

# THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE

by

**Richard Allestree**

(1619-1681)

*originally published at Oxford*

**1675**

*Updated and Modernized with Annotations by*

 **HF Books**

**2021**

*"Death and* **Life** *are in the power of the* **Tongue** *"*  
*Proverbs 18:21*

## **The Government of the Tongue by Richard Allestree**

*Updated and modernized from the 1675 Oxford edition of The Government of the Tongue by Richard Allestree from the Editor's personal library; notes & annotations added by H&F.*

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**PRE-PRINT COPY**

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“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; **whisperers, backbiters,** haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them.”

*Romans 1:28-32*

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## Preview

*Quotations by Richard Allestree*




☞ *"I advise those who would judge others to practice it first at home, within their own hearts, and if they would confine themselves to that until there is nothing left to correct, I do not doubt that their neighbor will be free of danger from their detractions."*


☞ *"It is very observable that God, who 'made of one blood all nations of the earth,' Acts 17:26, has so equally distributed all the most valuable privileges of human nature, himself designing to preclude all insulting of one man over another."*


☞ *"Amidst the universal deprivation of our faculties, there is no faculty more notorious than that of speech. Amidst that infinity of words in which we exhaust our breath, how few words are there that do at all correspond with the original designation of speech; nay, which do not flatly contradict it? To what unholy, uncharitable purposes is the useful faculty of speech perverted? That which was meant to serve as the perfume of the tabernacle, to send up the incense of praise and prayer, now*


*Preview: Quotations by Richard Allestree, 1675*


*exhales impious vapors to eclipse, if it were possible, the Father of Light. That which should be the storehouse of relief and refreshment to our brethren has become a magazine of all offensive weapons against them, 'spears and arrows and sharp swords,' as the Psalmist says. We not only fall by the slipperiness of our tongues, but we deliberately discipline and train them to mischief. We 'bend our tongues as our bows for lies,' as the prophet says, Jeremiah 9:3. And in a word, what God affirmed of the old world, in relation to thoughts, 'the imagination of the thoughts' of man, is too applicable to our words: they 'are only evil and that continually,' Genesis 6:5; and that which was intended for the instrument—the aid—of human society has become the disturber of human society."*

 **"Aright speech tends to the glory of God and the good of others.** But this is not to be understood so restrictively as if nothing but religion or the necessary concerns of human life may lawfully be brought into discourse: some portion is to be indulged to common civility; more yet to the intimacies and endearments of friendship; and a suitable portion to those recreative discourses which maintain the cheerfulness of society."

 **"In all detraction, there is some mixture of pride, and therefore I suppose a caution against pride is so generally seasonable that it may well lead the vanguard of all other advice that can be given in this matter."**

 **"Certainly there is nothing that does so gratify and so regale a haughty spirit as usurped sovereignty over their neighbors."**

 **"Such bitter invectives against other people's faults and indulgence or palliation of their own only shows that their zeal lies in their affections and that they consider not so much what is done as who does it."**

 **"And if you must speak of other people's faults, let it not be to defame but to amend; let us convert our detraction and backbiting into admonition and fraternal correction.** If people had the zeal for virtue to which they pretend when they inveigh against vice, they would surely take this course of action, for this method alone provides for the possibility of reforming the offender. But alas people arrange the matter in such a way—as if they feared losing an opportunity to make a great out-

cry—that they will tell the whole world, but not that person that it most concerns. Indeed it is a deplorable thing to see how universally this requisite Christian duty is neglected, and to that neglect we may in a great degree impute that strange overflowing of detraction among us.


✿ **"It is the peculiar insolence of those degenerate Christians who surely cannot be thought to be in earnest when they speak of singing Hallelujahs to God in the next world, while they entertain him here only with the sullen noise of murmuring and repining.** For we are not to think that heaven will suddenly metamorphose us, and turn our exclamations and wild clamors against the will of God towards us in particular into lauds and magnificats of the same. Heaven will indeed perfect and crown those graces which were inchoate and begun in us here, but no person's conversion will follow upon his or her entering into heaven; for Christ expressly told us that, 'except we be converted, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Thus, if we go on in the future in our froward discontent, that discontent will associate us with those with whom is 'Weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.'"

✿ **"Faults of the tongue are the harder to avoid because they are exemplified to us every day in common practice, and some of them are even recommended as reputable and ingenious.** And it is a strange insinuating power that example and custom have over us. We see this influence in every trivial secular instance in our every habit. And for this very reason, all sobriety and strict virtue now lies under heavy prejudice, and no part of that virtue is more prejudiced than that of the tongue, which current and common custom has now enfranchised from all the bonds that moralists and preachers of the Gospel had laid upon it. But the greater the difficulties are, the more it ought to awaken our diligence, for if we are loose and careless, odds are that we will be carried away with the rest. We had better therefore fix ourselves. And by sober recollection of the ends for which speech was given us and the account we must one day give of our use of it, we had better impress upon ourselves the baseness and the danger of misemploying our tongue in this use of speech."

✿ **"The tongue is a busy and active part of us that can scarcely be kept from motion, and if that activity is not resolved to good employments, it will be practicing itself upon bad.** For the mind is like the stomach in requiring wholesome nourishment, and if it is not supplied

**Preview:** *Quotations by Richard Allestree, 1675*

*with that which is wholesome, it will at last indulge in those things to which the fleshly nature is most inclined. So that, if in our conversation we do not interchange sober and useful notions between us, we will at best only traffic in toys and baubles and most commonly, infection and poison. Whoever would keep their tongue from exposing themselves or others to sin, must tune it to a quite contrary key by making it an instrument and an incentive to virtue."*

 **"We should be careful to improve every opportunity for directing our tongues to pay our more immediate homage to God through the duties of prayers and praises, making them not only the expressions of our pious affections, but the promoters of godly prayer and praise in others. And indeed that person can scarcely be thought to be in earnest, who prays, 'Hallowed be thy name,' and yet does not as much endeavor to glorify God's name in the company of others as he does solicit it from God."**



## Preface

to the 1675 Edition



he government of the tongue has ever been justly reputed to be one of the most important parts of the human regiment. The philosopher and the Divine equally attest this. Solomon (*who was both*) gives his suffrage also: the persuasions to and encomiums<sup>a</sup> of it taking up a considerable part of his book of *Proverbs*. I shall not, therefore, need to say anything, to justify my choice of this subject, which has much better authorities to commend it. I rather wish that it had not the super-addition of an accidental fitness grounded upon the universal neglect of it, it now seeming to be an art that is wholly outdated. For although some lineaments of it may be met with in books, yet there are scarcely any footsteps of it in practice where, alone, it can be significant. The attempt, therefore, of reviving it, I am sure, is seasonable; I wish only that it were half as easy.

Indeed that skill was never very easy, it requiring the greatest vigilance and caution and therefore, it is not to be attained by loose trifling spirits. The tongue is so slippery that it easily

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a. commendation

*Preface to 1675 Edition*

deceives a drowsy or heedless guard. Nature seems to have given it some unhappy advantage towards that. It is, in its frame, the most ready for motion of any member, needs not so much as the flexing of a joint, and by access of humors it acquires a glibness too, the more to facilitate its moving. And alas, we too much find the effect of this its easy frame: it often moves without giving us warning and, as children when they happen upon a rolling machine, can set it in such a motion that wiser people cannot bring it to a sudden stop. So the childish parts of us—*our passions, our fancies, all our mere animal faculties*—can thrust our tongues into such disorders as our reason cannot easily rectify. The due management therefore of this unruly member may rightly be esteemed one of the greatest mysteries of wisdom and virtue. This is intimated by James, “*If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body,*” James 3:2. It is recorded of Bembo, a primitive Christian, that coming to a friend to teach him a Psalm, the thirty-ninth, he began, “*I said I will look to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue,*” and upon hearing this first verse, he stopped his tutor, saying, “*This is enough for me, if I learn it as I ought to.*” And after six months, being rebuked for not coming again,<sup>a</sup> he replied that he had not yet learned his first lesson; nay, after nineteen years he professed that in all that time he had scarcely learned to fulfill that one line. I do not give this instance to discourage, but rather to move you to the study<sup>b</sup>, for a lesson that requires so much time to learn needs to be begun early.

And this is especially true in this age, wherein the contrary liberty has such a prepossession that all look on it as a part of their birthright, nay, they do not only let their tongues loose, but studiously suggest inordinancies<sup>c</sup> to them, and use the spur where they should use the bridle. By this means conversation

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a. *for instruction*

b. *to do likewise*

c. *excesses*

is so generally corrupt that many have had cause to wish they had not been made sociable creatures. A man secluded from company can have but the devil and himself to tempt him, but he that converses with others, has almost as many snares as he has companions. Men barter vices and, as if each did not have enough of his own growth, transplants out of his neighbor's soil, so that that which was intended to cultivate and civilize the world has turned it into a wild desert and a wilderness.

This face of things, I confess, does not look very promising to one who is solicitous of a reformation. But whatever the hopes are, I am sure the needs are great enough to justify the attempt. For, as the disease is epidemic, so also is it mortal, being utterly inconsistent with that pure religion which leads to life. We may take James' word for it, "*If any man seem to be religious and bridle not his tongue, that man's religion is vain,*" James 1:26. God knows we have little enough religion among us; it is a great pity that we should frustrate the little we have, rendering that utterly insignificant which at best amounts to so little. Let therefore the difficulty and necessity of the task prevail with us to take time now and not to defer this so necessary a work until the night comes, or imagine that the tongue will be able to expiate a life of guilt with a feeble, *Lord have mercy on me*, at the last moment of life. For if indeed that is possible, it is but a broken reed to trust to inasmuch as no one knows whether he or she shall have time or grace for such a prayer. He may be surprised with an oath, a blasphemy, or a detraction in his mouth, and *many* have been surprised by death in this way. It is sure that there must be a dying moment for each, but how can anyone assure himself regarding his end so that his expiring breath is so employed? Surely they<sup>a</sup> cannot think that those incantations, *though hellish enough*, can make them shot free or render them invulnerable to death's darts? And if they do not have that or some other just as

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a. those who put trust in the repetition of prayers

*Preface to 1675 Edition*

ridiculous reserve<sup>a</sup>, it is strange what else might make them run such a mad adventure.

But I expect it should be objected that this little despicable tract is not proportionable to the encounter to which it is brought, that besides the unskilful managing of those points it does touch, it wholly omits many proper to the subject, there being faults of the tongue which it passes over in silence. I confess there is color enough for this objection, but I believe if it was put to a vote, more would resolve that I had said too much rather than too little. If I had enlarged to the utmost compass of this theme, I would have made the volume of so frightening a bulk that few would have attempted it, and by saying much I would have said nothing at all to those who most need it. Men's stomachs are generally so queasy in these cases, that it is not safe to overload them. Let them test how they can digest this and, if they can digest it so as to turn it into kindly nourishment, they will be able to supply themselves with the remainder. For I think I may with some confidence affirm that he that can confine his tongue within the limits here prescribed, may without much difficulty refrain its other excursions. All I shall beg of the Reader is but to come with sincere intentions, and then perhaps these few *stones and sling*, used in the name and with invocation of the Lord of Hosts, may countervail the massive armor of the uncircumcised Philistine. And may that God, who loves to magnify his power in weakness, give it success.

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a. "*Mental reservations are the refuge of hypocrites.*" (Webster)





## CHAPTER 1

# The Use of Speech




an at his first creation was substituted by God as his vicegerent to receive the homage and enjoy the services of all inferior beings: nay further, was endowed with excellencies fit to maintain the port of so vast an empire. Yet those very excellencies, as they qualified him for dominion, so they unfitted him for a satisfaction or acquiescence in those his vassals. The dignity of his nature set him above the society or converse of mere animals, so that in all the pomp of his royalty, amidst all the throng and variety of creatures, he still remained solitary. But God, who knew what an appetite for society he had implanted in him, judged this no agreeable state for him, "*It is not meet that man should be alone.*" *Genesis 2:18.* And, as in the universal frame of nature, he engrafted such an abhorrence of vacuity, that all creatures do rather submit to a preternatural motion than admit it; so, in this empty, this destitute condition of man, he relieved him by a miraculous expedient, divided him that he might unite him, and made one part

 *The dignity of man's nature set him above the society of mere animals.*


 *God implanted in man an appetite for society & an abhorrence of vacuity.*

of him an associate for the other.

Neither did God take this care to provide him a companion merely for the intercourses of sense: had that been the sole aim, there needed no new productions, there were sensitive creatures enough. The design was to entertain his nobler principle, his reason, with a more equal converse; assign him an intimate whose intellect as much corresponded with his as did the outward form; whose heart, according to Solomon's resemblance, answered his, "*As in water face answers face,*" *Proverbs 27:19*; one with whom he might communicate minds, traffic and interchange all the notions and sentiments of a reasonable soul.

 *God's design was for man to entertain the principle of reason with an intimate of equal intellect.*

But though there were this sympathy in their more sublime parts which disposed them to the most intimate union, yet there was a cloud of flesh in the way which intercepted their mutual view, nay, permitted no intelligence between them other than by the mediation of some organ equally commensurate to soul and body. And to this purpose the infinite wisdom of God ordained speech, which, as it is a sound resulting from the modulation of the air, has most affinity to the spirit, but as it is uttered by the tongue, has immediate cognation<sup>a</sup> with the body, and so is the fittest instrument to manage a commerce between the rational, yet invisible, powers of human souls clothed in flesh.


 *God ordained speech as the vehicle of the interchange of sentiments between reasonable souls.*


And, as we have reason to admire the excellency of this contrivance, so have we to applaud the extensiveness of the benefit. From this it is we derive all the advantages of society, and without this, men of the nearest neighborhood would have signified no more to each other than our antipodes now do to us.

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*a. relation*

All our arts and sciences for the accommodation of this life, would have remained only a rude chaos in their first matter had not speech, by a mutual comparing of notions, arranged them into order. By this it is that we can give one another notice of our wants and solicit relief; by this we interchangeably communicate advise, reproof, consolation, and all the necessary aids to human weakness. This is that which possesses us of the most valuable blessing of human life, I mean, friendship, which could no more have been contracted amongst dumb men than it can between pictures and statues. Nay, further, to this we owe in a great degree the interests even of our spiritual being, all the oral, yea and written revelations too of God's will, for had there been no language, there had been no writing. And though we must not pronounce how far God might have evidenced himself to mankind by immediate inspiration of every individual, yet we may safely rest in the Apostle's inference in *Romans 10:14*, "*How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?*"


 From speech we derive all the advantages of society.

 To speech we owe the interests of our spiritual being in all the revelations of God.

From all these excellent uses of it in respect of man, we may collect another in relation to God, that is, the praising and magnifying his goodness, as for all other effects of his bounty, so particularly that he has given us language and all the consequent advantages of it. This is the just inference of the son of Sirach *Ecclus. 51:22*, "*The Lord has given me a tongue and I will praise him therewith.*" This is the sacrifice which God calls for so often by the Prophets, "*the fruit<sup>a</sup> of our lips,*" as in *Hosea 14:2*, "*Take with you words and turn to the Lord; say to him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, so will we render the fruit of our*

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a. orig., "*the calves of our lips,*" which is a mistranslation; in the Septuagint (second century BC Greek translation of the Old Testament) the Gk. is 'karpos', fruit.

 *The most excellent use of speech & language is the sacrifice of praise giving thanks to God's name.*

*lips,” and of which also the Apostle says, Hebrews 13:15, “The fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.” To this we frequently find the Psalmist exciting both himself and others, “Awake my tongue, awake viol and harp! I will awake the dawn. I will praise you, O Lord, among the people and I will sing unto you among the nations.”*

*Psalms 57:8-9. And “O praise the Lord with me and let us magnify his name together,” Psalms 34:3. And indeed whoever observes that excellent magazine of devotion, the book of Psalms, shall find that the Lauds<sup>a</sup> make up a very great part of it.*

By what has been said, we may define what are the grand uses of speech, viz. the glorifying of God and the benefiting of men. And this helps us with an infallible test by which to try our words; for since everything is so far approvable as it answers the end of its being, whatsoever part of our discourses does not agree

 *The grand uses of speech are the glorifying of God & the benefiting of men.*

with the primitive ends of speech, will not hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary. It will therefore closely concern us to enter upon this scrutiny, to bring our words to this touchstone. For though, in our depraved estimate<sup>b</sup>, the eloquence of language is more regarded than the innocence of it, and though we think our words

vanish with the breath that utters them, yet they become records in God's court, they are laid up in his archives as witnesses either for or against us: for he who is Truth itself has told us, that “*By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.*” *Matthew 12:37.*

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*a. divine worship; praise*

*b. judgement*




## CHAPTER 2

# The Manifold Abuse of Speech

And now, since the original design of speech is so noble and so advantageous that one would be apt to conclude that no rational creature would be tempted to pervert them, since it is sure that he can substitute none for them that is equally conducive to either his honor or his interest.

 *The design of speech is noble & advantageous.*

Yet experience—*that great baffler of speculation*—assures us that the thing is too possible and brings, in all ages, matters of fact to confute our suppositions. Alas, so liable is speech to be depraved that the Scripture describes it as the source of all our other depravity. Original sin came, first, out of the mouth by speaking before it entered in by eating. The first use we find Eve to have made of language<sup>a</sup> was to enter parley<sup>b</sup> with the tempter, and from that, to become a tempter to her husband. And immediately upon the fall, guilty Adam frames his tongue to a frivolous excuse that was much less able to cover his sin than the fig leaves were his nakedness. And

 *So liable is speech to be depraved that it is esteemed the source of all other depravity.*

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a. in Scripture

b. conference

as the tongue that had licked up the venom of the *Serpent of Old* in the infancy of the first world, so neither could it wash it off by the Deluge in the second.<sup>a</sup> No sooner was that small colony, wherewith the depopulated earth was to be replanted, come forth from the Ark, but we meet with Ham<sup>b</sup> a delator<sup>c</sup> to his own father, inviting his brethren to that execrable spectacle of their parent's nakedness.<sup>d</sup>

Nor did this run only in the blood of that accursed person, the holy seed<sup>e</sup> was not totally free from its infection, even the Patriarchs themselves were not exempt. Abraham used a repeated collusion in the case of his wife, and exposed his own integrity to preserve her chastity.<sup>f</sup> Isaac, the heir of his<sup>g</sup> blessing, was the son of his infirmity<sup>h</sup> also, and acted over the same scene upon Rebecca's account. Jacob obtained his father's blessing by a flat lie.<sup>i</sup> Simeon and Levi spoke not only falsely but insidiously, nay, hypocritically, abusing both their proselytes and their religion in order to effect their cruel designs upon the Shechemites.<sup>j</sup> Moses, though a man of an unparalleled meekness, yet "*spoke unadvisedly with his lips,*" *Psalms 106:33*. David uttered a bloody vow against Nabal,<sup>k</sup> spoke words smoother than oil to Uriah when he had don him one injury and designed him

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a. *Mankind embraced sin at the earliest temptation to it, revealing an innate weakness from which no threat of disaster can, by itself, cleanse him.*

b. *orig., Cham*

c. *an informer*

d. *Genesis 9*

e. *The people of Israel; cf., Ezra 9:2.*

f. *Genesis 20*

g. *Abraham's*

h. *old age*

i. *Genesis 27*

j. *Genesis 34*

k. *1 Samuel 25:21-22*

another.<sup>a</sup> It would be endless to reckon up those several instances the Old Testament gives us of these lapses of the tongue: neither lacks there divers in the New Testament, although there is one of so much horror as supersedes the naming of more. I mean that of Peter in his reiterated abjuring of his Lord,<sup>b</sup> a crime which, abstracted<sup>c</sup> from the intention, seems worse than that of Judas: *that* traitor who cried “*Master, Master*” even when he betrayed him, owned his relation,<sup>d</sup> so that, had he been measured only by his tongue, he might have passed for the better disciple.

These are sad instances—not recorded to patronize the sin, but to excite our caution. And we may well apply it to this: if persons of so circumspect a piety have been thus overtaken<sup>e</sup>, what security can there be for our reckless oscitancy<sup>f</sup>? If those who “kept” their mouths, as it were, “with a bridle,” *Psalms 39:1*, could not always preserve themselves in innocence, to what guilt may not our unrestrained, licentious tongues hurry us? Those which, as the Psalmist says, “*are corrupt and speak wickedly to oppress; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue walks through the world,*” *Psalms 73:8-9*, are in that unbounded range<sup>g</sup> very likely to meet with Satan who walks around the same, *Job 2:2*,<sup>h</sup> and by Satan be tuned and set to his

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a. 2 Samuel 11

b. Matthew 26:69-75

c. separated

d. *that which he had previously related (his lie); he did so saying, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.”* Matthew 27:4

e. by sin

f. sleepy dullness


g. lack of restraint (upon their tongues)

h. “*And the Lord said to Satan, From where do you come? And Satan answered the Lord & said, From going to & fro in the earth, and from walking up & down in it. And the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect & upright man, one that fears God & eschews evil?*” *Job 2:2-3*)

key,<sup>a</sup> be screwed and wrested from their proper use and made subservient to his vilest designs.

And would to God that this were only a probable supposition! But alas, experience supplants the use of conjecture regarding this point: we not only presume that it *may* be so, but we actually find that it *is* so. For amidst the universal depravity of our faculties, there is no faculty more notorious than that of speech. Where shall we turn to find speech in its pristine integrity? Amidst that infinity of words in which we exhaust our breath, how few words are there that do at all correspond with the original designation of speech; nay, which do not flatly contradict it? To what unholy, uncharitable purposes is the useful faculty of speech perverted?

That which was meant to serve as the perfume of the tabernacle, to send up the incense of praise and prayer<sup>b</sup>, now exhales impious vapors to eclipse, if it were possible, the Father of Light. That which should be the storehouse of relief and refreshment to our brethren has become a magazine of all offensive weapons against them, “*spears and arrows and sharp swords,*”<sup>c</sup> as the Psalmist often phrases it. We not only fall by the slipperiness of our tongues, but we deliberately discipline and train them to mischief. We “*bend our tongues as our bows for lies,*” as the prophet says, *Jeremiah 9:3.*<sup>d</sup> And in a word, what

 Amidst the universal depravity of our faculties, there is no faculty more notorious than that of speech.

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a. c.f., *Mark 4:15* & *2 Timothy 2:25-26*, which is spoken of those “*who are taken captive by [Satan] at his will.*”

b. c.f., *Revelation 8:4-5*

c. “*My soul is among lions and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears & arrows, & their tongue a sharp sword.*” *Psalms 57:4*

d. “*And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies, but they are not valiant for the truth on the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil & they know not me, says the Lord. Take heed every one of his neighbor & trust not in any brother, for every brother will utterly supplant & every neighbor will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbor & will not speak the truth; they have taught*

God affirmed of the old world, in relation to *“the imagination of the thoughts”* of man,<sup>a</sup> is too applicable to our words: they *“are only evil and that continually,”* Genesis 6:5; and that which was intended for the instrument—the *aid*—of human society has become the disturber, the pest, of human society.

 That which was intended for the instrument of human society has become the disturber of it.

I shall not attempt a particular discussion of all the vices of the tongue: to draw an exact map of that *“world of iniquity,”* as James calls it,<sup>b</sup> would surpass all need. I shall only draw the greater lines and identify it by its principal and more eminent parts which are distinguishable as they relate to God, our neighbor, and ourselves. And in each of these I shall make an essay by way of instance, rather than attempt an exact enumeration or survey.

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*their tongue to speak lies & weary themselves to commit iniquity.”* Jeremiah 9:3-5

a. *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, & that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* Genesis 6:5


b. *“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members that it defiles the whole body & sets on fire the course of nature; & it is set on fire of hell.”* James 3:6



### CHAPTER 3

## Atheistic Discourse


I begin with those discourses that relate to God—this poor despicable member, the tongue, being of no great size but of such a gigantic insolence as even to make war with heaven. It is true that every disordered speech makes war with heaven remotely, inasmuch as it is a violation of God's law, but I speak now only of those speeches which attack God's person, as it were, and immediately fly in the face of Omnipotence. It is among the highest ranks of these attacks that we may well place *all* atheistic discourse, which is that bold sort of rebellion that strikes not only at God's authority, but himself. Other blasphemies are leveled at one attribute or another; but this, by a more compendious impiety, aims at his very being and, as if it scorned piecemeal guilt, sets up a single monster big enough to devour them all. For all interior profaneness is as much outdone by atheism, as is religion itself.

 *Though the tongue is of no great size, it is of such a gigantic insolence as even to make war with heaven.*

There was a time when the inveighing against atheism would have been thought a very impertinent subject in a Christian nation and men would have replied to me as the Spartan Lady did when she was asked what the punishment was for an adulteress: *There are no such things here.* Nay, even among

the most barbarous people, it might have concerned but some singular persons but not numbers of people, much less whole societies ever having excluded belief in a deity. And perhaps it may at this day concern them as little as ever, for amidst the various deities and divinities of those more remote nations, we have no account yet of any that renounce all. It is only our light that has so blinded us, such that God may upbraid us as he did Israel, "*Has a nation changed their gods which yet are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.*" *Jeremiah 2:11*. This madness is now the environment and the peculiarity of those who by their names and institution should be Christians. It is as if that natural aphorism that, *When things reach the top, they must fall again*, had place here also, and our being of the most excellent and elevated religion were but the preparation to our being of none.

It is indeed deplorable to see how the professors of no God begin to vie in numbers with all the differing persuasions of religion, so that atheism seems to be the abyss that finally swallows up all our sects. Atheism has suddenly struck such a reputation that it scorns to skulk any longer, but owns itself more publicly than most dare to. It is set in the seat of the scorner and since it cannot argue, it resolves to laugh all piety out of countenance<sup>a</sup>. And having seized the mint<sup>b</sup> of knowledge, nothing shall pass for wit<sup>c</sup> that does not have the stamp of atheism. With atheism

 *Atheism seems to be the abyss that finally swallows up all.*

there is no metal of so base an alloy that it shall not become fashionable<sup>d</sup>. Even the dullest creature that can but stoutly disclaim his maker has, by so doing, sufficiently secured a title to ingenuity. And such measures being once established,

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a. acceptance

b. the source (of knowledge, in this case)

c. intelligence

d. orig., go current

no wonder at the throngs<sup>a</sup> of proselytes. No wonder, when it gives license to all sensual immoderation<sup>b</sup> and permits men and women, as much as they will or can, to live as beasts, and tells them that they are the more true to their nature<sup>c</sup> for it. Surely, it is not strange that a hook thus doubly baited would catch many. We see that either of those allurements has force enough by itself: the charms of sensuality being so fascinating that even those who believe in another world and the severe revenge that will there attend their luxuries, yet choose to enjoy sin in the present with all the dismal reversions<sup>d</sup>. And so, it cannot be anything but very good news for sure to such a person to be told that a reckoning to come hereafter is only a false alarm, and his or her great willingness to have this to be true will easily incline him or her to believe it is true. And doubtless, if atheism were traced to its first causes this would be found to be the most operative<sup>e</sup>, for it is so convenient for a person that would have no God to control or restrain him, to have no God that will punish him either. He would rather deceive his own understanding by concluding that there will be no future accounting of sin, than allow such a sting<sup>f</sup> in his pleasures as the remembrance of them will prove to be. This seems to be the original and first rise<sup>g</sup> of this impiety—it being impossible for anyone that sees even the

 *Atheism permits men & women to live as beasts, & tells them they are the more true to their nature for it.*

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*a. orig., sholes*

*b. orig., inordinances: abandon*

*c. The moral nature of man, being relegated by atheism to what is natural, immediately becomes what is fleshly, & since, without God there is no judgment against such, morality itself is irrelevant; compare the “natural brute beasts,” who, “speak evil of the things they understand not, & shall utterly perish in their own corruption.” 2 Peter 2:12; also Titus 1:12.*

*d. loss of grace & future enjoyment*


*e. the most effective original cause of a professed atheism*

*f. remorse (of conscience)*

*g. cause*

smallest part of the universe to doubt that there is a first and Supreme Being until, from consciousness of his provocations<sup>a</sup>, it is in his or her interests that there should be no God.

This is indeed, considering the depravity of the world, a pretty fast tenure for atheism to gain a hold by, yet it has of late twisted its cord<sup>b</sup> and gotten that other string to its bow that we mentioned before, its bold monopolizing of wit and reason, which thing compels even as the first invites. This we may indeed

 *People are afraid of being reproached as silly & irrational for their belief in God.*

call the devil's press<sup>c</sup> by which he has supplied himself an abundance of troops: people are afraid of being reproached as being silly and irrational in giving themselves up to a blind belief in what they do not see. And this bugbear frightens them from their religion and they revolve not to be "*fools for Christ's sake,*" 1 Corinthians 4:10.

I dare to appeal to the consciences<sup>d</sup> of many in this age, whether this has not been one of the most prevalent temptations with them to espouse the tenet of atheism; and although perhaps at first they took it up only in their own defense, for fear of being thought fools, yet that fear soon converted itself into the ambition of being thought ingenious<sup>e</sup>. They do not satisfy themselves with deserting their religion unless they revile it also: remembering how they themselves were laughed out of their religion, they essay to do the same to others. Yea, so zealous defenders<sup>f</sup> are they of their negative creed that they are importunately diligent to instruct others in it and in every little sophistry and reason<sup>g</sup> for

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a. *personal sins*

b. *tightened its hold*

c. *impress, as to compel or force persons into service*

d. *orig., breasts: hearts*


e. *orig., wits; of witty intelligence; intellectual*

f. *orig., propugners: vindicators*

g. *orig., color*

defending it, so that whoever would measure<sup>a</sup> the opinions by their industry—and against the remissness of believers—would certainly think that the great interest of eternity lay wholly on their side. Yet I do not take this as an argument for the confidence of this persuasion; on the contrary, for we know that these are not secure, but desperate undertakings wherein persons are most desirous of partners, as there is something of a horror in an uncouth<sup>b</sup> way that makes people unwilling to travail it alone.

The truth is that although these people speak big and prescribe atheism as positively to their pupils as if they had some counter revelation to confute those of Moses and Christ, yet if their secret thoughts were laid open there would scarcely be found any such assurance there. I cannot say to what reprobate sense<sup>c</sup> any particular persons may have provoked God to deliver them,<sup>d</sup> but in general, I believe that one may affirm that there is seldom an infidelity so sanguine as to exclude all fear. Their boldest thesis—that *there is no God, no judgment, no hell*—is often met with an inward tremulous hypothesis, *What if there is?* I dare to challenge—not *their consciences, who profess to have none, but*—their natural ingenuity to say whether they do not sometimes have such damps<sup>e</sup> and shiverings<sup>f</sup> within them. If they shall say that these are only the relics of prepossession<sup>g</sup> and education which their reason soon dissipates, let me then ask them further, whether they would not

 Does the atheist have some revelation to confute Moses & Christ?

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a. judge

b. unfamiliar; strange

c. state

d. Romans 1:18-32, God “gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not becoming,” (vs. 28); c.f. 1 Timothy 1:20 & 1 Timothy 2:26

e. dejection, depression

f. trembling (with fear)

g. previous impressions (on the mind or heart)

give a considerable sum to be infallibly ascertained<sup>a</sup> that there is no such thing. Now, no sensible person would give a quarter of a penny<sup>b</sup> to be made secure from a thing which his reason tells him is impossible for him to be made secure; therefore, if they would give anything (*as I dare say they themselves cannot deny that they would*), it is a tacit demonstration that they are not as sure as they pretend to be.

I might here take issue with the whole and press them with the unreasonableness and the disingenuousness of embracing a profession to which their own hearts have an inward reluctance; even the imprudence of governing their lives by a position which for all they know may be (*nay, they actually fear is*) false and if it *is* false, must inevitably immerse them in endless ruin. But I must remember that my original design limits me to only the faults of the tongue, and therefore I must not follow this chase beyond those bounds. I shall only extend it to my proper subject, namely, that of atheistic talk, wherein they make as mad an adventure as in any other of their enormous<sup>c</sup> practices, nay perhaps in some respects a worse.

First, it is to be considered that if there is a God, he, just as we, may be provoked by words as well as deeds. It is even possible that he may be more provoked. Our ill deeds may be done upon a vehement impulse of temptation, some profit or pleasures may transport and rush us into them, but they may at least have this alleviation, that we did them to please or advantage ourselves, *not* to spite God. But atheistic words cannot be so palliated: they are arrows shot directly against heaven and can come out of no quiver but malice, for it is certain that there was never


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a. *established in certainty*


b. *orig., a farthing*

c. *irregular*

anyone who said there was no God except such a person as first wished it. We know what an enhancement maliciousness gives to an injury we receive, and it is sure that an injury intended for God will be the more enhanced, as his principal demand of us is that we give him our heart. But atheism implies a malice of the highest sort. Where human spite is usually confined within some bounds, aiming sometimes at the goods, sometimes at the fame, and at its height at the life of our neighbor, in that spite that is aimed at God is an accumulation of all those backed with the most prodigious insolence. It is God alone who has the power of annihilation, and yet we (*vile worms*) seek to steal that incommunicable right and retort it upon God himself? And we, as if by some anti-creative power, would unmake God who made us? By this we have not only the greatest guilt as individual rebels, but we become ring-leaders also, drawing in others to that accursed association, for it is only this liberty of discourse that has propagated atheism. The devil might perhaps have drawn in a single proselyte here and there through inward suggestions, but he could never have had such numbers, had he not used some as decoys to ensnare others.

 *Have we power to unmake God who made us?*

And now let the brisk atheist consider a little what these aggravations will amount to. It was good counsel that was given to the Athenians to be very sure that Philip was dead before they expressed their joy at his death<sup>a</sup>, lest they might find him yet alive and able to revenge that hasty triumph. I may give the same advice to atheists: Let them be very sure that there is no God before they presume thus to defy him and lest they find him in the end to assert himself in their destruction. Certainly nothing less than a demonstration can

 *Be sure there is no God before defying him with the tongue that he created.*


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a. A reference to Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, who was assassinated by one of his bodyguards in 336bce; Demosthenes, an Athenian statesman, danced in the streets of Athens at the news of Philip's death.

justify the reasonableness of such a daring. And when they can produce such a demonstration they have so far outdone all the comprehension<sup>a</sup> of mankind that they may well challenge the liberty of their tongue and say, “*With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are our own; who is lord over us?*” *Psalms 12:4*.

But until they can do so, it would be good if they would soberly balance the hazards of this liberty with the gains: the hazards are of the most dreadful kind and the gains are of the slightest kind. The most that can be gained from this liberty of tongue against God is but vain applause for wit in an impious jest, or for being a deep thinker<sup>b</sup>. And yet, even for that they must encroach on the devil’s right too, who is commonly the prompter and therefore, if there is any credit in it, he may justly challenge credit given to *their* wit. Indeed it is to be feared that he will at last prove to be the master wit when, for those small loans he makes to them, he gets their souls in mortgage. Would God they would consider before it is too late what a woeful raillery<sup>c</sup> that is which for all they know may end in gnashing of teeth.

The next impiety of the tongue is *swearing*, that foolish sin which plays harmless to damnation, and courts damnation purely of itself. Swearing is without any of the appendant allurements that other sins have. It is a vice which for its guilt may justify the sharpest invectives, and for its customariness the

 *We see no one own God more in their oaths than those who disavow him in their other discourse.*

frequentest invectives which can be made against it. But this sin of swearing has been assaulted so often by better pens and has showed itself so unshakable<sup>d</sup> against all sermonizing that it is an as needless and just as discouraging a task for me to attempt it. It is indeed a thing taken

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a. *capacity to understand*

b. *orig., a deep confiderer*

c. *jest*

d. *orig., so much proof*

up so perfectly and senselessly that it is the no wonder to find it maintained upon the same principle it is founded, and continued in the same defiance to reason wherein it began. Therefore, all I shall say concerning swearing is that I wonder how swearing is twisted together with the sin of atheism by which (according to all rules of reasoning) it seems to be superseded, and yet we see no one own God more in their oaths than those who disavow him in their other discourse. Nay, such persons swear not only to inflate<sup>a</sup> their language and make it sound more full and blustering<sup>b</sup>, but they do so even when they most desire to be believed. What an absurdity of wickedness is this? Is there a God to swear by but not to believe in, not to pray to? We call it frenzy to see a man fight with a shadow, but surely it is more so, to invoke the same shadow. Why then and for what reason do these people make such solemn appeals (*for such is every oath*) to a mere chimera and phantasm? It would make one think they had some inward belief in a deity which they, upon being surprised, blurt out. And if it argues not an inward belief, it argues something worse and becomes evidence of how much the appearance of a sin recommends itself to them that they rush at it without examining how it will stand<sup>c</sup> with another they like better. These are indeed wholesale chapmen<sup>d</sup> for Satan, who do not exchange<sup>e</sup> and barter one crime for another but take the whole lot<sup>f</sup> and although, by reason of their disagreeing kinds, they are apt to worry and gore each other, yet they still keep up their old policy and will not let one devil cast out another. A league is made between the most discordant sins so that there shall be a God or there shall be

 *Is there then a God to swear by, but not to believe in or to pray to?*

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*a. orig., swell*

*b. boastful*

*c. orig., consist: subsist*

*d. merchants*

*e. orig., truck: trade*

*f. orig. herd*

no God according as opportunity serves to provoke them. Thus they assume to themselves a power which even Omnipotence disclaims: the reconciling of contradictions. And they succeed in this as far as their concern reaches, for although they cannot solve the repugnancies in reason, yet as long as they can unite the sins in men's practice, they have their design; they have at one time the gain and the sport of fooling these great pretenders to ratiocination<sup>a</sup>.

Another sort of impious discourse there is which is yet founded<sup>b</sup> on the most sacred—I mean, those profane paraphrases that are usually made upon the Holy Text,—many making it the subject of their cavils and others the subject of their mirth. Some do it out of an atheistic principle and I cannot but confess they act consonantly with themselves in it, for it is only a needful artifice for them to disparage those testimonies which they fear may be brought against them. But there are others yet, who not only profess a God but also own the sacred Scripture for his Word, and yet they use it as coarsely as the others. And these, I confess, are riddles of profaneness that hang (*as some have pictured Solomon<sup>c</sup>*) between heaven and hell, that borrow the Christian's faith and the atheist's drollery, and it is hard to say in which they are more in earnest. It is indeed scandalous to see to what despicable uses those holy oracles are put: such uses as, should a heathen observe them, he would little suspect the Scriptures to be owned by us as the rule of our religion and he could never think they were ever meant for anything beyond a whetstone for wit<sup>d</sup>. One person tests his logic against them and objects to the sense<sup>e</sup>; another tests his rhetoric against them and quarrels

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a. *reason (the faculty)*


b. *orig., bottomed*


c. "Solomon loved Jehovah, walking in the statutes of David his father. Only he sacrificed & burned incense in high places." 1 Kings 3:3; also 2 Kings 23:13.

d. *a thing upon which to sharpen wit*

e. *of the text*

with the phraseology; a third tests his contrivance and thinks he could have woven the parts with a better contexture<sup>a</sup>, never considering that unless they can confute the divinity of their origin, all these accusations are nothing but direct blasphemy, the making God “*such a one as themselves,*” *Psalms 50:21*,<sup>b</sup> and charging him with those defects that are indeed their own. They lack the learning or industry to sound the depths of those sacred treasures and therefore they decry the Scripture as mean<sup>c</sup> and poor<sup>d</sup>; and to justify their own wisdom, they dispute God’s. But this is like the mole complaining that the sun is dark because he dwells underground and does not see its splendor. In all instances, people are apt indeed to speak ill of all things they do not understand, but in none more so than this. Their ignorance of local customs, of idioms of language, and a number of other circumstances<sup>e</sup> renders them incompetent judges. It would therefore befit them either to better qualify themselves or to spare us their criticisms. But upon the whole, I think I may challenge any ingenious one of them to produce any writing of like antiquity, whose phraseology and genius is so accommodated to all successive ages. We know that styles and manners of speech grow obsolete and are almost as quickly antiquated as garments and yet, after so long a tract of time, the Scripture must (*by thoughtful men*) be confessed to speak not only properly but often politely and elegantly to the

 *In caviling scripture, some are like the mole complaining that the sun is dark because they dwell underground & do not see its splendor.*

 *Scripture must be confessed to speak politely & elegantly in every new age.*

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a. *how they are composed (as a whole)*

b. *“What have you to do with declaring my statutes?... These things you have done & I kept silence; you thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself. But I will reprove you & set them in order before your eyes.” (Psalms 50:16, 21)*

c. *base*

d. *of no value or importance*

e. *in writing of the scriptures*

present age: a great argument that it is the dictate of him that is, "*the same yesterday, today, and forever,*" *Hebrews 13:8*.

But besides these more solemn traducers, there are a lighter, ludicrous sort of profaners, who use the Scripture as they do odds and ends of plays to furnish out their jests, to clothe all their little impertinent conceits in its language, and to debase it by the mixture of such miserable trifles as they themselves would be ashamed of were they not exalted<sup>a</sup> and inspirited by that profaneness. A bible phrase serves them in discourse as the *haut-goust*<sup>b</sup> does in diet: to give a relish to the most insipid stuff. And were it not for this magazine<sup>c</sup>, a great many people's raillery would lack supplies, for there are divers who make a great noise of wit that would be very mute if this one topic were barred them. And indeed it seems a tacit confession that they have little of their own when they are fain<sup>d</sup> to commit sacrilege in this way in order to drive on the trade. But it is surely a pitiful pretense to ingenuity that can be kept up when there is little need of any other faculty but memory to be able to cap<sup>e</sup> texts: I am sure that such repetitions out of other books would be thought pedantic and silly. How ridiculous would a man be that always interlards<sup>f</sup> his discourse with fragments of Horace or Virgil or the aphorisms<sup>g</sup> of Pythagoras or Seneca? Now, it is too evident that it is not from any superlative esteem of sacred writ that it is so often quoted: so why then, when it is folly in other instances, should it be thought a specimen of wit to do it for such purposes? The truth is, it is so much the reserve<sup>h</sup> of those who can give

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a. *orig., heightened*

b. *high taste or flavor (as of somewhat tainted meat)*

c. *the scriptures (as a supply of sayings)*

d. *happy*


e. *oppose; to name a text in opposition or contest*

f. *mixes*

g. *maxims*

h. *storehouse (of sayings)*

no better testimony of themselves that, I think, upon that very score, it<sup>a</sup> should be given up by those who can. And surely, if it is possible for anything that is so bad to grow unfashionable, the world has had enough of this to be glutted<sup>b</sup> with it. But however fond people are of this diversion<sup>c</sup>, it will finally prove to have been that mirth Solomon spoke of which "*ends in heaviness*," *Proverbs 14:13*, for it is certain that whether we estimate it according to human or according to divine measures, it must be a high provocation to God.

 *A profane use of scripture must be a high provocation to God.*

Let any of us only transpose the case to our own persons: suppose we had written to a friend to advertise him of things of the greatest importance to him, had given him ample and exact instructions, had backed them with earnest exhortations and entreaties<sup>d</sup> not to neglect that which is his own concern, and lastly, had strengthened<sup>e</sup> all with the most moving expressions of kindness and tenderness towards him; and suppose that after all this, the next news we hear of that letter was that it was put in doggrel<sup>f</sup> rhyme to be made sport of by the rabble or to have the most eminent phrases picked out and made into common bywords. I would fain know how any of us would not resent such a mixture of ingratitude and contumely. I think I need make no minute application. The whole design of the Bible sufficiently answers or rather, surpasses, the design of the letter in the parallel and, God knows, our vile usage of scripture does too much and, I fear, too literally suit the latter. And if we think the affront is too base for any of *us* to bear, can we believe that

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*a. this habit of using scripture for profane purposes*

*b. orig., cloyed*

*c. orig., divertisement*

*d. orig., conjurings*

*e. orig., enforced*

*f. crude or burlesque*

God will take a like affront in good part? That would be to make God not only more stupid than any man, but as stupid as heathen idols that have "*eyes and see not,*" *Psalms 115:5*. And it is surely the highest madness in the world for any person that believes there is a God to imagine that he will at the last allow such usage.



*Mere natural piety has taught men to receive the responses of their gods with all possible veneration.*

If we weigh this crime in the scale of religion, it will appear yet more heinous: mere natural piety has taught men to receive the responses of their gods with all possible veneration. What acquiescence<sup>a</sup> had the *Delphic Oracle* from all parts and from all ranks of men? What confidence had they in its prediction and what obedience did they pay to its advice? If we look next into the Mosaic economy, we see with what dreadful solemnities the law was published<sup>b</sup>; what awful reverence was paid to the mount from which it issued and how that mount was fenced from any rude intrusions either of men or beasts; and after the law was written in tables, all the equipage of the tabernacle was designed only for its repository. The ark<sup>c</sup> itself received its value only from what it had in custody, and it received such a hallowing influence as transfused a relative sanctity even to the least utensils, of which none were thereafter allowed to be put to common uses. The very perfume was so peculiar and sacred that it was a capital crime to imitate the composition.<sup>d</sup> Afterwards when more of the divine revelations were committed to writing, the Jews were such scrupulous reverers of their scripture, that it was the business of the Masorites<sup>e</sup> to number not only the sections and lines but even the words and letters

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a. *orig., applications*

b. *orig., promulged (published)*

c. *the "ark of the testimony," Exodus 25: 10-16*

d. *"And the Lord said to Moses, Take sweet spices, stacte, & onycha, & galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense..." Exodus 30: 34-38*

e. *the writers of the Hebrew Bible (the Masora)*

of the Old Testament so that by exact calculation<sup>a</sup> they might better secure it from any surreptitious practices.<sup>b</sup>

And surely the New Testament is not of less concern than the Old: nay, the Apostle asserts it to be of far greater concern, and one which we shall be more accountable for: "*For if the word spoken by angels were steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken to us by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?*" *Hebrews 2:2-3*. And in another place, the same Apostle infers—from the excellency of the Gospel above the Law—that we should "*serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,*" *Hebrews 12:28*. And it is certainly but an ill performance<sup>c</sup> of that reverence and godly fear to use that very Gospel in such an irreverent and ungodly way as men now do. If we then pass from the Apostolic to the succeeding ages of the Church, we find the Primitive Christians looked on their Bibles as their most important treasure. Such was the outward respect they paid to them—*of which the standing up at the reading of the Gospel, still in use among us, is a faint memorial*—that the heathen persecutors made it a part of their examination of the Christians, who were brought to their tribunals, to inquire what those books were which they adored while they read them? Such was their inward<sup>d</sup> esteem that they exposed all other things to the rapine of their enemies, so that they might secure<sup>e</sup> those volumes. Nor was this only an heroic piece of zeal in some, but was indispensably required of all insomuch that when, in the heat of persecution, they were commanded to deliver up their Bibles to be burned, the Church gave no indulgence for that as a necessity of the

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a. in the transcribing thereof

b. as so much as missing a letter or word


c. orig., essay

d. orig., intimate

e. protect

times, but exhorted men to rather deliver up their lives; and those whose courage failed them in the encounter were not only branded by the infamous name of *Traditors*<sup>a</sup> but separated from the communion of the faithful and not readmitted until after many years of the severest penance.

I have given this brief narration with a desire that the reader would compare the practice of former times with those of the present, and see what he can find ether among heathens,

 *No respect was too much for the false oracles of a falser god, & yet we think no contempt is too great for the Words of the true God.*

Jews, or Christians that can at all patronize our profaneness. There was no respect thought too much for the false oracles of a falser god, and yet we think no contempt is too great for the Words of the true God. The moral law was so sacred to the Jews that no part of its remotest routine—those ceremonial attendants—was to be looked upon as common. And yet we, who are equally obliged by that law, laugh at that by which we will one day be judged. The ritual, the

preceptive, the prophetic, and all other parts of sacred Writ, were most sedulously<sup>b</sup>, most religiously, guarded by them. And yet we look upon them as a winter night's tale from which to fetch matter of sport and merriment. Lastly, the first Christians paid a veneration to, even sacrificed their lives to rescue their Bibles from the unworthy usage of the heathens, and yet we ourselves expose them to worse: the heathen would but have burned them, but we scorn and vilify them and out-vie even the persecutor's malice with our contempt. These are miserable antitheses, and yet God knows this is the case with too many. I wonder what new state of felicity hereafter these persons fancy to themselves, for surely they cannot think these retrograde steps can ever bring them so much as to the heathen's *Elyzium*,<sup>c</sup> much

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a. *lit.*, a deliverer, as one who had delivered over the scriptures to save his own life

b. *assiduously*

c. *in ancient mythology, a place assigned to happy souls after death*

less the Christian's heaven.

It will therefore concern those who do not quite renounce their claim to that heaven, to consider soberly how inconsistent their practice is with those hopes. A man may have a great estate conveyed to him, but if he madly burns or childishly makes paper kites of the deed to that fortune, he forfeits his title to it with the evidence he destroys. And it is certain that those who deal so with the conveyances<sup>a</sup> of their eternal inheritance, will not speed<sup>b</sup> better. If they dally and play with them in the same manner, God will be as little in earnest in the performance of the promises<sup>c</sup> as they were in the reception of them: nay, God will take his turn at mocking also and when their time<sup>d</sup> of mirth is over, his will begin. We have a dreadful menace of this which deserves to be set down at large:

 *God will take his turn at mocking also, & when their time of mirth is over, his will begin.*

*"Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded it, but you have despised all my counsel and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes, when your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me early, but they will not find me because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord." Proverbs 1:24-29.*

Would to God that I could transcribe this text into the hearts of all, such that there would be no more need to secure the whole canon of Scripture from their profanation. If every person would only consider their final destiny and apprehend how that in the days of their distress and agony to come, they will gasp for

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a. the scriptures

b. prosper

c. of eternal life (contained in scripture)

d. orig., scene

those comforts which they now turn into ridicule. If they would only consider this, they would not madly defeat themselves as they do presently, cutting off their best and only reserve<sup>a</sup> and casting away, with pitiful contempt, those cordials that are the

 *If every person would only consider their final destiny, they might not cast away those cordials that are the only support of their fainting spirits.*

only support of their fainting spirits. As for those who deride Scripture upon atheistic grounds, I shall refer only to that which I said in the beginning of this section: they have need to be very well assured that their foundation is not on the sand, for if it is, their reproaching of God's Word will add considerably to the guilt of all their other hostility. And however jolly they seem at present, it may be that as death draws near and the question will be decided as to whether there is a God or not—*which they are now so willing to*

*take for granted*—that their confidence will recede<sup>b</sup> a little and leave them, who have so ill provided for death, in an amazed expectation of something that cannot be good for them. Then perhaps their merry vein will fail them and not their infidelity but their despair may keep them from invoking that power<sup>c</sup> they have so long derided. It has certainly happened with some, for such speculative wickedness usually has a different appearance<sup>d</sup> when it stands in the shadow of death than it does when in the dazzling beams of health and vigor. It would therefore be wise to draw it<sup>e</sup> out of this deceitful light beforehand and, by sober and serious thought, place such speculation in the circumstance in which it will then appear: thus, for hearts that are not entirely hardened<sup>f</sup>, it will seem safer to own a God early and by choice,

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a. *the Word of God (that storehouse of promises)*

b. *orig., retire*

c. *God*

d. *aspect*

e. *atheistic speculation regarding God's existence*

f. *orig., petrified*

than late by compulsion<sup>a</sup>.

However, if they will not yield themselves to pay homage to God, yet, I think the mere possibility of their being in the wrong should persuade them at least to be civil adversaries. A generous man will not even pursue a fallen enemy with revilings and reproach; much less will a wise man do so to one who has even the least probability of revenging it. It is a received maxim that, *There is no greater folly than for a man to let his tongue betray him to mischief.* Let it therefore (*in this case at least*) stand neutral, so that, if by their words they are not justified, yet by their words they may not be condemned. They cannot be losers in this, for at most, it is but the stifling of a little unsavory speech which, supposing there is no God to be offended with it, is yet nauseous to all those men who believe there is. To those indeed who have zeal for their faith, there can be no discourse so intolerable and so disobliging: it turns conversation into skirmishing and perpetual disputes. The Egyptians were so zealous for their brutish deities that Moses presumed that the Israelites' sacrificing of those beasts that were thus adored<sup>b</sup> would set them in an uproar, *Exodus 8.*<sup>c</sup> And surely those who do acknowledge a divine power cannot contentedly sit by to hear him blasphemed. It is true there are some so cool that they are of the same mind for God that Gideon's father was for Baal, "*Let him plead for himself,*" *Judges 6:31*, who will not appear in his defense. Yet even these have a secret consciousness that they ought to do so, and therefore have some uneasiness in being put to the test, such that it cannot be a pleasant entertainment even for them. And therefore those who

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a. *when judgment is upon us*

b. *by the Egyptians*

c. *"Pharaoh called for Moses & Aaron and said, Go sacrifice to your God in the land. And Moses said, It is not right to do so, for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to Jehovah our God. Lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, & will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness & sacrifice to Jehovah our God, as He shall command us."* *Exodus 8:25-27*


have no fear of God to restrain them, should, I think, abstain from all sorts of impious discourse and at least be civil, though they will not be pious.



## CHAPTER 4

# Detraction

We have seen in the last section the insolence of the tongue towards God, and surely we cannot expect the tongue to pay more reverence to men. If there are those who dare "*stretch their mouths against heaven,*" *Psalms 73:9*, we need not wonder that there are more who will "*shoot their arrows, even bitter words,*" against the best of men on earth, *Psalms 64:3-4*. I shall not attempt to ransack the whole quiver by showing every particular sort of verbal injuries which relate to our neighbors, but rather choose out some few which, either for the extraordinariness of their guilt or the frequency of their practice, are the most eminent. I begin with *detraction*, in which both those qualities concur. For, as in some instances, detraction is one of the greatest sins, so generally speaking, it is certainly one of the most common and by being so common, detraction becomes insensible<sup>a</sup>. This vice—*above all others*—seems to have maintained not only its empire but its reputation too. People are not yet heartily convinced that detraction is a sin or, if it is a sin, it is not of so dark a color<sup>b</sup> or

 *The tongue that is insolent towards God, surely does not pay more reverence to men.*


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a. *imperceptible (to us)*

b. *orig., deep a die*

so wide an extent as indeed it is. They have, if not a false, yet an imperfect notion of it, and by not knowing how far its compass<sup>a</sup> reaches, they often do—*like inexperienced conjecturers*<sup>b</sup>—step beyond the limits of safety.

This I am the more apt to believe because I see some degree of this fault cleave to those who have eminently corrected all other exorbitances<sup>c</sup> of the tongue. Many who would startle at

 *Many slide glibly into the sin of detraction with little thought of the guilt of this sin.*

an oath, whose stomachs as well as consciences recoil at an obscenity, do yet slide glibly into a detraction, which I think persons of otherwise strict conversations would not do frequently *and* habitually had not their easy thoughts of the guilt of this sin smoothed the way to it.

It may therefore be no unkind attempt to try to disentangle them from this snare by putting detraction itself on display, by showing the whole context of the sin, how it is woven with treads of different sizes, the least of which is yet strong enough to ensnare<sup>d</sup> and entrap us. And alas, if Satan fetters us, he is indifferent as to whether it is done by a cable or a hair; nay, perhaps the smallest sins are his greatest stratagems: the finer he spins his line, the less shadow it casts and the less apt we are to be frightened away from the hook. And so likewise, although there is a great difference<sup>e</sup> between a talent of lead and a grain of sand, yet those grains of sand may be accumulated until they outweigh the talent of lead. It was a good reply of Plato's to one who murmured at his reproving him for a small matter, "*Custom,*" he said, "*is no small matter.*" And indeed, supposing

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a. orig., circle

b. orig., conjurers (in the ironic sense, persons of shrewd conjecture)


c. an interesting use of words as 'exorbitance' is literally a thing that is 'ex orbita,' that which is outside the compass (of propriety); hence, exorbitances of the tongue easily become enormities (rather than simple misspeak or impropriety)

d. orig., noose (to catch in a noose which, by design, binds tighter in a struggle)


e. orig., much odds (gerat inequality or difference)

any sin is really as small as we are willing to fancy most are, yet an indulgent habit even of small sins will certainly be ruinous: that indulgence being perfectly opposite to the love of God which can better coexist<sup>a</sup> with the indeliberate commission of many sins, than with an allowed persistence in any one sin.

But in this matter of *detraction*, I cannot yield that any sin is small, save only comparatively with sins of detraction that are greater. For absolutely considered, there is, even in the lowest degree of detraction, a flat contradiction to the grand rule of charity, the loving of our neighbor as ourselves. And surely that which violates the sum of the whole second table of the Law—for so our Savior renders it, *Luke 10:27*<sup>b</sup>—must be looked upon as no trifling inconsiderable guilt. To evidence this in the anatomizing of this sin, I shall apply this rule to every part of it: First I shall consider it in gross, in its entire body, and afterward I shall descend into its several limbs.

 To indulge in this sin is to oppose the duty to love God & neighbor.

1. *Detraction*, in the native importance of the word, signifies the drawing off from or taking something from a thing; and as it is applied to the reputation<sup>c</sup>, it denotes the impairing or lessening of a person in point of fame—the rendering him less valued and esteemed by others—which is the final goal of detraction, though it is pursued by various means.

 The goal of detraction is the rendering of a person less valued & less esteemed by others.


2. *Detraction* is justly looked upon as one of the most unkind designs one person can have upon another, there being implanted in every person's nature a great tenderness for their

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a. orig., consist


b. love of God & neighbor: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, & with all your soul, & with all your strength, & with all your mind; & your neighbor as yourself." *Luke 10:27*

c. of an individual

 *Detraction is one of the most unkind designs a person can have upon another.*

own reputation; and to be careless of one's own reputation, is looked on as a mark of a degenerate<sup>a</sup> mind. On which account *Solon* in his laws presumes that he that will fell<sup>b</sup> his own fame, will also fell the public interest. It is true that many have improved too much upon this and blown up this native spark into such flames of ambition as have set the world in a combustion: such as *Alexander*, *Caesar*, and others, who sacrificed hecatombs<sup>c</sup> to their own fame, fed their reputations up to a prodigy upon a cannibal diet, even the flesh of men. Yet, even these excesses serve to evince the universal consent of mankind, that reputation is a valuable and desirable thing.

3. Nor do we have only the suffrage of mankind, but the attestation of God himself, who frequently in Scripture gives testimony to a good reputation: "*A good name is better than great riches*," *Proverbs 22:1*. And again, "*A good name is better than precious ointment*," *Ecclesiastes 7:1*.

 *God himself testifies to the value of a good reputation.*

And the more to recommend a good reputation, God proposes it as a reward to piety and virtue, even as he menaces the contrary reward to wickedness: "*The memory of the just shall be blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot*," *Proverbs 10:7*. And that we may not think that this is an invitation fitted only to the Jewish economy, the Apostle goes further and proposes the endeavoring after a good reputation as a duty: "*Whatsoever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is any praise, think on these things*," *Philippians 4:8*.<sup>d</sup>

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a. degenerate

b. cause to fall


c. the public sacrifice of one hundred oxen to the gods (practiced in ancient Greece & Rome)

d. full text: "*Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever*

4. And accordingly, good men have ranked their names the next degree, in their estimation, to their souls, preferring their reputations before goods or life. Indeed, it is reputation which gives us an inferior sort of immortality and makes us, even in this world, survive ourselves. This part of us alone continues verdant even in the grave; the consideration of which has so prevailed with the more generous heathens that they have cheerfully quit life in contemplation of it. Thus *Epaminondas*<sup>a</sup> swiftly<sup>b</sup> expired in confidence that he left behind him a perpetual memory of the victories he had achieved for his country. *Brutus*<sup>c</sup> so courted the fame of a patriot that he broke through all the obstacles of gratitude and humanity to attain it, and he cheerfully bore the defeat of his attempt in contemplation of the glory of it. It would be endless to recount the stories of the *Codri*, *Decii* and *Curtii*,<sup>d</sup> with the train of those noble heroes who, on behalf of their countries, devoted themselves to certain death.

 *A good reputation outlives us.*

5. But we need no foreign mediums<sup>e</sup> to discover the value of a good name: let every person only weigh the value of a good name in his or her own scales, consider it in each their own heart and there reflect on the impatience they have when

 *Weigh within yourself the reaction you have when your own reputation is assaulted.*

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*things are of good report; if there is any virtue & if there is any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:8.*

a. a (4th century bc) Greek general who lead Thebes from subjugation to Sparta & into a pre-eminent position in Greek politics known as the Theban Hegemony

b. orig., *alacriously* (archaic): *briskly*


c. *Marcus Junius Brutus* (d. 42 bc); a Roman Senator & the most famous among the assassins of *Julius Caesar*; he died by suicide after his army was defeated twice by *Octavian* & *Antony* at *Philippi*.

d. these three are mentioned in *Ulrich Zwingli's Epistle MDXXVI*.

e. in logic, the middle term in a syllogism, the reason why a thing is affirmed or denied; in this case, that the heathen regard reputation paramount is not needed to prove that it is

their own reputation is assaulted<sup>a</sup>. To what dangers or to what new guilt does the mere fancy of a reproach sometimes hurry us? It makes people actually forfeit that virtue from which all true reputation springs, and like Aesop's dog, it makes them let loose of the substance<sup>b</sup> by too greedily catching at the shadow; an irrefragable<sup>c</sup> proof of how great a price they set upon their own fame.

6. And so, since reason sets reputation at so high a value, and passion sets it at a higher value, we may conclude that the violation of this interest is one of the greatest injuries in human commerce, and such a violation as is resented not only by the rash, but by the sober. We would have to pick out only blocks and stones—the stupid and insensible part of mankind—if we think we could inflict this wound without an afflictive<sup>d</sup> smart. And although the power of Christianity does so moderate this resentment in some persons that none of these blows will recoil<sup>e</sup> and no degree of revenge will be attempted, yet,

 *The power of Christianity may moderate resentment in the one who is defamed, but it does not reduce the guilt of the one who inflicts the offence.*

that does not at all justify or excuse the one who inflicts the blows. It may indeed be a useful trial of the patience and meekness of the defamed, yet the defamer does not have thereby either a lesser crime or lesser danger<sup>f</sup>: not of crime, for the crime is enhanced rather than abated by the goodness of the person injured; nor of danger, since God is the more immediate an avenger of those who do not attempt to be their own avengers.<sup>g</sup> But if the

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a. orig., invaded

b. in the case of the dog, he let go of the bone in his mouth in order to catch at its reflection in the water, losing that which he had

c. incontestable

d. painful


e. upon the one giving the offence

f. of damnation

g. "It is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God that you may be

injury is not met with Christian meekness (*and the odds are it will not in this vindictive age*) it then acquires another accumulative guilt: it stands answerable not only for its own positive ill, but for all the accidental ills that it causes in the sufferer who by this means is robbed not only of his reputation but his innocence too as he is provoked to those unchristian retorts<sup>a</sup> which draw God also into the enmity, and set him at war with heaven and earth. And though, as to his immediate judgment, he must bear his iniquity and answer for his impatience, yet, as in all civil insurrections, the ring-leader is looked upon with a peculiar severity and doubtless, in this case, the first provoker has by his seniority and primogeniture<sup>b</sup> a double portion<sup>c</sup> of the guilt and may consequently expect the same doubling of the punishment, even according to the doom pronounced by our Savior, "*Woe to that man by whom the offense comes!*" *Matthew 18:7*<sup>d</sup>.

8. Indeed, there is such a train of mischiefs that normally follow the sin of detraction that it is scarcely possible to make a full estimate of its malignity. It is one of the grand incendiaries that disturbs the peace of the world, and it has a large share in most of its quarrels. If we could examine all the feuds that harass persons, families, and sometimes nations too, we would find that the greater part arise from injurious, reproachful words; and we would find that for any one feud that is commenced upon a real considerable interest, there are many that owe their existence to

 Feuds often arise from injurious, reproachful words of detraction.

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*counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer: seeing that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you," 2 Thessalonians 1:5-6.*

a. orig., returns


b. birthright

c. formerly (before the American Revolution), the practice of primogeniture entitled the eldest son to a double portion

d. full text: "*Woe to the world because of offenses! For it is necessary that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!*" *Matthew 18:7.*

this licentiousness of the tongue, namely, detraction.


9. In regard therefore to the proper guilt of the sin of detraction and all those more remote sins and miseries which ensue from it,

 *It is every person's great concern to watch over himself or herself respecting this malicious sin.*

it is every person's great concern to watch over himself or herself in this. Neither is it less in respect of the universal aptness we have to this sin and its being so perpetually at hand that we must, for the sake of others, be watchful<sup>a</sup> regarding occasions and convenient seasons wherein this sin might be committed, which opportunities are always ready, but *a person can do his neighbor this injury*

*when he can do him no other injury.* Besides, the multitude of objects to which one might target a detraction do proportionally multiply both the possibilities and incitations for the sin; and the objects here in the world are as numerous as there are persons that I either know or have heard of. For although some sorts of detractions seem confined to those to whom we bear particular malice, yet there are other kinds of detractions that are more far ranging, which fly indifferently at all. Lastly, this sin has the aid of almost universal example, which is an advantage beyond all other advantages, there being scarcely any so irresistible insinuation<sup>b</sup> as taking part in the things practiced by those with whom we converse, and no subject of conversation so common as the defaming of our neighbors.

10. Since, then, the path of defaming others is so slippery, it has no need to be darkened too: let us next examine this sin in

 *Defaming others is a slippery path.*

the light and attentively survey it in its various branches that, by a distinct discovery of the degrees of defamation and the divers acts related to it, we may become the better armed against them all.

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a. orig., attend


b. gaining of favor



## CHAPTER 5

# Lying Defamation


Detraction being, as we have already said, the lessening and impairing of the reputation of another, we may resolve that whatever conduces to that end, to harming the reputation of another, is properly a *detraction*. I begin with that which is most eminent, that is, the spreading of a defamatory report. Such a report may be either false or true; and although these two kinds of reports seem to be of very different complexions, yet they may spring from the same stock and drive at the same design. Let us first consider the false report.

 *A detraction may be either true or false, & yet aim at the same harmful end.*

The report that is false admits of various circumstances: sometimes a person invents a complete falsity regarding another; sometimes one who did not invent the false report yet circulates it although he knows it is false; and there are a third sort of person who, having no certain knowledge of whether a report is false or not, do yet divulge it as an absolute certainty or at least with such artificial insinuations as may bias the hearer on that hand<sup>a</sup>. The former of these is a crime of so high and so disingenuous a nature that although many are vile enough persons to commit

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a. to believe the report is true

 *False accusation—a union of malice & lying—is of all sins the most diabolical.*

it, but none are so impudent as to avow it. Even in this age of insulting vice when almost all other wickedness appears barefaced, this is feign to keep on the mask<sup>a</sup>. No man will own himself a false accuser, for if modesty does not restrain him, his malice will; neither will he own himself such, since to confess would be to defeat his design.

Indeed false accusation is of all sins the most diabolical, it being a union of two of Satan's most essential qualities: malice and lying. We know it is Satan's peculiar title to be "*the Accuser of the brethren*,"<sup>b</sup> and when we transcribe his copy<sup>c</sup> in ourselves, we do thereby also assume his nature and evidence<sup>d</sup> ourselves to descend from him: "*You are of your father the Devil*," *John 8:44*<sup>e</sup>. We are rendered by this a species of *Incubus*<sup>f</sup> brats, the infamous progenies of the *Lying Spirit*. False accusation is indeed a sin of so gross and so formidable a magnitude that there is no need to render it discernible with the help of optics<sup>g</sup>, and therefore I need not further expatiate<sup>h</sup> on it.

 *False accusation renders a person a child of the Devil.*

it, but none are so impudent as to avow it. Even in this age of insulting vice when almost all other wickedness appears barefaced, this is feign to keep on the mask<sup>a</sup>. No man will own himself a false accuser, for if modesty does not restrain him, his malice will; neither will he own himself such, since to confess would be to defeat his design.

The next degree is not much short of this: what it lacks is

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a. orig., vizard

b. full text: "*And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation & strength & the kingdom of our God & the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day & night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb & by the Word of their testimony, & they loved not their lives unto the death.*" *Revelation 12:10-11*.

c. copy his malice & lying

d. orig., entitle (give evidence of)


e. full text: "*You are of your father the Devil & the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning & abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own; for he is a liar & the father of it.*" *John 8:44*.

f. demon

g. by casting more light on it

h. enlarge the discourse

in invention rather than malice, for the person that will adopt another's lie shows that he would willingly have been its proper father. Indeed, that one differs no more from the inventor of the lie than the vendor of counterfeit<sup>a</sup> wares does from the maker of them; and there certainly cannot be a more ignominious trade than to be hucksters of such vile merchandise. Neither is the sin of repeating a false accusation any less than the baseness of it, and we find the *lover of a lie* ranked in an equal form of guilt with the *Maker of lies*, *Revelation 21*<sup>b</sup>. And surely that person, who will stoop to be the broker of lies and help a false report to be received in the world, must be presumed to love doing so.

 *The peddler of a lie is guilty with the inventor, & the two of them with the Father of Lies.*

The third sort of detractors look a little more demure and with the woman in *Proverbs 30*, "*wipe their mouths and say they have done no wickedness.*" They do not know for certain the falsity of what they repeat, and their ignorance must serve them as an amulet against the guilt of both deceit and malice.<sup>c</sup> But I fear it will not serve them for either,<sup>d</sup> for, first, perhaps they are affectedly ignorant, and yet they are so willing that the lie should be true that they have not attempted to examine it; and secondly, it does not suffice to say that I do not know for certain that the matter I repeat is false, for to make me a speaker of that


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a. orig., adulterate


b. "For outside [of new Jerusalem] are dogs & sorcerers & whoremongers & murderers & idolaters & whosoever loves & makes a lie." *Revelation 22:15*

c. in catholic theology, this mental equivocation is known as reservation of conscience

d. As pointed out here, scripture differentiates little between the one who makes & the one who loves a lie, and the one who lies in order to defraud or harm another is condemned in strong terms: "He who hates dissembles [as if ignorant] with his lips, & lays up deceit within him; when he speaks fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. He whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shown before the whole congregation. ... A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it." *Proverbs 26:24-28*.

 *If I will speak the truth, I must know the truth of what I speak.*

which is *true*, it is necessary that I know the truth of what I affirm. Nay if the thing that I report seemed ever so true, yet if I knew it not to be entirely so, its seeming truth will not protect me from being a liar. Therefore, whoever endeavors to have that received for a certainty which himself knows to be not so, offends against truth. The utmost that is consistent with sincerity is for a person to represent a matter to others as doubtful, inasmuch as it appears to him to be so. Yet even that, howsoever consonant to truth it may be, is not consonant with charity. Even doubtful accusations leave a stain behind them and often prove to be indelible injuries to the party accused: how much more injurious then are the more positive and confident aspersions we have hitherto spoken of? I add only this concerning this later sort of false accusers, that is that they are greater advancers of defamatory designs than the first sort of contrivers: for those first, upon a consciousness of their falseness, are obliged to proceed cautiously and to pick out the credulous and least discerning persons on whom to impose their fictions, and they dare not produce their fictions in all companies for fear of detection; but these last, in confidence that the untruth (*if it be an untruth*) lies not at their door<sup>a</sup>, speak it without any restraint in all places and at all times; and while the first are fain to whisper their lies, the second proclaim their's aloud. In the case of stealing it is proverbially said that if there were no receivers, there would be no thieves. So it is in the case of slander: if there were fewer spreaders of slander, there would be fewer forgers of libels; the manufacturing of such would be discouraged if slander had no retailers to sell their wares.


 *If there were fewer spreaders of slander, there would be fewer forgers of libels.*

Now to apply these practices to a rule of duty there is no need

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a. *the guilt will not be imputed to them*

of a very close inspection of slander to discern the obliquity<sup>a</sup>. The most superficial glance will evidence to us the various degrees of slanderers who do to others that which they would not be willing to suffer themselves. Who among them will be content to be falsely aspersed<sup>b</sup>? Nay, so far are they from that, that if but a shadow of their own calumny be reflected upon themselves, or let anyone so much as truthfully tell them that they have falsely accused others, and they will grow raving and impatient like a dog at a mirror<sup>c</sup>, fiercely combating the very image that they themselves created. And howsoever smoothly the original lie slides off their tongue, the echo of that lie returned upon them for what it is grates their ears. And indeed, it is observable that those who make the greatest havoc of other person's reputations, are the most delicately tender of their own, a thing which sets the sin of calumny in the most diametrical opposition to the evangelical precept of *loving our neighbors as ourselves*.<sup>d</sup>

 Let the calumniator examine himself as in a mirror.

This much is discernible even on the surface of the crime, but if we look deeper and examine the motives, we will find that the foundation well agrees with the superstructure<sup>e</sup>, the motives usually being one of these two: *malice* or *interest*. And indeed the thing is so disingenuous, so contrary to the dictates of humanity as well as divinity, that I must (*in reverence to our common nature*) presume that there must be some very forceful impulse<sup>f</sup> that is able to drive a man so far from himself. The Devil here plays the artist and, drawing the most fatal poisons from human nature

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a. deviation from moral rectitude


b. bespatter

c. orig., looking glass

d. "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:14

e. that which is built upon the foundation

f. orig., impellent (compulsion)

 *Satan*  
moves us to sin  
through our  
most corruptible  
parts.

itself, he extracts the venom of our irascible and concupiscible<sup>a</sup> part and in it he dips the arrows which people then shoot at one another.

It is needless to harangue separately upon each motive of the sin of lying defamation. The world too experimentally knows the force of both: *Malice* is that whirlwind that has shaken states and families no less than private persons. It is a passion so impetuous and precipitate that it often equally involves the agent and the patient<sup>b</sup>: a malicious man being of the same violence as those who flung "*the three children*," *Daniel 3*<sup>c</sup>, into the fire and were consumed by the flames into which they cast others. As for *Interest*, it is that universal monarch to which all other empires are tributaries, to which men sacrifice not only their consciences and innocence, but (*what is usually much dearer*) their sensualities and vices; those persons whom neither all the divine threats nor all the divine promises can persuade to mortify, nay, so much as restrain, one lust; such persons who at mammon's beck<sup>d</sup> will disclaim many and force their inclinations to comply with their interest.

And while this sin of calumny has two such potent abettors, we are not to wonder at its growth: for as long as men are malicious and designing, they will be traducing<sup>e</sup>; those cyclopes will perpetually be forging thunderbolts against which no innocence or virtue can protect. And alas, daily we see too great effect of their industry. But although these are the forgers of the more solemn deliberate calumnies, yet this sportive age

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a. (archaic) an appetite inclining to the enjoyment of unlawful pleasure

b. the person that receives (in this case) the harm


c. "Because the king's commandment was urgent & the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace." *Daniel 3:22-23*

d. for the reason of personal gain; greed

e. slandering

has produced another sort, there being persons who defame others for diversion<sup>a</sup>, who invent little stories that they may find themselves exercise and be the talk of the town. This, if it must pass for sport, is such sport as *Solomon* describes, "*As a mad man that casts firebrands, arrows and death, so is he that deceives his neighbor and says, Am I not in sport?*"

*Proverbs 26:18-19.* He that shoots an arrow in jest, may kill a man in earnest, and he that gives himself liberty to play with his neighbor's fame, may soon play it away<sup>b</sup>. Most men have such an aptness to entertain sinister opinions of others

 *He that shoots an arrow in jest, may kill a man in earnest.*

that they greedily take in any suggestion of that kind; and one may as easily persuade the thirsty earth to refund the water she has sucked into her veins, as such persons to give up<sup>c</sup> a prejudice once they have taken it up. Therefore such experiments upon the fame of others are as dangerous as that which *Alexander* is said to have made of the force of *naphtha* upon his page<sup>d</sup>, from which he scarcely escaped with his life. These jocular handers are often as mischievous as those of deeper design and have, from the slightness of the temptation, an enhancement of their own guilt. For surely, he that can put his neighbor's interest in the balance with a little fit of laughter for himself, sets his neighbor's interest at a lower price than a person who hopes to enrich or advance himself by calumniating others. And although such calumny passes among some people as a specimen of wit, yet it really lists such persons among *Solomon's* fools who "*make a mock at sin,*" *Proverbs 14:9.* In the meantime, since slander is a plant that can grow in all soils, since the frolicking humor as well as the morose humor betrays the guilt, who can hope to escape

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a. orig., divertisement (turn the mind from care; amusement, exercise)

b. his own liberty (shen judgment comes upon him)

c. orig., deposit (to lay or throw down)

d. *Plutarch's Life of Alexander* contains an account of the discovery of *naphtha* (a flammable liquid) in *Babylon*; it tells of a near-fatal experiment wherein *Alexander's* page, *Stephanus*, was anointed with *naphtha* & set ablaze.

this scourge of the tongue which communicates with all? Persons of all ranks do mutually asperse<sup>a</sup> and are aspersed, so that he who would not have his credulity abated, has scarce a more secure way than to let his belief run quite counter to reports—*like that astrologer who made his almanac give a tolerable account of the weather by a direct inversion of the common prognosticators.* Yes, and so epidemic is this disease grown that even religion (*at*

 *Many who profess Christ also freely calumniate others, & violate both truth & charity by doing so.*

*least those parties and factious that assume the name of religion*) has got a taint of it: each sect or opinion seeking to represent its antagonist as being as odious as it can. And while they contend for speculative truth they, by mutual calumnies, forfeit the practice<sup>b</sup> of truth: a thing which justly excites the grief of good people. They see that those who together pretend to the same

Christianity are unanimous in violating the truth and charity that Christianity prescribes.

And if such methods are the weapons of our spiritual warfare, what may we think of the carnal?—*how are our secular animosities pursued when our speculations are thus managed?* How easily do we run down the reputation of any who stand in the way either of our anger<sup>c</sup> or our avarice? When *Joseph's* resolute purity had altered the scene of his mistress's passion<sup>d</sup>, she does as readily shift that of guilt too and fixes her crime upon him, *Genesis 39:14*<sup>e</sup>. So also when *Ziba* had a mind to

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a. bespatter others with false & injurious charges or stories; calumniate


b. orig., practis (archaic)

c. orig., spleen (anger; latent spite; ill humor)

d. she had immediately shifted from passion to rage against Joseph; *Genesis 39:7-20*

e. "And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me; & he left his garment in her hand & fled, & got himself out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand & fled, she called to the men of her house & said, See, he has brought in an Hebrew to us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, & I cried with a loud voice. And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted

undermine *Mephibosheth* in his estate, he first practices upon his fame through a false accusation<sup>a</sup>, 2 *Samuel* 16:3. And alas, how familiarly do we now see both these scenes acted out today? And those, who will not take vice into their bosoms, will yet have it bespatter their faces; those who will not run to "*the same excess of riot*," may expect to be evilly spoken of, 1 *Peter* 4:4<sup>b</sup>. Not only pious men but piety itself partakes of the same fate and falls under the two-edged slander of both deceit and folly. And if people are not permitted to quietly enjoy their piety<sup>c</sup>, much less will they be permitted to quietly enjoy those things whereof the world has more gusto<sup>d</sup>, I mean, secular advantages. There are still crimes to be discovered in the possessors of honors or estates, and such discoveries wonderfully excite the zeal of those who would supplant them. What artifices may be found to make pious persons appear unworthy of what they have, that others (*more unworthy*) may succeed them? Nor are these storms only in the upper region—in the higher ranks of men—but if we examine all degrees of persons, we will find the difference is rather in the value of the things coveted than in the means of pursuing them. He that reaches for<sup>e</sup> the meanest office does as studiously disparage his competitor as he that is rivaled for a kingdom. Nay

 Not only pious men but piety itself falls under the two-edged slander of deceit & folly.

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up my voice & cried, he left his garment with me & fled ... And Joseph's master took him & put him into prison." *Genesis* 39:12-20

a. Hoping to make himself master of the estate of *Mephibosheth*, *Ziba* ingratiates himself to *David* with gifts & tells him that *Mephibosheth* believed he would be restored "the kingdom of his father"; which was obviously a slander, 2 *Samuel* 19:27.

b. full text: "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, & abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." 1 *Peter* 4:3-4


c. that is, by slanderers

d. orig., gust (sensual enjoyment)


e. orig., pretends (literal use from the Latin, *proe tendo*, to reach for(ward))

even he that has but a merry humor to gratify makes no scruple to do it at the loss of another person's reputation.

Thus do we accommodate every petty temporal interest at the cost of our eternal interest, and as an unskilful fencer, while he is pursuing a thrust with the sword, exposes his body, so while we thus actuate our own malice, we abandon ourselves to Satan's malice, and we receive mortal wounds from him only that we may give a few light scratches to one another. For, as I have before said, there is nothing that does more secure Satan's title for us than the vice of calumny, it bearing his proper impress<sup>a</sup> and figure. And we may fear that Christ will one day make the same judgment of persons as he did of coin, and award such person to Satan whose "*image and superscription they bear,*" *Matthew 22:20*<sup>b</sup>.

 *While we actuate our own malice, we abandon ourselves to Satan's malice.*

And now, how great a madness is it to make costly oblations to so vile an idol? This is indeed the worshiping of our own imaginations, preferring a malicious fiction before a real felicity. Alas, are there not gross corporal sins enough to ruin us, but must we have aerial ones too, damn ourselves with chimeras<sup>c</sup>, and by these forgeries of our brains dream ourselves to destruction?

 *The disguise that now masks the sin of defamation will be torn off on the day of judgment.*

Let all those then, who thus unhappily employ their inventive faculty, consider in a timely manner how unsuccessful a trade it will prove in the end when all their false accusations of others will rebound in true ones upon themselves.

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a. stamp or mark

b. full text: "And they brought unto him a penny. And he said to them, Whose is this image & superscription? They said to him, Caesar's. Then he said to them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, & unto God the things that are God's." *Matthew 22:19-21*.

c. vain fancies

It does often happen so in this world where many times the most clandestine contrivances of lying defamation meet with detection; or if they should happen to keep on the disguise here, yet without fail<sup>a</sup> the disguise will be torn off on the great day of manifestation when, before God and angels and all mankind, such sin will be rendered infinitely more vile than it was possible for the defamer to make others here in this world.

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*a. orig., infallibly*




## CHAPTER 6

# Uncharitable Truth

Next, we will consider the another branch of defamatory reports, namely, such reports as are true and which—*although they must be confessed to be of a lower form of guilt than the former type, that is, of lying defamation*—yet as to the kind, they equally agree in the definition of *detractio* since it is possible to impair a person's credit by true reports as well as by false reports.

To clarify this, I will first observe that although every fault has some penal effects which are contemporaneous<sup>a</sup> with the act, yet, of infamy this is not so: infamy is the more remote consequence<sup>b</sup> and that which infamy immediately depends upon, is the publishing of it. A man may do things which render him abominable to God and his own conscience, and yet he may keep his reputation with others; but when his stifled crime breaks out, when his secret guilt is detected, then and not before then, he becomes infamous. So then, although his sin is material, yet it is the discovery of that sin that is the formal cause of

 *We may do things which render us abominable to God & conscience, & yet keep our reputation with others.*


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a. *orig., coetaneous (beginning at the same time)*

b. *orig., consequent (that which follows a cause)*

his infamy.

This being granted, it follows that he that divulges an unknown concealed fault stands accountable for all the consequences that flow from that divulging; but whether as for guilt there is accountability, such must be determined by the particular circumstances of the cause. So then, here we must admit of an exception: for though every discovery of another's fault be in the strict natural sense of the word, a detraction, yet it will not always be the sin of detraction because in some instances there may some higher obligation intervening and superseding that which we owe to the fame of our neighbor. And in such cases it may not only be lawful but necessary to expose him.

 *In the exposing of others in fault, both justice & charity must be considered, lest we find ourselves guilty of real harm.*

Now, I believe that all such cases may summarily be reduced to two chief points: *Justice* and *Charity*. First, as to *Justice*: justice, we know, is a fundamental virtue and he that shall violate justice in order to (*seem to*) abound in another virtue is as absurd as he that undermines a foundation in order to build the walls. We are not to steal in order to give alms. And God himself has declared that he hates robbery for a burnt-offering, so that no pretense either of charity or piety can absolve us from the duty we owe to justice. Now, it may often fall out that by concealing one person's fault, I may be injurious to another, even to a whole community, at which time I assume the guilt I conceal and by the laws of both God and man I am judged an accessory.

And as justice toward others enforces the publishing of a fault, so sometimes justice toward oneself allows the same when a considerable interest either of fame or fortune cannot otherwise be rescued. But to make loud outcries of injury when they tend nothing to the repressing of that injury, is a liberty assumed by rage and impatience rather than one authorized by justice. Often

in such cases the complainer is the most injurious person, for he inflicts more injury than he suffers; and in lieu of some trivial right of his which has been invaded, he assaults another in a dearer<sup>a</sup> interest by wounding him in his good name. But if the cause is considerable and the manner is regular<sup>b</sup>, there surely lies no obligation upon any person to wrong himself and to indulge another.

Neither does *Charity* retrench<sup>c</sup> this liberty: for though it is one act of charity to conceal another person's faults, yet sometimes it may be inconsistent with some more important charity which I owe to a third person or perhaps to a multitude of people, as in such cases wherein the public benefit is concerned. If this were not allowable, no history could lawfully be written, since if history is written truthfully it cannot but recount the faults of many. So also, no evidence could be brought against a malefactor, and indeed all discipline would be subverted. Each of these would be so great a mischief that charity obliges us to prevent them whatever defamation falls upon the guilty by our revealing the fault; for in such instances, it is a true rule that mercy to an evil person proves to be cruelty to the innocent. And as in a choice of mischiefs, we are to choose the least mischief; so in a choice of two goods, the greatest and the more extensive good is the most eligible.



*Mercy to  
an evil person  
may prove to be  
cruelty to the  
innocent.*


Even that *Charity* which reflects upon myself may also sometimes supersede that owed to my neighbor: the rule obliging me to love him as, not better than myself. I surely need not silently assent to my own unjust defamation for fear of proving another a false accuser, nor suffer myself to be made a beggar to conceal another person's being a thief. It is true in

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a. *orig., nearer (more dearly held)*

b. *governed by rules or practices*

c. *abridge*

 *Charity prompts me to prefer a greater concern of my neighbor's over a slight one of my own.*

a great inequality of interests, that charity—whose character it is, "Not to seek her own," 1 Corinthians 13:5<sup>a</sup>—will prompt me to prefer a greater concern of my neighbor's over a slight concern of my own, but in equal circumstances I am surely at liberty to be kind first to myself. If I wish to recede even from that, I may, but that is then to be accounted among the heroic flights of charity, not her binding and indispensable laws.

Having now set the boundaries for excepted cases, in the same way that all instances within the range of excepted cases may be legitimated<sup>b</sup>, so all cases that fall outside them (by the known rule of exceptions) may be precluded and fall under that general duty we owe to our neighbor of tendering<sup>c</sup> his credit. However, this obligation is so universality infringed upon that it is not imaginable that the breach of it always happens within the excepted cases. And when it is remembered how inactive the principles of *Justice* and *Charity* have now grown in the world, we must certainly impute such incessant effects<sup>d</sup> to some more vigorous causes of which it may not be amiss for me to point out some of the most obvious and then leave every person to examine which of them he (*or she*) finds most operative within himself.

First, *Pride*, being a humor<sup>e</sup> that is always mounting, will

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a. full text: "Charity suffers long & is kind; charity envies not; charity vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endureth all things." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7


b. a legitimate reason can be found that allows for or insists upon revealing the fault of another (thief, for example)


c. offering a thing for acceptance

d. the universal practice of defaming others

e. a peculiarity of disposition

make use of any footstool that aids it rise. A man who affects an extraordinary splendor of reputation is glad to find any *foils*<sup>a</sup> to set himself off and will therefore let no fault nor folly of another's enjoy the shade but will bring it into the open light, that by such a comparison his own excellences may appear the brighter. I dare appeal to the conscience of any proud person as to whether he or she does not, upon such occasions, delight to make some Pharisaical reflection on himself or herself, whether he or she is not apt to say, "I am not like other men, or as this publican," Luke 18<sup>b</sup>, although probably they leave out the, "God, I thank you." Now whoever cherishes such resentments as these within himself will doubtlessly be willing to propagate them among others, and to that end, will render the blemishes of others as visible as he or she can. But this betrays a degenerate<sup>c</sup> spirit which, from a consciousness that he or she wants solid worth on which to found his or her own reputation, is happy to found it on the ruins of other person's reputations. The true diamond sparkles even in the sunshine, but it is only a glowworm virtue that owes its luster to the darkness around it.

 A proud person will expose the faults of others in order to increase his own repute.

 A diamond sparkles even in the sun, but false virtue owes its luster to the darkness around it.

Another prompter to detraction is *Envy* which sometimes is particular, sometimes general. He that has a pique<sup>d</sup> toward

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a. a thing used to set off something or someone to better advantage (in this case, the faults of another, as they are used to increase one's own value)

b. full text: "Two men went up to the temple to pray the one a Pharisee & the other a publican. The Pharisee stood & prayed thus within himself, God, I thank you that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Luke 18:10-13.

c. degenerate; unvirtuous

d. has taken offense

another, would have all others as hateful towards him as he is; and therefore, as he grieves and repines at anything that may advance his low estimation of him, so also he exults and triumphs when anything occurs that may depress it further and is usually very industrious to improve the opportunity to do so, he even has a strange sagacity in hunting out opportunity to do. No vulture scents<sup>a</sup> a carcass more quickly than an envious person

 *No vulture smells a carcass more quickly than an envious person does the dead flies that corrupt his neighbor's ointment.*

does those *dead flies* that corrupt his neighbor's ointment, *Ecclesiastes 10:1*<sup>b</sup>, the smell<sup>c</sup> of which his hatred scatters and disperses near and far like a strong wind. Nor does he need any great crime to practice on: every little infirmity or passion, seen through his eyes<sup>d</sup>, appears to be a mountainous guilt. He can enlarge<sup>e</sup> the least speck or freckle into a leprosy that spreads over the whole person; and a small cloud may in an instant, with the

help of prejudice, grow to the utter darkening of the brightest reputation and fill the whole horizon with a tempest and horror. Sometimes this *Envy* is general, not confined to any particular person, but diffused to the whole species<sup>f</sup>. There are some tempers so malign that they wish ill to all and believe ill of all, like *Timon the Athenian*<sup>g</sup>, who professed himself a universal man-hater. He, whose guilty conscience reflects dismal images of himself, is willing to put the same ugly shape upon the whole species and to conclude that all people are the same if they were but closely inspected. Therefore, when he can see even the least

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a. identifies by smell

b. full text: "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor: so does a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom & honor." *Ecclesiastes 10:1*.

c. orig., vapor (fumes; smell)


d. orig., optics (vision)

e. orig., improve (expand)

f. orig., nature

g. from a play by William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*

glimmering of a fault in anyone, he takes it as a proof of his hypothesis and with envious joy summons as many spectators as he can. It is certain that there are some in whose ears nothing sounds so harsh as the commendation of another, and contrarily, nothing is so melodious as a defamation. *Plutarch* gives an apt instance of this on the banishment of *Aristides*, whom, when a mean person had proposed his ostracism, being asked what displeasure *Aristides* had done him, he replied, *None, neither do I know him, but it grieves me to hear everybody call him a just man.* I fear that some of our keenest accusers now days may give the same answer. No man that is eminent for piety or indeed, even *moral virtue*, but he will have many insidious eyes upon him, watching for him to falter<sup>a</sup>, and if even the least obliquity<sup>b</sup> can be espied in him, he is used worse than the vilest malefactor. Such accusers are tried at but one bar<sup>c</sup> and know the utmost of their doom, but those who are pious are arraigned at every table and in every tavern. And at such a variety of judicatures<sup>d</sup> there will be as great a variety of sentences, but they commonly concur in this one thing, that he is an hypocrite; and then what pleasure<sup>e</sup>, what triumph they have in such a discovery. There is not half so much *Epicurism*<sup>f</sup> in any of their most studied luxuries, and no spectacle affords them so much pleasure as a bleeding fame thus lying at their mercy.

 To some, nothing is so harsh as the commendation of another, or so melodious as a defamation.

There are another sort of detractors whose designs are not so black, but are equally mean and sordid, much too light to be put in balance with a neighbor's credit. Of these, some will

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a. orig., halting (faltering)

b. irregularity (from a rule)


c. in the final judgment

d. courts

e. orig., complacency (self-satisfaction)

f. pleasure (Epicurus held that the highest good is pleasure)

pick up all the little stories they can get to humor a patron<sup>a</sup>—an artifice well known by those trencher guests, who, like rats, will haunt the best provisions. These men, as the Psalmist said, "eat up people for bread," *Psalms 14*<sup>b</sup>, tearing at and worrying others in their good names that they themselves may eat. Such persons court this as a preferment, and to bring themselves within the reach of it do not hesitate to assume that vilest office of common denouncers<sup>c</sup>. There are others who, when they have gotten knowledge of another persons fault, think it an endearing thing to whisper it in the ear of some friend or confidant. But

 *Some tear  
& worry others  
in their good  
names that they  
themselves may  
eat.*

surely, if they must sacrifice some secret to their friendship, if they will express their confidence, let them acquaint their friend with their own private crimes. That would indeed show something of trust, but that which is done at another's expense will hardly convince any thoughtful<sup>d</sup> person of their kindness.

There remains an even more trifling sort of defamers still who have no deliberate design that they pursue in defaming, yet are as assiduous at the trade as darker contrivers. Such are those who publish their neighbor's failings as they read a gazette, only that they may be telling news. It is an itch wherewith some people's tongues are strangely overrun, who can hold a glowing coal in their mouths as well as they can withhold anything they think is new; nay they will sometimes run themselves out of breath for fear lest anyone should tell the tale before them. This is one of the most childish vanities imaginable, and surely such persons

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a. a defamer will discover faults in others that please & excite his peers or patrons

b. full text: "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that does good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, & call not upon the Lord." *Psalms 14:3-4*.

c. orig., delators (accusers; denouncers; from *delate*, to hand someone down to a court of law)

d. orig., considering

must have very debased souls that can think it a commensurate entertainment. Others use defamatory discourse neither for the love of news, nor the love of defamation, but purely for love of talk; whose speech, like a flowing current, indiscriminately washes away whatever is in its way. And indeed such incessant talkers are usually people that do not have enough depth to supply themselves out of their own store, and therefore they can let no outside acquirement<sup>a</sup> pass by them any more than a mill that is always going can afford any waters to run past wasted<sup>b</sup>. I know we use to call this talkativeness a feminine vice, but to speak impartially, although we assume this scandal is the peculiar arena of women, they are not alone in this fault; and he that appropriates loquacity to women should perhaps shine a light on men, because it is as possible to go into masculine company where it will be just as hard to get in a word as it is in female gossiping. However, as to the particular fault of defaming, both the sexes seem to be in competition, and I think that person is a very critical judge that could make a determination between them.

 Some use  
defamation  
purely for love  
of talk.

Now lest this later sort of defamers should be ready to absolve themselves as persons of harmless intentions, I want them to consider that they are only more impertinent, not less injurious; for though it be granted that the proud and envious will make a distinct account for their pride and envy, yet as far as relates to the neighbor, they are equally mischievous. *Anacreon*,<sup>c</sup> who choked on a grape seed<sup>d</sup>, died as surely as *Julius Caesar* with his twenty-three wounds; and a person's reputation may be as well deceptively lost and prattled away, as it may be maliciously betrayed; nay perhaps more easily so, for where the speaker

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a. *orig., accession (something acquired)*

b. *without engaging the mechanisms of the mill*


c. *of Teos, 6th c. BC; one of the Nine Lyric Poets of ancient Greece*

d. *orig., grape-stone*

is least suspected of design, the hearer is the more apt to give him credit. This way of insinuating by familiar discourse is like those poisons that are taken in at the pores, which are the most insensibly absorbed and the most impossible to expel.

But we need not dispute which is the worst, since it is certain that all are bad, none of them (*or any proportionate to them*) being at all able to pretend to be warranted by either *Justice* or *Charity*. And then, what our Savior says in another case, will be applicable to this: "*He that is not with me is against me,*" *Matthew 12:30*. He who acts not upon the dictates of *Justice* or *Charity* in publishing his neighbor's faults acts directly in contradiction to them; for where *Justice* and *Charity* do not in some particular respect command such disclosures, they do generally and implicitly forbid *all such* disclosures.

For, first, if a divulged fault is of a light nature, the supposed offender does not merit being made an object of public discourse because of it. Fame is a delicate<sup>a</sup> thing and seldom is it tossed and bandied about without being bruised, if not falling into ruin: for reports, we know, like snowballs, gather more the farther they roll, and once I have passed a small detraction to another person, how do I know how he or she might improve upon it? And if that person, after advancing it, delivers it to a third, he or she may also make their own contribution to it, and so, in a successive transmitting from one to the next, the small


 *How many people have lain under great & heavy scandals which arose from only some inadvertence or indiscretion?*

offence may grow to such a monstrous bulk as bears no proportion to the original. He or she must be a great stranger to the world that has not experimentally found the truth of this. How many people have lain under great and heavy scandals which arose from only some inadvertence or indiscretion? Slander is of so quick a growth that the least grain immediately shoots up into a tree;

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*a. orig., tender*

and when a slander has grown, it can no more be reduced back into its first cause than a tree can shrink back into that little seed from whence it first sprang. No ruins are so irreparable as those of reputation and therefore, whoever pulls out but one stone to create a breach may do a greater mischief than perhaps he or she intends, and a greater injustice too: for by however much the more strictly *Justice* obliges a person to perform reparation in the case of injuries done, so much the more severely does *Justice* prohibit the doing those injuries which we are incapable of repairing. In the *Levitical Law*,<sup>a</sup> he that knew his ox was apt to gore, and yet kept him not confined, was responsible for any mischief the ox happened to do, *Exodus 21:29*<sup>b</sup>. I think that there is no thoughtful<sup>c</sup> person who can be ignorant of how little trivial accusations are apt to tear and mangle the fame of others: and yet if the lavish talker does not restrain himself from such, he certainly stands accountable to God, and his neighbor, and his own conscience for all the danger such accusations procure.

 Who is ignorant of how little trivial accusations are apt to mangle the fame of others?

But when the report concerns some higher and enormous crime, it is true that the delinquent person may deserve the


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a. Old Testament law that pertained to the civil & religious concerns of the Jews

b. full text: "If the ox pushed with his horns in time past & it was testified to his owner, & he kept him not in & he killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned & his owner also shall be put to death. If there is laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him. If he has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. If the ox shall push a manservant or maidservant, he shall give their master thirty shekels of silver & the ox shall be stoned. And if a man shall open a pit or dig a pit & not cover it, & an ox or an ass fall therein, the owner of the pit shall make it good & give money to the owner & the dead beast shall be his. And if one man's ox hurt another's so that he die, then they shall sell the live ox & divide the money & the dead ox also they shall divide. Or if it is known that the ox pushed in time past & his owner has not kept him in, he shall surely pay ox for ox, & the dead shall be his." *Exodus 21:29-36*.

c. orig., considering

less pity and yet perhaps the reporter may not deserve the less blame; for often such a discovery<sup>a</sup> serves not to reclaim but to enrage the offender and thereby to precipitate him into greater

 *Modesty & fear of shame are natural restraints that the wisdom of God has placed upon mankind.*

degrees of ill doing. Modesty and fear of shame are among those natural restraints that the wisdom of God has placed upon mankind so that whoever stumbles once may yet recover himself by checking himself with that bridle; but when he has fallen under the infamy he feared through public detection of his fault, he may then be inclined to discard all caution and to think he

owes himself the utmost pleasure in his vice as the price for loss of his reputation. Nay perhaps he goes even further and prepares for a reverse sort of fame by becoming eminently wicked; and he or she who before was only a clandestine disciple of impiety becomes a doctor of impiety. And surely it would be better to let a concealed crime remain in its wished for obscurity than, by thus rousing it from its concealment<sup>b</sup>, bring it to stand at bay and set itself in this kind of open defiance, especially in this degenerate<sup>c</sup> age where vice has so many well-wishers who will eagerly run after any that will lead them in it.

And this brings up a consideration relating to the public, to which the divulging of private crimes (*especially if they are unusually novel*) does only an ill bit of service to the public good. Vice is contagious and casts pestilential vapors and, like someone that brings a plague-sick person out in public in order to inform the world of his disease would be thought not to have much befriended his neighborhood, so also he that displays these vicious ulcers while he seeks to defame his neighbor may perhaps infect many other in so doing. We too experimentally find the power of ill examples. People often take up sins—to which they


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a. disclosure


b. orig., covert

c. orig., degenerated (fallen)

*have no natural propensity*—merely by way of conformity and imitation. And if the occasion happens during the commission of a crime that more suits the practice of the hearers, although it cannot be said to seduce them to greater sin, yet it may encourage and confirm them; emboldening them not only the more frequently to those sinful acts but even to avow those sins wherein they now find that they stand not alone, and by discovering a new accessory to their party<sup>a</sup>, to invite them the more heartily and openly to espouse it.

 People often take up sins merely by way of conformity & imitation.

These are surely effects that do not correspond very well with the *Justice* and *Charity* we owe either to particular persons or to mankind in general. And indeed, no better effect can be expected from a practice which so perfectly contradicts the grand rule of both justice and charity, namely, *the doing unto others even as we would have others do to us*. That the immodest exposition of our neighbor's sin does so violate this rule, every man has a ready conviction within himself if he does but consult his own heart. Alas, with what solicitude do we seek to hide our own guiltiness with false dresses, and what varnishes<sup>b</sup> do we put on them? There are not more arts for disguising our corporal blemishes than for disguising our moral blemishes, and yet while we thus paint and plaster<sup>c</sup> our own deformities, we cannot allow any of the least imperfections of another to remain undetected but we tear off the veil from their blushing frailties and not only expose them but we proclaim them. And can there be a grosser, a more detestable partiality than this? Surely God may in this instance (*as in many others*) expostulate with us as he did with Israel, "Are

 We hide our own guiltiness while we expose & proclaim the frailties of others.

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a. *in sinful activities*

b. *an artificial covering (to give a fair appearance to an act)*

c. *orig., parget (paint or plaster)*


*not your ways unequal?" Ezekiel 18<sup>a</sup>. What barbarism and what inhumanity is it to treat in this manner those who are of the same common nature as ourselves, whom we cannot but know have the same concern in preserving their own reputation, and the same regret at the loss of it, as we also have? And what shame is it that the evangelical precept of doing unto others as we would have them do to us—a saying that met with so much reverence even from heathens that Severus the Emperor preferred it to all the maxims of philosophers—should be thus contemned and violated by Christians, and that too upon such slight and inconsiderable motives as usually prevail in this kind of defamation?*

But we are not to consider this fault as it is a defect of *Justice* and *Charity* only in its root, but in its product to, as it is a seminary of more injustice and uncharitableness. Those disadvantageous reports we make of our neighbors are almost seen to come back around to us: for let no one persuade himself that the hearers of such defamation will keep his or her counsel any better than he or she does that of the defamed person. The softest whisper of this kind of defamation will find others echoing it until it reaches the ears of the concerned party, and perhaps with some enhancements too. And when it is considered how unwilling people are to hear of their own faults even in the mildest and most charitable way of admonition, it is not to be doubted that a public defamation will seem disoblighing enough to provoke


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a. full text: "Yet says the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not fair. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal [fair]? Are not your ways unequal [unfair]? Therefore I will judge you ... every one according to his ways, says the Lord God. Repent & turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed, & make a new heart & a new spirit: for why will you die ... ? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God: wherefore turn & live." Ezekiel 18:29-32

a response<sup>a</sup>, which again begets a rejoinder, and so the quarrel is carried on with mutual recriminations; every malicious inquiry is made into each others manners and the things, which perhaps they did in closets, come to be proclaimed upon the house-tops: so the wildfire runs round and round until it is fixed<sup>b</sup> in an irreconcilable feud. This is often the reason for the distance we see between friends and relations; this breeds such strangeness, such animosity between neighbors that you cannot go to one without being entertained with invectives against the other; perhaps you shall even lose both because you are willing to side with neither.

 *The usual consequences of the liberty of the tongue are estrangement & animosity.*

These are the *usual* consequences of the liberty of the tongue; and what account can anyone give of himself—*respecting Christianity or prudence*—that has let in such a train of mischief merely to gratify an impotent childish humor by telling a defamatory tale? Peace was the great legacy Christ left to his followers, and peace ought to be guarded though we risk our greatest temporal concerns for it; and we cannot be thus prostituted without showing despite to Christ as well as our brethren.

 *What account can anyone give of himself who gratifies a childish humor by telling a defamatory tale?*

Yet, if we consider this liberty of the tongue abstractly from the more solemn mischiefs that attend it, the mere levity and unworthiness of it sets it below an ingenious person. We generally think that *tattler* and *busybody* are titles of no small reproach, yet truly I do not know to whom it more justly belongs than to those who busy themselves first in learning and then in publishing the faults of others. The Apostle thought this employment was a blot even upon the weaker sex, and held the prevention of it to be of such importance that he prescribed a change of the

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a. *orig., return*

b. *becomes permanent*

whole condition of life: to convert widowhood (*though a state that in other respects he much prefers, 1 Corinthians 7:8<sup>a</sup>*) into marriage rather than expose themselves to this temptation, *1 Timothy 5:13-14<sup>b</sup>*. And if the impotence of the weak cannot afford an excuse for this liberty of the tongue in spreading the faults of others, what a debasement is it of man's nobler faculties to be thus entertained with such things? The historian gives it as an ill indication of *Domitian's<sup>c</sup>* temper that he employed himself in catching and tormenting flies, and surely these tattlers do not fall under a much better character—either for wisdom or good nature—who thus snatch up, to the prejudice of their neighbors, all the little fluttering reports they meet with.



*Weakness does not afford an excuse for liberty of the tongue.*

But besides the habit of divulging the faults of others, there is another branch of *detraction* that naturally springs from this root, namely, the censuring and severe judging of them. We think that we have not well played the historian when we have told a thing, unless we have also add our remarks and animadversions<sup>d</sup> regarding it. And although, God knows, it is bad enough to merely relate a thing and trust it to the severity of the hearers, yet

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a. *full text*: "I would that all men were even as I myself. But everyone has his proper gift of God, one after this manner & another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried & widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." *1 Corinthians 7:7-9*.

b. *full text*: "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; & not only idle, but tattlers also & busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." *1 Timothy 5:13-14*.

c. Roman emperor, 81-96; last member of the Flavian dynasty; the son of Vespasian & younger brother of Titus; known chiefly for a reign of terror & the authoritarian nature of his rule.

d. from *animum advertere*, meaning 'to turn the mind to', thus, critical or censorious remarks.

few can content themselves with that, but must give a sampling of their rigor<sup>a</sup> and by the bitterness of their own censure invite others to pass similar judgment. It is a process contrary to all rules of law or equity for the plaintiff to assume the part of a judge; and we may easily divine the fate of that person's fame, who is tried so unduly.

It is indeed sad to see how many private tribunals are set up everywhere where we scan over and judge our neighbor's actions, but scarcely ever acquit any. We take up with the most incompetent witnesses, often even suborning our own surmises and jealousies that we may be sure to convict<sup>b</sup> the unhappy criminal. How nicely and scrupulously do we examine every circumstance—*would God we were only half as exacting in our own penitential inquisitions<sup>c</sup>*—and torture them to make them confess something which does not appear within a more general viewing of the facts, and which perhaps was never in the actor's intention? In a word, we do like witches with their magical chemistry, we extract all the venom and take nothing that abates<sup>d</sup>. By this means we confound the degrees of sins and sentence the deliberate and indeliberate alike, receiving the habit and the act all at the same rate and that, at the utmost it can commonly amount to at its worst. Surely, if we could but show our commission to judge our brethren, this is a most culpable corruption in judgment.



*Would God we were only half as exacting in our own penitential inquiries into ourselves.*

But here we may, every one of us, interrogate ourselves in our Savior's words, "*Who made me a judge?*" *Luke 12:14*. And if he disclaimed it, who in respect of his divinity, had the supreme

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a. severity

b. orig., cast (overcome)

c. into our own doings

d. orig., allay (n., that which allays or abates)

right<sup>a</sup>, and that too in a case wherein (at least) one of the litigants had desired his interposition, what boldness is it in us to assume the power of judging where no such appeal is made to us, but on the contrary, the party disowns our authority and (which is infinitely more) our authority is superseded by our great lawgiver in that express prohibition, "Judge not," and that, backed with a severe penalty "that you be not judged?" Matthew 7:1<sup>b</sup>. As God

 The reality of right judgment.

has appropriated vengeance to himself, so has he appropriated judicature<sup>c</sup> also, and it is an invasion of his peculiar power for any (except his delegates, the lawful magistrates<sup>d</sup>) to pretend to.

And indeed, in all private judgment, so much depends upon the intention of the offender that unless we could possess ourselves of God's omniscience, it will be as irrational as it is impious to assume his authority. Until we know the hearts of others, we are at best only imperfect judges of their actions: at our rate of judging, *St. Paul* surely passed for a most malicious persecutor, whereas God said he acted "ignorantly in unbelief," and upon that intuition had mercy on him, *1 Timothy 1:13*<sup>e</sup>.

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a. to judge; Jesus said, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." John 7:24, & "You judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I & the Father that sent me." John 8:15-16).

b. full text: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; & with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why do you behold the mote in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull the mote out of your eye, & behold, a beam is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the beam out of your own eye; & then you will see clearly to take the mote out of your brother's eye." Matthew 7:1-5


c. the power of distributing justice

d. government, being of God, has power to judge & punish: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme, or to governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers & for the praise of them that do well." 1 Peter 2:13-14; see also Luke 12:58-59.

e. full text: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer

It is therefore good counsel which the Apostle gives, "*Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come,*" 1 Corinthians 4:5. For although it is said that "*the Saints shall judge the world,*" 1 Corinthians 6:3, yet it will be at the great judgment<sup>a</sup>, and whoever will intrude into that office before the time, will be in danger of being passive rather than active in the judicatory<sup>b</sup>. I do not here advise anyone to such a stupid charity as that which makes no distinction between actions: I know there is a woe pronounced against those who call evil good, as well as those who call good evil<sup>c</sup>. Surely when we see an open notorious sin committed, we may express a detestation of the crime, although not of the actor; this detestation may sometimes be a necessary charity both to the offender and to innocent spectators as an amulet to keep them from the contagion of the example. But even still, in these cases, our sentence must not exceed the evidence; we must judge only according to the visible undoubted circumstances and not aggravate the crime with our own presumptions and conjectures. If we do, however right our guesses may be, our judgment is not, and we are as St. James says, "*Judges of evil thoughts,*" James 2:4.

Indeed this rash judging is not only very unjust both to God and our neighbor, but it is an act of the greatest *pride*. When we set ourselves in that tribunal, we always look down with contempt on those at the bar. And certainly there is nothing that does so gratify and so regale a haughty spirit as usurped sovereignty over their neighbors: but the more it does

 *Nothing so gratifies a haughty person as usurped sovereignty over others.*


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*⌘ a persecutor, ⌘ injurious: but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith ⌘ love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying ⌘ worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief." 1 Timothy 1:12-15.*

a. *orig., assize (judicial inquest or court)*


b. *dispensing of justice (on that great day)*

c. *"Woe unto them that call evil good, ⌘ good evil; that put darkness for light, ⌘ light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, ⌘ sweet for bitter!" Isaiah 5:20*

 *Pride is a hardy vice: you cannot starve it with the most industrious mortifications.*

so, the greater necessity there is to abstain from it. Pride is a hardy kind of vice that will live on the barest pasture: you cannot starve it with the most industrious mortifications. How little need is there then for pampering and heightening our pride, which we cannot more effectually do than by this censorious disposition<sup>a</sup>? For by that vice we are so perpetually employed abroad<sup>b</sup> that we have no leisure to look homeward<sup>c</sup> to see our own defects. We are like the inhabitants of *Ai*, *Joshua* 8<sup>d</sup>, that were so eager upon the pursuit of others that they left themselves exposed; like them, in pursuit of others, we leave ourselves open to the ambush of Satan, who will be sure to encourage us in our chase and to draw us farther and farther from ourselves, and who does not care how zealous we are in fighting against the crimes of others as long as he can keep that zeal from recoiling upon our own selves.

Lastly, this judging of others is one of the highest violations of *Charity*. The Apostle presents charity as one of the properties of that grace that "*thinks no evil*," is not apt to devise severe constructions<sup>e</sup>, but sets everything in the fairest light and puts the most candid interpretation upon a thing as the matter will bear. And truly this is of great importance to the reputation of our neighbors. The world we know is extremely, in many instances, governed

 *The judging of others is one of the highest violations of charity.*

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a. *orig., humor (temper)*


b. *at others*

c. *inward*

d. *The king of Ai "went out against Israel to battle, he & all his people ... but he knew not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city. And Joshua & all Israel made as if they were beaten before them & fled by the way of the wilderness. And all the people that were in Ai were called together to pursue after them: & they pursued after Joshua, & were drawn away from the city." Joshua 8:14-16.*


e. *to put an evil construction upon (the deeds & words of others)*

by opinion, it has not only an influence upon it, but it is that very thing: reputation being nothing but a fair opinion and estimation among others. Now this opinion is not always swayed by due motives, but sometimes little accidents, and often fancy, and more often than that, prepossession<sup>a</sup> governs in it. So we see that many times the one who puts the first ill-character upon another, solidifies the impression of that person which then runs rampant in the world. The generality of people take up prejudices (*as they do religions*) upon trust; and of those who are more curious in inquiring into the grounds of such prejudices, there are not many who vary on the more charitable side, or who bring the common sentence<sup>b</sup> to review with intent to moderate rather than to enhance it.

 *People take up prejudices (as they do religions) upon faith.*

People are apt to think it some disparagement to their acuteness and invention if they cannot say something as discerning<sup>c</sup> on the subject as has been said before; and so it is the business of many to lay on more load, but of few to take it off. Therefore, he or she that passes the first condemnatory sentence is like the incendiary in a popular tumult, who is chargeable with all those disorders to which he initially gave rise, although that does not free his abettors from their share of the guilt.

And as this is very uncharitable with respect to the injury offered, so also is it seen to be uncharitable as we reflect on the grand rule of *Charity*. Can we pretend to love our neighbor as ourselves and yet, our love for our neighbor has an entirely contrary outcome than the love which we bear toward ourselves? Can self-love shrink our beam into a mote even while our love for our neighbor magnifies his mote into a beam? Certainly not.

 *Can we say we love our neighbors as ourselves & yet treat them entirely contrary to the way we treat ourselves?*

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a. *preconceived opinions*

b. *judgment (as pronounced upon some person)*

c. *orig., sharp (penetrating)*



True  
charity is more  
sincere.

True Charity is more sincere. True Charity does not reverse the perspective to deal us the small end, to represent our own faults at a distance and in the most diminutive size, and then shuffle the perspective again when we are to view our neighbor's faults. No, these are tricks of *legerdemain*<sup>a</sup> that we learn from another school, even from him whose whole style is "*the accuser of the brethren*"<sup>b</sup>. We know how frequently God protests against false weights and false measures<sup>c</sup>, and surely it is not only in the shop or market that he abhors them: they are no less abominable in conversation than they are in commerce<sup>d</sup>. To buy by one measure and sell by another is not more inequitable<sup>e</sup> than it is to have these differing standards for our own and our neighbor's faults, that our own



Partiality  
is inconsistent  
with common  
honesty, &  
can never be  
reconciled with  
Christian love.

may weigh lighter than nothing and yet our neighbor's (*though actually lighter than ours*) may be found heavy as lead. This is a kind of partiality that is inconsistent with common honesty, and can therefore never be reconciled with Christian Charity. And however demurely such persons may pretend to sanctity, that interrogation of

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a. *sight of hand* (a trick performed with such art & adroitness that it eludes observation)


b. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation & strength & the kingdom of our God & the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day & night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb & by the word of their testimony; & they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:10-11.

c. "The stranger that dwells with you shall be to you as one born among you & you shall love him as yourself ... You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in the yard or weight or measure. Just balances, just weights ... shall you have; I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 19:34-36; "You shall not have in your bag different weights, a great & a small. You shall not have in your house different weights, a great & a small. But you shall have a perfect & just weight, a perfect & just measure ... For all that do such things, & all that do unrighteously are an abomination unto the Lord your God." Deuteronomy 25:13-16..

d. *orig., traffic* (buying & selling)

e. *orig., unequal* (unjust)

God presses hard upon them: "*shall I count them pure with the wicked balances and with the bag of deceitful weights?*" Micah 6:11<sup>a</sup>. Such bitter invectives against other people's faults and indulgence or palliation of their own only shows that their zeal lies in their affections<sup>b</sup> and that they consider not so much what is done as who does it, and to such persons the saying of the Apostle is very applicable: "*Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are that judge: for wherein you judge another you condemn yourself, for you that judge do the same things.*" Romans 2:1. But and if we admit a person may be guilty of the very same things he censures in another, yet it is certain that every person has some things worthy of censurer and of whatsoever sort they are, he or she desires that they not be rigorously judged; and therefore by the rule of *Charity*, yea and *Justice* too, we should not do to others that which we would not suffer ourselves. If he that would judge can find extenuations<sup>c</sup> for his or her own crimes, he must in all reasonableness presume that others may also have extenuations for theirs. The common frailty of our nature is that just as it is apt to mislead us into faults<sup>d</sup>, so it gives as equal share in excuses for those faults; and therefore what I would have pass for the consequences of impotency or inadvertence in myself, I can, with no tolerable ingenuity, give a worse name to when I discover them in others.

 *The common frailty of our nature must always be considered.*

We have now viewed both these branches of *Detraction*, seen both the sins and mischiefs of them, and we may now join them together in a concluding observation, which is that they are as *imprudent* as they are *unchristian*. It has been received among

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a. *full text*: "*Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, & the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, & with the bag of deceitful weights?*" Micah 6:10-11.

b. *orig., spleen (affection)*

c. *the act of representing a thing as less wrong than it is*

d. *due to moral weakness*

the maxims of civil life that we not unnecessarily exasperate anyone; to which agrees the advice of an ancient philosopher, "*Speak not evil of your neighbor; if you do you will hear that which will not fail to trouble you.*" There is no

 *There is no one who will not at some time give offense, but defaming others lays one open to unscrupulous revenge.*

person so inconsiderable that he or she may not at some time or other do a displeasure, but in this displeasure of *Defaming*, people need no harnessing<sup>a</sup>, no preparation and every man and woman has weapons ready for a return. Thus, none can shoot the arrows of defamation but they must expect that they will revert with a rebounded force upon themselves; and they do so

not only in violation of Christian unity (*as I have before observed*) but to the aggressor's great secular detriment, both in fame and oftentimes in interest also. Revenge is sharp-sighted and overlooks no opportunity for retaliation and that, commonly not as restrained as the Levitical ones were, "*An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,*" *Exodus 21:24*; no, nor by the larger proportions of a fourfold restitution, *Exodus 22:1*<sup>b</sup>, but extends to the utmost power of the one who inflicts. The examples are innumerable of people who in this same manner have laid themselves open in their greatest concerns<sup>c</sup> and have let loose the hands as well as the tongues of others against themselves merely because they would put no restraint upon their own tongues. This is so great an indiscretion that we may well apply the words of Solomon to them: "*A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.*" *Proverbs 18:7*.

And now who can sufficiently wonder that a practice that so thwarts our interests in both worlds<sup>d</sup> should come to prevail

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a. *they need no harness put on them to draw them into doing such things*

b. "*If a man shall steal an ox or a sheep, & kill it or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, & four sheep for a sheep.*" *Exodus 22:1*.

c. *risks more important things*

d. *the present & the future*

universally among us? Yet that it does so, I may appeal to the consciences of most and to the observation of all. What so common topic of discourse is there as that of backbiting our neighbors? Enter into the company of all ages, all ranks, all professions and this is the constant entertainment. I doubt that any one of us who at night shall honestly recollect the occurrences of the day, will very rarely be able to say that we have spent it without hearing or speaking (*perhaps both*) something of this kind. Nay, even those who restrain themselves from taking other liberties, are often apt to indulge to this. Many who act so justly towards their neighbor's property that they would not take so much as a thread from their neighbor, are yet so inconsiderate of his fame as to find themselves in discourse at the expense of that very thing, though it is an infinity greater injury than the robbing of his money or goods<sup>a</sup>. This shows what a tendency we have to measure things with a false measure, and it evinces that many of those who have not only abjured the world in general in their baptism and do in many instances seem to themselves, as well as to others, to have gained a superiority over the world, do yet indiscernibly, in this fault of defaming others, yield to the world in the greatest sign<sup>b</sup> of its continued sovereignty over them by permitting the world to set the standard and estimate of things and taking its customary prescriptions for laws. For what, besides this unhappy servility to custom, can possibly reconcile persons who own Christianity to a practice so widely distant from it? It is true that those who profess themselves men of this world, who design<sup>c</sup> their portion only in this life, may take up Christianity as sometimes conducive (at least seemingly) to their end; but for those who

 Do you permit the world to set the standard & estimate of things & take its customary prescriptions for laws?


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a. *orig., coffer (treasure)*

b. *orig., ensign (mark)*

c. *purpose (plan)*

propose higher hopes for themselves and know that charity is one of the main props to those hopes, how foolishly do they undermine themselves when they act against Christian principles, and that upon no other authority than that of popular usage?

 Do you profess Christ while popular custom rather than Christian love rules your life?

I know that people are ready to excuse themselves because of their own indignation against vice, thinking that their zeal against sin in others must acquit them for their own violation of the second table of the law<sup>a</sup> just as well as it once acquitted Moses for the breaking of both tables, *Exodus 32:19*<sup>b</sup>. But I answer such people in Christ's words: "You do not know what manner of Spirit you are of." *Luke 9:55*.<sup>c</sup> Meekness and charity are the evangelical


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a. Detraction is in the 2nd table: "Honor your father & your mother ... You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, his house, field, manservant, maidservant, ox or ass or anything that is your neighbor's." *Deuteronomy 5:16-21*.

b. Moses broke the tables on which the law was written (not the law itself) just after God had relented from destroying the people for their sin: Moses took the two tables of the law & descended from the mountain to return to the people, "the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side & on the other. And the tables were the work of God, & the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And Moses said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but I hear the noise of them that sing. And it came to pass, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf & the dancing; & Moses' anger waxed hot & he cast the tables out of his hands & broke them beneath the mount." *Exodus 32:1-19*.

c. While detraction, especially unjust & false detraction, seeks to destroy the lives of others, Jesus, when he was rejected by a village of Samaritans & the disciples thought to "command fire to come down from heaven & consume" those who had rejected him, said, "You do not know what manner of Spirit you are of. For the Son of man has not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." *Luke 9:52-56*. **But Jesus said this of his disciples before the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them & they were in truth converted to him, so we ask, do those today who have inherited the promises—within whom the Holy**

graces that will most recommend and assimilate us to Christ who was meek and lowly in heart. But after all this pretext of zeal against sin as put forth by some, I fear it is but a device by which they deceive themselves; a cloak by which they disguise their true nature. Let these truly ransack their own hearts and I doubt but that the best of them will find that there is some vanity that lies at the bottom of their doings, and if it is not of the positive sort mentioned before—*of designing to illustrate their own virtues by contrasting them with the blemishes of others*—it will at least be of the negative sort—*that they are unwilling to incur the contempt incident to those who scruple at small sins*<sup>a</sup>. Besides this, I observe that as it is the common entertainment of the world for people to defame their neighbors, then perhaps they, if they do not join<sup>b</sup> in upon this common theme, will have nothing to render them acceptable company to others; perhaps they will be reproached as morose or dull and their silence will be construed as proceeding not from the abundance of their charity but from a defect of their wit.

 *Meekness & charity are the evangelical graces that are a sign of true Christianity; detraction & evil speaking & pride are not.*

But surely those who thus argue do give thereby a demonstrative proof of that defect that is within them. And he or she whose wit is so precarious that it must depend on the folly and vices of others, would do better to give up all pretense

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*Spirit resides & upon whose hearts God has written his law—yet also not keep his law from their hearts? This keeping of the law from the heart is the very mark & standard of conversion, of a Holy Spirit filled person, of a profession of faith that is true indeed: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." Ephesians 4:29; and when "the year of my redeemed is come," when "mine own arm brought salvation," God himself testifies, "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Savior." Isaiah 63:4-8*

a. *thus they are willing to enlarge upon the sins of others*

b. *orig., strike (enter suddenly)*

of wit. For he or she that has nothing from their own garden<sup>a</sup> to set before their guests would do better to make no invitations than to break down their neighbor's fence<sup>b</sup> and feast their guests upon plunder. Besides, how pitiful an attestation of wit is it to be able to make a disgraceful revelation about others? There is no censorious<sup>c</sup> woman who cannot set up such trophies for herself; and those who value a person on account of such things do prefer the scarab over the bee because the scarab feeds upon dung and is remarkable for no other quality, while the bee sucks flowers and produces honey from its effort.

But next, we must admit that restraint in this practice of evil speaking and defamation should certainly expose a person to reproach from those who do not so restrain themselves<sup>d</sup>. I think that this should not be news to those who know that the condition of Christianity is to take up the cross, though it surely cannot weigh lighter than in this instance. What am I the worse if a vain and talkative person thinks me too reserved? Or if he, whose gay<sup>e</sup> levity is his disease, calls me dull because I do not vent all my excitement<sup>f</sup> into a froth? *Socrates*, when informed of some derogatory speeches someone had spoken against him behind his back, made only

 *Restraint in backbiting & defaming others may bring reproach upon a person.*

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a. *orig., of their own growth*

b. *orig., enclosure*

c. *orig., scolding (given to censure others)*


d. *"Forasmuch as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, & abominable idolatries; wherein **they think it strange that you do not run with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.**" 1 Peter 4:1-4.*

e. *orig., frolic (gay; merry)*

f. *orig., spirits (excitement of mind)*

this facetious reply: "Let him also beat me while I am absent." And he or she who does not attain to such an indifference toward all the idle censures of others will be disturbed in all their civil, as well as their Christian, transactions: it being scarcely possible to do anything without there being remarks<sup>a</sup> made about it. And if a man regards those winds, he will, as *Solomon* says, "never sow," *Ecclesiastes 11:4*<sup>b</sup>; he will suspend even the necessary actions of common life if he will not venture them to being misjudged by others.

But there is a further consideration yet in this matter: for that person who will violate his or her duty in one particular upon such a despicable motive as fear of reproach by ungodly persons, lets Satan get a main point over them and can by no good logic deny to do their Christian duty in other particulars. *Detraction* is not the only sin in fashion: *Profaneness* and *Obscenity* and all sorts of *Luxury* are in fashion too, and threaten no less reproach to those who scruple at them. Upon the same grounds therefore that such a person discards his charity towards his neighbor, he may also discard his piety, his modesty, his temperance<sup>c</sup>, and almost all other virtues. And to speak the truth, there is not a more fertile womb for sin than this dread of the reproach of ungodly persons. Other corruptions must be gratified with cost and industry, but in this the Devil is put to no more trouble than to deride people out of their souls. Such a prolific vice has need therefore of being weeded out of men's hearts: for if it is allowed the least corner of the heart, and if it is indulged in this one instance, it will quickly spread itself farther.

 Let no one violate their Christian duty because of fear of reproach by ungodly persons.


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a. *orig., descants (comments); a virtuous person should be pleased to find people descanting on his actions.*

b. *full text: "He that observes the wind shall not sow; & he that regards the clouds shall not reap." Ecclesiastes 11:4.*

c. *moderations*

Yet after all, this fear of reproach is a mere fallacy, started to disguise a more real cause of fear; for the greater danger of reproach does indeed lie on the other side: common estimation puts an ill character upon pragmatic meddling people. For though the inquisitiveness and curiosity of the hearer may sometimes render such discourses grateful enough to him, yet it leaves in him no good impressions of the speaker. This is


 *Common estimation puts an ill character upon pragmatic meddling people.*

well observed by one who said, "*Whether it be to friend or foe, talk not of other men's lives and if you cannot speak without offence, reveal them not, for he heard and observed you and when time comes he will hate you.*" In a word, all thoughtful persons will be ever on guard in such company,

foreseeing that they will talk no less freely of them than they do of others before them. Nor can the commonness of the guilt obviate the censure, there being nothing more frequent than for people to accuse faults of which they are also guilty when they see them in other persons. Vice is like a dark lantern that turns its bright side only to the person who holds it, but looks black and dismal in another's hand. And in this particular, none has so much reason to fear a defamer as those who are themselves defamers; for besides the common prudential motive, their own consciousness of their doings gives them an inward alarm and makes them look for retribution in kind. Thus all in all we see that there is no real temptation, even to our vanity, to comply with this uncharitable custom of defaming others, when we are sure to lose more repute by it than we can propose to ourselves to gain from it: being esteemed an ill-willed person will not be balanced by being thought pleasant, ingenuous company, were one sure to be thought so. But odds are that being thought pleasant, ingenuous company will not be acquired by it either, for the most assiduous talebearers and the bitterest revilers are often half-witted people, there being nothing more frequently observed than such people's readiness to "*speaking evil of things they*

understand not," Jude 1:10<sup>a</sup>.

O let not those then, who have repudiated the more inviting sins, show themselves philtered<sup>b</sup> and bewitched by this sin of detraction, but instead of submitting to the bad example of others, themselves set a good example for them, and endeavor to force this unchristian custom out of fashion. I am sure if they do not,<sup>c</sup> they will be more deeply chargeable than others, for the more command they have over their other corruptions, the more do they witness against themselves in this fault. Their remissness and willing subjection to this sin—besides their bad example—is more ensnaring than the same example in other people, and is apt to insinuate light thoughts regarding this sin: people are ready to think themselves safe while they follow one of noted piety, and the authority of such a person often leads them blindfolded into that person's failings. Thus when Peter dissembled, *St. Paul* tells us that the "other Jews and even Barnabas also was carried away with his dissimulation," *Galatians 2:15*<sup>d</sup>. And I doubt not, in this particular, many are encouraged

 Instead of submitting to the bad example of others, let us set a good example for them

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a. full text: "But these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." *Jude 1:10*.


b. enchanted (by a philter or magic potion)

c. he refers to the professing Christian who is backsliding in this fault (though they seem to have overcome other faults or worldlinesses)

d. full text: "When Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles, but when they came, he withdrew & separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they did not walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter before them all, If you, being a Jew, live after the manner of Gentiles, & not as the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature & not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in


by the liberty they see even good persons take, so that such persons have a more accumulative guilt, for they do not only commit but patronize the fault. The consideration of this has kept me, I confess, longer on this subject than is proportionate to the brevity of the rest; but, I think, not longer than agrees to the importance of the subject.

And now, since we have considered the malignity of this *Sin of Detraction*, and yet withal find that it is a sin which, as the Apostle says, "*does so easily beset us,*" it is but a natural corollary that we

 *We must be ever vigilant against the sin of detraction.*

strengthen<sup>a</sup> our vigilance against it. And where the importance and difficulty are both so great, it is necessary to consider what are the likeliest means and the most appropriate antidotes against this so dangerous and yet so epidemic a disease.

And here the common rule of physic is to be adverted<sup>b</sup> to, viz. to examine the causes, so that the remedies may be adapted to them. I therefore first ask that every person seriously study his own constitution of mind, and observe what his or her particular

 *Each must examine himself for the causes of this sin of detraction.*

temptations are to this sin of *Detraction*; whether any of those I have mentioned before, such as *Pride, Envy, Levity*, etc., or any other temptation lies deeper and is only discernible to his or her own inspection. Let each scrutinize himself and then accordingly apply himself to correct the sin

in its first principle. For, just as when there is an infection<sup>c</sup> in any part<sup>d</sup>, it is not cured merely by outward applications but by such alternative medicines as purify the blood; so also this *Leprosy*

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*Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ & not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." Galatians 2:11-16.*

a. orig., enforce

b. attended to

c. eruption of humor

d. of the body

of the Tongue will spread still farther if it is not checked<sup>a</sup> in its spring and source by the mortifying of those corrupt inclinations which feed and strengthen it.

✎ Each must correct this sin of detraction in its first principle within himself.

This is an inquisition I must leave to every individual's own conscience, which alone can testify by what impulses he or she acts. Yet as the Rabbins<sup>b</sup> were known to say, that in every *signal judgment* that befell the Jews, there was some grain of the golden calf. So I think I may venture to say that in all *Detraction* there is some mixture of *Pride*, and therefore I suppose a caution against *Pride* is so generally seasonable that it may well lead the vanguard<sup>c</sup> of all advice that can be given in this matter. And here it is observable that God, who "*made of one blood all nations of the earth,*" *Acts 17:26*<sup>d</sup>, has so equally distributed all the most valuable privileges of human nature, himself designing to preclude all insulting of one man over another. Neither has he insinuated this only by his *providence*, but he has enforced it by his commands: in the *Levitical Law* we find what particular care he takes to moderate the rigor of judicial correction for this very reason, "*lest your brother be despised in your eyes,*" *Deuteronomy 25:3*. So unreasonable did he think that the crime or misery of one should be the exultation of another. Neither we, when we observe the sins of one against another: it would be a great guilt to be puffed up against him that is wronged

✎ In all detraction, there is some mixture of pride.


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a. destroyed

b. Rabbis


c. the front line of attack

d. full text: "God that made the world & all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven & earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything, seeing he gives to all life & breath & all things; & has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, & has determined the times before appointed & the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him & find him, though he is not far from every one of us:" *Acts 17:24-26*.

 God, who "made of one blood all nations of the earth," has so equally distributed all the most valuable privileges of human nature, himself designing to preclude all insulting of one man over another.

when we should rather have mourned the sin that was committed against him. And when we see a dead body, we are not inclined to pronounce insults over it or brag of our own health and vigor, but it rather dampens our spirits and makes us reflect that it may be our own condition we know not how soon. And certainly the spectacles of spiritual mortality should operate in the same manner. We have within us the same principles of corruption as our lapsed brethren, and we have nothing but God's grace to secure us against the same effects of that corruption; and it is by these insulting reflections upon our neighbor that we risk forfeiting that too, for God gives grace **only** to the humble, *James 4:6<sup>a</sup>*. St. Paul's advice is therefore very apposite<sup>b</sup> to this case: "*Brethren, if*

*a man is overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.*" *Galatians 6:1*. In a word, the faults of others ought to excite our pity towards them, our caution as to ourselves, and our thankfulness toward God if God has hitherto preserved us

 God gives grace **only** to the humble.

from the same faults. But if we spread our sails in order to show triumph over these wrecks, we expose ourselves to worse. Other sins, like rocks, may split the hull, yet the lading<sup>c</sup> may be

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a. full text: "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil & he will flee from you. Draw near to God & he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; & purify your hearts, you double minded. Be afflicted & mourn & weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning & your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord & he will lift you up. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He who speaks evil of his brother & judges his brother, speaks evil of the law & judges the law: but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save & to destroy; who are you that judge another?" *James 4:6-12*.

b. applicable

c. the lading of a ship (cargo)

preserved; but *Pride*, like a gulf<sup>a</sup>, will swallow us up and our very virtues, when so leavened, become weights and plummet<sup>b</sup> to sink us to the deeper ruin<sup>c</sup>. The counsel therefore of the Apostle is very pertinent to this matter: "*Be not high-minded, but fear.*" *Romans 11:20*.

But God knows people can insult others when they are not only *possibly*, but *actually*, involved in the same sins; so then, what are all your accusations and bitter censures of others but indictments and condemnatory sentences against yourselves?<sup>d</sup> And we may justly expect that God will take us at our word and reply to us as the prophet did to David: "*You are the man.*" *2 Samuel 12:7*<sup>e</sup>. For though our officious vehemence against another's fault may blind the eyes of men, yet God is not so

 If we  
censure others  
when we  
commit the  
same sins, our  
censures are  
indictments  
against  
ourselves.

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a. eddy (turning water); whirlpool

b. a piece of lead attached to a line (used in sounding the depth of water)


c. than others; c.f., *Luke 11:24-26; Hebrews 6:4-8; Proverbs 26:11; 2 Peter 1:2-11*; "*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*" *2 Corinthians 11:13-15*.

d. "*You are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judge; for wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you that judge do the same things. ... And do you think, O man that judges them which do such things & does the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?*" *Romans 2:1,3*.

e. Nathan illustrated David's sin against Uriah through a tale of a man who "had nothing but one little ewe lamb" which he treated as his own child, & which was taken by a rich man who "spared to take from his own flock." Hearing the tale, "David's anger was greatly kindled against the man & he said to Nathan, As the Lord lives, the man who has done this thing shall surely die; & he shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing & because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, *You are the man.*" And Nathan pronounced God's judgment against David: "*I will take your wives before your eyes & give them to your neighbor ... the child also that is born to you shall surely die.*" *2 Samuel 12:1-14*.

mocked<sup>a</sup>. And therefore, as when a thief or murderer is detected, it raises an alarm among the whole confederacy<sup>b</sup>; so, when we find our own sins prosecuted in other men's persons, it is not the time for us to join in the prosecution of such persons, but rather to provide for our own safety by humble and penitent reflection on ourselves.

And therefore when we find ourselves (upon any misdemeanor of our brother or sister) ready to stand in the place of a judge<sup>b</sup> and pronounce sentence, let us first consider how competent we are for the office, calling to mind the decision Christ once made in a similar case: "*He who is without sin among you, let him cast the first a stone,*" *John 8:7*. And if we only did this one thing, many perhaps of our fiercest impeachers<sup>d</sup> might think it fit to retire and leave the delinquent brother or sister to the merciful indulgence of our Savior, even as they themselves desire to be left. In short, if we would but look into our own hearts, we would find so much matter for our inquisitions and censures that we would not be at leisure to ramble abroad for it. And therefore as *Lycurgus*<sup>e</sup> once said to one who importuned him to establish a popular parity in the state: "*You,*" he says, "*begin it first in your own family.*" And so I advise those who would judge others to practice it first at home, within their own hearts, and if they would confine themselves to that until there is nothing left to correct, I do not doubt that their neighbor will be free of danger from their detractions.

 *Those who would judge others ought to practice it first at home, within their own hearts.*

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a. "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that he also will reap.*" *Galatians 6:7*.


b. *of evil doers*

b. *orig., mount the tribunal (court of justice)*

d. *of others*

e. *Lycurgus of Sparta; lawgiver who reformed Spartan society*

Another preservation against this sin is the frequent contemplation of the last and great judgment. This is indeed a *catholicon*<sup>a</sup> against all sin, but we find it particularly applied by St. Paul to this sin of judging and despising our brethren: "Why do you judge your brother? Or why do you set at naught<sup>b</sup> your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." *Romans 14:10*. That is the great day of revelation and retribution, and we are not to anticipate it by our private inquests or sentences; we have business enough<sup>c</sup> to provide our own accounts against that day. And as it would be a spiteful folly for malefactors, who are going together to trial<sup>d</sup>, to spend their time in exaggerating each others crimes: so surely is it a spiteful folly for us, who are all going toward the dreadful tribunal, to be drawing up charges against one another. And in so doing, who knows whether we might then meet with the fate of *Daniel's* accusers<sup>e</sup>, only to see those whom we censured acquitted and ourselves doomed. The repentance of the offender may have numbered him among the saints, when our unretracted uncharitableness may send us to unquenchable flames. I conclude this consideration<sup>f</sup> with the words of St.

 It is a spiteful folly for us, who are going together to the final judgment, to draw up charges against one another.

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a. a universal remedy

b. make no account of; despise utterly

c. enough to keep us busy


d. orig., to the bar; to trial (court)


e. "Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, & the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego: therefore he commanded that they beat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. And ... because the king's commandment was urgent & the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego. And these three men .. fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was amazed. ... [and] came near the door of the burning fiery furnace & said, Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come forth & come here. Then [they] came forth from the midst of the fire." *Daniel 3:19-26*.

f. line of thought

James: "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who are you that judge another?" James 4:12.

Another expedient may be, to try to divert<sup>a</sup> this inclination into another channel: if you must speak of other people's faults, let it not be to defame but to amend; let us convert our detraction and backbiting into admonition and fraternal correction. This is a way to extract medicine out of the viper, to consecrate even this so unhallowed a part of the human temperament and turn the ungrateful meddling of a busybody into the most obliging office of a friend. And indeed, if people had the zeal for virtue *to which they pretend when they inveigh against vice*, they would surely take this course of action, for this method alone provides for the possibility of reforming the offender. But alas people arrange the matter in such a way—as if they feared losing an opportunity to make a great outcry<sup>b</sup>—that they will tell the whole world, but not that person that it most concerns. Indeed it is a deplorable thing to see how universally this requisite Christian duty is neglected, and to that neglect we may in a great degree impute that strange overflowing of *detraction* among us. We know that the receiving of anything into our care<sup>c</sup> does insensibly beget a love and tenderness towards it. On this account, a nurse often comes to vie in kindness with the mother. And if we were to only take one another in like manner into our care, and by friendly vigilance watch over each other's souls, it is hardly imaginable what an endearment it would create between people, but such certainly as would infallibly supplant all our unkind reporting on one another, and our severe discourses<sup>d</sup> about our

 Consider the difference between detraction & admonition, & the usefulness of admonition over detraction.

 Detraction pretends to zeal against vice, but it seeks no reformation.

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a. orig., make a revulsion (*divert*)


b. orig., clamor (*urgent outcry*)

c. orig., charge

d. orig., descants

brethren, since those things can *never* take place except when there is at least some indifference, if not enmity, against another.

The next cure I shall propose for *Detraction* is to withdraw<sup>a</sup> its nourishment by suppressing *all* curiosity and inquisitiveness concerning others. Were all supplies cut off in this way, the inclination to engage in detraction would at last be subdued. The *King of Ethiopia* in a contest<sup>b</sup> of wit with the *King of Egypt*, proposed this as a problem to him: that he might *drink up the sea*; to which the other replied by requiring him first to stop up the access of rivers to the sea. So also, that person who would drain this other ocean, this inclination to detraction, must take the same course and dam up the avenues of those springs which feed it. Because whoever is always following the scent of some offence, hunting out some discovery of fault in others, will be very inclined to invite his neighbors to the prey<sup>c</sup>. It will be necessary therefore for such a person to restrain himself or herself from that range, namely, from constant curiosity and inquiry into other persons failings; to not be like a jealous state that keeps spies and pensioners abroad to bring them intelligence, but rather to discourage all such officious pickthanks<sup>d</sup> in themselves. For the fuller such a person is of such informations, the more his or her agony is if they keep that information to themselves, and the more their guilt if they publish it. If such people could be persuaded to affect a wholesome ignorance in these matters, it would conduce both to their ease and their innocence. For it is that *Itch of the Ear* which breaks out at the *Tongue*, and if *Curiosity* were not the *Purveyor*, *Detraction* would soon be starved into tameness.

 *Whoever hunts out the faults of others will also invite his neighbor to the prey.*

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a. orig., *subtract*

b. orig., *vie*

c. orig., *quarry (to prey upon another)*

d. *talebearing (the work of a whispering parasite)*

But the most infallible prescription<sup>a</sup> of all is the frequent recollection and serious application of the grand rule of doing unto others as we would have them do to us. For as *detraction* is the violation of that rule, so the observation of that rule certainly must of itself supplant *detraction*. Let us therefore when we find this propensity fermenting within us and ready to break out in declamations against our neighbors, check<sup>b</sup> it with this short question: *Would I myself be thus used?* This voice from within



*An  
infallible  
prescription  
against a  
propensity to  
detraction:*

*Do unto others  
as you would  
have them do  
to you.*

will be like the voice from heaven which stopped St. Paul at the very height of his carrier, *Acts 9:4*. And every one of us will hear this voice if we have not already stopped our ears and gagged our consciences, for it is but the echo of that native *justice*<sup>c</sup> and *equity*<sup>d</sup> that was planted in our hearts. But when we have the needed remedy so near us and yet we will not use it, God may well expostulate with us as he did with the Jews, "*As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn, turn from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel,*" *Ezekiel 33:11*.

These are some of the many remedies that may be prescribed against this spreading disease. But to be sure, there is not so much a need to multiply the number of remedies, as to persuade people to apply them: people are in love with this malady and they are as loathe to be cured of the *Luxury of the Tongue*, as St. Augustine was of another form of sensuality against which he prayed but with a caveat, that his prayer might not be heard too quickly.<sup>e</sup> But it is not good to be dallying where our souls are

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a. orig., receipt (recipe; prescription of ingredients or medicine)


b. stop


c. just judgment

d. impartiality

e. Augustine is quite open about the fact of his amorous relationships prior to

concerned, for alas it is our souls that are wounded by those darts<sup>a</sup> that we throw at others. We take aim perhaps at our neighbors but indeed, we only strike ourselves. And in so doing we verify in the highest sense that axiom of the wise man, *"He that digs a pit, shall fall into it; and he that rolls a stone, it will return upon him."* Proverbs 26:27. If therefore we have no tenderness and no relenting toward our brethren, let us yet have some toward ourselves, even so much compassion and so much respect toward our precious immortal souls, as not to set them at so worthless<sup>b</sup> a price as to put them in balance with the satisfying of a petulant peevish vanity. Surely the revealing of ourselves as ill natured—which is the sum of the gain that *detraction can amount to*—is not so enamoring an end that we should sacrifice our highest interest to it. It is too much to waste our breath in such a pursuit. O let us not lose our souls also in the exhaling of such delinquent vapors against other; but let us rather pour out our souls in prayers for our brethren than in accusations against them. For although both the one and the other will return into our own bosoms, yet, God knows, the will do so for far differing purposes, even as different as the purposes for which we uttered them. The *charity* of the one kind of utterance, like kindly exhalations, will descend in showers of blessings; but the rigor and asperity of the other kind of utterance, will return in a severe doom upon our own selves. As the Apostle will tell us, *"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that has showed no mercy, but mercy rejoices against*

 We take aim perhaps at our neighbors but we only strike ourselves.

 We must only examine ourselves & apply the necessary remedy to free ourselves from backbiting & judging our neighbors.

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*conversion: "Sensual folly assumed dominion over me & I gave myself totally to it," he says, distinguishing even between "sanctioned" marriage & the relationship he had with a woman that he lived with for fourteen year & with whom he had a son.*

a. *detractions*

b. *orig., despicable (worthless)*

*judgment*<sup>a</sup>.” James 2:13.

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*a. "Take notice," says Matthew Henry, "1. The doom which will be passed upon impenitent sinners at last will be judgment without mercy; there will be no allays in the cup of wrath & of trembling, the dregs of which they must drink (Psalms 75:8 ). 2. Such as show no mercy now shall find no mercy on the great day. But we may note, on the other hand, 3. That there will be such as shall become instances of the triumph of mercy, in whom mercy rejoices against judgment: all the children of men, on the last day, will be either vessels of wrath or vessels of mercy. It concerns all to consider among which they shall be found; & let us remember that, 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.' Matthew 5:7."*



## CHAPTER 7

# Scoffing and Derision

There is also another fault of the tongue that is injurious to our neighbor, and that is *Derision* and *Mockery*—the striving to render others as ridiculous and contemptible as we can. This, with respect to the subject matter, differs from the fault of *Detraction* as much as folly<sup>a</sup> or deformity do from vice. Yet since injuries as well as benefits are to be measured by common estimation, this fault of *scoffing* and *derision* may be of the same weightiness when set in a balance with the fault of *detraction*. There is such a general aversion<sup>b</sup> to contempt within human nature that there is scarcely anything more exasperating, and I will not deny that our aversion to contempt may be, in its excesses, the equivalent<sup>c</sup> of *Pride*. Yet surely *scorn* and *disdain* never spring from humility and therefore are very incompetent correctors of one another, so that it may be said, as it was once of *Diogenes*, that he trampled on *Plato's* pride with a greater pride of his own.

 *The injury of mockery & derision touches upon the pride of the one mocked.*


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a. *weakness of intellect*

b. *orig., aversation (archaic, aversion)*

c. *orig., leveled (equal)*


Nor is the injury of scoffing and derision of our neighbor enhanced only by the resentment of the sufferer, but also by the manner by which it is inflicted. We generally think that those are the most severe marks of infamy which are the most indelible<sup>a</sup>. To be burned on the hand or pilloried<sup>b</sup> is a more lasting reproach than to be scourged or confined. It is the same in the case of *derision*, for in *derision* wit is commonly the lictor<sup>c</sup> that is armed with a sharp edged tool<sup>d</sup> and leaves scars behind it. The reproach of rage and fury seem to be written in chalk or lead, which a dispassionate hearer easily wipes away; but the reproaches of wit are like the engraver's tool<sup>e</sup> upon copper, or the corroding of nitric acid<sup>f</sup>, engraving and carving out<sup>g</sup> the characters such that they can never be erased<sup>h</sup>. The truth of this is attested by daily experience: a dull contumely<sup>i</sup> quickly vanishes, none thinking it worth remembering; but when contempt is steeled with wit, it pierces deep and leaves such impressions in the imagination<sup>j</sup> of the hearers that it gets rooted thereby in the memory and can scarcely be eradicated. Sometimes it happens that such sarcasms survive both the speaker and the hearer, and are conveyed to posterity; it is not unusual for the sarcasms of wit to be transmitted in

 *The reproaches of wit are like the engraver's tool, leaving a mark that cannot be effaced.*

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- a. which cannot be effaced  
b. the public punishment of being placed in a pillory (a wood frame with holes for head & hands)  
c. an officer who bears an ax as an ensign of his office; his duty is to attend a magistrate, clearing the path for him & causing respect to be paid to him; a lictor's duty included the apprehension & punishment of criminals  
d. such as an ax  
e. orig., burin (tool)  
f. orig., aqua fortis (lit., strong water; now called nitric acid)  
g. orig., indenting (forming deep recesses)  
h. orig., defaced (disfigured)  
i. contempt  
j. orig., fancy

stories. And as wit thus gives an edge to a reproach, so also does it add wings and makes it fly abroad in an instant. Many a poor person's infirmities would have been confined to the notice of only a few relations or neighbors had not some remarkable strain of drollery scattered and dispersed them. The jest recommends the *defamation*, and is commonly so incorporated with it that the two cannot be related separately. And even those, who dislike the reproach in one respect, are yet often so carried away<sup>a</sup> by it in the other respect that they choose to propagate the contumely rather than to stifle the conceit. Indeed *wit* is so much the *Diana*<sup>b</sup> of this age that he who goes about to set any bounds upon *wit* must expect an uproar or, in the very least, to be judged to have imposed an envious inhibition on it because he himself has not stock enough to maintain the trade<sup>c</sup>. But however sharp or unexpected the censure may seem to be, yet it is necessary that plain downright truth should sometimes be spoken, and I think that this will bear me out if I say that it is possible that people may be as oppressive through their intellect as through their power; and that God did no more design the meaner intellect of some for triumphs over the pride and vanity of the more acute, than he did the possessions of the less powerful as a prey to the rapine and avarice of the mighty.

And this suggests a yet further aggravation related to this sin of mocking derision, as it is a perverting of God's design related to the use of our intellect, and an abuse of the talent he has committed in trust to every individual. Ingenuity and quickness of intellect<sup>d</sup> is sure to be reckoned

 *Scoffing derision is an abuse of the talent God has committed in trust to every individual.*


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a. *orig., transported*


b. *Diana of the Ephesians, Acts 19:24-35, who "brought no small gain to the craftsmen," who incited a crowd to her defense rather than allow her to be disesteemed & her shrines abandoned because of the preaching of the truth*

c. *has not wit enough to engage in the banter*

d. *orig., parts (mind)*

 *Ingenuity is a great blessing.*

in the highest ranks of blessings and an instrument proper to the most excellent purposes. Therefore we cannot suppose the Divine Wisdom so much short of human wisdom as not to intentionally assign human wisdom to uses worthy of it. And those worthy uses must relate either to God, to ourselves, or to our neighbors. With respect to God, ingenuity renders us more capable of contemplating his perfections, and discerning the equity and excellence of his laws and our obligations to obedience. With regard to ourselves, ingenuity makes us apprehend our own interest in that obedience, and makes us tractable and persuasible, contrary to that brutish stubbornness of the horse and mule, which the Psalmist reproaches, *Psalms 32:9*.<sup>a</sup> Besides, our ingenuity accommodates us in all the concerns of human life, it forms of itself all those useful contrivances that are able to make our being here more comfortable; and especially so, in that it renders a person company to himself and in the greatest scarcity<sup>b</sup> of society it entertains him with his own thoughts. Lastly, with respect to our neighbors, ingenuity renders us useful and able to assist. In all personal exigencies wherein any of us are at any time involved, we do not need be told the usefulness of a wise adviser; and all those discoveries and experiments, those arts and sciences which are now the common treasure of the world, each arose from the ingenuity of particular persons. Now all these are employments commensurable to the faculty from which they flow, and that answer to its excellence and value; and he, who bestows his talent to that which is excellent and valuable to himself and to others, gives a good account of that entrusted to him. But I would like to know under which of these headings *derision* of our neighbor comes: certainly not under the heading of being helpful to our


 *There are employments commensurable to the faculty of the intellect from which they spring.*

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a. "Be not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit & bridle." *Psalms 32:9*.

b. orig., dearth

neighbor. It would be a sorry relief to a poor indigent wretch to lavish out wit upon him by upbraiding his misery; and is this not an entirely parallel case? Is it not the same barbarism to mock and reproach a person who lacks the gifts of nature as it is the person who lacks those of fortune? Perhaps it may even be more so, for a beggar may have impoverished himself by his own fault; but in the case of natural defects, there is nothing to be charged against a person unless we wish to aim higher and arraign that providence that has so dispensed the defect itself. In a word, as the superfluities<sup>a</sup> of the rich are assigned by God as the storehouse of the poor<sup>b</sup>, so also are the abilities of the wise to the ignorant: for it is a great mistake to think ourselves stewards in some of God's gifts and proprietaries in others when they are all equally to be employed according to the designation of the *Giver*, and there is nothing more universally designed by him than that mankind should be equally helpful to one another.<sup>c</sup> Those therefore, whom God has blessed with higher degrees of sagacity and quickness of mind, ought not to look down on those less gifted, as the objects of


 *Ingenuity is to be used according to the design of God who gave it.*

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a. *superabundance (of wealth)*

b. *"Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."* 1 Timothy 6:17-19

c. *The author is not advocating for equity of status or of wealth but for the godly use of both an overabundance of wealth (that it might be used charitably by its owner to assist the poor who are poor indeed; c.f., 1 Timothy 5:4-16) and of ingenuity (as it naturally advances the interests of whole peoples). Within scripture there is a clear delineation as to who may receive charity & who may not receive charity either generally or specifically by the Christian church: "This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some that walk among you disorderly [deviating from the rule], working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command & exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work & eat their own bread."* 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; also Ephesians 4:28.

 *Those less gifted ought to be objects of the care & pity of the gifted.*

their contempt or scorn, but rather look upon them as the objects of their care and pity, that they might endeavor by their wit to rescue them from the mischiefs to which their weakness may expose them. All the while remembering that God might have ordained otherwise and made *them* as weak as they see others to be. It is part of Job's justification of his integrity that "*he was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame,*" Job 29:25,<sup>a</sup> that is, that he accommodated his assistance to all the deficiencies and exigencies<sup>b</sup> of others; and surely it is no less the part of every good person to assist others in relation to intellectual<sup>c</sup> as well as corporeal defects.

But alas, many would rather put a stumbling block in the way of the blind and pull away the crutch from the lame that they might amuse<sup>d</sup> themselves to see them tumble. Such an appetite<sup>e</sup> some have for observing and exaggerating<sup>f</sup> the imperfections of others that it has become the grand excellence of the age to be dexterous at it, and wit serves some persons for little else. We have come indeed into a merry age<sup>g</sup>: laughing is our main business as if, because it is part of the definition of man that he

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a. full text: "When the ear heard me then it blessed me, & when the eye saw me it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried & the fatherless & him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; & I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness & it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe & a diadem. I was eyes to the blind & I was feet to the lame. I was a father to the poor & the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I broke the jaws of the wicked & plucked the spoil out of his teeth." Job 29:11-17.

b. needs (urgencies)

c. orig., mental

d. orig., sport (entertain, esp., with mockery)

e. orig., sensuality (gratification of bodily appetites)

f. orig., improving (advance, in a bad sense)

g. orig., world

is risible<sup>a</sup>, his manhood then consists in little else. But alas, if that is all the usefulness people have for their intellect, then their intellect was given to them to little purpose, since mere idiots can laugh with as much pleasure and more innocence than those who are of greater intelligence. And herein is a grand instance of how extremes may be brought to meet one another: when the excess of wit in the one and the excess of folly in the other serve to produce the same effect.<sup>b</sup>

 *Wit serves some for little else than for exaggerating the imperfections of others.*

Yet so voracious has this humor now grown that it draws in everything to feed it. There is not amusement<sup>c</sup> enough to be had from the real follies of the world, and therefore that which is the most distant from amusement<sup>d</sup> must be stamped with its mark. There is a well-known story of a Friar who, on a fasting day<sup>e</sup>, bid his capon<sup>f</sup> become a carp,<sup>g</sup> and then very canonically<sup>h</sup> ate it; and

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a. *has the faculty of laughing (man is a risible animal)*

b. *"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," Romans 1:22.*

c. *orig., game (sport)*

d. *honest amusement*


e. *a day when only fish may be eaten*

f. *a rooster fattened for eating*


g. *A reference to the dogma of transubstantiation: although the outward 'appearance' undergoes no change, the invisible 'substance' is believed to change at the bidding of a priest, there being a distinction made between appearance & substance in Catholic theology since the 9th century. Paschasius Radbertus had claimed that, as Christ's saying, "This is my body, etc." must be received as truth, it must therefore be received "in truth" (in veritatis), i.e., literally (not 'spiritually') & so: it must be admitted that "contrary to natural order" (contra naturae ordinem), the 'forms' of bread & wine are mere appearances after the unseen substance (non videntur substantiarum) undergoes a change (varietatem, permutatum or mutationem) into the true (vero) body of Christ (the same born of Mary & crucified on the cross) after the mystic consecration (post mysticam consecrationem). The acceptance of this by the church was, after several centuries of scholastic experimentation, & through heavy reliance on the Aristotelian distinction between 'form' (forma) & 'substance' (substantia), promulgated in the early 13th century dogma of Transubstantiation.*

h. *in a manner agreeable to church law*

by such a *transubstantiating* power our wits bid all seriousness and consideration become mere formality and foppery<sup>a</sup>, and then under the names of formality and foppery they endeavor to hunt seriousness and consideration into extinction. I

 *Moral honesty & moral prudence tend to be together present or absent in people.*

fear that moral honesty fares no better than moral prudence with some people. The old philosophical virtues of *Justice*, *Temperance*, and *Chastity* are now hissed off the stage as if they are fit only for the antiquated set of actors; and he or she who appears in that equipage<sup>b</sup> is thought by many to be more ridiculous than he that walks the street in his ancestor's trunk hose<sup>c</sup>. Indeed, vice itself is scarcely secure if it has not the grand accomplishment of *impudence*: a puny blushing sinner is to be laughed out of his modesty, not out of his sin; and to assure oneself against scorn, we must prove ourselves free of all regret of mind as we embrace the path of such impudence.

 *Virtue is hissed off the stage; & a blushing sinner is laughed out of his modesty, not his sin.*

And if mere ethnic virtue or shame-faced vice is treated this way, Christian piety should expect worse; and so indeed it finds its professors being exposed, beyond all others, to scorn and contempt. Nor is it strange that it should be so, such men being *made* to reprove the ways of those who uphold justice


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a. *idle practice*

b. *so equipped; c.f., "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh & blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. ... Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, & having on the breastplate of righteousness; & your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace; above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation & the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."* Ephesians 6:11-17.

c. *short ballooning breeches that extended from mid-waist to mid-thigh; worn over hose by European men in the 16th-17 centuries*

and piety; even thinking that they must, in their own defense, deride those who "*depart from evil*," *Isaiah 59*<sup>a</sup>. This is that indeed which gives a secret sting and venom to their reproaches: for they abuse others as an exercise of their wit, but persons of a Christian integrity they abuse in defense of their party. So Julian<sup>b</sup>, after his apostasy, thought it a more effectual way to persecute the Christians by taunts and ironies than by racks and tortures, thinking it more possible to shame than to frighten them out of their religion. And the stratagem seems to have been resumed<sup>c</sup> by many in this age and (I fear) with too great success: for I do not doubt that there are divers persons who have herded themselves into the fold of these profane scoffers not because they are convinced by their reasons, but because they are terrified by their contumelies<sup>d</sup>. Even as some are said to worship the Devil so that they will not be harmed by him, so these choose to be actively insolent so that they are not found passive in the contempt flung upon religion: such people forget the dreadful denunciation of Christ against who are "*ashamed of him and his words*," *Mark 8:38*<sup>e</sup>.

 Some use wit to shame the pious out of their religion.

As for those who, upon a juster estimate, find the advantages of piety worthy to be chosen, and thus take piety with all its accessory ignominies<sup>f</sup>, such have the encouragement of very

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a. *full text*: "And judgment is turned away backward & justice stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street & equity cannot enter. Yea, truth fails, & he that departs from evil makes himself a prey," *Isaiah 59:14-15*

b. *Julian the Apostate (Julian Flavius Claudius)*, d. 363, who rejected Christianity in favor of Neoplatonic Hellenism (classical worship of the Greek gods)..


c. *orig.*, reassumed (assumed again)

d. *contemptuous insolence*

e. *full text*: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me & of my Words in this adulterous & sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." *Mark 8:38*.

f. *from Lat.*, *ignominia* (in & nomen, against name or reputation): shame, dishonor, & reproaches

good company in their sufferings: the *Psalmist* long ago had his share, when not only "*those that sit in the gate*" spoke against him, but the drunkards made songs about him, *Psalms 69:12*<sup>a</sup>. It was also the prophet Jeremiah's complaint: "*I am in derision daily, everyone mocks me,*" *Jeremiah 20:7*. Even our blessed Lord himself was derided by the Pharisees, *Luke 16:14*<sup>b</sup>, and was mocked and reviled at his death by the priests, the elders, the even by casual passers-by<sup>c</sup>, *Matthew 27:39*<sup>d</sup>. And shall the servant think himself greater than his Lord? Shall a Christian expect immunity from what his Savior has borne before him? Whoever does, is too delicate a member for a crucified head. No surely, let us rather animate ourselves, as the Apostle exhorts, by considering him who "*endured the cross, despising the shame*" for our sakes, *Hebrews 12:3*<sup>e</sup>; and who has not only given us an example, but proposed a reward, a beatitude to those who are "*reviled for righteousness*

 *We are in good company when we are made a derision for the Gospel's sake.*

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a. full text: "*I made sackcloth also my garment; & I became a proverb to them. They that sit in the gate speak against me, & I was the song of the drunkards. But as for me, my prayer is unto you, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of your mercy hear me, in the truth of your salvation. Deliver me out of the mire & let me not sink; let me be delivered from them that hate me.*" *Psalms 69:11-14*.

b. full text: "*And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, & they derided him. And he said unto them, You are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.*" *Luke 16:14-15*.

c. orig., passengers (travelers)

d. full text: "*And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, saying, You who would destroy the temple & build it in three days, save yourself. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes & elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross & we will believe him.*" *Matthew 27:39-42*.

e. full text: "*Looking unto Jesus the author & finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame ... consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied & faint in your minds.*" *Hebrews 12:2-3*

sake," *Matthew 5:11*<sup>a</sup>. And when this is soberly pondered, it will surely make it easier for us to resolve with holy *David*, when he was in a like circumstance, "*I will be yet more vile*," *2 Samuel 6:22*<sup>b</sup>.

But to return from this digression to those persons who thus unhappily employ their intellect, let me propose to them that they should borrow a few minutes every day from their mirth and seriously consider whether this is—*I need not say a Christian, but*—a manly exercise of their faculties. Alas when they have spent the day in merriment<sup>c</sup>, going from one company to another, they may sum up the day's account at night in the wise man's simile: their laughter has been but like "*the crackling of thorns under a pot*," *Ecclesiastes 7:6*; they have made a little lively<sup>d</sup> noise for the present, but what real good has it brought to them? A reputation for wit is all that they can fancy; but surely this might be attainable some other way. We find the world passionate<sup>e</sup> about new things; and this affection for derision and abuse of others is such a beaten road that perhaps the variety itself of a new path would render that new path more acceptable. Such

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a. full text: "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall revile you & persecute you, & shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice & be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*" *Matthew 5:10-12*.

b. "full text: "*And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window & saw king David leaping & dancing before the Lord; & she despised him in her heart. ... And Michal came out to meet him & said, How glorious was the king today, who uncovered himself in the eyes of the handmaids, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovers himself! And David said, It was before the Lord which chose me, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord; therefore I will play before the Lord. And I will be yet more vile than this, & I will be base in mine own sight, & I will be held in honor by the maidservants of whom you have spoken.*" *2 Samuel 6:16, 20-22*.

c. orig., rallied out the day

d. orig., brisk (full of spirit)

e. orig., affected (having a passion for)

persons are as the lighter substances that are carried away by the stream, while greater and more solid bodies do sometimes stop the current itself from flowing: and surely it is a noble endeavor<sup>a</sup> of a person's ingenuity<sup>b</sup> to stem this tide, and by a more useful application of their own faculties to convince others that their's also might be better employed. It is said of *Anacharsis*<sup>c</sup> that he could not be brought to smile at the affected railleries of common jesters at a feast, but when an ape was brought in he freely laughed, saying that an ape was ridiculous by nature, but men are so only by art and study. And truly it is in great contempt for human nature for some to think their intellects were given to them for no better end than to evoke<sup>d</sup> that laughter which a brute can do as well or better.

I do not recommend such a stoic sourness as shall admit of nothing of the cheerfully pleasant parts of conversation. God has surely not been more rigid to our minds than to our bodies. He has not so devoted our bodies to toil and labors, but allows us some time to exercise them in recreation as well. So doubtless he indulges the same relaxation to our minds, which are not always to be *screwed up to the height*<sup>e</sup>, but are allowed to descend to those easinesses of familiarity and conversation<sup>f</sup> that entertain the lower faculties of the soul<sup>g</sup>. Nor do I think those are ill employed in those little skirmishes of wit that pass familiarly between intimates and acquaintances, which besides

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a. *orig., essay (attempt)*

b. *orig., parts (intellect)*

c. *a Greek philosopher, 6th century BC; his statues were inscribed with the saying, "Restrain your tongues, your appetites, your passions."*


d. *orig., raise*

e. *so wholly engaged*


f. *orig., converse*

g. *c.f., "Be admonished: of making many books there is no end, & much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God & keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:12-13.*

the momentary diversion<sup>a</sup>, serve to whet<sup>b</sup> and quicken the mind<sup>c</sup>. Yet, in these encounters, this liberty is to be restrained with some cautions: First, the charge should be powder not bullets; nothing should be said that would leave any ungrateful impressions or give any umbrage of a spiteful intent. The world lacks no example of the mischief that has occurred by railleries that are too severe: in such fencing with one another many a jest has proved earnest, and florets have often turned to swords and not only the friendship but the men have fallen sacrifice to a jest.

 *Let not a jest prove too earnest lest it become a sword.*

Secondly, this is to have the same restrictions as all other recreations—that it is a diversion, not a trade<sup>d</sup>. Jestings is an insinuating thing and is apt to encroach too much upon our time, and God knows we have a great deal of business to attend to in this world, and even more for the next, which will not get done with laughter. It is not therefore for us to play away too much of that time which is required<sup>e</sup> for more serious concerns. In all seriousness, it is certain that we shall die, and it will not become us to have lived altogether for jest. And besides this robbery<sup>f</sup> of our time, such lightness is liable to steal away people's hearts too and make them dote so much upon this kind of entertainment that it turns<sup>g</sup> them away from anything more serious. I appeal to those who have made lightness their constant business: I wonder whether it does not go against the grain<sup>h</sup>

 *It is not becoming for us to play away too much of our time.*

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a. *orig., divertisement*

b. *stimulate; excite*

c. *orig., fancy (imagination)*

d. *business, as employment*


e. *orig., exacted (demanded)*

f. *orig., stealth (theft)*

g. *orig., averts*

h. *orig., hair (naturally falling in a certain direction)*

with them to set themselves to anything else; and that having espoused lightness as their one excellence, they are willing to decry all others that they may value themselves the more in this. The gift of raillery has, by this very means, devoured all the more solid worthy qualifications of society in this age, even as the lean kine devoured the fat<sup>a</sup>; and yet it is counted as the most reputable accomplishment. It is a strangely inverted estimate of value to thus prefer the little ebullitions<sup>b</sup> of wit over solid reason and judgment. If they would accommodate their diet at the same manner, they shall eat the husk rather than the kernel, and drink nothing but froth and bubbles. But after all, in the long run, wisdom is commonly justified even of her despisers; for these great idolaters of wit often dash themselves upon such rocks as make them wish too late that they had been less with their sails<sup>c</sup> and more with their ballast<sup>d</sup>.

 *Today people prefer wit over solid reason & judgment.*

For the preventing therefore, of more such wrecks<sup>e</sup>, I wish the following caution to be more regarded: that people not bestow

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a. *the kine in Pharaoh's dream regarding the years of plenty & the years of famine that were coming; the lean kine ate up the fat & yet remained just as lean, Genesis 41:17-21.*

b. *the boilings over*


c. *which carry them along with every wind (of the times); c.f., "Be no more children, tossed to & fro, & carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men & cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love." Ephesians 4:14-15.*

d. *"Piety is the only & right ballast of society. Piety is a fence protecting each individual; rendering each man civil, condescending, kind, & helpful to others. If every governor would have the people honest & diligent, if every parent would have his children obliging & grateful, if every man would have his friend faithful & kind, if we would have others act in a just & sincere manner, then we must each strive to further piety from which all good dispositions & practices proceed." Isaac Barrow, Godliness is Profitable for all Things.*

e. *orig., wrack (ruin)*

a disproportionate<sup>a</sup> portion of their time or too great a value on this superficial exercise of mankind's slightest<sup>b</sup> faculty.

A third caution in this matter is to confine ourselves to present company when among others, and not to make those who are absent the subject of our mirth. The freedoms we use to a person's face are commonly more moderate, thus they are more equitable, because we expose ourselves to the like from that person; but the back-blows are disingenuous and from them there arises a suspicion that we intend, not a fair trial of wit, but a cowardly murder of a person's fame. It was the precept of the philosopher to "*Deride not the absent*"; and I think this may well be applied to the politician, there being nothing more imprudent in regards to our civil concerns than the contrary liberty. For those things never die in the company in which they are first vented (*perhaps the hearer is not willing that his wit should so soon expire*), and once they are aired they quickly come to the notice of the derided person and then, nothing in the world is more disobliging. It is a sober precept that we ought not to so much as laugh in compliance with him that derides another, for we will be hated by him he derides; and if an accessory to the event is hated, surely much more is the principal. I think I may also say that there are many who can forgive a solemn deep contrivance against themselves

 *We ought not to so much as laugh in compliance with him that derides another,*

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a. orig., unproportionable (lacking due proportion)

b. least valued; c.f., "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, & the end of that mirth is heaviness." Proverbs 14:13; "I said in my heart, Go to now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure. And behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad; & of mirth, What does it accomplish?" Ecclesiastes 2:1-2. Scripture does not reject laughter, but that joy pales to nothing when set against joy in the Lord who saved us: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter & our tongue with singing: then it was said among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Psalms 126:1-3.

sooner than they can a jocular reproach; for in the first instance, he that designs the reproach seems to acknowledge them to be of considerable stature, but in the second, he that mocks them seems to think them too low for anything but contempt. And we learn from *Aristotle* that the measure of anger is entirely taken for that reason; people being only as far provoked as they imagine they were slighted or affronted. In mere secular wisdom, it is therefore becoming to us to consider whether this business is likely to be of any value<sup>a</sup> and whether it is worthwhile at one and the same time to make a jest and make an enemy.

And if it is imprudent to make others our enemies, it is much more imprudent to make God our enemy by leveling our blows at anything sacred. But of this I have already had occasion to speak and I shall not repeat it except to say that besides the more



*Nothing is more inconsistent with the divine precept than to expose others unjustly to contempt.*

profane sort of jest (*which immediately reflects on God*), God has an affected interest in all the unjust reproaches that are offered our Christian brothers and sisters: our love for them being confirmed in the same divine precept<sup>b</sup> as our reverence toward God<sup>c</sup>. And surely nothing is more inconsistent with that love than exposing our brothers and sisters to the kind of contempt

we ourselves would not endure with patience. In a word, in whatever reputation this practice of wit is now held, it is far from wise to provoke God only that we might disoblige our fellow man. And if we accept the scriptural estimation of this practice, we will find that *scorner* is not such an honorable epithet as we seem to account it. *Solomon* almost constantly sets the scorner in opposition to the wise: for example, *Proverbs 9:8*<sup>d</sup> and *Proverbs*

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a. orig., turn to account (profit)

b. orig., sanction (decree)

c. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one toward another." *John 13:35*.

d. "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate you: rebuke a wise man & he will love you."

13:1<sup>a</sup>, and many other places. He also closely links the *scorner* with the *fool*, and that, not only in title, but in punishment too: "*Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools,*" *Proverbs 19:29*. And if our great wits of today did not think *Solomon* too dull for their cabal<sup>b</sup>, we might see what a turn he would give to their present judgment<sup>c</sup>.

And if the reproaches that aim only at ostentation of wit are so unjustifiable, what shall we say of those that are drawn with blacker lines, that are founded on *malice* or *envy* or some other undermining design? Every person that would be supplanted by someone that despises them cannot always be attacked with outright battery—perhaps his or her integrity is such that, as it was said of Daniel, "*They can find no occasion against him,*" *Daniel 6:4*<sup>d</sup>—so, when they find they cannot shake the main fortress, they must try, if they can, to take possession of the outworks<sup>e</sup> by raising some prejudice against his or her discretion, or humor, or carriage, or most extrinsic adherents<sup>f</sup>; and if by representing him or her to be ridiculous in any of these things<sup>g</sup> they can abate other people's reverence for him or her and their confidence in

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*Proverbs 9:8.*

a. "A wise son hears his father's instruction: but a scorner does not hear rebuke." *Proverbs 13:1.*

b. persons untied in design typically to promote their private views in church or state; faction

c. orig., verdict

d. Darius preferred Daniel "above the presidents & princes because an excellent spirit was in him; & the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents & princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no occasion nor fault inasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." *Daniel 6:3-4.*

e. parts of a fortification most remote from the main fortress

f. remotest associates

g. Jesus was disreputed in this very manner: "Then all the publicans & sinners drew near unto [Jesus] to hear him. And the Pharisees & scribes murmured, saying, This man receives sinners & eats with them." *Luke 15:1-2.*

that person will no longer hold out: bare honesty without some other adornment being looked upon as a leafless tree, nobody will trust himself to its shelter. Thus the enemies of *Socrates*, when they could suppress his reputation no other ways, hired



*Insinuation that fosters contempt & hatred.*

*Aristophanes*, a comic poet, to impersonate him on the stage, and by the insinuations of those theatrical interludes, insensibly conveyed first a contempt and then a hatred of him into the hearts of the people. But I do not need to bring

examples from ancient times into this matter; such detractors being sufficiently versed in that mystery<sup>a</sup>.

It is not strange that men and women of such design should summon all their wit to the service of an unjust cause, and make their railleries as piquant<sup>b</sup> as they can, that they might wound others more deeply. But I think it is but a mean office they assign their wit, to be—I will not say *the pander*<sup>c</sup>, as that is scarcely a title of reproach in this age—but the executioner or hangman to their malice. While Jesus Christ bids us to "*be as wise as serpents*," and yet adds that we be altogether "*as harmless as doves*," *Matthew 10:16*<sup>d</sup>; yet here, we see that *the Serpent* has quite eaten up the dove and has put a vulture in its place, a creature of such design, of such sagacity and diligence in pursuit of its prey, that it is hard for any art or innocence to escape its talons.<sup>e</sup>

But there is yet another sort of contumelious person who is not chargeable indeed with the circumstance of ill employing their wit, as they use none in it. These are people whose sole talent is *Pride* and *Scorn*, who have perhaps attained to the science of

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a. trade that supposes secret knowledge & skill unknown to others


b. sharp

c. pimp (procurer)

d. full text: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be therefore as wise as serpents, & as harmless as doves." *Matthew 10:16*.

e. those who in the disguise of Christians (who ought to be doves) wreak their malice on others within the Christian community

dressing themselves tastefully and eating well, and who, upon the strength of these excellences, look fastidiously on and speak disdainfully about any who lack them. They conclude that if a man or woman falls short of their garniture<sup>a</sup> at the knees and elbows<sup>b</sup>, he or she is then much inferior to them in the furniture of their head<sup>c</sup>. Such people think that crying, *O ridiculous!* is an ample confutation of anything that is said by whomever they despise. And so such persons can hardly despise others enough; and they are content not to be able even to say why they do so. These are, I confess, the most harmless kind of deriders, that is, in respect to others, since what they do say does not have edge enough to cause any smart. The greatest hurt they do is to themselves; for such, although they much need to be rescued, are yet generally incapable of that rescue; and therefore I will not clog up the present discourse with any advise to them.

 *Pride & scorn cry, 'O ridiculous!' to anything said by others.*

I choose rather to conclude by reinforcing my petition<sup>d</sup> to those spoken of before, that they would soberly and sadly weigh the account they must one day give of the manner in which they have employed their wit and intellect. For the more they have hitherto embezzled<sup>e</sup> their talents, the more they must endeavor to expiate that unthriftiness through more careful management<sup>f</sup> in the future, so that, instead of the vain, empty, vanishing mirth they have courted in the world, they might, through repentance, find a real, full, and eternal satisfaction in the joy of their Lord.

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a. dress (perceived station of life)

b. upon their person

c. in intellect

d. orig., suit ()

e. appropriated them to their own uses; c.f., "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Galatians 2:20.


f. by thriftiness (by seeking to preserve themselves)



## CHAPTER 8

# Flattery

The last of the verbal injuries inflicted by some upon their neighbors, which I shall mention, is *Flattery*. Flattery is indeed the most fatal wound of the tongue; carrying, as it does, the least smart but infinity more danger with it. It is as much superior to the aforementioned injuries as a gangrene is to a chafe<sup>a</sup> or scratch. These may be sore and vexing, but flattery is stupefying and deadly. Flattery is such a mystery<sup>b</sup>, such a riddle of iniquity that its very softness is its cruelest rigor: its balm corrodes and, *to summarize all that is contained in the Psalmist's excellent description*, its words are "*smoother than oil*," and yet, "*they are very swords*," *Psalms 55:21*<sup>c</sup>.

 *Flattery is a riddle of iniquity.*

But besides the mischiefs of flattery to the recipient<sup>d</sup>, flattery

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a. *orig., gall (a sore made by rubbing)*

b. *trade that supposes secret knowledge & skill unknown to others*

c. *full text: "He has put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he has broken his covenant. The words of his mouth are smoother than butter, but war is in his heart: his words are softer than oil, yet they are drawn swords." Psalms 55:20-21.*


d. *orig., patient (person receiving external impressions)*

is the most dishonoring, the most vilifying, thing to the agent<sup>a</sup>. I need not impanel a jury either of moralists or divines: every man or woman's own heart sufficiently instructs them in the unworthiness of flattery (*if their consciences are not so seared as to be unable to do so*). Flattery is indeed a collective accumulative baseness; it being, in its elemental parts, a mixture<sup>b</sup> and a assemblage<sup>c</sup> of the most sordid, hateful qualities

 *Flattery, in its essential parts: lying, servility, & treachery.*


incident to mankind. I shall show instances of three of these, viz. *Lying, Servility, and Treachery*, which are detestably deformed in themselves and which, when in conjunction with one another, must necessarily make up a loathsome monstrous

guilt. Now although *Flattery* itself has two separate branches, yet these branches are so close to the root that the root equally influences both: for whether you take flattery as

 *Flattery in undue praise or in false kindness.*

the giving of praise where it is not due, or you take it as the professing of kindness which is not real, these properties are still its constitutive<sup>d</sup> parts.

First we may take *Lying* to be the very cornerstone of the fabric itself of flattery; for take that away and the whole falls to the ground<sup>e</sup>. A parasite, were he to confine himself to the truth, would make only a lean employment<sup>f</sup> of flattery. For although it is possible to so order the manner and circumstances of flattery

 *There is no flattery where there is no lie.*

as to flatter even in representing a person's real virtues to him or her, yet commonly, if the flatterer does not falsify as to the kind, he or she is forced to do so as to the degree. Besides, as there are

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a. the actor exerting the power (in this case, of flattery)

b. orig., compound


c. orig., complex (a collection)

d. elemental

e. without lying there is no flattery

f. orig., trade

but few virtuous persons who become the subjects of flattery, so neither are men and women that are of that worth so receptive to flattery. Flattering addresses are less dangerous to those who have the perspicacity<sup>a</sup> to see through them, and thus the merchants of flattery are under a necessity of dealing their goods to the more ignorant purchasers<sup>b</sup> with whom their counterfeit wares are best received. It is strange indeed to consider with what gross impudent falsehoods people of this trade will court their patrons. How many people in former ages have not only amassed every sublunary excellence but have even ransacked heaven in order to supply their stores of flattery? How many have deified their princes and persuaded them they were gods, who at last found they were to die like men? And although this strain of flattery is now outdated, yet perhaps it is not because the vice itself has grown more modest, but because atheism has robbed it of that device: those who believe in no God, would seem to annihilate rather than magnify any person to whom they might, by flatteries, apply the title. But I do not find that the practice of flattery has any other bounds: a great man's vices are still called virtues; his deformities are still called beauties; and his most absurd follies are still seen as the height of ingenuity. Such a subtle alchemist is the flattering parasite that he is able to turn all he touches into gold, imaginary indeed as to the deluded person, but oftentimes of real value to himself.

 *The flatterer is a subtle alchemist.*


Nor is *Lying* less natural to that other part of flattery, that is, *Servility* or the profession of service and kindness. This needs no evidencing, and to attempt it would be a self confutation: for if the things which the flatterer professes are true, then they are not flattery; and if they are flattery, they must necessarily be *Lies*. It is almost as needless to expatiate on the baseness and meanness of this sin of lying; for although there is no subject that

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a. *discernment*


b. *orig., chapmen (one who offers as a buyer)*

affords more matter for declamation, yet lying is a thing that is ashamed of itself and may well, therefore, be remitted to its own convictions. I think we may say that all crimes have had their abettors and fautors<sup>a</sup>—*someone who has stood up in their defense*—except *Lying* alone which is recognized as so much the dregs and refuse of wickedness that no one has yet had chemistry enough to sublimate<sup>b</sup> it and to bring it into such a reputation that any person will think fit to own it. And it is a greater wonder yet that what is held in such universal reproach should be so commonly permitted<sup>c</sup> in practice. But by this one thing we can accurately estimate what the whole body of flattery is, when in one limb of flattery we find so much corruption.

 *Lying has ever been held in universal reproach.*

abettors and fautors<sup>a</sup>—*someone who has stood up in their defense*—except *Lying* alone which is recognized as so much the dregs and refuse of wickedness that no one has yet had chemistry enough to sublimate<sup>b</sup> it and to bring it into such

The second ingredient in flattery is *Servility* or an abjectness of disposition; and that this is so there is need for no proof other than that which has already been given: this charge of servility, being implicitly involved in the former charge of *Lying*, the condescending to which is itself a mark of a disingenuous<sup>d</sup> spirit. And accordingly, nobler heathens have looked upon servility as

 *The disingenuous servility of the flatterer.*

the vice of slaves and vassals, who might use such arts to improve their lot. But of itself, servility is beneath the liberty by which a free man, as well as an honest one, acts. And although I need no other

evidence to make good the accusation that servility is part of the admixture of flattery, yet every sycophant furnishes me with many supernumerary<sup>e</sup> proofs. Look at such a person, and you will see his eyes immovably fixed on his patron's face, watching each look and each glance, and (*like a stargazer*) reading his own destiny in every change of his patron's countenance; his ears chained to

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a. patrons

b. exalt

c. orig., admitted (permitted to enter, in this case, common practice)

d. meanly artful; illiberal;

e. beyond what is necessary

his patron's dictates (*like a galley-slave at the oar*), sucking in the most insipid discourses with as much greediness as if they were the apothegms<sup>a</sup> of the seven sages; his tongue finely tuned to utter only panegyrics<sup>b</sup> and acclamations; his feet in winged motion upon every nod or other signification of his patron's pleasure: in a word, (*as if having no other human sentiment<sup>c</sup> than that which he derives from his patron,*) he varies his whole body, his postures and his exercises<sup>d</sup> as he finds agreeable to the whims and caprices<sup>e</sup> he is to serve<sup>f</sup>. Can humanity contrive to debase itself more? But yes, it can, and it does too often by enslaving its more divine parts, by compliantly taking up not only the opinions but also even the crimes, by playing the incarnate devil and helping to act upon those villainies which only Satan can suggest. And if this is not a state of abject slavery, surely there is none in the world.

*Plutarch* tells us that *Philoxenus*, for despising some dull poetry of *Dionysius*'s, was condemned by *Dionysius* to dig in the quarries; and when he was remanded from that place through the mediation of friends, at his return *Dionysius* produced some other of his verses which, as soon as *Philoxenus* had read, he made no reply but calling to the attendants, said, *Let them carry me again to the quarries.* And if a heathen poet could prefer corporeal slavery over a mental form of slavery, what name of reproach is low enough for those who submit to both mental and corporal slavery in pursuit of those poor sordid advantages they design<sup>g</sup> by their flatteries. Nor is this baseness more obvious



*Heathens have refused the mental slavery of servility.*

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a. remarkable & instructive sayings

b. eulogies

c. orig., animal spirits

d. everything he undertakes to do

e. orig., humor (whim)

f. in pleasing his patron

g. orig., project (contrive)

in the flatterer's spiritless fawnings and performances, than it is in his protestations of kindness and friendship.

Love is the greatest gift anyone has to bestow upon another; and friendship, which is the most sacred of all moral bonds. And to prostitute these to little pitiful designs is surely one of the basest deceptions<sup>a</sup> we can effect upon our common nature, thus debasing nature's purest and most received<sup>b</sup> coin<sup>c</sup> which, through these frequent adulterations, has become so suspect that scarcely anyone knows what he or she actually receives. But it is Christian charity that is used yet worse in this case; for inasmuch as Christian charity is sincerely obliging to all, it is hereby induced to give gold in return for dross, exhibiting that love which is "*in deed and in truth*" for that which is only "*in word and in tongue*," *1 John 3:18*<sup>d</sup>. And so it goes for those who observe the rules of Christian love in truth; but for those who own the rules of Christian charity and observe them not, it is a yet greater suffering, laboring as they must under the scandal of all their dissimulations<sup>e</sup>. It was once the characterization given to Christians even by their enemies: "*Behold how they love one another.*" But, God knows, we may now be pointed out by a very different mark: "*Behold how they deceive and delude one another.*"<sup>f</sup> And surely this violation,

 *The prostitution of love & friendship through flattery.*

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a. orig., cheats (tricks)

b. orig., current (generally received)

c. love & friendship being the coin of interpersonal commerce


d. full text: "*Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed & in truth.*" *1 John 3:18.*

e. hiding under false appearances; hypocrisy

f. c.f., "*But if you bite & devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another. I say, then, Walk in the Spirit & you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.*" *Galatians 5:15-16;* & "*From where come wars & fightings among you? Come they not from your lusts that war in your members? You lust & have not; you kill & desire to have & cannot obtain; you fight & war, yet you have not because you ask not. You ask & receive not because you ask amiss that you might consume it upon*

which some offer to our Christian religion, does not allay but rather aggravates the baseness of this practice against Christian charity. For if in the other, namely, flattering servility, we sell ourselves; in this adulteration of Christian love, we sell our God too, sacrificing our interest in God to get a surreptitious title to the favor of a man. And this I conceive does not much commend the art of flattery, which is constructed of such vile materials.

And to complete this infamous composition of ingredient that constitute flattery, the third, *Treachery*, comes in: *treachery* being a crime of so odious a nature that to name it is to bring suit against<sup>a</sup> it. Yet how intrinsic a part of flattery treachery is will require no great skill to evidence: daily experience does this sufficiently enough. It is a common observation re regarding flatterers that they are like the heliotrope<sup>b</sup>: they open only towards the sun, but they shut and contract themselves at night and in cloudy weather. Let the object of their adoration be eclipsed by another, and the flatterer can see none of those excellences which dazzled their eyes before. And however fickle<sup>c</sup> flatterers may seem to be in this to onlookers, they are very constant<sup>d</sup> indeed within themselves: true to their own fixed principle of courting the greatness, not the man. And often, in pursuit of that greatness, their old idol is made a sacrifice to their new idol: every malicious discovery may be made of their falling friend, in order to buy an interest in the rising one. Of this there are such crowds of examples in history that it would be impertinent to single out any, especially in an age that is more fit to furnish precedents for the future, than to borrow of them from past times. But supposing that the flattering parasite is


 *Treachery, in the very mention, displays its own criminality.*

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*your lusts.* " James 4:1-3.

- a. *orig., implead (accuse; bring suit against)*
- b. *a turnsole plant (one whose flowers follow the sun)*
- c. *orig., inconstant (changeable)*
- d. *unchanging*

not actually guilty of this base revolt (which on any occasion he seldom fails to be), yet he is no less treacherous, not even at the height of his blandishments<sup>a</sup>; for while he most courts a person, he does most ruinously undermine that person. First he abuses him in his understanding, precluding him from that which wise men have judged to be the most essential part of learning, that is, the knowledge of himself—*from which it is the main business of the flatterer to divert him*. And this abuse leads to an inevitably consequent: for this ignorance of his own faults and

 *The main business of the flatterer is to blind one to oneself.*


follies necessarily condemns the subject of the abuse to continuing in them: it being impossible for him who is made believe he has neither faults or weaknesses to think of correcting either the one or the other. This is like the treachery of a bribed officer in a garrison, who will not let the

weaker parts of the town be fortified; for the flatterer lays the person as open to assaults as the bribed officer does the fortified town. Yet this is not all, for the flatterer does not only provide for the continuance but also for the improving of his victim's crimes and errors, which alas are only too prolific of themselves, but being cultivated and manured with perpetual soothing and encouragements, grow immeasurably luxuriant. And accordingly we see that those, who are only used to applause, are so swelled up by acclamation that their insolence becomes intolerable. And sometimes it happens that they are taught this at their own cost when they chance to be among free men who will not submit to all that they say, nor commend all that they do. And finding these uneasy contradictions when they go abroad, they are willing to retire to their most complaisant company: and so this sycophant devil, having once gotten them within his circle, may enchant them as he pleases, and lead them from one wickedness to another. And as *Caligula* and other voluptuous emperors, by being adored as gods, sunk in their sensuality below the nature


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a. *soft words & kind speeches*

of man, so also these celebrated persons are animated by the false veneration of flatterers to all those reproachful practices that may expose them to real contempt: their follies, as well as their vices, get license<sup>a</sup> still, until they themselves answer the description given by the Apostle: "*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*" Romans 1:22.

 *The flatterer will encourage vice until people are moved to contemptible foolishness.*

And surely, whoever it is that betrays another person to all these mischiefs may well be thought to be perfidious<sup>b</sup>. But that which infinity amplifies and enhances the treachery is that all that the flatterer does is acted out under the notion and disguise of a friend, a relationship so venerable, and the name of a friend being of such endearment as nothing human can equal. All other natural and civil ties take their greatest force from friendship. What signifies an unfriendly parent or brother or wife? It is friendship alone that is the cement which really and effectively binds<sup>c</sup> mankind one to another. And therefore we may observe that God, when reckoning up other relationships, illustrates them by several notes of endearment, but when he comes to that of friendship, it is "*your friend, who is as your own soul,*" Deuteronomy 13:6. Of whomever may be reckoned as a friend indeed, nothing below this highest standing, "*who is as your own soul,*" was thought expressive enough of that union. What a legion of fiends then contains<sup>d</sup> persons who can break the chains of friendship, who can even hammer and forge the very chains of friendship into daggers and stilettos<sup>e</sup>, and make their friendship an engine of ruin? This is certainly

 *Treachery will appear in the guise of a friend while it is the worst enemy.*

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a. orig., get head (freedom from restraint; liberty)


b. treacherous; violating good faith

c. orig., combines

d. orig., possesses

e. a small dagger

the blackest color wherein we can view a flattering parasite; his false light makes his shadow the more dismal. As the ape has a peculiar lack of beauty above other beasts because of that awkward and ungraceful resemblance he has to a mankind, so surely a flatterer is infinitely the more hateful

 *A flatterer is the ugly counterfeit of a friend.*

for being the ugly counterfeit of a friend. And as *Treachery* lies at the bottom of the flatterer's panegyrics, so also does *Treachery* lie at the bottom of all the careless and exuberant

kindness of a flatterer; and though the flatterer aims not at any particular circumventive<sup>a</sup> ends, yet he must in general be found treacherous by being a false friend. A person looks upon the love of his or her friend as one of the richest possessions—*upon this account the philosopher thought one's friends ought to be inventoried as well as one's goods*. What a defeat and discomfiture would it be to a person when he comes to use this wealth, to find it all false metal such as will not answer any of those purposes for which he depended on it. There surely cannot be a greater *Treachery* than first to gain a confidence and then use that confidence to deceive. But besides this fundamental falseness, there are also many incidental treacheries that fall in upon the occasion of particular designs. A pretense of kindness is the universal allurements<sup>b</sup> to all base projects: by this men are robbed of their fortunes, and women of their honor. In a word, all wolfish designs are advanced<sup>c</sup> under this sheep's clothing and, as the world goes, people have more need to be wary of those who call themselves friends than those who own themselves their enemies.

These are the lineaments<sup>d</sup> of this vice of *Flattery* which together make up a face of the most extreme deformity. Men of this art

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a. *fraudulent (deceptive)*

b. *orig., stale (obsolete); a thing offered as an allurements*

c. *orig., walk (act)*

d. *features (outlines)*

do sometimes drop their mask<sup>a</sup> before they have obtained the prize, and then there is nothing in the world that appears so contemptible and so silly: the barefaced flatterer becomes the scorn of everyone. In short, wherever the game of flattery is played, there is always a fool involved. If the flattering parasite is detected, it falls to his share to be known as a fool; and if he is not detected, it falls to the share of him or her whom he deludes. At best, the flatterer can boast of subtlety and cunning; and if, in his own imagination, he can raise these things to the opinion of true wisdom, it is a sign that he has gone full circle to practice his deceits upon himself and is as much his own flatterer as he has been to others.

 *In the game of flattery, there is always a fool involved.*

And now, I do not know whether it is more shame or wonder to see that people can so turn human ingenuity aside and put off the native greatness of human kind as to descend to so base, so ignoble a vice as flattery. Yet alas, we see it done daily and that, not only by those who are the scum and refuse of the people, such persons as *Job* speaks of, "*who are more vile than the earth,*" *Job 30:8*<sup>b</sup>, but by persons of all conditions. Flattery is found from him that wears a linen frock to him that wears a crown; all intermediary degrees of people are but like pipes for this fountain of flattery from which they draw, to transmit it upwards among others. There are few people that are so low that they find no one to cajole and flatter them. Some interest or other may be found to be served by flattering even the meanest, who find even themselves thus solicited for benefits. And as this art is handed from one rank to another, it becomes still more subtle and refined, and thus it passes through all states and conditions of men. People are either active and flatter others, or


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a. *orig., vizard*

b. *full text:* "*They that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. ... They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth.*" *Job 30:1,8.*

they are passive and are flattered by others. God help our poor princes, who commonly meet with the elixir and quintessence<sup>a</sup> of this venom.

To clarify, I say all *conditions* of persons; I do not say all *persons* in those conditions; for no *truly generous soul* can stoop so low as to become a flatterer of others. But it is too evident by the

 *No truly generous soul can stoop so low as to become a flatterer of others.*

numbers of those who degrade themselves in this way, to what a low ebb generosity, as well as Christianity, has grown; every petty interest being now thought worthy of base submission to this vice. And truly it is hard to find by what topic of persuasion an effective assault might be

made upon the practices of such people. The baseness and the sinfulness of flattery are scarcely dissuasive to those who have reconciled themselves to both. And if anything pertinent can be said to them, it must be upon the score of their personal interest, for such is their grand principle and they can with no pretense disclaim the inferences drawn from it.

Let all therefore who engage in this false friendship duly balance the advantages they intend to gain<sup>b</sup> from this practice with the mischiefs and dangers of the practice itself. What they expect is commonly either *Honor* or *Wealth*, which things they hope may be acquired by their prostrations to those who can dispense or procure them. It is true that, as *honor* signifies greatness and power, it is sometimes attained by this method; but inasmuch as *honor* signifies reputation and esteem, it is just as surely lost by this method. He that ascends through flattery may be looked upon with fear, but never with reverence; thus it is no good bargain to exchange reputation for power, for besides the difference in intrinsic value, one must take into consideration how tottering a pinnacle unmerited greatness is. He that raised

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a. *extract (the most essential or powerful part of a thing)*

b. *project (purpose; intend to appropriate)*

the flatterer to satisfy a whim at one moment, can (with more ease and equal justice) throw him or her down at another moment: and when such a person does fall, he or she falls as much without pity as without remedy, having no foundation upon which to rebuild his or her fortune. The sycophantic arts of the false friend being detected, that game is not to be played the second time; whereas a man or woman of a clear reputation, though their ship<sup>a</sup> be split, yet may save their cargo and so will have something left towards setting up again, having the capacity to receive benefit not only from their own industry but from the friendship of others. Like a sound piece of timber, if it is not thought fit for one use, yet it will be stored away for another: so also an honest person.

 *A flatterer may be feared, but will never be respected.*

As for the other aim, that *Wealth* to which the flatterer aspires, it is very possible that sometimes this may well be obtained<sup>b</sup>, the flatterer, having several springs by which to feed it. For he that has a great patron has the advantage of his countenance and authority; he has the advantage of his bounty and liberality; and he has another advantage (sometimes greater), that of his negligence and deceivableness. But yet, all these acquisitions are often like fairy money: what is gained one night is taken away the next. Persons of this mold seldom know how to bear prosperity temperately, and it is no new thing to see a *privado*<sup>c</sup> go so high as to awaken the jealousy of his promoter who, assisted by the busy industry of those who envy the flatterer's fortune, may easily enough find some flaw in his activities by which to unravel the whole web. The example<sup>d</sup> of such an event has been often acted not only in the private management of

 *A flatterer aspires to gain wealth through several devices.*

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a. *orig.*, *barque* (a small ship)


b. *orig.*, *compassed* (gained)

c. . a private friend

d. *orig.*, *experiment*

families but in the most public administrations. And these are such hazards, that together would much recommend to any the moral of *Horace's* fable, and make one choose the country mouse's plain fare and safety over the delicacies of the city with so much danger. This then is the state of the prosperous parasite; but alas, how many are there who never arrive at this, but are knocked down before<sup>a</sup> they have climbed the first two or three rounds up the ladder; upon which consideration, I think the role of servile flatterer appears no very inviting role to any. In the long run, an honest freedom of speech will recommend a person more than all these sneaking flatteries: we have a very wise man's word for it: "*He that rebukes a man shall afterwards find more favor than he that flatters with his lips.*" *Proverbs 28:23.*

After all that has or can be said, the suppression of this practice of flattery will depend most upon those people on whom this art is focused. And if it is not repulsed by them, nothing else will discourage it; but if it *is* repulsed by them, it is crushed in the egg and can produce no viper. These vultures prey only on carcasses—on such stupid minds as have not life and vigor enough to scare<sup>b</sup> them away. But let persons of worth<sup>c</sup> entertain such customers with a severe brow, with some smart expression of distaste, and those leeches will immediately fall off. In *Sparta*, when all laws against theft proved ineffectual, at last they affixed a penalty to those who were robbed, and by that accomplished the business of ending the theft: and in this present case, if it were made as infamous to be flattered as it is to flatter, I believe it might have the same effect. And indeed there is pretense enough to do so. For first, as to *Wit*, the advantage is clearly on the flatterer's side, for he or she must

 *The hopes of a flatterer should be crushed at the start.*


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a. orig., ere

b. orig., fray (terrify)

c. orig., quality (moral value)

be admitted to have abundant wit (*which in this age is more than a counterpoise to honesty*). And as for virtue, the balance (*as to the principal motive behind flattery*) seems to hang pretty even: it is the vice of avarice that tempts one person to flatter another, and it is the vice of pride that makes being the object of flattery acceptable to the other. The truth is, and herein is the bottom of the matter, that it is that secret confederate<sup>a</sup> within any person that exposes him or her to these assaults from without. People, in general, have such an appetite for praise that they greedily suck it in without stopping to examine whether such praise belong to them or not, whether it is designed as a kindness or an abuse. Other injuries rush upon us with violence and give us notice of their approach; but this penetrates easily, indiscernibly, with the aid of that native propensity that we have to receive it. It is therefore the close<sup>b</sup> concern of every person—especially those whose status most exposes them—to keep a guard upon that treacherous inmate, so as not to let that interior ally step onto the scale to make a base sycophant outweigh a true friend. And whenever they are attacked with extravagant encomiums<sup>c</sup>, let them fortify themselves with this dilemma: either they have those excellences they are being praised for, or they have them not; and if they have them not, it is an apparent deception<sup>d</sup> and fraud<sup>e</sup>; and more, for he or she is of a pitifully forlorn understanding that delights to be fooled. But if they have such excellences, they are too worthy to allow themselves to be exposed to such worms as will instantly wither the fairest gourd.

 *The flattered is a secret ally to the flatterer.*

We may say of the flatterer that no virtue ever prospers where he or she is admitted. And if the flatterer finds any virtue he

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*a. ally*

*b. personal*

*c. praises*

*d. orig., cheat (fraud)*

*e. orig., gull (deceit)*

 *The  
flattered is a  
mischief beyond  
others.*

squeezes it until he stifles it; if he finds none, he so indisposes the soil that no future seeds of virtue can ever take root. In fine, he or she is a mischief beyond the description of any character.


O let not anyone then act this part to themselves by being their own parasites, and then it will be an easy thing to escape all other flatterers.



## CHAPTER 9

# Boasting

We have now seen some effects of an ungoverned tongue as they relate to God and our neighbor. There is yet a third sort which reflects upon a person's own self. So unboundedly mischievous is the tongue, that petulant member, that heaven and earth are not wide enough for its wanderings<sup>a</sup>; but it will find work at home too and like the viper which, after it has devoured its companions, preys upon itself. So this fault corrodes inwardly and often becomes as fatal to its owner as to all the world besides.

 *Boasting is often as fatal to the boaster as it is to others.*

Of this there are as many examples as there are imprudent things said; for all such imprudence reflects worst upon the speaker, and therefore all that have given rules for civil life have put very severe restraints upon the tongue so that it runs not before the judgment. It was the advice of *Zeno* that one should "*dip the tongue in the mind*" before permitting it to speak. *Theophrastus* used to say, "*It is safer trusting to an unbridled horse, than to intemperate speech.*" And daily experience confirms the aphorism, for those who set no guard upon their tongues, are

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a. orig., range (wander without restraint)

rushed by them into a thousand indecencies, and very often into real considerable mischiefs. By this means people have proved their own delators<sup>a</sup> and revealed<sup>b</sup> their own most important secrets. And whereas their heart should have kept a lock upon their tongue, they have given their tongue the key to their heart, and the consequence<sup>c</sup> has often been as unhappy as the proceeding was preposterous. There are indeed so many ways for people to lose themselves in their talk, thus I endeavor not to trace them all, nor to discourse *ethically*, but *Christianly* upon this fault of the tongue.

In this discourse, I will dwell<sup>d</sup> upon a fault of the tongue which is at the same time a vice and a folly: I mean that particular fault of *Boasting* and vaunting oneself, which is a strain of sin to which some people's tongues have a wonderful glibness<sup>e</sup>. No discourse can be had, but the boaster will try to turn the tide of it and draw it all into their own channel by entertaining you with long stories of themselves; or if they find no opportunity for that, they will at least work in here and there some intimations of what they did or said. Yea, so stupid a vanity is this boasting that it works alike for all materials, not only their greater and more illustrious acts or sentences, but even the slightest and most trivial occurrences, by being theirs, they believe, acquire a considerableness and are thus forcibly imposed upon whomever is in company. The very dreams of such people strait away take<sup>f</sup> on a degree of prophesy and are as seriously related as if they were undoubted revelations<sup>g</sup>. And surely, if we reflect



*The boaster  
turnes every  
topic to vaunt  
himself.*

this boasting that it works alike for all materials, not only their greater and more illustrious acts or sentences, but even the slightest and most trivial occurrences, by being theirs, they believe, acquire a considerableness and are thus forcibly imposed upon whomever is in company. The very dreams of such people strait away take<sup>f</sup> on a degree of prophesy and are as seriously related as if they were undoubted revelations<sup>g</sup>. And surely, if we reflect

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a. informers

b. orig., discovering

c. orig., event (that which falls out)

d. orig., insist (to dwell on in discourse)


e. smoothness; slipperiness

f. orig., commence (enter upon)

g. orig., revelations

on our Savior's rule, that "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks," Luke 6:45<sup>a</sup>, we cannot but think these people are *very full of themselves*; and to be thus full of themselves is only another expression for *being very proud*. So the spring that feeds this perpetual current of the mouth is the pride that is in the heart, and we are to reflect upon<sup>b</sup> *boasting* under the notion of *pride*.

And truly there is nothing that can render *Boasting* more infamous than *Pride*, and *Pride*, being a vice that of all others is branded in scripture as most detestable to God, and is eminently shown<sup>c</sup> to be detestable by the punishment that is due it. For this sin *Lucifer* was turned out of heaven<sup>d</sup>, and *Nebuchadnezzar* was turned out of his throne and even out of human society<sup>e</sup>. And indeed, boasting seems to still have something of the same effect, nothing rendering a person so inconsiderable: for it sets him above the lowly and humble, and makes him intolerable to the better sort of company. And to complete the parallel with *Nebuchadnezzar*, the boaster seldom comes to know himself until he or she is "*driven from men*" and is reduced to

 *Boasting*  
is rendered  
infamous by  
*pride*.

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a. full text: "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good. And an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." Luke 6:45.

b. orig., consider (think seriously about)


c. orig., signalized (distinguished)

d. full text: "Your pride is brought down to the grave ... How you are fallen from the heavens, O shining star, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will go up to the heavens, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ... I will go up above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet you shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the Pit." Isaiah 14:11-15.

e. full text: "This is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: they shall drive you from men, & your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, & they shall make you to eat grass as oxen, & they shall wet you with the dew of heaven, & seven times shall pass over you until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, & gives it to whomsoever he will." Daniel 4:24-25.

some extremity.

But this boasting arrogant humor, though always bad, is yet more or less so according to the subject on which it works. If it be only on natural excellences such as beauty or wit, or accidental acquisitions such as honor or wealth or the like, yet even here boasting is not only a theft, but a sacrilege: the glory of each of these being due only to the Giver<sup>a</sup>, not to the receiver; there being not so much as *any* predisposition in the subject to determine God's bounty. God could have as easily made the most deformed beggar as handsome and rich as those who pride themselves the most in their wealth and beauty. No man imagines himself to be his own creator, and although some have assumed themselves to be the architects of their own

 *God's providence is ignored by the boaster.*

fortunes, the frequent defeats of men's industry and contrivance do sufficiently confute that bold pretense, and evince the fact that there is something above them that can either prevent<sup>b</sup> or prosper their attempts<sup>c</sup>. What an violation<sup>d</sup> is

it then of God's right, for the boaster to appropriate<sup>e</sup> to himself the honor of those things being done, which were not at all in the power of the boaster to do?<sup>f</sup> And surely this folly is as great

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a. orig., Donor

b. orig., blast (blight or wither, prevent from coming to fruition by some destructive cause or pernicious influence)

c. c.f., "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might ... [but] the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time & chance happens to them all." Ecclesiastes 9:10-11; "[Solomon] exhorts us to do what we have to do with all our might, but reminds us that, when we have done all, we must leave the issue with God, & not be confident of the success." Matthew Henry.


d. orig., invasion (attack)

e. orig., engross (take or seize upon the whole of something)


f. c.f., "In the morning sow your seed, & in the evening withhold not your hand: for you know not which shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Ecclesiastes 11:6.

a sin with respect to others as it is towards God. This vanity of boasting utterly drowns all notice of the Divine hand in the things upon which it is itself founded<sup>a</sup>. People are not as inclined to say that such a man is handsome or wise or great, as they are to say that he is proud because he imagines himself to be these things. In a word, he who celebrates his own excellences must be content with his own applauses, for he will get none from others unless it is from fawning sycophants, people whose praises are worse than the bitterest detraction.

And yet so sottish a vice is *Pride* that it can make even the insidious flatteries of fawning sycophants a matter for boasting: an object that is even more irrational than the boaster's own fancies. How eagerly do some propagate every little encomium their parasitic flatterers bestow on them! And with what gust and sensuality will they tell how some jest of their's hit its mark<sup>b</sup>, or some magnificence of their's was admired! And how humorous is it to see what little arts and dexterities they have to wind such things into any discourse, when alas it amounts to no more than this: that some have thought them fools enough to be flattered, and odds are that the hearers think them fools enough to be laughed at.

 A vain person will boast even of flattery.

But there is yet another kind of boasting that is more foolish—and more criminal too—and that is when men and women vaunt themselves in their *Piety*. But if that in which they vaunt themselves is so in truth, yet it would be less owing to themselves than any natural endowment they might have; for as we cannot lend at all to that in which we find ourselves


 Natural gifts are found, rather than merited or chosen, by us.

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a. vanity causes a person to credit themselves with the things given them by God

b. orig., took (accomplished it intended purpose, in this sense, of derogation or detraction)

endowed<sup>a</sup>, neither can we obstruct our being so endowed. But in the operations of *Grace* it is otherwise: we have within ourselves a principle of opposition, and God never makes us his own until he himself subdues that natural opposition. And although he does not subdue that resistance by irresistible force but by such sweet and gentle insinuations that we are at some point captivated before we are aware, yet that does not impeach his right of conquest but only shows him to be the more gracious a conqueror. And it is true that we have great cause for exultation and joy with respect to the event itself of our captivity, for the entering into God's service is the entering into the most perfect freedom; yet with regard to the efficiency by which we entered into that freedom, we have as little matter for boasting as the surprised city has in the triumphs of the one who gains the victory over it.<sup>b</sup>

 *God conquers our hearts by the insinuations of grace.*

But another thing, for either this vaunted *Piety* is not real at all—which renders it good for nothing—or in the very act of its being vaunted, it becomes good for nothing. If it is not real, it is no less than the super-adding<sup>c</sup> of hypocrisy to the former sacrifice of boasting. It is an attempt at one and the same time to rob God and to deceive our neighbor; and in the very attempt to deceive, such persons are usually rendered hateful to both. They are rendered thus instantly to God, who cannot be mocked, and it seldom fails to render them so to their neighbor in the end. A hypocrite has a long part to playact, and if his or her memory fails them in any one scene, then the playacting itself is spoiled.


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a. *as if by choice or worthiness or wisdom of our own we are so endowed*

b. *it is God who conquered us with grace, not we who gained grace by our merits; c.f., "For by grace your are saved through faith, & that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10; & "We love him because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19.*

c. *the adding of something extrinsic*

And thus the hazards of playing the hypocrite are so great that it is as little prudent as it is honest for anyone to set themselves up in that trade, especially in an age when real *Piety* itself is at so low a value that its counterfeit does not pass for much. But if their *Piety* is indeed true, the boasting in it blights<sup>a</sup> it and makes it utterly insignificant<sup>b</sup>. This we are told by *Christ* himself, who assures us that even the most Christian actions of prayer and alms giving and fasting can expect no other reward than the sought-after applause of others when they are boasted before others, *Matthew* 6<sup>c</sup>. When a person makes their own tongue the trumpet of their alms giving or the echo of their prayers, they carve out, or rather, snatch at their own reward, and they cannot look to God to heap more reward on them. Indeed, they may look to God for the recompence of their pride alone, for they have already obtained<sup>d</sup> the recompence of their virtue. In short, piety is like a lamp that maintains its light for ages underground, but as soon as it is aired it expires. And surely there cannot be a more deplorable folly than to lose a rich jewel only for the pitiful pleasure of showing it. Such is the humor of children and those destitute of reason,

 *Piety that is real does not vaunt itself; false piety can hardly do otherwise.*

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a. orig., blasts (blights)


b. without value; answering to no purpose

c. full text: "Take heed that you do not do your alms before men to be seen by them; otherwise you have no reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when you do alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues & in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward. But when you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does; that your alms may be in secret, & your Father who sees in secret shall himself reward you openly. And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues & at the corners of the streets that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your closet & when you have shut your door, pray to your Father ... & your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly." *Matthew* 6:1-6.

d. orig., forestalled (purchased beforehand)

who will handle the captive bird until it flies away; and it ranks us with them in point of discretion, though not of innocence.

From the viewpoint of these particulars, we may in the gross conclude that this ostentation is a most foolish sin, and one that never brought advantage to anyone. There is no vice that so undermines itself as this does: it seeks glory and instead of gaining that, it loses even the common ordinary esteem<sup>a</sup> of others. Everyone who sees an inflated balloon<sup>b</sup> knows that it is only air that fills it.

 *Boasting is a foolish sin.*

There is no surer argument that a person is of a light vain<sup>c</sup> mind than this bubbling at the mouth. Indeed there is nothing that renders anyone so contemptible, so utterly useless to the world; it almost excludes him from all commerce between persons. It makes him incapable of receiving or doing a benefit, for no one will do him a good turn because they can foresee that he will arrogate it to himself as the effects of his own merit; and no one (who is not in some great exigence<sup>d</sup>) will receive one from him, knowing that it will not only be proclaimed, but magnified much above the true worth. There seems to be only one purpose such a person serves, and that is to be sport<sup>e</sup> for his companions, and that he seldom fails to do, for in these wanton<sup>f</sup> days people will not lose such an opportunity for diversion<sup>g</sup> and therefore will purposely give him hints that may put him upon his rodomontades<sup>h</sup>. I do not speak this to encouragement to them, but only to show these vaporers to what scorn they expose themselves, and what advantage they give to anyone who

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a. *orig., estimation*

b. *orig., bladder (a bladder taken from an animal & inflated with air)*

c. *orig., frothy (empty; vain)*

d. *necessity*

e. *the cause of amusement*

f. *orig., gamesome*


g. *orig., divertisement*

h. *vainglorious boasting; pretentious talk*

has a mind to abuse them. For they need not go to any further pains for it, when they do but swim with their stream and an approving nod or smile serves to drive them on and make them display themselves more disadvantageously, more ridiculously, than the most satirical character could possibly do.

But besides these sportive projects<sup>a</sup>, such a person lays himself or herself open to more dangerous circumventions. Whoever shows himself or herself so enamored by praise, whoever—*like Narcissus*—dotes on his or her own reflection, is a fit prey for flatterers; and such a carcass will never lack those eagles hovering about. For once his or her weakness is discerned (*as it must soon be when they themselves publish it*), he or she will quickly be surrounded with assailants. And I have already shown the misery of a person so besieged, therefore I will not enlarge upon it here, this mention is intended only to evince how liable this vainglorious humor is to betray a person.

These are competent specimens of the folly of this vice of boasting; but boasting has a further aggravation yet, in that it precludes all means of the boaster growing wiser. Solomon asserts: "*Do you see a man that is wise in his own conceit? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*" *Proverbs 26:12*. And the reason for this is evident, for such a person discards the two grand instruments of instruction, namely, *Admonition* and *Observation*. As for *Admonition*, he or she thinks it to be superseded by their own perfections, and therefore when any such friendly office of admonition is attempted toward them by another person, they impute it to envy and a desire to eclipse their luster by finding some spot in them, or else they impute it to ignorance and the inability to estimate their worth. The first he or she will entertain with indignation, and the second with disdainful pity. As for

 *The arrogant believe themselves to be the one thing they are not: wise.*

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a. *entertaining others*

*Observation*, such a person so circumscribes it within himself or herself that it can never fetch in anything from without<sup>a</sup>. Now, the reading of other people is thought by some to be the most



*Arrogant persons lose all benefits of conversation with others.*

facile and expedite method to acquire knowledge and surely for some kinds of knowledge it is, but a person must not read only one author, much less the worst one he or she can pick out for themselves. It is an true old saying that "*He that is his own pupil shall have a fool for his tutor,*" and

truly whoever studies only themselves will be likely to make but a sorry progress in their ability to observe others. Yet this is the case with arrogant men and women. They lose all the benefits of conversation<sup>b</sup> with others, and when they should be enriching their minds with foreign treasure, they are only counting over their own store. Instead of being attentive<sup>c</sup> to those sober discourses that they hear from others, they are perhaps only watching for an opportunity to interrupt others with some pompous story about themselves or, in the abundance of their self-sufficiency, thinking they can say much better things, they magisterially obtrude their own notions and fall to teaching when it is fitter that they should be learning. And for sure, to be so forward to lay out, and taking no care to bring in, must necessarily end in a state of bankruptcy. It is true, I confess, that the study of a person's self is, when rightly undertaken, the most useful part of learning, but it must be the kind of study that brings the person to know himself or herself, but none do this so little as



*Arrogant persons do not rightly understand themselves.*

men and women who are like those silly persons the Apostle describes, who are "*ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,*" 2 Timothy 3:7. And it is no wonder, for they begin at the wrong end: making no inquiry into

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a. they hold their own power of observation to be innately accurate

b. they can interpret others only from what little they understand of themselves

c. orig., *adverting* (observing)

their own faults or defects, they fix their contemplation only on their more splendid qualities with which they are so dazzled that when you would bring them to the darker parts of themselves, they fare as those that just come from gazing at the sun and can see nothing.

And now, having dissected this swelling vice and seen what it is that feeds the tumor, the cure suggests itself: if the disease is founded in *Pride*, the abating of that *Pride* is the most natural and proper remedy, and truly one would think that the mere weighing of the foregoing considerations might prove to sufficient allay *Pride*. Yet because where humors<sup>a</sup> are turgid<sup>b</sup>, it is necessary not only to purge them, but also to strengthen the infested parts, I shall venture to give some advice by way of *Fortification* and *Antidote*.

 *The proper remedy for pride is the pulling down of pride.*

In the first place, that advice of the Apostle offers itself to hand: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." *Philippians 2:4*<sup>c</sup>. A counsel which, seems to be too much practiced in a distorted sense: for we readily apply this to worldly advantages, and according to that notion we do not look at our own things with thankfulness, but at other people's things with envy. We also apply it in a distorted sense to errors and sins, looking not at our own errors and sins to correct and reform them, but at the errors and sins of others to despise and censure them. Let us at last consider the Apostle's advice in the genuine sense: let us not look on our own excellencies, but on those of others. In this as in all things, we see how disuse<sup>d</sup>

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a. characteristic dispositions

b. orig., turgent (swollen)

c. full text: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." *Philippians 2:3-4*

d. orig., desuetude (Latin., cessation of use)

contracts and narrows our faculties, so that we can apprehend only those things wherein we are truly conversant. The toiling<sup>a</sup> peasant scarcely thinks there is any world beyond his own village or the neighboring markets, nor any gaiety beyond that of an all night vigil<sup>b</sup> or a morris-dance<sup>c</sup>; so also people who are accustomed to the admiration of themselves alone, think there is nothing besides them that is worthy of regard. These untaught<sup>d</sup>



*Observe  
the good that is  
visible in other  
people.*

minds should be sent abroad<sup>e</sup> a little and made acquainted with those excellencies which God has bestowed on other persons, and only then will they not think themselves to have sucked up all the dew of heaven<sup>f</sup>; perhaps they may even find

that they are *drier* than their neighbors. Let them therefore put themselves on this course: observe diligently all the good that is visible in other people. And when such people find themselves mounting into the altitudes of their pride, let them weigh down<sup>g</sup> their wings with the remembrance of those who have out-soared them, not in vain opinion, but in true worth. It is nothing but the fancy of singularity that puffs us up. To breathe, to walk, to hear, and to see are excellent powers, yet nobody is proud of them because they are common to the whole of mankind: if, therefore, we would only observe the great number of people who equal or exceed us even in the more peculiar<sup>h</sup> endowments, we would not put so excessive a price upon ourselves.

Secondly, if we reflect upon ourselves, let us do it more

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a. *orig., droiling (drudging)*

b. *orig., wake (e.g., a church dedication; all night vigil)*

c. *orig., morrice (a Moorish dance, usually performed with castanets, tambourines, bells & ribbons)*

d. *orig., unbred (ill educated)*


e. *outside their own 'comfort zone,' as is said modernly*

f. *thinking they are 'God's gift to the world,' as is said modernly*

g. *orig., clog (encumber; embarrass)*

h. *orig., appropriate (set apart)*

skillfully<sup>a</sup>, more impartially; let us make a true survey and observe the barren as well as the fertile part of the soil. And if this were done, many people's value would come up very short of what they are currently willing to suppose it is. If we only compared our crop of weeds and nettles<sup>b</sup> with that of our corn<sup>c</sup>, we would have to think that either our ground is poor or we ourselves are very bad husbandmen. When therefore the recollection of either real or fancied worth begins to make us lifted up<sup>d</sup>, let us come down to earth<sup>e</sup> again by the remembrance of our sins and folly. This is the only possible service those sins can do us, and considering how dearly they may cost us, we need not lose this one accidental advantage. In this sense, when we honestly reflect upon ourselves, our vilest guilt helps to eject our pride. And if we would well manage this one stratagem against Satan, it would give us more cause for triumph than most of the things for which we now spread our plumes.<sup>f</sup> I do not say that we should contract new guilt to make us humble<sup>g</sup>, God knows we have no such need, all of us have enough of the old stock in past guilt if we would only employ that guilt to this cleansing use.

 *It is the guilt of past sins that helps us eject pride.*

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a. *orig., ingeniously (with ingenuity)*

b. *evil thoughts & deeds*

c. *good & useful thoughts & deeds*


d. *orig., airy (vainly lifted up)*

e. *orig., condense (pull ourselves together, as is said modernly)*

f. *c.f., "Submit yourselves to God. Resist the Devil & he will flee from you. Draw near to God, & He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners; & purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be afflicted & mourn & weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning & your joy to heaviness. Be humbled before the Lord, & He will lift you up." James 4:7-10.*


g. *c.f., "If the truth of God has abounded more through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner, & not rather, (as we are slanderously reported & as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil that good may come? Whose damnation is just." Romans 3:7-8.*

And finally, I would advise those who are inclined to talk big things of themselves, to turn into some other road of discourse; for if they themselves are their own theme, their tongues will as naturally turn to eulogies as a horse does to that inn to which he is accustomed. All habits seem to require some degree of contrary excess<sup>a</sup> for their cure: for we do not have so just an estimation<sup>b</sup> of ourselves that we might know to a minutia<sup>c</sup> what will level the scales and place us in a proper degree of moderation<sup>d</sup> respecting our own worth. Let men and women therefore, that have this infirmity, shun (as far as prudence and interest permits) all discourse on themselves until they can sever such talk from that unhappy appendage of vanity. They will not be at all the less acceptable company, as it is generally thought that none of the best parts of good manners include talking much of one's self: for even though such talk is done in a way so as not to argue any pride in it, yet it argues ignorance of more worthy subjects.

 *All bad habits require a degree of counter action to be cured.*

I should here conclude this section except that there is another sort of vaunting talk which was not well reducible to any of the former topics, the subject matter being vastly distant from them.

For in those other types of boasting, the boasting is founded in either some real or supposed worth, but in this sort of boasting it is founded in *Baseness* and *Villainy*. There is a generation of people who have removed all the landmarks<sup>e</sup> which their fathers, even the Father of Spirits, have set; they have reversed the common notions of humanity about good and

 *There is a generation that calls evil good & good evil.*

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*a. a weightier contrary force, as that derived from contemplation of personal sinfulness (to counterbalance or outweigh the habit of too great a self-esteem)*

*b. orig., scantling (measure)*

*c. orig., grain (minute particle)*

*d. orig., mediocrity (middle state; moderate)*

*e. or boundaries (as we would say today)*

evil, and call evil good and good evil; they not only proclaim but boast in those things which even a moderately impudent person would blush to be surprised<sup>a</sup> in; and they blow the trumpet before their crimes as much as others blow a trumpet before their good deeds.<sup>b</sup>




*Some  
vaunt their evil  
in the same  
way hypocrites  
vaunt their  
piety, blowing  
a trumpet to  
announce their  
deeds.*

---

*a. found out*

*b. Even as pious hypocrites, these blow a trumpet to announce their deeds without realizing those deeds are truly sinful & will lead to their destruction: the one regales in pious living, gratifying him/herself in thoughts of his/her own righteousness; the other regales in his/her freedom from Christian morality & values, unaware that under the banner of freedom he/she makes him/herself a slave to the flesh, to the fleshly mind, & to sin & death. This vaunted sinfulness is seen today in the pride parades, in the vaunting of lifestyles choices that are not mere alternatives coincident with Christianity or even normal to the human state & nature ("God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions." Ecclesiastes 7:29), but are rooted in real animus against Christianity & as such are embraced proudly & without shame as if in the very face of Christianity. HOWEVER, as Jesus himself said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," (Mt. 9:13), so that, when the religious 'righteous', by affirming their own righteousness not through humility (which they reject) & repentance (which they disdain) but through the very pride they take in their own deeds, make themselves unable to be reformed & renewed (c.f., Heb. 6:4-8), these others, who regale themselves in refusing to accept "outdated values" and who set themselves against those values, are yet not at all excluded from the possibility of repentance but are the very ones addressed by the Gospel call to repentance. Unlike the hypocrite, the vaunting sinner who embraces every form of ungodliness against Christ, may at last, after indulgence has yielded nothing more than emptiness of soul (a thing the hypocrite will never experience) begin to crave righteousness & cleanliness of mind & body, & in the very doing of this is enabled to repent unto salvation. And more so, because these, through repentance, have the capacity to love God & the things of God even more than others, for "to whom little is forgiven, loves little," but when forgiven much, the great sinner will also "love much," (Luke 7:39-47). Neither does any real Christian hold him/herself to be better than any such sinners, knowing well that we are of the same sinful nature: "Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus & by the Spirit of our God.**" 1 Corinthians 6:9-*

So much do they affect this inverted sort of hypocrisy that they own more wickedness than they do, and assume they have made the highest speculations of villainy practical; and like the *Devil's* knights-errant<sup>a</sup>, they pretend to those fanciful<sup>b</sup> achievements which the very *Fiend Incarnate* himself could never compass.<sup>c</sup> These are such prodigies, such monsters of villainy, that though they are the objects of grief and wonder, they are not the objects of counsel. Men and women who thus rave, we may conclude that their minds are turned against truth, and one may as well read lectures<sup>d</sup> at Bedlam<sup>e</sup> as to attempt to enter into discussion<sup>f</sup> with such. Yet we know that at Bedlam sharp corrections may sometimes recover crazed persons to sobriety, and then their cure needs only the hand of civil justice. But these, if we take them at their word and receive their bragging as confessions and punish them accordingly under the law, it may be that a little real smart would correct this mad itch of villainy, and teach them not to "*glory in their shame,*" *Philippians 3:19*<sup>g</sup>.

 Some pretend to a true practicality in evil-living, believing evil-living to be good-living.

In the mean time, let those, who have not yet arrived at this height of baseness and villainy, consider before it is too late that all indulgent practice of sin is the direct road to destruction,

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11.

a. knights who traveled in search of adventures for the purpose of exhibiting their skill & prowess

b. orig., romantic (extravagant)

c. though the Devil was present in the flesh, yet he could not achieve the practicality some claim to find in the things in which they indulge


d. instructions (in this case, upon scripture)


e. Bedlam was a hospital for the insane in London

f. orig., treat (talk; negotiate)

g. full text: "For many are walking, of whom I have told you often & now tell you even weeping, as the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, & whose glory is in their shame, those who mind earthly things." *Philippians 3:18-19*.

and according to the degrees of that indulgence, they make haste to their own death<sup>a</sup>. He or she who constantly and habitually indulges in sin rides with the spur<sup>b</sup>, and will quickly overtake their leaders<sup>c</sup>. Even if it is only this single vice of vanity, yet it may soon bring such a person to the same state as those he or she follows; for that person who loves to brag will scarcely find exercise enough for that faculty among their seeming virtues, and may soon enough be tempted to adopt other vices also. But what is an even more serious consideration is that *Pride* is so provoking to Almighty God that it often causes him to withdraw his *Grace*, which is a gift<sup>d</sup> he has promised **only** to the humble, *James 4:6*<sup>e</sup>. And indeed when we turn that *Grace* into wantonness, as the proud man does who is pampered by his own pride into high conceits of himself, it is not probable that God will any longer prostitute his favors to such abuse.<sup>f</sup> The Apostle observes this of the Gentiles who had, in contradiction to the natural

 Those who continue in sin should consider that their indulgence is a direct road to destruction.

 Grace turned into wantonness is no grace at all.

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a. c.f., "As righteousness tends to life; so he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death." *Proverbs 11:19*; "He that sins against [wisdom & understanding] wrongs his own soul; all they that hate [wisdom & understanding] love death." *Proverbs 8:36*.

b. spurs himself on to greater depravity


c. Sin is deceitful (*Hebrews 3:13*) & habituation in sin hardens the heart & drives one further from God & truth; compare how Jesus accused the scribes & Pharisees as hypocrites for the pains they went through in proselytizing, saying to them, "you compass sea & land to make one proselyte, & when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." *Matthew 23:15*.

d. orig., donative (a gratuity)

e. full text: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he says, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." *James 4:6*; God, in the exercise of his absolute sovereignty in the dispensing of saving grace, affirmatively excludes the proud from salvation, for he that is without humility is without repentance (irrespective of his protestation otherwise), & without repentance there is no grace of salvation, for God "gives grace to the humble."

f. c.f., *Luke 13:6-9*

light inherent in every person, so abandoned themselves to vile idolatries that God "gave them up to a reprobate mind and vile affections", Romans 1:25-26<sup>a</sup>. But the proud now stifle a much clearer light<sup>b</sup> and give themselves up to as base an idolatry as the adoration of themselves<sup>c</sup>. And therefore it is only fair<sup>d</sup> to

 A great light is stifled by self-love, namely, that true light that lights every man.

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a. full text: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has showed it to them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power & Godhead, so that they are without excuse because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations & their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools & changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, & to birds, & four-footed beasts, & creeping things. Wherefore **God also gave them up** to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie & worshiped & served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause **God gave them up unto vile affections**: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature; & likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly & receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, **God gave them over to a reprobate mind**, to do those things which are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Romans 1:19-32.

b. that is, Jesus Christ, "the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world." John 1:9.

c. "c.f., "In the last days, perilous times will come. For men will be **lovers of themselves**, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

d. org., equal (fair)

expect that God should desert them, and permit them to celebrate even their foulest enormities. The application of all I shall sum up in the words of the Apostle, "*For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not you.*" Romans 11:21.




*Take care  
lest God not  
spare you.*



## CHAPTER 10

# Querulousness

To the sin of *Boasting* may be subjoined another inordinacy of the tongue, viz., *Murmuring* and *Complaining*. And though these faults seem to differ as much in their complexions as *sanguine* does from *melancholy*, yet there is nothing more frequent than to see them united in the same person. Nor is this conjunction with boasting of a modern date, but is as old as the days of St. Jude who observed that the *murmurers* and *complainers* are the very same as those who speak "*great swelling words*," *Jude 1:16*<sup>a</sup>.

 *Boasters tend to be murmurers & complainers.*

Nor should we wonder to find them thus conjoined when we consider what an original cognation<sup>b</sup> and kindred they have, they (*however they seem to be divided*) being streams issuing from the

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a. *full text*: "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, & to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, & of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. **These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; & their mouth speaks great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.**" *Jude 1:14-16.*

b. *relationship (by the same nature)*

same fountain. For the very same *Pride* which prompts a man to vaunt and overvalue what he is, does just as forcibly incline him to contemn and dis-value what he has: whilst measuring his enjoyments by that vast idea he has formed of himself, it is impossible that he not think that what he has is below him.



*Pride*  
is the root of  
discontent.

This is indeed the true original of the perpetual complaining we hear from all sorts and conditions of persons. For if we passed through all degrees and all ages of people, we would rarely find a single person, much less a number of people, exempt from this *Querulous*<sup>a</sup>, this sullen humor. It is as if that breath of life



*None are*  
*exempt from the*  
*sullen humor of*  
*querulousness.*

that God originally breathed into<sup>b</sup> us was given to us not to magnify his bounty, but to accuse his illiberality, and like the more dismal sort of instruments, could be tuned to no other strains<sup>c</sup> than those of mourning and lamentation. Every man contributes his note to this doleful harmony, and after all that God has done to oblige and delight mankind, scarce any person is satisfied enough—*I will not say, to be thankful, but*—to be patient. For alas, what tragic complaints do people make of their infelicity when perhaps their prosperity is just as much the object of the envious outcry of others? Every little defeat of a design or of an appetite, every little act of disregard from those above them or less solemn act of reverence<sup>d</sup> from those below them makes their hearts hot within them, and their tongues (*that combustible part*) quickly takes fire and breaks out into extravagant exclamations. It is indeed strange to see how weighty even the most trivial thing is when a passion is cast into the scale with it, and how even the slightest inconvenience or

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a. *disposition, habit & practice of murmuring*

b. *orig., inspired (breathed into)*

c. *songs or tunes*

d. *orig., observance (act of reverence)*

petty want preponderates<sup>a</sup> hundreds of great and substantial blessings, when in fact, were the thing never so considerable, it would yet be no just counterpoise<sup>b</sup>. Yet so closely is this corruption interwoven with our constitution, that it has sometimes prevailed even upon good persons. *Jacob*, though he had twelve sons, yet upon the supposed death of one<sup>c</sup>, he despised the comforts of all the rest and with an obstinate sorrow resolves to "go mourning to his grave," *Genesis 37:35*<sup>d</sup>. *David*, after that signal victory that had preserved his life and reinstated him in his throne and restored him to the ark and the sanctuary, yet, allowed the loss of his rebellious son, who had been the author of all his danger, to overwhelm the sense of his deliverance, and instead of hymns and praises, David breaks out into lamentations<sup>e</sup> and wailing, *2 Samuel 18:33*<sup>f</sup>.

 It is human nature to be dissatisfied in many things.

But God knows that the greater number of our complaints cannot pretend to such considerable<sup>g</sup> motives: they are not the bowels of a father or the compulsions<sup>h</sup> of nature that excite our repining, but the impulses of our lusts and inordinate appetites.

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a. outweighs

b. counterweight

c. Joseph

d. When Jacob believed Joseph had been "rent in pieces," he "rent his clothes & put sackcloth upon his loins, & mourned for his son many days. And all his sons & all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, & he said, For I will go down mourning into the grave to my son." *Genesis 37:34-35*

e. orig., ejaculations (loud cries of grief)

f. full text: "And, behold, Cush came & said, Tidings, my lord the king, for the Lord has avenged you this day of all them that rose up against you. And the king said to Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cush answered, The enemies of my lord the king, & all that rise against you to do you hurt, be as that young man is. And the king was much moved & went up to the chamber over the gate & wept; & as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God that I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" *2 Samuel 18:31-33*.

g. weighty, worthy

h. orig., impresses (imprintings)

Our discontents are usually similar to *Ahab's* discontent over his neighbor's vineyard,<sup>a</sup> and *Haman's* discontent over Mordecai's lack of obeisance,<sup>b</sup> and *Ahithophel's* discontent over having his counsel rejected<sup>c</sup>. Every disappointment of our avarice, ambition, and pride fills our hearts with bitterness and our mouths with vociferations<sup>d</sup>. And if we were



*Discontent typically has pride as its origin.*

to examine the numerous complaints that are heard in every corner, we would doubtlessly find that the greatest number of them have some such similar origin; and this is true whether the

pretended grievances are public or private. For the first: many a person is in a state of malcontent merely because he or she sees another advanced to that honor or wealth that he or she thinks they have better deserved. Such a person is always inveighing against such unfair<sup>e</sup> distributions where the best services—and

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a. "Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard that was in Jezreel, close by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spoke to Naboth saying, Give me your vineyard that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near my house, & I will give you for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you the value of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it of me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you. And Ahab went to his house heavy & displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him. .... And he laid down on his bed & turned away his face & would eat no bread." 1 Kings 21:1-4.


b. King Ahasuerus had promoted Haman "above all the princes," and all the king's servants that were in the king's gate bowed & revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. ... And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath." Esther 3:2,5.

c. 2 Samuel 17; Ahithophel, David's counselor, had deserted David & joined Absalom, and when he saw that his counsel was not followed by Absalom, his vexation turned to suicide. Perhaps, says Matthew Henry, Ahithophel believed himself exposed & his life in danger; perhaps "his proud heart cannot bear the affront; it rises & swells, & the more he thinks of it the more violent his resentments grow, until it brings him at last to this desperate resolve not to live to see another preferred before himself."


d. orig., clamors (vehement outcries)

e. orig., unequal (unjust)

you may be sure that his own services are the best—are the worst rewarded. Nor does such a person ever cease to forebode public ruin until his private estates are repaired. But as soon as his estates are in good order, his augury grows more mild. It is as if he and his estate are twins, his fresh supplies<sup>a</sup> give him new vigor, and until his next suit is denied, everything is well administered. Alas, so full are people of themselves that it is hard to find any who, even under the most splendid pretenses, have not something of that discontentment at the bottom of their actions. And would that every person might ransack their own heart, and resolve not to cast a stone at another until he or she has first cleared their own heart of all sinister motives<sup>b</sup>. Perhaps the number of our complainers would then be much abated.

 People are so full of themselves.

Nor is the case otherwise in *private* discontentments. People are inclined to think themselves ill used by any person who will not serve their interests or their humor and sometimes even their vices. They are prone in all companies<sup>c</sup> to arraign such an unpliant person as if he or she were an enemy of mankind, because he or she is not a slave to their will. How many have quarreled even with their dearest friends because they would not assist them to their own ruin or who have striven to divert them *from* ruin. So impetuously inclined<sup>d</sup> are our propensities<sup>e</sup> to mutiny that we equally take occasions from benefits or injuries.

 People think they are ill used in anything that thwarts them.

But the highest and most unhappy instance of all is in our behavior towards God, whose allotments we dispute with the

---

a. *orig., recruits (new supplies of anything including money, food, people, flocks)*


b. *orig., respects (considerations)*

c. *any assemblage of people*

d. *orig., forcible (driven)*

e. *orig., propensions (archaic)*

same or rather with greater boldness than we do those of men. What else do those impatient murmurings at the things which are the immediate issues of God's *Providence* mean? Such are our native blemishes, our diseases, the death of friends, and other like things. Indeed, consider what our displeasure is at even those things that we pretend to fasten upon second causes; for all such things, being subordinate to the first cause, cannot move except by permission of that first cause. Holy *Job* well discerned this, and therefore he does not indite the Chaldeans or Sabeans for his being plundered, but knowing that they were only instruments, he submissively acknowledges that there was a higher agent in his loss: "*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord,*" *Job* 1:21. When therefore we ravingly execrate the rapine of one man or the deceit of another for our impoverishment, when we angrily charge our defamation on the malice of our maligners, our disappointments on the treachery or neglect of our friends, we do interpretatively conclude either that there is no overruling providence that could have restrained those events or else (*which is equally horrid*) we accuse providence itself of not having done well in permitting


 *Querulousness always carries a repugnance to God's providence.*

those events. Against whomsoever we direct our outcries, the last reverberations of those outcries is again heaven. This *Querulous* humor always carries with it an implicit repugnance to God's providential disposal of everything in our lives; and where this humor indulges God's providence


to dispose anything, it usually becomes its expositor and it explicitly avows itself so, and charges God foolishly and by impious murmurings it blasphemes that power which it cannot resist. Indeed it is very natural for our impatience with others to progress and swell into mutinies against God: for when the mind has become embittered, it no longer distinguishes between objects, but lets the venom of its bitterness fly indifferently: "*They will fret themselves,*" the prophet tells us, "*and will curse their king and their God,*" *Isaiah* 8:21. But he or she that quarrels

with God's *providential distribution* of all things is also in the direct path to defying his *being*.

By this we are able to estimate the dangers of our discontent which, although at first discontent is introduced by the inordinate love of ourselves, yet it is very apt to terminate in hatred and blasphemies against God. He or she therefore that would secure himself or herself against the greatest degree of discontent, must watch against the lowest degree of discontent, even as he or she that would prevent a total inundation must first avert the smallest breach in the banks. Even the first beginnings of discontent are in themselves well worth guarding against, for even when abstracted from all the danger of the enormous increase that will follow upon them, these murmurings—*like a mortiferous<sup>a</sup> herb*—are poisonous even in their first springing up, long before they arrive at full maturity. To dip our tongues in gall and to have nothing in our mouths but the extract and exhalation of our inward bitterness is surely no great pleasure. And to be always moralizing upon ourselves is no desirable thing (though we were accountable to none but ourselves for so doing), but if we were to consult only our own ease, we might for that single reason draw arguments enough against our mutinies.

 *We must guard against the dangers of discontent within our own hearts.*


But besides our duty and ease, our credit and reputation make their plea also for us to guard against discontent. *Fortitude* is one of the noblest of moral virtues, and it has the luck to appear considerable even to those who despise all other moral virtues. Now one of the most proper and eminent acts of fortitude is the bearing of adverse events with an evenness of temper. This passive valor is as much the mark of a great mind as active valor, perhaps more, the later being often owing to the animal

 *Bearing adversity is a mark of a great mind.*

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*a. deadly*

but this to the rational part of man. And surely mankind together must have strangely corrupted the principles of *morality* as well as *religion* if every turbulent unruly spirit that fills the world with blood and rapine shall have his ferocity<sup>a</sup> called gallantry, when yet that sober courage that maintains itself against all the shocks of fortune and that stays at its post in spite of the rudest encounters will not be allowed at least as good a name. And on the contrary then, we may conclude that to sink under every cross accident, and to be still whining and complaining, and to be crying out upon every trial is a note of a mean degenerate<sup>b</sup> soul, being below the dignity of our reasonable nature. For certainly God did not give us reason for so unkind a purpose as just to quicken and enhance the resentment of our sufferings, but rather to control those disorders which the more tumultuous part of us, namely, our senses, are apt to raise in us: and we show ourselves to be men insofar as we use that sober courage to that end. Therefore if the dictates of religion cannot restrain our murmuring, and if we are nor Christians enough to submit to the divine precepts of meekness and acquiescence, yet let us at least keep within those bounds which ingenious nature has set us and not, by any unmanly impatience, enter into a commonality with brutes and animals.

 *To sink & whine & cry out under every trial of life is a sign of an unworthy soul.*

I may add, if neither for God's nor our own sakes, yet for the sake of others, for humane society's sake, this querulous inclination should be suppressed, there being nothing that renders a man or a woman more unpleasant or more uneasy company. For, besides the fact that a querulousness person is very disposed to vent on those with whom he or she converses, rendering such a person capricious and peevish<sup>c</sup>, and besides


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a. *orig., ferity (savageness; wildness)*


b. *degenerte, base*

c. *orig., exceptionous (apt to cavil or take exceptions)*

the fact that it is a harsh and a grating sound to always hear a person in the complaining key, no person would willingly dwell within the noise of shrieks and groans. The exclamations of the discontented differ from others only by being more articulate, so that it is a very unwelcome importunity to entertain a person's company with remonstrances of one's own infelicities and misadventures, and he or she who relates all their grievances to others will quickly make themselves a grievance to them. For though he or she that is full of the inward sense of their own discontentedness thinks it rather an ease than an oppression to speak them out, yet the case is far otherwise with his or her hearers<sup>a</sup>; for they are perhaps just as much taken up with themselves as the speaker is with himself or herself, and they may be as little at leisure to consider the speaker's concerns as the speaker is of theirs.

 We may have little leisure to consider the concerns of others.

But alas, we are not now in those primitive days when there was, as it were, one common sense among Christians, when, "if one member suffered, all the members suffered with it," 1 Corinthians 12:26<sup>b</sup>. That Charity, which lends a sympathetic motion to the whole, is now itself benumbed and rarely flows beyond the narrow compass of our personal interest. We cannot therefore expect that others will be very patient with our complaints when they are not personally concerned in the causes of them. The priest's answer to Judas expresses the rationale of most men in the case: "What is that to us? You see to that." Matthew 27:4<sup>c</sup>. I do not deny that the

 Charity, which moves Christians to sympathy for others, is now benumbed.

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a. *orig., auditors (hearers)*

b. *full text:* "There should be no schism in the body, but the members should have the same care one for another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, & members in particular." 1 Corinthians 12:25-27.

c. *full text:* "All the chief priests & elders of the people took counsel against Jesus

discharging of one's griefs into the bosom of a true friend is both innocent and prudent, and indeed, he that has such a treasure in a friend is unkind to himself if he uses it not. But that which



*Through querulousness, a person's lack of patience is made known to all.*

I would dissuade is the promiscuous use of this liberty in common conversation; the satisfying of our anger<sup>a</sup> when we cannot ease our hearts by venting our complaints; the loud declaiming at our misery, which declaiming is seldom severed from the same severe reflexions upon

those whom we suppose are the causes of our misery. And such liberty and venting and declaiming from which nothing can be acquired except the opinion of others as to our impatience,<sup>b</sup> or perhaps we gain even some new grievance from persons who think themselves concerned in such a way as to be bound to vindicate those whom we charge with injury<sup>c</sup> to us. In a word, this *querulousness* is as indecent as it is unacceptable, and we may observe that all people are willing to slink out of such company, and to seek sober company rather than hazardous, and jovial company rather than unpleasantness. So then, the murmurer seems to be turned off to the company of the doleful, creatures filled with their own grievances; for his or her conversation is ill conversation to all, though worst of all to him or her self.

And now therefore, upon the force of all these considerations, I

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*to put him to death: & when they had bound him, they led him away & delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, & brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests & elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? You see to that." Matthew 27:1-4.*


*a. orig., spleen*

*b. compare: "Rest in the Lord & wait patiently for him; fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger & forsake wrath; fret not yourself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off; but those that wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." Psalms 37:7-9.*

*c. orig., asperse (bespatter with foul reports)*

may reasonably impress the wise counsel, "*Beware of murmuring*."<sup>a</sup> And indeed it is the precept of all who have made any just pretense to the title of wisdom. For when we consider those excellent lectures upon contentment<sup>b</sup> and acquiescence wherewith the writings of philosophers abound, it is hard to say whether they speak to us more out of instruction or in reproach. When even their confused notions of a deity gave them such impressions of his *wisdom* and *goodness* that they would not pretend to make any elections<sup>c</sup> for themselves, how much should this shame us who dare not depend on God in the smallest instance when we have more explicit knowledge of him?<sup>?</sup>—who will not trust God's disposal of all things for good<sup>d</sup> unless our senses accord<sup>e</sup> with his sureties<sup>f?</sup><sup>g</sup>—and which thing amounts only to that degree of credit that the most faithless person can expect from us: we trust him only as far as we can see him. This is a contumely<sup>h</sup> of such a kind towards God as the heathen<sup>i</sup> world does not dare to offer him; and it is the peculiar insolence of

 *Beware of murmuring.*

 *Trust in God in even the smallest things.*

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a. c.f., "*Who is he that speaks & it comes to pass when the Lord commands it not? Does not evil & good proceed out of the mouth of the most High? For what reason does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search & try our ways, & turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our hearts & our hands unto God in the heavens.*" *Lamentations 3:37-41.*

b. orig., contentation (quietness of mind; lack of repining)

c. take any liberties

d. c.f., "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*" *Romans 8:28.*

e. orig., become (are congruous with)


f. God's promises

g. unless we see with our own eyes that God's promises (his sureties) are true indeed; but, for the double-minded person, God's promises are true of themselves & not because we see them fulfilled, for "*we walk by faith, not by sight,*" 2 *Corinthians 5:7*

h. haughty contemptuousness

i. orig., ethnic (pagan)

those degenerate Christians who surely cannot be thought to be in earnest when they speak of singing *Hallelujahs* to God in the next world, while they entertain him here with only the sullen noise of murmuring and repining. For we are not to

 No one, who has not first glorified God on earth, will do so afterward in heaven.

think that heaven will suddenly metamorphose us, and turn our exclamations and wild clamors against the will of God towards us in particular into lauds and magnificats<sup>a</sup> of the same.<sup>b</sup> Heaven will indeed perfect and crown those graces which were inchoate<sup>c</sup> and begun in us here, but no person's conversion will follow upon his or her

entering into heaven; for Christ expressly told us that "*except we are converted, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"<sup>d</sup> Thus, if we go on in our froward discontent, that discontent will associate us with those with whom is "*Weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.*"<sup>e</sup>

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a. the magnifying of God in his sovereign purpose & will (from the words of Mary, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Luke 1:46-47)

b. we are told here & now to, "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

c. commenced

d. full text: "Except you are converted & become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3.


e. Matthew 24:45-51; Matthew 13:41-42; Matthew 22:11-14



## CHAPTER 11

# Positive Authoritativeness

Another very unhandsome circumstance in discourse is the being over confident and peremptory<sup>a</sup>, a thing which does very much unfit men and women for conversation. It is looked upon as the common birth-right of mankind that every person is to opine according to the dictates of his *own* understanding and not that of another. Now this *peremptoriness* is of two sorts: the one is a *Magisterialness* in matters of opinion and speculation, and the other is a *Positiveness* in relating matters of fact. In the one, we impose upon one another's understanding, and in the other we impose upon their faith.

 *Positive authoritativeness speaks from its own understanding.*

As for the first, the *Magisterial*, he or she must be very much a stranger in the world who has not met with such a person, there being a generation who, as the prophet says, "*Are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight,*" *Isaiah 5:21*. Not only this, but the *magisterial* make themselves the standard of wisdom to which all others are bound to conform, and whoever is found wanting in *their* balance—*be their reasons ever so weighty*—

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a. *authoritative (in a manner to preclude debate or expostulation)*

they write *Tekel*<sup>a</sup> upon them. *Magisterialism* is one of the most oppressive monopolies imaginable. All other monopolies can concern<sup>b</sup> only those things that are outside us, but *this* fastens upon our nature, yea and the better part of our nature too,



*Reason submits to reason, but not to bare authoritativeness.*

namely, our *Reason*. And if a *Magisterial* person meets with anyone who has any considerable share of reason within them, they will often be tempted to rally that *authoritativeness* and will not too tamely resign their native liberty. *Reason*

submits only to *Reason*, and he or she that assaults *Reason* with bare *Authority*—except that which is *Divine Authority*—may as well cut at a flame with his sword.

It is true indeed that these great dictators do sometimes run down everyone in company and carry their hypothesis without contest, but there may be divers reasons for this besides the weight of their arguments. Some unspeculative person may not have the skill to examine their assertions, and therefore an assent is their safest course; others may be lazy and not think it worth their pains<sup>c</sup>; another sort may be modest and awed by a severe brow and an imperious nod; and perhaps the wiser sort may providently foresee the impossibility of convincing someone who thinks himself or herself not subject to error<sup>d</sup>. Upon these or other like grounds it is very possible that everyone in



*Authoritative persons do not rightly estimate their hearers.*

company may be silenced when not even a one of them has been convinced; thus, these great *Masters* may often make very false estimates of their conquests and "*sacrifice to their own nets,*"

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a. "*Tekel; You are weighed in the balances, & are found wanting.*" *Daniel 5:27.*


b. *affect the interest of*

c. "*Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.*" *Proverbs 26:5.*

d. c.f., "*Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate you.*" *Proverbs 9:8;* "*A scorner loves not the one that reproves him: neither will he go unto the wise.*" *Proverbs 15:12.*

*Habakkuk 1:16*<sup>a</sup>, when they have taken up nothing in them.

Indeed this insolent way of proposing a thing is so far from propagating the notions of the *Magisterial* person that it only gives reason for prejudice against them. It is the gentle insinuation that pierces, and oil is the most penetrating of all fluids<sup>b</sup>; but in these *magisterial* dictates<sup>c</sup> people think themselves attacked, and they stand on guard and reckon that they must part with their honor together with their opinions if they suffer themselves to be bullied<sup>d</sup> out of those opinions. Besides, this imposing humor is so unamiable that it evokes an aversion within the hearer, and we know how forcible personal prejudices are (*although it is true that they should not be*) towards the biasing of people against the opinions of others; and indeed, men and women of this *Magisterial* temper cut themselves off from the opportunities of proselyting others by averting them from their company. Freedom is the endearing thing in society, but where freedom is controlled people are not very fond of associating<sup>e</sup>. It is natural to us to be uneasy in the presence of those who assume authority over us. Children care not for the company of their parents or tutors, and men and women will care even less for those who would make them children by imposing<sup>f</sup> a tutorage<sup>g</sup> over them.

 People stand on their guard against an authoritative person.

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a. *full text*: "They are terrible & dreadful; their judgment & their dignity shall proceed of themselves. ... the wicked devour the man that is more righteous than he, & makes men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them. They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net & gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoice & are glad. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net & burn incense unto their drag," *Habakkuk 1:7, 13-16*.

b. *orig.*, liquors (liquids)

c. *orig.*, documents (instructions; authoritative dogmas)


d. *orig.*, hectoring (teased; bullied)

e. uniting in company


f. *orig.*, usurping (occupying; seizing)

g. the authority or solemnity of a tutor

All these inconveniences are evidently consequent to this kind of dogmatizing, even supposing that a person is in the right; but if they happen to be wrong, what a ridiculous pageantry is it to see such a philosophical gravity set to flesh out a solecism<sup>a</sup>? A concluding face put upon *no concluding argument* is the most contemptible sort of folly in the world! By this, such persons sound a trumpet to their own defeat: for whereas a modest mistake might slip by undiscerned, these rodomontade<sup>b</sup> errors force themselves upon the observation of others and make it as impossible for others not to see them as it is for them not to despise that person when they do see their errors. For indeed *Pride* is as ill associated with *Error*, as it is with *Beggary*<sup>c</sup>, and in either case, it converts pity into contempt.<sup>d</sup>

 *The errors of the proud convert pity into contempt in their hearers.*

We might consider what security any person, who imposes himself or herself upon others, has that this will not be his or her case. Human nature is very fallible, and as it is possible that a person may err in a great many things, it is certain that every person does err in something or other. Now who knows at the instant he or she is so positive, whether this may be their turn at erring? Alas how frequently are we mistaken even in common ordinary things! For, as a wise man says: *We hardly judge aright even in things that are before us*. Our very senses do sometimes delude us. How then can we wander into things of abstruse

 *Confidence is far from being a certain mark of truth.*

speculation? The very consideration of this has so prevailed with some, that it has produced a sect of *Skepticism*. And although I press this not for the purpose of promoting that sect, yet surely I may reasonably urge *skepticism* in order to introduce

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a. a deviation or breach of proper order

b. blustering; vaunting

c. extreme indegence

d. c.f., "An unjust man is an abomination to the just; & he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked." Proverbs 29:27.

some modesty and calmness in the making of assertions. For when we have not other certainty of our being right except our own persuasions that we *are* right, this may often be nothing more than the making of one error the gage for another.

 None are so apt to go astray as those who despise instruction.

For, God knows, confidence is so far from being a certain mark of truth that it is often the very seducer that lures people into falsehood, none being so inclined to lose their way as those who, out of an ungrounded presumption of knowing the way, despise all direction from others<sup>a</sup>.

Let all this be weighed and the result will be that this *peremptoriness* or *authoritativeness* is a thing that is befitting to no form of understanding: it renders wise persons disobliging and troublesome, and it renders fools ridiculous and contemptible. It casts a prejudice upon the most solid reasoning, and it renders lighter reasoning more notoriously despicable. It is a pity that excellent things<sup>b</sup> should be leavened by it, made a snare to the owners, and useless to others.<sup>c</sup> And it is pity too that persons of weak parts<sup>d</sup> should by *peremptoriness* be condemned to be always so, by despising those aids which would otherwise improve them.<sup>e</sup> Since therefore this *authoritativeness* is so ill calculated in every place it is found on the globe<sup>f</sup>, would to

 The authoritarian person rejects reason.

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a. c.f., "Speak not in the presence of a fool; for he will despise the wisdom of your words." Proverbs 23:9.

b. orig., good parts (that which is more excellent, in this case, in knowledge or doctrine)

c. c.f., "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." 1 Corinthians 8:1 & "Though I speak with the tongues of men & of angels, & have not charity, I have become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." 1 Corinthians 13:1


d. of inferior or ordinary endowments (a person 'of parts' is one of excellent endowments or talents)

e. "He that refuses instruction despises his own soul; but he that hears reproof gets understanding." Proverbs 15:32.

f. orig., every meridian (every place on the globe has its meridian, hence, every

God that all climes<sup>a</sup> might be purged from it.

And as there are weighty objections against this *authoritarian positiveness* in respect of its effects, so also there are no inconsiderable prejudices against it in relation to its causes, of which we may reckon *Pride* to be the most certain and universal cause.<sup>b</sup> For whatever else casually occurs together with *Magisterialism*, *Pride* is the fundamental constitutive principle and nothing except a great conceit<sup>c</sup> in a person's own understanding is able to inflate him or her to that imaginary empire over other people's opinions. For here surely we may ask the Apostle's question: "*Who makes you to differ from another?*"<sup>d</sup> When God made rationality the common portion of all mankind, how did rationality come to be exclusive<sup>e</sup> to you? Or what signature has God set upon yours, and what mark of excellency that your signature should be paramount? Doubtless

 God made rationality the common portion of all.

if you fancy that you have that part of Jacob's blessing, "*To be lord of your brethren, and that all your mother's sons should bow down to you,*" *Genesis 27:29*<sup>f</sup>, you have surely gotten it more surreptitiously than he did and with less effect: for

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place around the globe)

a. regions of the earth

b. c.f., "*In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride.*" *Proverbs 14:3.*

c. orig., overweening ( )

d. full text: "*For who makes you to differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you received it, why do you glory as if you had not received it?*" *1 Corinthians 4:7.*

e. orig., inclosure (the appropriation of some common thing)

f. full text: "*And Isaac said to Jacob, Come near that I may feel you ... whether you are my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near Isaac his father; & he felt him & said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not because his hands were hairy as his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. ... God give you of the dew of heaven & the fatness of the earth & plenty of corn & wine; let people serve you & nations bow down to you; be lord over your brethren & let your mother's sons bow down to you; cursed be everyone that curses you, & blessed be he that blesses you.*" *Genesis 27:21-23, 28-29.*

although Isaac could not retract his mistaken benediction, God will never ratify that fantastical blessing you have pronounced upon yourself with his real and effectual blessing.

But many times in this *authoritarian positiveness* there happens to be another ingredient besides *Pride*, and that is *Ignorance*. For those two qualities, however they may seem to be at war, do often combine very closely. He who has narrow notions, who knows but a few things and has no glimpse of anything beyond himself, may think that there are no such things as are in fact beyond himself, and therefore as if he had—*like Alexander the Great*—no desire but that of worlds to conquer, he thinks himself the absolute monarch of all knowledge. And this is of all others the most unhappy combination<sup>a</sup>: for ignorance, being of itself like a stiff clay, an infertile soil, when pride comes to scorch and harden it, grows perfectly impenetrable.<sup>b</sup> And accordingly we see that none are so inconvincible as half-witted people who know just enough to *excite their Pride*, but not enough to *cure their ignorance*.



*The infertile  
ground of proud  
ignorance.*

There remains yet a second kind of *Peremptoriness* which I will speak to, specifically, those who can make no relation of information or fact without an attestation of its certainty: a sort of people who are hospitable to and entertain every idle vagrant report, and then send those reports out with a passport<sup>c</sup> and

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a. *orig., composition (union; conjunction)*

b. *c.f., "The parable is this: the seed is the Word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear, then comes the devil & takes away the Word out of their hearts lest they should believe & be saved. They on the rock are they who, when they hear, receive the Word with joy, & these have no root, who for a while believe & in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they who, when they have heard, go forth & are choked with cares & riches & pleasures of this life & bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they who in an honest & good heart, having heard the Word, keep it & bring forth fruit with patience." Luke 8:11-15.*

c. *approval (to pass)*

testimonials; who, once they have adopted a story, will have it pass for legitimate howsoever spurious it was originally. These people somewhat resemble the foundling hospitals<sup>a</sup> in Italy where all abandoned infants are sure of reception and such provision as may enable them to subsist in the world. But these people, were it not for their being hospitable to every bastardized saying, many a baseless lie would never have a start. It is indeed strange to see how suddenly a loose rumor is knit into a formal story, and then grows into a certainty; but it is stranger to see that men and women can be of such profligate impudence as to knowingly advance such rumors. And yet it is no rarity to meet with such persons who will pawn their honor and their souls for that unworthy purpose, and who will do so with as much impertinence as baseness, even when no interest of their own or perhaps anyone else's is to be served by it.



*Some specialize in baseless lies.*

This entertainment of baseless sayings is so prodigious a thing as seems to excite one's curiosity to inquire as to the cause of so wonderful an effect. And here, as in other unnatural productions, there are several concurrent things involved. If we trace this habit from its original, its first element seems to be *Idleness*: this diverting of a person from serious and useful entertainments<sup>b</sup> forces them into the *usual refuge* of vacant persons, namely, the inquiring after news which, when he or she has gotten any, the venting of it is their next business. If such a person is of a credulous nature and believes the thing, he or she does the more innocently impose it upon others. Yet then to secure themselves from the imputation of levity and too easy belief<sup>c</sup>, they are often tempted to lend some probable circumstance. If he or she is of a proud nature and has that miserable vanity of loving to



*The role of idleness in talebearing.*

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a. *charity houses for deserted infants*

b. *activities*

c. *orig., faith*

speaking big and to be thought a person of greater correspondence and intelligence than their neighbors, they will not abate<sup>a</sup> an ace of absolute certainty, but however doubtful or improbable the thing is, it must be received as an indisputable truth coming from him or her. This seems to be the downward progress<sup>b</sup> of this unhappy folly which yet is often nursed by a mean or imprudent education. A man or woman who has conversed with only that lower sort of company that would not dare dispute his or her veracity, thinks the same false coin that is received among their inferiors<sup>c</sup> will pass elsewhere in the world. Thus we observe that this is most usual in the young who have come raw into company with good fortunes and ill instruction<sup>d</sup>; but it is all too true also that many such persons never lose this habit, and are as morosely positive<sup>e</sup> in older age as they were childishly peremptory in their youth. Indeed it is impossible that they should be otherwise unless they have the wit to disentangle themselves first from their love of flattery, and after that, from the company of flatterers; for, as I have already observed, no vice will ever wither under their shade.

I think that I do the reader no ill service to let in a little light upon such persons, and show some of those many mischiefs that attend this unworthy practice: First, it engages a person in oaths and, for all he knows, in perjuries. When he has launched out boldly into an incredible account<sup>f</sup>, he knows he has put his credit at risk and must take care to provide himself relief, and there is no succor so constantly ready at hand as that of taking



*Positiveness  
will accompany  
talebearing.*

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a. *orig., bate (literally, to force down, hence, to lessen or abate)*

b. *orig., descent (declivity)*

c. *orig., servants and tenants*

d. *orig., breeding (formation of manners; deportment)*

e. *peremptory (confidently assertive)*

f. *orig., relation (telling; recital)*

oaths and pronouncing imprecations<sup>a</sup>; and therefore whole volleys of oaths and imprecations are discharged upon dubious things. Thus do some make God a witness to, and their own soul a party in the cause of every trifling rumor, as if we<sup>b</sup> had modeled our theology<sup>c</sup> according to the scheme of that *Jesuitical Casuist* who legitimates the killing of a man for an apple.<sup>d</sup>

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a. *invoking evil (upon anyone)*

b. *Gospel Christianity; specifically, Protestantism*

c. *orig., Divinity (the science of divine things, which unfolds the character of God, his laws & moral government, the duties of man, & the way of salvation)*

d. *A reference to that science of ethics within Catholic theology (taken up in the post-medieval era by the Jesuits) which recognizes a 'reservation of conscience' by which ambiguity in speech or expression may be employed in order to (seem to) avoid or even overcome the moral consequence of real sin: the perceived justice of the individual's intent is weighted to counteract a sinful or unlawful act. This equivocation is much more sinister than, for example, the lie by which an individual saves his own or another's life (e.g., Rahab's treatment of the spies, Joshua 2 & 6, Hebrews 11; or the midwives' endeavor to save the children, Exodus 1:15-21, to which it is testified that they "feared God" & were thus blessed by him), & it is much different in its effects, as this deals with, for example, when & how theft from one's employer or neighbor might be 'just' (that is, a person is, by this method, justified in providing himself relief by theft against a perceived injustice), the real effect of which is unequivocal revenge, & the inclination & its indulgence is opposed to the Gospel principle of suffering wrong, 1 Corinthians 6:7, & fulfilling the commandments even in the face of injustice, Romans 12:19. This religious subtlety is the more guilty inasmuch as it also bypasses civil government, which is the institution appointed by God to meet out justice to evildoers, Rom. 13:1-4. Another example, as serious as that given by the author (& one of the great moral issues of today) is the casting of one's vote for a politician who promises some sought after benefit while, at the same time, promises to protect abortion as a human right, which vote is justified internally through a mental reservation that allows the voter to extract himself (or herself) from guilt as to the critical power of his vote in the establishing of legalized abortion & thus, in the death of the unborn, "because" he votes for that person "for other reasons" & has no other choice available to him. All such equivocations are repugnant to the Christian spirit & profession, neither will God honor the hypocrite, however carefully crafted his self-delusion is, for God commands everyone to "speak the truth" in their hearts (Ps. 15:2) & also says, upon this very point, "If you forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, & those that are ready to be slain; if you say, Behold, we knew it not; Does not he that ponders the heart consider it? And he that keeps your soul,*

A second mischief is that it betrays a person to quarrels: he or she that is peremptory in their own telling of a story, may meet with another who is as peremptory in the contradiction of it, and then the two *Master Positives* will have a skirmish indeed. He that has attested to the truth of a falsehood or to the certainty of a dubious thing, has brought himself into the same straits as *Baalam's* ass: he is driven by his lie to either fall down under it or to run upon a sword, *Numbers 22:27*<sup>a</sup>. For if his (*or her*) hearers do but express diffidence<sup>b</sup>, either he must sink to an open<sup>c</sup> confession that he is a *Liar*, or else he will huff and bluster until perhaps a counter-storm is raised and, as he fooled *himself* out of the truth, so he might be beaten out of all pretense to truthfulness. Indeed there is scarcely any quality that does so tempt and invite affronts as this positive authoritativeness does; for he or she that can descend to such a meanness as to promote baseless lies, may reasonably enough be presumed to have little (*true*) worth, or even that worth

 *Positiveness puts the talebearer at risk of being called a liar.*

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*does he not know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works?" Prov. 24:11-12. Anyone who wishes to confirm the author's observation might, short of referring to 17th century Latin works by the Jesuits, refer to The Casuist, A Collection of Cases in Moral & Pastoral Theology, New York, J. F. Wagner, 1910.*

*a. full text: "And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, & his sword drawn in his hand; & the ass turned aside out of the way & went into the field; & Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on one side & a wall on the other side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself into the wall & crushed Balaam's foot against the wall, & he smote her again. And the angel of the Lord went further & stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam, & Balaam's anger was kindled, & he smote the ass with a staff. ... And the angel of the Lord said to him, Why have you smitten your ass these three times? for behold, I went out to withstand you because your way is perverse before me," Numbers 22:23-27.*

*b. a doubt*

*c. orig., downright (complete)*

which the world calls gallantry<sup>a</sup>, such that every inexperienced swordsman will think him a good and tame quarry to pierce and to flesh<sup>b</sup> himself upon.

Third, it exposes a person to all the contempt and scorn that both good or ill people can fling upon them: the good person will abominate the sin; the ill person will triumph over the folly of that sin. The truth is that there can be nothing more wretchedly mean. To be the champion and *Knight of the Post*<sup>c</sup> to every fabulous rumor or lie is such a sordid thing that there



*There is scarcely a name too vile for a champion of lies.*

can scarcely be any name of reproach too vile for it. And certainly the person who will pawn their own credibility upon such poor<sup>d</sup> terms will, by those frequent mortgages of his or her credit, quickly be broken<sup>e</sup> upon a forfeiture of that credit, or will have their credit so impaired by their faithlessness that no person will think their word a competent gage for the slightest concern.

And a fourth consideration is that this *Positiveness* is so far from gaining credit for a person's present affirmation that it also destroys their credit for the future: for he that sees a person make no difference in the confidence with which he or she asserts realities or fictions, can never measure anything by that which such a person's avers<sup>f</sup>, but according to the common proverb, will be in danger of disbelieving that person even when they speak the truth. And of this no one, who consults only his or her

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a. politeness or civility

b. to become accustomed or hardened on a thing (in this case, the art of engaging a liar to take him to task)

c. a knight dubbed at the whipping post or pillory; a hireling witness

d. orig., miserable (worthless)

e. orig., snapped (suddenly broken)

f. confidently affirms

own observation, will lack conviction. For what a hindrance<sup>a</sup> do we find it to the credit of even the most probable event when it is reported by one who is use to stretching the truth? Thus, how unhappily do such men and women defeat their own designs, for while they stoutly affirm a thing in order that they might be believed, that very affirmation makes their hearers doubt them, the world not now being able to ascertain how frequently confidence is made a supplement for truth. Nor let anyone that uses this positive authoritativeness flatter themselves that they alone escape the common fate, for though perhaps he or she meets with someone who out of civility or pity will not dispute the probability of their narratives, or they meet with others who will not discourage that overconfident humor with which they intend to amuse themselves in their absence in raillery against such a person, yet he or she may rest assured that they are discerned by all and derided for this trait.



*The common fate of positive-ness: to be pitied or mocked.*

It therefore concerns men and women, who regard their own honesty<sup>b</sup> and reputation, not to give indulgence to this authoritative humor which is the silliest way of shipwrecking both. For he who will place his honesty and reputation at stake<sup>c</sup> upon every fleeting story, may as well wager his estate upon which way the wind will blow the next morning, there being nothing weaker to entrust themselves to than the breath of fame or the whispers of tale-bearers in private. Wise persons are afraid to report improbable truths, and what a foolhardiness is it then to attest improbable falsities, as it is often the luck of these *Positive* persons to do?

Certainly there is nothing that they design by this that may not be obtained more effectually by a modest and unconcerned

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a. orig., *allay* (abatement)

b. orig., *truth* (fidelity; sincerity)

c. *in jeopardy*

relation of a story or event. He that merely<sup>a</sup> relates the facts of what he has heard, and leaves the hearer to judge regarding the probability of a thing, entertains present company as much and (*I am sure*) with more civility than he who throws down the gauntlet<sup>b</sup> in attestation. And he or she will as much satisfy the itch to tell some news; he or she will as much persuade their hearers, nay, will persuade them very much more, for those overearnest asseverations<sup>c</sup> serve only to make others suspicious that the speaker is conscious of his or her own falseness; and all this is accomplished while he (or she) has a secure retreat, standing as he is upon the relation of a story the truth of which he is not responsible for. Indeed, even though a person may speak ever so well known and certain truths, it is most advisable not to press such things too importunately; for boldness, like the *Bravo*<sup>d</sup> and *Banditti*<sup>e</sup>, is seldom employed except upon desperate services, and is so known a pander<sup>f</sup> for lying that the truth is only defamed by its attendance.



*Modesty captivates.* To conclude, *Modesty* is so amiable, so insinuating a thing, that all the rules of oratory cannot help a person achieve a more agreeable ornament of discourse. And if they will try it in both the foregoing instances—*eschewing the magisterialness and authoritativeness of this Positiveness*—they will undoubtedly find that the effects of it are this: A modest proposal will captivate the reason of others, and a modest relation of a thing will gain belief sooner than any *Positiveness* added on their part.

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a. orig., barely (without decoration; without anything more)

b. orig., his gauntlet, that is, his glove (a medieval glove of mail or plate worn by a knight in armor, & throw down in defiance or challenge)

c. emphatic assertions

d. bandits or murderers, especially those hired to steal or murder for others; assassins

e. robbers, especially those that form a marauding band


f. an agent



## CHAPTER 12

# Obscene Talk

There is another vice of the tongue which I cannot but mention, though I knew not in which of the former classes to place it, not because it comes under none, but because it is so common to all that it is not easy to resolve to which in particular to assign it. I refer to obscene and immodest talk, which is offensive to the purity of God, damageable and infectious to the innocence of our neighbor, and most pernicious to ourselves. And yet, notwithstanding this, such talk has grown to be a thing so common that one would think we had fallen into an age of metamorphosis where brutes do now really speak even as they did poetically and in fiction: for the talk of many persons is now so bestial that it seems to be nothing but the very thoughts conceived by the more libidinous<sup>a</sup> animals clothed in human language.

 *Obscene & bestial speech is now the norm.*

And yet, even this must pass for ingenuity<sup>b</sup>, and this vile descent below our own humanity, must be counted among the


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a. *lustful (from Lat. libidinosus, libido, lust)*

b. *c.f., "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions (imaginations)." Ecclesiastes 7:29.*

highest strains of wit. It is a wretched debasement of that spry<sup>a</sup> faculty of wit to thus be made the interpreter for the thoughts of a goat or boar; for without doubt, if those creatures only had the organs of speech, their fancies lie enough in fleshly mindedness to make them as good company as those who more studiously apply themselves to this sort of entertainment.

This crime is widespread enough to afford abundance of matter for the most satirical zeal we might use against it, but I also regard the fact that the dissecting of such putrid bodies (*as to look further into the heart of the obscene talker*) may cast such pestilential fumes as all the benefits of this scrutiny will not recompence to us. Therefore I shall, out of respect for the reader, dismiss this noisome subject, and thereby give an example with what abhorrence the reader should always reject that very kind of discourse, remembering the advice of St. Paul that no uncleanness should be even once named among those who would walk "*as becomes Saints,*" *Ephesians 5:3*<sup>b</sup>.

 *All Saints  
must eschew  
unbecoming &  
obscene talk.*

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a. *orig., sprightful (sprightly)*


b. *full text: "Be therefore followers of God, as dear children, & walk in love, as Christ has also loved us & has given himself for us an offering & a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor. But fornication & all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes Saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no whore-monger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ & of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience. Be not therefore partakers with them. For you were sometimes darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: walk as children of light." Ephesians 5:1-8.*



## CHAPTER 13


# The Closing

I have now touched upon those enormities of speech that I designed to make observation of. I would not have anyone take this little tract for a just criterion by which to approve himself in reference to his words, for I have been far from making a full and exact catalogue of *every* enormity of speech. Yet God grant that all who read this may be able to put themselves to the test even by this imperfect essay, and he or she that does so will make a fair approach towards being that "*perfect man*" of whom St. James speaks, *James 3:1*<sup>a</sup>. Those that I have covered are such faults of the tongue as are the harder to avoid because they are exemplified to us every day in common practice, and some of them are even recommended as reputable and ingenious. And it is a strange insinuating power that example and custom have over us. We see this influence in every trivial secular instance in our every habit: those dresses which we laughed at in our forefathers wardrobes or pictures, when by the circulation of time and vanity they are brought into use again, we think to be very becoming. It is the same in our diet, when our very


 *The power of example & custom.*

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a. *full text*: "In many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man & able also to bridle the whole body." *James 3:2*.

 *Virtue lies under prejudice.*

palates conform to fashion and everything grows amiable to our fancies according as it is more or less fashionable in the world. And for this very reason, all sobriety and strict virtue now lies under heavy prejudice, and no part of that virtue is more prejudiced than that of the tongue, which current and common custom has now enfranchised<sup>a</sup> from all the bonds that moralists and preachers of the Gospel had laid upon it.

 *The tongue enfranchised from moral restraint.*

But the greater the difficulties are, the more it ought to awaken our diligence, for if we are loose and careless, odds are that we will be carried away with the rest<sup>b</sup>. We had better therefore fix ourselves. And by sober recollection of the ends for which speech was given us and the account we must one day give of our use of it, we had better impress upon ourselves the baseness and the danger of misemploying our tongue in this use of speech. Yet a negative innocence will not serve our turn either, it will only put us in the condition of him who "*went and hid*" the talent of money he was commanded to employ to profitable use, *Matthew 25:25*<sup>c</sup>. Indeed it will be impossible to preserve even that much if we


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a. freed; released (from bondage)

b. orig., stream (in this case, of world men; c.f., "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." *Galatians 6:7-8*)

c. full text: "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants & delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, & to another one; to every man according to his several ability. And straightway he took his journey. ... [and] he that had received one [talent] went & dug in the earth & hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came & reckoned with them. ... [and] he which had received the one talent came & said, Lord, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sown & gathering where you have not scattered, & I was afraid & went & hid your talent in the earth; lo, there you have that which is yours. His lord answered & said to him, You wicked & slothful servant ..." *Matthew 25:14-15, 18-19, 24-26*.

aspire no further than a silent seeming innocence. The tongue is a busy and active part of us that can scarcely be kept from motion, and if that activity is not resolved<sup>a</sup> to good employments, it will be practicing itself upon bad. And indeed I believe that a great part of its licentiousness is owing to this very thing. There are so few good themes of discourse practiced today that many people are driven to *ill* conversation for want of *better* conversation. Learning is thought to be pedantic; agriculture is thought to be peasant-like; and religion is thought to be the most insufferable of all conversation. Thus, by excluding all useful subjects of conversation, we come together as St. Paul (*upon another matter*) says, "Not for the better but for the worse," 1 Corinthians 11:17. And if the philosopher thought he had lost that day in which he had not learned something worthy of his notice, how many days do we more than lose by having them not only empty of solid and useful gains, but full of noxious and pernicious ones? And indeed if those gains are noxious, they will not miss being pernicious also. For the mind is like the stomach in requiring wholesome nourishment, and if it is not supplied with that which is wholesome, it will at last indulge in those things<sup>b</sup> to which the fleshly nature is most inclined. So that, if in our conversation we do not interchange sober and useful notions between us, we will at best only traffic in toys and baubles and most commonly, infection and poison. Whoever would keep their tongue from exposing<sup>c</sup> themselves or others to sin, must tune it to a quite contrary key by making it an instrument and an incentive to virtue. And by this we will not only secure the negative part of our duty in the use of speech, but we will comply with the positive part of our duty also by

 Discussion of religion is almost excluded from conversation.

 The mind requires wholesome nourishment.

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a. *orig., determined (directed)*

b. *orig., humors (caprices)*

c. *orig., betraying (misleading, exposing)*

employing speech to those uses for which it was given to us by God.

It would be too vast an undertaking, even impossible, to prescribe the particular subjects of such positive discourse, because many of them are occasional and such as cannot beforehand be reduced to any certain narrative. In general, we



*Aright  
speech tends to  
the glory of God  
& the good of  
others.*

can rest upon this alone: That all speech that tends to the glory of God<sup>a</sup> or the good of others is speech that is directed aright. This is not to be understood so restrictively as if nothing but religion or the necessary concerns of human life may lawfully be brought into discourse: some

portion is to be indulged to common civility; more yet to the intimacies and endearments of friendship; and a suitable portion to those recreative discourses which maintain the cheerfulness of society. All of these forms, though they are of a lesser degree than discourse upon godliness, yet if moderately used, they are within the latitude of the rule of tending to the wellbeing of men, and by consequent to the honor of God who indulges us such innocent refreshments. But if the subordinate uses of speech come to encroach upon the higher uses, if we dwell here and look no further, they then become very sinful, not in their nature but by excess to the exclusion of discourse respecting virtue and godliness. Such inordinacy sets our conversation in opposition to God's designation, in which they were allowed only a secondary place. We should therefore be careful to improve every opportunity for directing our tongues to pay our more immediate homage to God through the duties of *Prayers* and *Praises*,<sup>b</sup> making them not only the expressions<sup>c</sup> of our pious

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a. *c.f.*, "You are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body & in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:20.


b. *compare*: "You that fear the Lord, praise him; all you the seed of Jacob, glorify him; & fear him, all you the seed of Israel." Psalms 22:23.

c. *orig.*, interpreters (*expositors*)

affections, but the promoters of godly prayer and praise in others. And indeed, that person can scarcely be thought to be in earnest, who prays, "*Hallowed be your name,*" and yet does not as much endeavor to glorify God's name in the company of others as he does solicit it from God.<sup>a</sup>

 *Promote  
prayer & praise.*

And if we fulfill our obligations in this single point we will discharge, in the very doing of that duty, the highest part of our duty to our neighbors also: for in whatever heart we are able to implant a true reverential awe of God, we sow in that heart the seed of immortality, of an endless happy being, which is the greatest and the most superlative good that we are capable of. Besides, in the interim<sup>b</sup>, we help to manumit<sup>c</sup> and release that person from the servile drudgery to vice under which all people remain who live without God in the world.<sup>d</sup> And indeed these are benefits that are worthy of the dignity of human nature to communicate. And it is both sad and strange to see that among the multitude and variety of leagues that are contracted among people in the world, how few there are of these pious combinations; how those, who show themselves concerned in all the petty secular interests of their friends, never take piety at all into their care: a pregnant evidence of how little true friendship there is among people.

 *The Gospel  
is able to liberate  
a soul from  
slavery in sin.*

I know that some think they sufficiently excuse themselves

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a. c.f., "*Be doers of the Word, & not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*" James 1:22;

b. now, in this life

c. liberate from personal bondage & servitude; free a slave (in this case, from sin)

d. c.f. "*For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*" 1 Corinthians 1:21; "*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness & superfluity of naughtiness, & receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls.*" James 1:21.

when they shift off this office to pastors and preachers whose peculiar business they say it is. But this is the same as to say

 *Should you not help when you see someone in need?*

that one who sees a poor fainting wretch should forbear to administer a cordial<sup>a</sup> he has at hand, for fear of encroaching<sup>b</sup> upon the physician's faculty. A friend or companion may have many opportunities which a pastor may lack. A friend

often sees another in the very fit of discomfort, and so may more aptly apply the remedy. For where there is an intimacy of conversation, men and women reveal themselves more openly, and disclose those passions and those vices that they carefully conceal when a strange or more severe eye approaches. As someone who is a friend or companion may easier discern the disease, so does he or she have better advantage for administering a remedy. Even as children will not take those medicines from a doctor's hand that they will take from a nurse or mother, so are we usually too childish in what relates to our souls. We look upon good counsel from churchmen as a theological<sup>c</sup> potion, and we set our stomachs against it; but a familiar friend may insensibly insinuate the same remedy into us and before we are aware of it, beguile us into health. And yet, if you give to

 *A friend may discern a need more quickly.*

pastors alone the scope<sup>d</sup> of this healing office, you should at least withdraw those impediments you have set in their way when you reposit in others those prejudices that will certainly frustrate the pastor's endeavors. Men and women have lately

been taught to look upon preaching as a thing of bare form to the hearers, and of profit only to the speakers, even as a craft whereby, as *Demetrius* says, they "*have their living*," *Acts 16:25*<sup>e</sup>.

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a. that which increases strength, raises the spirits, & gives life & cheerfulness to a when weak & depressed person


b. orig., entrenching (trespassing)


c. orig., divinity ()

d. orig., enclosure (area of expertise or control)

e. full text: "A certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver

But admitting it is so in that we make our living by preaching, yet it does not infer that preaching should be mere form to the hearers. If preaching is a trade, it was surely thought (*in all ages except this*) to be a very useful trade, or else there would never have been such encouragement given to it, for no state ever allotted public salaries for a set of people that were thought to be utterly useless<sup>a</sup>. In nothing else are we so senseless: no one will refuse counsel from a physician because he makes a living by his profession. Rather, it is an argument on the side of the physician that because such a great interest of his own, namely, his living, depends on his skill, he is the more industrious to fit himself for his profession. But not to run further with this digression, I shall apply it to my purpose by making this equitable proposal: That no one so moralize the common fable as neither to admonish one another among themselves, nor to suffer ministers to admonish without them. And truly, the preaching of God's Word and admonishing according to it is hard if neither of these can be granted when both ought to be done. And though we do all well, I am sure that all will be little enough to anyone who has learned no more than, as the prophet says, "*precept upon precept; line upon line; here a little, and there a little.*" *Isaiah 28:13*<sup>b</sup>. Human nature is so

 *Do you refuse spiritual counsel?*

 *We are industrious when our living depends on our skill.*


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*shrines for Diana, brought no small gain to the craftsmen; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation & said, Sirs, you know that by this craft we have our wealth." Acts 16:24-25*

*a. at the time of the Reformation in England, ecclesiastical lands & properties had been appropriated to the crown; under Queen Elizabeth I, the Bible was printed, a copy placed in every church & chapel, and every 'priest' became a Bible reading & preaching pastor.*

*b. full text: "To whom shall he teach knowledge? & whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk & drawn from the breasts. ... For with stammering lips & another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest, & this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear. But the Word of the Lord was unto them*

inattentive to good that there can scarcely be too many monitors prepared to admonish<sup>a</sup>. We see *Satan* who, although he has a much stronger conspirator in our fleshly inclinations and self-will, does not dare to rely on that but continues to employ his emissaries to confirm and excite those inclinations. And while *Satan* has so many agents among us, it is unthinkable that God has none who stand ready to administer the remedy of exhortation; in which case, we are likely to give only an ill account of our zeal either to God or our neighbor, and of the tongues that were given to us to glorify God and to benefit our neighbor. Indeed without this care toward one another, our greatest officiousness in the secular concerns of others is no kindness at all, for when we strive to advance the fame and to increase the

 *Satan does not rest; why should we?*

 *Our tongues were given us for the benefit of others.*


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*precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, & there a little; that they might go & fall backward, & be broken, & snared, & taken." Isaiah 28:9, 11-13.*

*a. A strange saying often heard among professing Christians today is the bold declaration that no one, especially someone who would admonish them, can judge them (however overtly they sin): this saying is used, not against judgment (for we know that God will judge evildoers) but as a veritable talisman against exhortation. The teaching of Jesus Christ is of an altogether different nature: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But **exhort one another daily**, while it is still called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Hebrews 3:12-13. Exhortation is in the interest of all; exhortation is commanded; exhortation is, in fact, indispensable as we stand guard against not only the world itself, but sin & error within the church & among those professing Christ. We are to exercise judgment at all times & to keep ourselves from evil, neither of which can be done without exercising judgment. We have not come to Christ only to blindly follow ignorant & self-willed persons—such persons are not of God ("Be not deceived, God is not mocked," Galatians 6:7). We have come to Christ because we hungered for truth, we hear the truth, & we would walk & grow in the truth, and it is by the truth alone that we are able to fulfill the command to admonish one another: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, & have no company with him that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15.*

fortunes of a wicked person, what do we do but enable him to do more mischief, to foment his own luxuries by his wealth, and to commend the same to the practice of others by his reputation? He it is who makes his friend truly rich and great, who teaches him to employ those advantages aright.<sup>a</sup> And if you that are in the church would turn your tongues to this sort of oratory, you would indeed show that you understood for what ends you were given your tongues and the power of speech.

But as all good receives more enhancement from its being more diffused, so that these attempts of ours should not be confined to some one or two of our intimates or relatives, but should be as extensive as the common need demands, or at least as extensive as our opportunities afford. It is a generous ambition to benefit many and to oblige whole communities, and such a thing cannot be done better than by endeavoring to subvert the vicious customs that are the pests and poisons of all societies. The heathens had many ceremonies of lustration<sup>b</sup> for their cities and countries, but he or she that could purify and refine their manners would indeed attain to the substance of those things that are only shadows. And because the Apostle tells us that "*evil words corrupt good manners,*" 1 Corinthians 15:33, it would be a fundamental piece of reformation to introduce a better sort of conversation into the world. And this is an instance so agreeable to my present subject that I cannot close upon a more pertinent note than to commend this very endeavor to the reader who, if he or she has been at all convinced of the sin and

 *With our tongues we may endeavor to subvert vicious customs.*


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a. c.f., "*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life.*" 1 Timothy 6:17-19; compare James 5:1-5.

b. *purifying by water (as holy water) or sacrifice*

mischief of those ungodly schemes of discourse deciphered<sup>a</sup> in this tract, cannot be more just and true<sup>b</sup> to his or her convictions than by attempting to supplant those forms of discourse.


It is a design worthy of a noble soul to try to model the age anew in this particular, to make it possible for men and women to be at both sociable<sup>c</sup> and innocent. I know it will be objected that

 *We must enable one another to be sociable & innocent.*

it is too vast a project for one or many individuals to undertake alone; yet generous spirits used to be animated by difficulties, especially when (*as here*) the very attempt is laudable. But as *Christ* says of wisdom, so may we say of courage: the children of this world are more daring than the

children of light. The great corrupters of discourse have not been so distrustful of themselves! This is visible to anyone who will reflect on the fact that it is within our lifetimes that much of this monstrous exorbitance of discourse grew in fashion, particularly the atheistic and blasphemous sort of discourse. The first defenders<sup>d</sup> of it were few and at that time only dared to whisper their black rudiments; yet the world sees what a harvest they have now from their devilish industry.

And shall we give over our clime as forlorn and desperate? Shall we conclude that nothing but that which is venomous

 *Can evil example alone thrive?*

will thrive in our soil? Would that some persons of parts<sup>e</sup> and authority would only make the experiment of this, because I cannot believe that all places are even now so vitiated that they might not meet with many who would relish sober and

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a. *unfolded; explained*


b. *orig., just (truthful)*


c. *orig., conversable (inclined to mutual communication of thoughts; free in discourse with one another; )*

d. *orig., propugners (vindicators)*

e. *of more than ordinary talent*

noble<sup>a</sup> discourse, and who might by their example be animated to propagate it to others. But as long as blasphemy, ribaldry, and detraction are held up as wit and this opinion prevails without any competition or dispute, we implicitly yield that title to it, and it is hard to say whether their triumphs are owing more to the boldness of ill men or the pusillanimity of the good. What if upon trial they should meet with the worser part of *St. Paul's* fate at Athens, that "*some will mock,*" *Acts 17:32*? Yet perhaps they might partake of the better part of that fate also, and find persons that would be willing "*to hear them again,*" and a few at least that might "*join themselves to them.*"<sup>b</sup> And surely they are too tender and delicate who will run no hazard, nor be willing to bear a little share in the profane drollery by which an apostle *was* and their God *is* daily assaulted, especially when, by this exposing of themselves to such hazards, they might hope in some way to check that impious liberty. However, by running such a hazard, besides the satisfaction of their own consciences in the very attempt, they might also gain this advantage: That it might be a good test by which to try the company they keep. For you may assure yourselves that those friends, whom you find impatient of innocent and profitable conversation, can only ensnare you and not benefit you, and you are as a very weak gamester<sup>c</sup> that is drawn to play even upon such terms as make it highly probable for you to lose but impossible for you to win. In that case, therefore, the advice of Solomon is very proper, "*Go*

 *Are none willing to turn their conversation aright?*

 *With whom do we keep company?*

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a. *orig., ingenuous (obsolete: honorable, noble)*

b. "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance unto all men, in that he has raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, & others said, We will hear you again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men joined themselves to him & believed.*" *Acts 17:30-34.*

c. *a person that is addicted to gaming*

*from the presence of a foolish man when you perceive not in him the lips of knowledge," Proverbs 14:7.*

But he that will undertake so heroic an enterprise must qualify himself for it first by being true to his own pretensions. He must leave no uneven thread in his loom, or by indulging in any sort of reprobable discourse himself, defeat all his endeavors against the rest. Those very speculators who have written of the philosopher's stone<sup>a</sup> have required many personal qualifications, strict abstinences and purities in anyone that would make the experiment. The thing may have this sober application: that those who would turn this iron age into gold, who would convert our rusty drossy conversation into a purer strain, must be clean themselves. For alas, what effect can that man hope for from



*Let those who would reprove others do so from a clean heart.*

his most zealous reprehensions, who lays *himself* open to recrimination?<sup>b</sup> He who hears a person that would monitor him by bitterly inveighing against blasphemy and profaneness and yet, in almost the same breath, hears him inveigh just as bitterly against his neighbor, will scarcely think

him that has only half the mastery of his own tongue is a good guide of *his* tongue. Let every person therefore be sure to begin at the right end of the work, to wash his or her own mouth clean before prescribing gargarisms<sup>c</sup> to others. And to that purpose let a person reflect impartially upon all the undue liberties they have given their own tongue, whether those which have been remarked upon here or others that may be found in all books

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a. a stone or preparation which alchemists formerly sought as the instrument of converting baser metals into pure gold

b. We must take care that we walk spiritually & do not rely upon our fleshly understanding when we would admonish any other person: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual (*pneumatikos*; **governed by the Holy Spirit**), restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also are tempted." Galatians 6:1.

c. a preparation to cleanse the mouth (from Lat., *gargarismus*), gargle

on practical knowledge<sup>a</sup>, especially in the most practical of all books, his or her own conscience. And when someone has traced their own talk through all its wild ramblings, only then let them bring home their neighbor who has strayed from the right path.<sup>b</sup> And let him or her that has strayed return not with joy as a lost sheep that is found, but with tears of penitence and contrition. And let us keep a strict watch over such a one that they do not break loose again, or let us even require the stray to make some restitution for the trespass he or she has committed in their former excursions, even to restore to God what they have robbed of his honor by devoting themselves as an instrument of God's service; let them restore to their neighbor what they have detracted from them, let them wipe off the sullage<sup>c</sup> they themselves have cast upon the fame of others; and let them attend to themselves by defacing the ill characters of vanity and folly they have imprinted within themselves. In this manner, the tongue may cure its own sting, and by a kind of sympathetic virtue, the wound may be healed by dressing-down the weapon. But alas when we have done all, the tongue is so slippery that we are often in danger of being deceived by it even while we are watchful: the tongue has a secret intelligence with the heart which, like a corrupted jailer<sup>d</sup>, is all too prepared to connive at its escape. Let us therefore strengthen our guard and call upon him who sees all the secret practices of



*Let the one who defames others also restore what he has taken.*



*Let the vain person deface his own vanity first.*

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*a. that reduce knowledge or theory to practice and use (in this case, Christian living)*

*b. Neither is reproof to be handed out indiscriminately or according to our own will, but in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Matthew Henry says, "A great difference is to be made in our reproofs, according to the age, quality, & other circumstances of the persons rebuked." As scripture directs: "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; & the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger women as sisters, with all purity." Timothy 5:1-2.*

*c. filth*

*d. orig., goaler*

our **treacherous hearts**,<sup>a</sup> and commit both our hearts and our tongues to his custody. Let us say with the Psalmist, "Set a watch,

 Let the one whose heart remains unchanged seek God.

O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips. O let not my heart be inclined to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties." Psalms 141:3-4. And if God's grace

is humbly invoked and our own endeavor honestly employed, even this "unruly evil" of the tongue as St. James calls it, James 3:8<sup>b</sup>, has a remedy and may be tamed. And if, now and then, it

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a. An exhortation to those within the professing Christian community whose hearts are in fact still 'treacherous' according to the saying, "The heart is deceitful above all things & desperately wicked," Jeremiah 17:9. The same is not said of the one who has come to God in truth, who is a partaker of the grace of God & of the Holy Spirit, for God himself testifies of them: "A new heart also will I give you, & a new Spirit will I put within you; & I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh & I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, & cause you to walk in my statutes, & you will keep my judgments & do them." Ezekiel 36:26-27. Regenerated people draw near to God with "a true heart" (Hebrews 10:22), but God testifies otherwise of the rest (of whom the author speaks) saying, "Therefore I will judge you ... every one according to his ways, says the Lord God. Repent & turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed, & make you a new heart & a new spirit; for why will you die? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves & live." Ezekiel 18:30-32.

b. full test: "Even so the tongue is a little member & boasts great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body & sets on fire the course of nature; & it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts & of birds & of serpents & of things in the sea is tamed & has been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame: it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father, & therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing & cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water & bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water & fresh. Who is a wise man & endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying & strife in your

gets out a little by stealth, yet it will not be like the demoniac, so raving as to break all its chains.<sup>a</sup> If we cannot always secure ourselves from inadvertence and surprise such that a forbidden word may sometimes escape us, yet we may secure ourselves from deliberate willful offenses of the tongue. And though we should all aspire higher, yet if we can but reach this, we ought to not excuse ourselves upon our remaining infirmities from the generous Christian undertaking that I have recommended, namely, the reforming of others. Indeed I made a very strict observation on this, that it might not be undertaken if this degree of fitness has not been attained and yet I fear that no one on earth will attempt it upon other terms. And yet, if we do not attempt it, the world will remain as it is, awaiting only the tongues of angels to reduce<sup>b</sup> it. Nor do we need to fear that censure of hypocrisy which we find in the Gospel:



*Let not our smaller infirmities excuse us in our duty to others.*

"And why do you behold the mote that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull the mote out of your eye, and behold, a beam is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to cast the mote out of your brother's eye." Matthew 7:3-5.

For the case is very different, and indeed it is as ridiculous as the insolent attempt of him or her that has a beam in their own eye to pretend to see clearly enough to cast a mote out of their neighbor's eye.




*Every speck does not blind us.*

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*hearts, glory not & lie not against the truth: this wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." James 3:5-15.*

a. Mark 5:1-19


b. abridge. The role of the angels on the last day: "So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth & sever the wicked from among the just, & shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing & gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:49-50.

 *Every infirmity does not inhibit our discernment.*

For the thing does not hold true for the contrary, that is, for one that has a mote in their own eye not to endeavor to remove the beam that is in their neighbor's eye. Every speck does not blind a person, nor does every infirmity make a person

unable to discern or incompetent to reprove the grosser faults of others.

Yet, after all is said, let us as much as possible clear our eyes even of the mote and make our own example as worthy of imitation by others as we can, for certainly the best instrument of reformation is example. And although admonition may sometimes be necessary, yet there are many circumstances required to the right ordering of an admonition, so that it is not always practicable. However, a good example is always possible. Besides, a good example has a secret magnetic virtue, it is like a lodestone: it attracts by a power of which we can give no account, so that it has one of those invisible<sup>a</sup> qualities, those secrets in nature which have puzzled enquirers, and experience alone demonstrates it

 *Become an example worthy of imitation.*

to us. We know this is all too abundantly true of ill examples, but I do not doubt that it is so in good examples and that good examples might likewise do good if they were experimented with

as plentifully as evil ones. And that the good may so affect others, let every man be ambitious to cast in their small bit, for though one or two is but a little, yet together they may multiply to a vast sum. And though we reform no others, yet I am sure it will be worth our while, to show ourselves approved,<sup>b</sup> and to save ourselves *"from this untoward generation," Acts 2:40.*

I have now presented the tongue from two perspectives,<sup>c</sup>


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a. *orig., occult (hidden)*

b. *"Be diligence to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed," 2 Timothy 2:15*


c. *orig., under a double aspect*

and such as may justify the ancient definition of it, that it is both the worst and the best part of man: the best in its origin and design; and the worst in its corruption and degeneration. In David, the man after God's heart, his tongue was "his glory," *Psalms 57:8<sup>a</sup>* and the best member that he had, *Psalms 108:1*, "O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory." But in the wicked the tongue cuts like "a sharp razor," *Psalms 52:2<sup>b</sup>*. It is as the "adder's venom," *Psalms 140:3<sup>c</sup>*. The tongues from heaven were "cloven," *Act 2:2*, to be the more diffusive of the good in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. But those tongues that are set on fire from hell are "a world<sup>e</sup> of iniquity", *James 3:6*, to be the more impressive in their mischief. It must be referred to the choice of every person, into which of the forms he or she will mold their tongue. Solomon

 In the tongue is the worst & the best of man.

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- a. full text: "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing & give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery & harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise you, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto you among the nations." *Psalms 57:7-9*. David "excites himself to the duty of praise: Awake up my glory, that is, my tongue (our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God)," Matthew Henry.
- b. full text: "Why do you boast yourself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually. Your tongue devises mischiefs, like a sharp razor working deceitfully. You love evil more than good & lying rather than to speak righteousness. You love all devouring words, O you deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy you forever; he shall take you away & pluck you out of your dwelling place, & root you out of the land of the living." *Psalms 52:1-5*.
- c. full text: "Deliver me, O Jehovah, from the evil man; keep me from the violent man, who devised evil things in the heart; they are always gathered for war. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips." *Psalms 140:1-3*.
- d. It appears that the tongues of fire were cloven, that is, dividing & distributing themselves among them: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, & it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them cloven tongues like as of fire, & it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." *Acts 2:2-4*.
- e. kosmos (multitudinous, an aggregate or universe)

tells us that, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue,"<sup>a</sup> and that, not only directly, in regard to the good or ill we may do to others with it, but reflexively also, in respect to what good or evil may rebound to ourselves, "and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." Let Moses then make the inference from Solomon's premises, "Therefore choose life," Deuteronomy 30:15, a proposal so reasonable and so agreeable to nature that no flourishes can render it more inviting. I shall now leave it to the reader's contemplation, and I hope that if you are but pleased to revolve this subject with the seriousness which the importance of it exacts, you will set your tongue anew and compose it to those pious divine strains which may be a proper prelude<sup>b</sup> to the *Hallelujahs* you hope to sing eternally.

 *The good or evil of our tongues will rebound to us.*

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a. full text: "A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth, & with the increase of his lips he shall be filled. Death & life are in the power of the tongue, & they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." Proverbs 18:20-21.

b. orig., *preludium* (Lat.)

FINIS

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