A TREATISE AGAINST
Detraction,
IN
Ten Sections.

By the Reverend
Mr. Andrew Le Mercier,

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A TRACT

OBTAINED

DELIBERATION

IN

Ten Sections

By The Directors

Mr. Contractors &c. &c.

PUBLISHED IN THE WINTER OF 1776

Printed by D. Otis at the Printer's Office.
To the Elders, Deacons and all the Heads of Families of the French Church of Boston in New-England:

Gentlemen, and most honoured dear Brothers,

I read in the Third Chapter of the Book of Ezra, 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 Sanctuary, his Rod, resting so heavily and so long upon us, we cannot but be affected as Jeremiah the Prophet, when he 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 Mercys of GOD, when we consider how graciously he hath been pleased to give us Places of Refuge, and after a Flood of Miseries, preceded 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,
Dedication.

To 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 choose 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 Catholicks 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 Catholicks, 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

PREFACE

in the Form of a

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

Tertullus and the Author.

Tertullus.

SIR,

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
PREFACE.

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 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 sile perfricuit.
Intactus Deus est ilii, 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.
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 surprising, 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.
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 fo 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 finful Creature, can procure infinite Glory, everlasti
PREFACE.

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 frivolous
volous Objections generally alleged 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 surprising 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
faith on the one side, that without Faith, it is impossible to please God; 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.
PREFACE.

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.
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ERRATA.

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 People 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 thinking 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, &c some instead of very. p. 230 l. 29 read sort of Criminals. p. 263 l. 15 read and even without Detractions. l. 14 read those instead of these. p. 278 l. 24 read Melisas instead of Miferies.

I take often in this Treatise the Word; Self-Love, for that which sinful, though Self-Love in it self be innocent and natural.
I must desire the Reader to excuse some Phrases that may be improper or obscure. As this Work was first composed 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 itself, 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 obliged to be very particular, as I have been in this Work, tho' I hope not to a Fault.
A TREATISE AGAINST DETRACTION.

SECTION I.

ARTICLE I.

Detraction is defined.

He heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? faith the Prophet Jeremiah. Paul tells us also that no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him: So that that Heart which hardly knoweth itself would be quite unsearchable to 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.

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 hath
Sect. I. hath drunk 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 Catholic, 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.

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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 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 itself seems to confound them together**, in many Places too long here to be mentioned. The Reason now alleged 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. Equally alleged 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 than 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.

ARTICLE 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 God, 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 observe 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 trouble 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 forbids 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 believe 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 lift us above other Men. Thus self-love
Sect. I. Love would 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 are none but those who dwell in Heavenly Mansions, of whom it is impossible to speak ill, because they are perfectly holy. This is what the Scripture assures us with respect to God in a great many places. *He is of purer eyes than to behold Evil*, far from committing it. I own, there are Persons Wicked, or rather Mad enough, to find fault with the Divine Conduct, and to say as the Jews in Ezekiel, *the ways of the Lord are not Equal*. But what do they then say? They pronounce an horrible *Blasphemy* and not a Detraction. Those are, these unhappy ones who know not God, and speak Evil of what they understand not.

As for Angels and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, the Scripture makes their continual Employment and perfect Felicity 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 sufficient Reason to warn and exhort you to forfake it. What we have already said of its
its Nature may serve for this, that it should make us forfake 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.

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 Back-
Back-bite Persons for fear of offending Sect. I. 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.

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. 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 could contain the Books which might be writ-
Sect. II. 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, falsly 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-
DETRACTION.

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 GOD. 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. Sickness & 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 passeth 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, indiscreeet, 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 unturned'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 restrained 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, 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 natural Defects, or odd Postures. For Example, His Looks may be lascivious, his Gaite haughty, his Garb indecent. We may even detract and backbite Persons on Account 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 Parents 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, without 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 examined 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
DETRACTION.

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  II.

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 Testimony 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 Person that I would trust as soon as myself.

2. We may detrañ 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
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 Jars. Perhaps Cowardice may hinder some from telling Persons of their Faults to their Face, or some other peculiar Reasons.

4. Men may detract publickly and without reserve. Thus hafty and giddy-minded 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 would blast, be known or unknown to them.

5. On the other hand, Men may detract 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 however, if you should happen to mention it, don't bring me for your Author, for you will certainly meet with the Disappointment 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; because, 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 that
Sect. II. That Detraction itself 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.

A R T I C L E  III.

Of 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
DETraction.

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 impression 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 persuaded, thinking that it is thro' Love or Companion, that we conceal the Name of the Evil-Deer.

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

5. One way of Detraction is to jeer, expose and ridicule any one before a Company. Without this, say some, Conversation would 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 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-
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, i. 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,
though not always Sins, being permitted to
C 4
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 Person. 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. *Curstng* is detraction. To detract and to curse may be expressed 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 singly 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 shew, 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 detraction.

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.
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 caused 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 ourselves 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.

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
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 one's Virtues upon Occasions that naturally present and when it would 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 wherever 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.

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 a-
gainst the Love we owe the Person detracting 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 Actions. It is Criminal before GOD 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 itself. We shall here therefore only just mention the principal Heads, and finish with motives and exhortations to avoid the Vice we have been describing in its principal Parts.
Sect. II. We have said, That there are almost in-
finite Ways of Detraction; because that on the one hand, we make use herefor 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 anothef 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
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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 barely 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 Apo-

\textbf{fles without scourching them.}

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 least 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 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 little 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 endeavoured to discover, as far as was tho't necessary, the Ways of Detraction, (1) With reference to it's Subject and Matter. (2) With respect to the Circumstances by which the Faults & Sins of Men are spread abroad. (3.) With regard to the Means and Instruments employ'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 Article, 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 mentioned 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 reasonable, than to contemplate Virtue, rather than Vice? Is it not much more lovely,
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 let forth Detraction in the Ways wherein it is practisefed (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.

Here is hardly any better Way of finding out the Perfection or Imperfection of a Thing, than by considering 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 itself; 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.

**ARTICLE 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 filled 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 harassed and torn to pieces; because that in general, Afflictions & Adversity suits Piety much better than Prosperity, and particularly in Persecution, we have other Affairs than those of Detraction. 'Tis then we return to God, 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 particular
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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 Paint-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 D\textit{e}tr\textit{a}ction, and which suits so well with our natural, that is, corrupt D\textit{i}s\textit{p}osition; What adds still more force to these Examples is, that they come from those who are accounted Gentlemen, and who truly would 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 d\textit{e}tract, only because they don't really reflect on the Evil that accrues thereby to the Person detracted.

\textit{A Third Source, Impunity.}

There is certainly nothing more capable of encouraging a Crime, as Men are now disjosed, than Impunity. Perhaps there are some who think that D\textit{e}tr\textit{a}ction 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 Periôn 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 Easinels 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.

ARTICLE II.
Of the internal Sources of Detraction.

We 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 would have thought, thou'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 entirely; 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 Sect. III of Sins, of whose Number Detraction is one, let us see more particularly how this arises from that fatal and communicative Fountain.

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
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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, says, *And withal they learn to be idle, wandering from House to House; and not only idle, but Tattlers also, and Busiebodies, 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 would justify themselves by the Purity of their Intentions, which are not to hurt their Neighbours in the least, but only for Paftime 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 unprofitable ends, 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 pleasured and diverted at their Cost.

A Third Source, *Impudence.*

To be convince'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.
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. 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 ofteneft 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?
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,
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, because we know those of a contrary Disposition are always blamed. One of the Reasons why we see more Detractors among 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 Temper is so contradictory, that it is sufficient
Reason for them to cry a Man down only because another commends him. This they do only to contradict and gainsay the Sentiments & Praisés of others: Which ought to be as much condemned as it is blame-worthy. Happy those who can keep a Medium between these two Vices!

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, 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 Suspicions in-jurios
A Treatise against 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 delivered 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 would 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 shall shew hereafter,) what encreaseth this Sin is, that it provokes those to detra, whom we inform of our Neighbours ill Conduct.

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 willing
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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 dettract 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.


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, prays 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 Apostle James.
In a word, if a good Man from the good Treasure of his Heart brings forth good Things, and an evil Man, evil Things, what must he be, who from his Heart brings forth Things so very pernicious as Detractions? 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, revengeful, &c. Qualities very proper to produce 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 would treat him so, if Occasion presented. Besides, there are those who detract, endeavouring thereby to excuse their own Faults, and to cast their Sins on the Multitude 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 among...
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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 acknowledgment. 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-
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 displeased with.

Another will decry the Conduct of a Person raised 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 backbite 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 to 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?

Would 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.
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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 further, 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 they drawn Swords, said his Father before 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 would seem willing to hide the Thing, but they soon suffer themselves to be overcome by Questions and Entreaties. They would apparently excuse those they speak ill of; but truly the surest way of excusing is, not to accuse 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 sincere Friendship. If this be not after having 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 Perfon, cloathed him with a Purple
Robe, the Mark of Royalty.

As the Words & Actions of Hypocrites are very base so they are very dangerous,
because it looks by these affected Discour-
des, 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 pre-
judice 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 would 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 would abuse others, we hurt
our selves.

A Sixteenth Source, A false and blind
Zeal.

A blind and false Zeal for Religion and
our own Party often caufes Detraction.
We think to do GOD Service by hurt-
ing the Reputation of thofe whom we sup-
pofe to act contrary to his Glory. And a
Man of this Character speaks ill of thofe
of a Religion which he has quitted, in or-
der
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Order to perswade them of a Communion he 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 Christianity, 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 would have had him consum'd the Inhabitants who denied them Entry into their City, ye know not of what Spirit ye are.

A true Zeal for GOD's House enflames and eats up our Hearts; but that is a blind Zeal, which eats up the Reputation of other 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, lift 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 Parties 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 their Minds, the good Opinion we have of others' 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 would tarnish their good Qualities, do we not endeavour to obscure the Gifts and Graces of the Lord? Since
Since he is the Author of them. *Is thy Eye Evil, because God is Good?* Should we not rather imitate the Conduct of Moses, 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? Would to God, that all the Lord's People were Prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them.* Instead of speaking Evil of them, and endeavouring to preserve his own Credit by ruining them, he rejoiced in the Favour GOD had done his People, and reproved 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 Vices 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 itself, we easily perceive that of Detraction. Solomon says expressly of that sort of Detraction which is called Railery, Proud & haughty Scornere is his Name who dealeth in proud Wrath.

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.

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, would at least be placed in the second Rank, altho' they don't deserve to be in the sixth.
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 persuades us of our own fine and good Qualities prompts us to persuade 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 here-upon 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 would 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?

Is it not certain, That we would have all the World love us, as much as we do our selves? As we love none but our selves, so we would have others love none but us; and persuade '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 cauces, 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.
From hence it comes also, That a Man detraacts from his Neighbour, thereby to inflinate, 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 esteem’d: 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 Prais'es 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 Prais’es. 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 lowli-ness of Mind let each esteem others better than themselves. 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.

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
ous Man is not Master of himself, how then should 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.

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 detraet thro’ Hatred, Self-Love or Envy. Nevertheless, as it is very blame-worthy to be wrotha 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.
But 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 itself 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.
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 slightily 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: Dearly beloved, says he, Avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto Wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay,
Sect. III repay, faith 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 Accessory, 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.

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

pocrisy, 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, Covetousness, &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.

Let us here make some Reflections on the external Sources of Detraction. First on the Subject of Prosperity. It is a very slippery
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flippery 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 exposed to, and on the other, against the Security 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 horrifyingly offending GOD by a proud Ingratitude, and of feeling the terrible Effects of his Justice, after and because that we have abused the Effects of his Love and Grace.

As to the evil Examples, we still recommend this Attention to you, that so you may not suffer your selves to be seduced 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.

This
Sect. III  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 Raileries, 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
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bleth his own Flesh. O! Detractors, we 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 because you would do Justice to all the World. No, it is your Self-Love. Say no more, that it is because you hate Flattery. 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, Impudence, 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; Compliance to be gentle as GOD requires; a contradictory Spirit to attack Vices; Covetousness to be sparing of Invectives against our Neighbours; Jealousy to endeavour to surpass others in Piety; Self-Love to do our utmost to gain the inestimable good Things of Paradise by our Charity. 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.

SECTION IV.

Wherein is proved, That Detraction is a Sin.

ARTICLE I.

The Law of God expressly forbids it.

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 tattle-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 haft
haft heard of the laft: Not that GOD con-
sunds only this sort of Detraction, but
because those who make a Business of de-
trating 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 fame 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.

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.

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.

Fifthly, The Apostle writing to his Disciple Titus, commands him to exhort Men to speak evil 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 speak evil. 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 speak evil of no man.

Sixthly,
Sixthly, St. James expressly forbids us to speak Evil one of another, wherein he forbids us to speak evil, not only, when no one has given Occasion therefor, but even when another has formerly back-bitten 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,

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

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. Chrysostom 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 detraets,

Ps. 120. 4.
Prov. 15. 18.

Hym. 3.
DETRACTION.

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. Chrysostom, this is what a Detractor does.

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.

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, Male- dicus a Malefico non differt nisi Occasione. And Zolius 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; except 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 Number of those who shall dwell in the Tabernacle of the Lord, him, That back-hiteth G 3 not
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.

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 Brass and Iron; they are as Persons, who destroy one another.

Here
Here I can't help observing Three Characters of Detraction or Detractors:

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 its 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 detra\(\text{c}^\text{tion}.\) 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 itself.

**ARTICLE III.**

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

1. **OUR Lord JESUS CHRIST ranks Detractions among those evil Things which**
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.

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 Inventers 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 would our Assemblies be to GOD!

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 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 Chaffisement 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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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 detraction are Sins.

We could doubtless make separate Treatises on the different Ways of detraction, 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 Sect.IV it's parts, we shall be very brief with re-
spect to Stories, Railleries and Reproaches.

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 show Divisions,
are very great Sins against Charity, and oftentimes against the Fidelity, which we
owe to those who have trusted their Sec-
crets 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
revealeth Secrets, but he that is of a faith-
Spirit concealeth the Matter.

When St. Paul reckons up the capital
Sins of the Pagans, he counts their having
been Back-bitters, as one; and adds, That
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 Scorers, or Railers.

Unhappy
Sect. IV. Unhappy then and criminal are they who have fat therein. Solomon says, that He who mocketh the Poor, reproacheth his Maker; GOD, who is the Maker of the Railer, and him that is mocked. Consequently, it is a Crime no less than high Treason against the Divinity. He says likewise that Judgments are prepared for Mockers. Likewise Isaiah 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 Invectives, 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 forfake his way, and the injurious Man his Tho'its. 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 divided
divided about the signification of the word Sect.IV 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.

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,
Sect. IV. Self, Detraction on many occasions is injo- 

lent 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 laid of them. Charity hopes for the Conversion and Change of Sinners, and in this hope of future amendment hides 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 Parallel is pretty long; but there 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 Commiʃion and Omiʃion. 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 hate 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 affiʃt 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 Affliʃions; but how can we do that, if we our selves are the Authors of their Affliʃions? Can a Fountain at the same Time send forth bitter Waters and sweet? No verily. Jam. 3. 17. 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.

A R T I C L E 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 Jesus Christ 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
that it won't permit, nor does it need any reasonings to prove it. Now where is the Man who would 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 Tables of the Hearts of all Men, it is, That our Lord has established his Commandment of loving others as we love ourselves. This Principle then must be very true, seeing GOD has built upon it. This Principle, 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 Balances, which are

\[\text{Lev. 19:36, Prov. 11:1} \]

con-
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 VII.

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

1. It 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.

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 this,
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.

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 Filthines of their
their deed. To GOD this Right belong. 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 Detraction 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?" (Rev. 12.10) 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.
Detraction is contrary to the Design of 
GOD in giving us the Faculty of 
Speech.

This 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 
Col. 3. 16. Cause St. Paul requires of us to have con-

tinually 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 
Heb. 13. 15. 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 contrary to GOD's Design; since 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 enlightened 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 neces-
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 fastening 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.

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ARTICLE 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 a Proof of this, I shall make 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 would be a very unmannerly, ungenteeel Action for a Traveller to enter a House, and survey all that is therein, 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 People; such as have no Education, and who are ignorant even of the Principles of Honour, 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.

ARTICLE X.

Detraction is a mean vile Sin.

1. It is certain, that all Mankind, especially Men of Education & Honour, despise Traitors and look upon them as the
A Treatise against

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 would offer the good Name of their Neighbours, they would 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 choose Dirt and Filthiness for their Nourishment, and Vipers which kill Men with their Tongue.
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 the 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.

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 Chilon, one of the seven wise Men of Grace, which a Modern thus describes, He reckoned among the Qualities of a wise Man, those he himself possesst; 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 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 thought so to do. And there is no Man among those who are most given to Detraction, but would 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.

It many Times happens that a Man will tell of an ill Action a hundred Times,
DE'TARCTION.

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 Loose ness 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 spake 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.

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.

ARTICLE
The Greatness of this Sin, shown by some further Considerations.

1. O N E 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
Sect. IV Fact, and for all which they put thereto of their own. The Fault itself 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 bad 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 nature was almost nothing, appears an enormous and a frightful Crime, after it has been spread abroad, and related many Times: and that an Indiscreet or Inadvertent Action 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 Detractors 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 Author of the Detraction or not, is answerable 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
4. It is but too common, that this Sin 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 disadvantagously 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 St. Austin wrote on his Table, against those who were inclined to this Sin. We shall give them in Latin, in French and in English.

\[
\text{Quisquis amat dictis Absentum rodere (sanim,)} \\
\text{Hanc mensam vetitam noverit esse sibi.} \\
\]

In French thus explain'd,

\[
\text{Que Quiconque aime des Absens} \\
\text{A dechierer l'honneur par dos mots offens-} \\
\text{(sans,)} \\
\text{Et Quiconque les de'credite,} \\
\text{Aprenne que pour lui ma Table est inter-} \\
\text{(dite.}} \\
\]

In English,

\[
\text{Whoe'er delights the Absent's Fame to hurt,} \\
\text{Far from my Table let the Wretch depart.} \\
\]

With
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.

What 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 ourselves, 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
and consequently Sins. Notwithstanding 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 by 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 Scripture.

But some will doubtless say, that if Detraction 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 saved 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 hard, and few there be that find it: That those who with the Generality of Men, enter at the wide Gate, and abandon themselves to Detraction, 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, 14,

The Uses of this Section.

We shall say here what we have already said, that the Reasons we have alleged 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 itself most strongly condemns Detraction and Detractors. How then shall we avoid so great, so terrible a Judgment, and whose Consequences 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 Tempters. Let us then take heed, how we receive in us the Impression which gives this evil Spirit the Right of Sovereignty and Death.
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 itself, 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 evidenced 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 would 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.

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 would be the Instrument of our greatest Evils. But do Men make Use of their Reason, when they detrac't? Reason requires, that we should bless him who has so liberally distinguished us from other living Creatures. But this is not all.
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 other's 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 Curfing. My Brethren, these things ought not so to be. Thus S. James argues and thus also we do. He here includes 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 itself. 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 comprised in these Words, My Brethren, these things ought not so to be. All these Things should hinder us from Detraction.

S E C T.
Of the various Circumstances which aggravate this Sin.

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.

It 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 despite the Persons to whom they are indebted for their Birth.

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 Mancsluughter, so far Detraction against Parents, surpasses in Enormity Detraction of those, who do not stand related to us. 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 seeing *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 contrary to what it ought. As they see each other the oftener, and so know better the Defects one of another, and their blended Interests give more Occasion for mutual Disputes and Detractions. Let such know, that a Brother is born for the Time of Adversity, that is, to comfort his Brethren and Sisters in the Time of their Adversity: '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. Thou sittest and speakest against thy Brother; 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 consider'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 Detractions before our Eyes, to convince us that we
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.

Circumstance Third.

An Husband commits a very considerable Sin, when he speaks ill of his Wife.
S. Peter commands Husbands to honour their Wives, and to carry it respectfully to them, as to the weaker Vessels, that is, if by an Infirmity 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 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 express to Persons by fulfilling their Reputation? They who observe not this Precept 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 alto, as Spouses. Besides this, they sin not only as Detractors, but vaftly more as perjured Persons, having promised to Love and Honour them at their Efpousals. 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 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 Wifes, 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 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 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 Designs are ordinarily concealed 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.*

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, *The Wrath of a King is as the roaring of a Lion, and he that stirreth it up, wrongeth his own Soul.*

To conclude, Altho' we should avoid the Effects of their Resentment, yet it will be impossible to escape the Punishment of GOD, who will shew 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
Sect. V. with the Leprosy, and that at a Time when the Punishment of Retaliation, or the Resemblance of Punishments to Sins, was in Use; which teaches us, That if Detraction 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 inconsiderable Sin, 1. Because we are to speak ill of no Man. 2. Because all Princes in general 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 Viceroy's 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 oppressed, Satyrs against their oppressors are not like to relieve them very much.

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 Past they are by their Grandeur, they ought
ought to leave so mean and base a Vice to Sect. V others. It is also a great Weakness in them to backbite their Subjects, or others whom they can chaste 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.

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

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 censire 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 sacred Writ, called, Ambassadors for Christ, Angels or Messengers of GOD, whom
in some sense, they represent upon Earth. Sect. V.

Let us remember, that they are spiritual 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 beyond 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 against Aaron the high Priest.

Circumstance Sixth.

To backbite Benefactors is adding to 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 Benefactors 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 Nature. 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 Mafter 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 Hypocrify, Infidelity and Treason joined to Detraction. What! Because they er'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!
etret! Shou'd any Difference arise between 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 choose 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. Chrysostom. "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 divulged, 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".

Every one looks with a kind of Horror on the Persidy of Sabinus's false Friend, who by his Wiles engaged him to talk a little too freely of the Emperor Tiberius, and to 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 profets 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 tence, we are to do Evil to no Man, especially not to the Household of Faith.

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; an ambitious Fellow, that would fly without 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 sovereign Rights of the Lord. Suppose 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 deride, 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, being
SEC. V. being ready to make Men think, That seeing 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 Persecutors of the Afflicted among the very worst of Men, when he says, They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk of the Grief of those whom thou hast wounded.

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 Authors of 'em are looked upon as most blameworthy and consequently most rigorously treated. The Leaders of a Rebellion for Example, as they are the most distinguished in the Sedition, are most distinguished
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 already 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 Person whom we defame, to hinder our doing. The general Tye we have to all Men, as Children of the same heavenly & earthly 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 Detraction; 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.

If 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 Suspicions, This is to do a great Injustice to our Neighbour. 'Tis greatly to wrong him, to form Judgments grounded on Suspicions, and to destroy
DETRACTION.

For altho' we don't say they are very certain, yet as the World now goes, choosing 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.

The 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
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 Desart, 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 Jepthah, (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.

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 should we degrade them, and if their own Wit has rais'd them to this high Station, they are so much the more Worthy
Worthy, (far from meriting Contempt,) 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 punished by the Magistrate, or which altho' not punished, do yet dishonour their House.

Moreover what has been said of the Unhappiness of Birth, and the Infirmities of the Body, may also extend to the involuntary Defects of the Mind. To detract from a Person because GOD has not allowed him the Gift of Memory, to deride involuntary Ignorance and invincible Stupidity, would certainly be a great Aggravation of Detraction, for the Reasons already alleged, 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 consequently, 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 back-biting, when he divulges the Sins where-into 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 would have, were they not accompanied with Circumstances which make them les. In short every Circumstance that lessens the Fault of the Doer, aggravates the Sin of the Publisher.
Circumstance the Third.

'Tis an enhancing of Sin to mention Faults of which Persons have repented. Who would have reproached St. Peter for his Cowardice 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.

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 Vices
Vices of the Heart, I reckon all those Sins which St. 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 that it could be without Detraction. Such are the Debaucherries and Impurities, which St. 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 Dis-
course 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.

ARTICLE V.

Time and Place may aggravate the Horror of Detraction.

For 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. Neverthelefs,
Sect. V. vertheless, ( O the Wickedness, ) we see Persons who seem to come to these sacred Places, only to examine curiously, and malignantly 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. 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 represent it ever so little and trifling, still he knows it to be a Sin, and this Knowledge serves to make it the greater; Faults committed by Ignorance being more excusable. 3. That we commit this Sin from very small Motives, yea from very evil Motives, as Self-Love, Covetousness, &c.
DEFRACTION.

The Uses of this Section.

W E 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 should 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? 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.

L 3
Sect. V. The same may be said in general of all the Degrees of this Sin, and even of the Sin itself considered without its aggravating Circumstances. Suppose we should avoid these Circumstances, yet what could 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 itself 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 would have been more blameable, had he amassed a great Number.
DETRACTION.

SECTION VI.

Of the Effects of Detraction.

Detraction be a Sin in its Sources and in itself, 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.

ARTICLE I.

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

In this first Respect it is exceeding detrimental to these Persons. For 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 extremally 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 des-
Treatise against

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 would say the same or like Things of him, which he has heard spoken at another's Cost. After having been a Witness to a Conversation where no one was spared, can he persuade 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 Scourner is an Abomination to Men, says Solomon.

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 should overthrow his Neighbour's Reputation, would 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 fell'd it, one Inch the higher?
Nothing is more ridiculous than to de-
tract 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 Detrac-
tors but Comedians, who act their Neigh-
bours on a hundred different Stages? The
Profession of a Buffoon is looked upon with
the same Eye, and yet this is the Profes-
sion 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.

III.

Not only are Detractors exposed to the
Lois of their own Reputation, but also to
the Hatred, and Resentment of those whom
they have backbitten. From hence arise
to 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 Secre-
tary
tory 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 itself, 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 itself.* 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 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 of Retaliation, Eye for Eye, and Tooth for Tooth.

St. Peter requires that Christians suffer not as Busy-Bodies in other Men's Matters; which teaches us, That Detractors by getting acquainted and medling unadvisedly in other Men's Matters, do bring themselves into difficult Affairs. And besides 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 see Good? Keep thy Tongue from evil, says David. He that hath a perverse Tongue falleth into mischief, but whosoever keepteth his Mouth and his Tongue keepeth his Soul from Troubles. A Whisperser separateth chief Friends. Cast out the Scorer and Contention shall cease; yea Strife and Reproach shall cease, 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
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 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. 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 surpas, 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; be-
cause 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 detracting 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 Miferies on themselves by their own Detractions, are involved in the same Sin with Self-Murderers, except
except that they sin only in proportion to the hurt brought on themselves; but if hereby they bring death on themselves, they are then self-murderers indeed? That by raising quarrels between themselves and those whom by their discourse, they injure, they act contrary to the precept of the apostle Paul, who requires us to be at peace with all men, as far as in our power; and to that of our Saviour, to be harmless as doves, and wise as serpents; nothing being more opposite to wisdom and prudence, even humane prudence, than the conduct of those we are speaking of, since they expose themselves to many evils which it is wisdom to avoid: Which made Solomon say, 'he that backbiteth is a fool;' and elsewhere, 'he that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour, but a man of understanding holdeth 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, which
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 for-
merly done was but the Effect of Hypo-
crisy; which takes away the Reputation
acquired by Actions which perhaps were
really good. For the present Time, be-
cause 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 Rever-
beration 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 per-
swaded '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, Thou-
sands 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 diabolically
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!

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 Witness 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
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 refined on the common way of sinning?
Or let us suppose, That a Man 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 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.

ARTICLE IV.

Detraction is very fatal to any State and Society.

After 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.

2. Historys
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 thoufand 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 wherefeto 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 uncapable of governing; People despife 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 Men, says Solomon, bring a City into a Spare.
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 fold 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, rather 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.

ARTICLE V.

Detraction is hurtful to the Church.

We 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 desiling his
his Neighbour's Bed, he would have co-Sect. VI
ver'd the enormous Crime with his own imperal Mantle, for fear any one should be icandalized therewith.

2. Detractors hinder the Name of GOD from being glorified. Let your good Works so shine before Men, that others may glorify your Father which is in Heaven, said our Lord. Whereby it appears that it is by the Sight of our good Works that others are induced to glorify GOD. How then will they glorify him, if they see nothing 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 Outrage 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.

(i.) With Regard to those within the Church: Who can doubt for instance, that when the Leaders of Churches are quarrelling about Trifles, and Disputes and Questions about Words, and do anathematize each other for meer Nothings, and compose Volumes
Sect. VI. Volumes for the Ruin of each other's 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 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. Thos 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,
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.

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 Actions?" 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 profess Subjection to this Religion and this Legislator! Detractions then do as far as they are able, crucify themselves afresh the Lord of Glory and put him to open Shame. Alas, had we the Interest of Religion 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. Thereby we shall hinder the Insults and Reproaches of its Enemies and rather gain them over to Christ. Being obliged as we are to pray for the Peace of Jerusalem, to seek the Prosperity of the Church, and
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 Virtues 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 uniting two Things, that are so incompatible. But is it not acting the Madman, to expose one's self to the Danger of Destruction, or rather to the inevitable Loss of the Riches and Glories of Paradise?

If we won't hide the Faults of our Neighbours, how can we hope that Jesus Christ will hide our Faults, when He shall judge the World in Righteousness? He will find his Arrests on our Practice or Omission of Love. To those whom He shall condemn 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 Members, you exposed them to the Eyes of all the World, by publishing their Imperfections. 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, Depart therefore, ye Cursed, &c. Then shall be fully accomplished the Truth of Solomon's Words, GOD scorneth the Scorners, but giveth Grace to the lowly.

'Tis an important Consideration, That GOD will treat Detractors with the utmost Severity. There is not only this Evil in Detraction, that we shall render up an Account of what we have said, but that we
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 Publishes other Men's failings shall find no Pardon for his Excesses. And truly he shall be punished as Detractor, then as blamable for the evil Causes which made Men detract, and as the Author of all the pernicious Effects which Detraction produces; and because he hath been guilty of that very Sin, which he hath so much condemned in others.

After all this, Who can think that Detraction 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 Witnesses against Detractors!

The Uses of this Section.

Hitherto we have proved, that Detraction 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, without
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 All!

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 Detraacting, 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 whose honour has been fulfilled, and whose credit has been diminished, do not revenge themselves on the injurious and make them repent: and a detractor never can be saved if he do not repent and be converted. On these two regards, where all our interests are united, let me use the words of the Apostle, *If ye bite & devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

**SECTION VII.**

**Wherein some doubts and cases of conscience 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 exceptions, and that in many cases, detraction is not a sin, but is very lawful and even necessary.

**1st general case.**

It may be said in a general way, that all these reasons which on some occasions should hinder us from detracting, such as the divine command, charity, justice, &c.,
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 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.

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.

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 expos'd 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.

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

DETRACION.
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 flick to say that the Cretians or Candians are always Liars, Bow Bellies. Yet still it must be remembred, that all which is lawful...
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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.

4th CASE.

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

As to Raileries 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 Jesting, as we say. They must be aware that we are playing and
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 Prefence, 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.

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 whole 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 ourselves, 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
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.

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 forts of Sinners who are punished by civil Laws, and the Laws of all Nations, such as Robbers, Murderers, &c.
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. 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 would be soon found in a woeful 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
whereas these Chaftisements 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-wreck of the Faith; and according to the Opinion of some he argues against their Sentiments of the Resurrection in his 1st Epift. to the Corinthians, 15th Chapter. And he says of Demas, that he had forsaken him, having loved this present World. In his Epistle to
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, would 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.

We
Sect. VII. 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 Heretics 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 befal 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 ourselves, 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.
DETRACTION.

I wrote, says he, unto the Church; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the Preeminence 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 Diotrephes 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 itself 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
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 would be contrary to Justice, for the same Reason it would 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 would be no longer Virtues, if there were any contradiction between them.

4. Part of those Reasons we have alleged 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 would injure us, or actually have, injured us, by representing to them the Injustice of their Proceedings, and by endeavouring to persuade them to make us satisfaction. So Christ commands us in Mat. 18. 17. ver. and following.

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 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
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 wou'd 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,
Pfalmift, 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 would not contradict what we have alleged.

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 Causes why
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
DETRACTION.

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,

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 who
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 * Sat-
yrists 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 Ob-
jects 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 ownCrimes!
'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.
J. Ardeur de se montrer, ou plutôt de médire,
Arna la vertu du Vers de la Satire.
Boileau Arr. Poetique.
DETRACTION.

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,

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.
To resolve this Question, we may say in general, that a Man ought not to do, because it is ordinarily a bragging of Debuchery 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 ourselves may scandalize others, and therefore to be abounded 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.

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
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 lie. 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.

**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
DE TR A C T I O N.

‘Tis the Opinion of some Authors and Popish Casuists, that it is so, but this is not mine. For,

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

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 Meaneness 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.

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, nor
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 everyone 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 would be done by. Far then from being invincible, we need but descend into our own Hearts,
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 shou'd it excuse Christians, that have so much Light which the others had not?

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
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 contrary-wise, all that is done with this sort of Faith, is not a Virtue nor an Excuse.

10th 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
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.

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 fir-mat 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.

SECTION VIII.

Answers to the Objections made in favour of Detraction.

That we have hitherto said against Detraction, would be perhaps to little purpose, if we shou'd not answer the Objections which are made to authorize 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 Bias.
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 would 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, would he address himself, and would 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 would go and converse with them in Private, and with mildness would 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 them; 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 up
up publickly to their vicious Inclinations. Many do even persuade 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 throu' your Detractions?

As by Violence and Persecution Men never make true Converts and good Profelytes, so we never make Persons the better by tearing their Reputation. We may perhaps engage 'em to hide their Crimes better, and to lave 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 Hatesfulness 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, these 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 GOD 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 would say or do, they would make an open Profession of Libertinism and Debauchery. Moreover, we must not imagine, that all those who do not fear GOD 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
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, First, That 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 Partisans 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 as the most Learned and Eloquent among Men, yea as Angels,yet we are nothing if we have not Charity, according to S. Paul.

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 GOD'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
he who turns his towards Evil & Detraction, 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 would 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 lies 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 last Objection was grounded upon our fear of the Judgments of Men; the next is grounded upon their Example and Authority.

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.
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.

By Virtue of what, may we dispense with Duty thro' Custom? Is it a Rule itself? 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 itself? Nemo ad alium transferre potest plus iuris 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 Head to raise himself.
felf Children from the very Stones in the Sect.

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 reproving him to his Face and with warmth? and yet there was only Imprudence in the Conduct 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 worship 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 excuse 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 blameable. 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 Person on by our wicked Example, we ought strongly to withstand those of others.

Here
Here you will say, What can a few Examples do against an almost universal Corruption? I answer, First, This Corruption would 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 does 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 Crowd: 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 choose 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.

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.

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, you'd 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 itself.

All the agreeableness and pleasure of Conversation, say some, is spoiled by restraining...
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 brutifh Pastime. The Remorces which Detractors feel for the Commiilion 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.

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
The Company of those whom we must soon forake, if they don't forake 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?

VI.

Some imagine to say much in favour of Detraction, by alding that ve 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 those 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,
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.

VIII

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

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

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.

IX.

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
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 lie, 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 would 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.

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. '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 would
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would 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 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.

It must be remembered, 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 preceding 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 Example
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.

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 would 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.

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 would abstain therefrom, were he sure that his Tongue should be bored every Time he Detracted. Any one thro' fear of this Punishment would refrain immediately: Why then don't we refrain thro' fear of far greater and more durable Pains in the other World,
World, if we can't be persuaded thereto
thro' Love to GOD and thro' noble Prin-
ciples? If it be impossible to refrain De-
traction, 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 Martyr-
dom, 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 Mem-
bers?

But if it seem impossible to refrain De-
tracting at our neighbour's Cost, there ap-
ppears in some Persons a still greater impos-
sibility, 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 spoke
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 GOD, 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 us
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 spake evil of them, and they condemn this Vice in others, and yet
DETRACTION.

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.

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,
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.

'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.
DETRAC TION.

The Uses of this Section.

It is easy to shew in a Word the Weakness of the Objections made to authorize 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 would 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
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 Detracting 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 him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.
SECTION IX.

Motives to avoid this Sin.

In 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 forfake 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.

1st 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,
Detraction.

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 detraet, 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 detraet 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.

R 2
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 David, 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-backed, who don't see the Load they carry about with 'em, continually even to the Grave, which they who walk behind 'em can easily 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 nothing 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 \textit{sect. IX} Fault of being a \textit{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 \textit{David, Lord, Cleanse thou me from secret Faults}.

Since then every one is undoubtedly a Sinner, and since all Men have their Failings, with what Reason or Justice can we deride those of others? Can we do it, without condemning our selves by accusing our selves in the Person of others? 'Tis nevertheless as common as it is ridiculous, to see those who would pass for fine Railers, begin to rail at themselves and afterwards attack others. Can we see thro' it, that Persons 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 Railly, but by their manner of spreading it abroad.

In general, As all Destractors are Sinners, and perhaps culpable of those very Failts they blame in others, are they not afraid that we shall apply to them, what the Apostle said of the Heathen, \textit{Wherefore, O Man, whoever thou art, that judgest another, thou art inexcusable; for where-}...
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, \textit{Let him among you who is 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 lay to them, as the converted Thief to his Companion, \textit{Fearest not thou God, seeing we are in the same Condemnation?} Under the Law, \textit{God strongly recommended to the Israelites, Pity for Strangers and the Afflicted, because they themselves had been Strangers in Egypt, 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.}

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? \textit{Tis to the Grace of God.} Is this then any Reason for his Pride? No indeed: On the contrary, \textit{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.} \textit{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.

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 itself, 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 finning, 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 Esayias exhorted the Jews to Charity, because they who had need of Charity were
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
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 MOTIVE.

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 Detraacting 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 there-in, 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.

2. There
2. There is no Person's Faults so much 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 Respect 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 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 profitable to us, but also because it may be so with regard to our Neighbour. It causes our Advice for the good of particular Persons or of the Publick to be better received
Sect. 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 MOTIVE.

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 strictly 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.

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.

7th Motive.

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! 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?

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.
Detraction.

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 Favourites 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 bruitish as Sin. Sinners are also in sacred Writ represented to us as blind Persons.
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 Motive.

Another Motive may be taken from the Nature of the Evil caused by Detraction, namely the Loss of the Reputation of those who are detracted, a Reputation which beside that
that it is very precious, is also very easily loft and ruined. 'Tis like the Eye, the finest, but withal the most tender and sensible 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 detracting.

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
Sect. IX for, 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 shewed no Mercy, shall have Judgment without Mercy. Who would refuse to give something to a poor Man, especially if what he gave did not incom-mode 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 the Certainty and Horror of those Pains which they will suffer throughout Eternity, if when they have been weighed in the Balance of God's Justice, they are found light, like Belshazzar. It was by such a Motive as this, even by the Consideration of the Destruction and End of the World, which should precede the universal Judgment, 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 consuming Men, who shall then be only changed: Our Bodies will be dissolved by Death, and 'tis this Death which should hinder us from detractions. What Service will it then be to us, that we have passed for agreeable Railers, 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 detraction he may also hinder it from uttering any other Words which are contrary to God's Orders.
Detraction.

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 way to Sanctification, and thereby to Salvation.

You will perhaps say, That this would be to attempt an Impossibility, which a wise Man will not, since this same Apostle assures us, that no Man can tame the Tongue, inasmuch as it is an Evil that cannot 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.

But moreover, I am persuaded, That when the Apostle says, No Man can brieve the Tongue, it must be understood of the Tongue of another Man which is not in our Power; and not of our own Tongue, which
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'd allow the Term) is not so much a Virtue as an Abstinence from a Vice, or at fur-
theft a negative Virtue, which consists not 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 Enemies; this is a Mark that they were not subject 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 itself. 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 secretly, 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 who...
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 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 would 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!

I acknowledge. That the generality of the Pagan World was extremely 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 God, and without hope in the World!

* 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 would gain the Good-Will of Men, Those who would 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 Brethren; Why do ye wrong one to another?

S E C T I O N
DETRACTION.
SECTION X.

Containing many Duties and Counsels concerning Detraction.

It 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.

Not 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
first 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 evi-
dent.

We must often and strongly represent
to our selves, how Detraction is a very
great Sin, its fatal Effects and the power-
ful Motives which should turn us therefrom.
Certain I am, we should therein find Rea-
tions so strong against Detraction, that we
should not be in a suspense about doing
for others, what we would 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 thi, we
shall have neither Time nor Will for De-
traction: We shall no more find Time
therefor, seeing the Instruction we owe to
our selves, the Care we are obliged to take
not
not to fall into numberless Sins which so easily beset us; and the Time it self which demands the Practice of the Virtues commanded us, will leave us no leisure to detract 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 without Ceasing. Would we employ that Time which we spend in prying into and finding out the Defects of others, in correcting 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 leisure to read GOD's Word in private, and to discharge the other Duties of Piety; but this Complaint would cease if we did employ 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 left the Strength
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 GOD, 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.

Moreover, If we apply our selves to the Things of the Kingdom of Heaven as we ought, we shall have no Will for Detraction, 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 itself 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 made a Covenant with his Eyes, that he might not Sin by their means, so we should make a Covenant with our Tongue, that we offend not GOD 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.

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 would 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' 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 ourselves, 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.

We should avoid having a strict Commerce 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
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
forfake 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-
sions may be a great help to us, to hinder
us from Detracting, according to that Maxim
of the wise Man, He that walketh with
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 bury
Sect. X. our selyes 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 alleged 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 Meditation of our Hearts may be acceptable in his Sight. And in fine, That in Paradise 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 Chrift: for the accuser 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 in 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.

ARTICLE II.

The Duties of those who are fallen into Detraction.

In 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 forswake 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.

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 detraded, 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.

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, and 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.

ARTICLE III

The Duty of those in Presence of whom People have Detracted.

The 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 their Duty.

Thei
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
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 ac-
cused of, make known his good Quali-
ties. 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 rela-
ting also what is good in the same. Take
the Apostles themselves; you will see them
proud, ambitious, infatuated with a tem-
poral 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
DETRACtion.

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 dif-
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 Physiognomist who accused Socrates of being brutish, given to Drunkenness and Unchastity, had reason therefore, 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 spoken ill of, we must break off the Conversation 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 another, we are with Moderation to make him perceive the wrong he is in in detracting. 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 reference 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 offended, 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 o-
thers. 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 hear-
en favourably to those who would 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 ob-
liged to do, since to do otherwise is to
second Detractors, to favour them, and
consequentially 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 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..."
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 ourselves 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 practice 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 and good Works.

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 would 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 would 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. Moreover, 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 would 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 ourselves
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 231
2. A second Precaution is, to act with a great deal of meekness, prudence and circumspection, 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 Deceits 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 him 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 distasteful 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 inreat him to pardon them both. This is anessential 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.

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
Detraction from those who have formerly detracted from us. Hence that saying of St. 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; Knowing 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 indissoluble 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 could revenge my self. I could easily tell of many shameful 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 would inflame that we have great Reason to complain of a Man, to call him a Detractor, and to shew that he has done shameful Things, the Publication whereof would
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 as a rule, to forget, to hide and pardon a Fault, are expressed 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 would forgive us our Trespasses as we forgive Men their's (with the Mouth only) is to pray that he would shew us no Mercy.

We must imitate the Example of St. 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 Jefuitical 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 I said with regard to Shimei, who cursed him, *The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.*

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 who
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 vexed 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 Fewel 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 Supposition 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 least it is very possible that all those whose help we need, may themselves speak ill of us. If we would 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.

In fine, If any one has Detracted 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 persuade you from Revenge, here is a Way that you may be revenged without offending GOD, and without injuring yourself; 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 Design to amend and not to be offended. This excellent Counsel the wise Man gives us, 

*Take no heed unto all Words that are spoken, least thou hear thy Servant curse thee. For oftentimes also thine own Heart knoweth, that thou thyself 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 examine 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 detract from us, since we have not given any
one Occasion to hate and defame us. Let 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 vicious, you may be assured, That in this detracting 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 cenfure 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 Counsel of Epictetus, "I am not at all astonished 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 to passibly, how much more does GOD know them?"
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 would 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 would 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 would 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 its 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 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 Detractors of others, since being shewn their Faults by them, and being apprised that they are blamed 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 Of Contention and not sincerely, supposing to add Affliction to my Bonds. What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in Pretence or in Truth, CHRIST is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea and will rejoice. Thus how ill ever the Motive may be which Detractors act from, we know
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 would 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 com-
monly 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 unli-
mited and able to help them, that he wouldn't
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 Detrac-
tion. But being persuaded that those
Exhortations we have made thro' the whole
Course of this Treatise, are capable of ma-
kong Impression on the Hearts, where the
Love of GOD, of our Neighbour, and of our
selves is not entirely quenched, there re-
mains but little for us to do to finish this
Treatise.

I exhort you to consider, That the De-
tractor sins essentially against Charity, and
thereby shews that he has no Religion at all;
for how can a Man have any Religion, if
Sect. X. if we 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 of his own Blood; and whither he 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 fat on Fire of Hell, as S. James says?

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.
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 avoiding Detraction.

2. A second Character which Exhortations should have that so they may be followed 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 Detraction, 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'd their Detractions; but at all Times, in all Nations, and at present as much and more than ever, Detraction has upheld and does uphold 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 this Regard we are persuaded, 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 persuaded 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 forswake their Crimes, and to follow Virtue, as has been already shewn, and therefore they have Right to exhort Men to shun Detraction. 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 GOD accompany this Work with his Blessing, and his Grace for the Sanctification, and the eternal Salvation of those who shall read it.