds abroad his Blessings and Favours on all the Inhabitants of the Earth, even the most Wicked.

Without Charity how can we enter into that Paradise, from whence Jesus Christ descended only thro' the Effect of his Love for Mankind, and to redeem them by the
 Price

Price of his own Blood ; and whither he SECT. X. ascended again to exercise still his Love towards them, by interceding on their Behalf before GOD his Father ?

In fine, How can we expect without Charity to enter into that Heaven from whence the Holy Spirit by an Effect of his Love, pours down upon Men his Graces and Gifts, which comfort, which regenerate, which prepare them for *an Inheritance in Heaven* ?

On the other Hand, when we have sinned against Charity by Detraction, may we not fear to be the Companions of Devils, since an evil Tongue is already sat on Fire of Hell, as *S. James* says ?

Chap. 5.
Ver. 14.

Let us endeavour to live all so like Christians, that we may have no Cause, no Reason to speak ill one of another. Let us avoid the very appearance of Evil, so as to give no Ground for rash Judgments. Let us well consider every Time that we Sin so as that others know of our Sins we miserably Scandalize them, since we are the Occasions of their Evil speaking, and consequently of their Sin, which is an Aggravation of those Sins which occasion Detraction.

I hope they who read this Treatise will receive these Exhortations of mine with Complacency, since they have five Characters which are, it seems to me, very fit to make them efficacious.

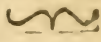
1. The

SECT. X. 1. The first of those Characters which an
 ~~~~~ Exhortation ought to have, in order that it  
 may move and make Impression, is, that  
 the Things exhorted to, be of Importance.  
 Now nothing is of greater Consequence  
 than the Charity, or rather the Salvation  
 we exhort Men to attain unto, by avoid-  
 ing Detraction.

2. A second Character which Exhorta-  
 tions should have that so they may be fol-  
 lowed is, that they be necessary and well  
 applied to the Thing exhorted unto, and  
 to the Time in which it is to be done. I  
 reckon that also on this regard it will be  
 granted, that there is ground, and that it is  
 proper at this present Time, if ever it was,  
 to exhort the World to abstain from De-  
 traction, since perhaps there never was an  
 Age wherein it was more in Vogue than  
 the present. Languages have been often  
 changed, Words have been different in their  
 Pronunciation, their termination and their  
 signification. Every Nation according to  
 their Language has variously express their  
 Detractions; but at all Times, in all Na-  
 tions, and at present as much and more than  
 ever, Detraction has upheld and does up-  
 hold it's Empire in the World.

3. We ought, Thirdly, to give way to  
 Exhortations founded on strong Motives,  
 powerful Reasons and necessary Advice.

In

In this Regard we are perswaded, That SECT. X.  
 all which has been said against Detraction,   
 is very strong, very pressing, and very necessary.

4. Fourthly, We are more ready to obey Exhortations, when we are perswaded of the Sincerity of those who Exhort. As I can have no Advantage from deceiving others, and on the contrary should be accountable unto a righteous GOD for so doing, you ought to be convinced of my Sincerity.

5. Lastly, Exhortations are more persuasive, when we know that he who gives them, has a right thereto. This Right belongs to all Men. It is one of their Duties to exhort their Neighbours to forsake their Crimes, and to follow Virtue, as has been already shewn, and therefore they have Right to exhort Men to shun Detraction. Luk. 23. 14  
 And to do this I conjure them by the *loving Kindness of Christ*, who prayed to his Father for his very Murderers. And may the great G O D accompany this Work with his Blessing, and his Grace for the Sanctification, and the eternal Salvation of those who shall read it.

A M E N.