

THE COMMANDMENTS.

The Eighth Commandment (concl.):

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Calumny or Slander.

1. *To calumniate or slander* any one is to impute to him some fault or bad motive, or which the calumniator knows he is entirely innocent, or some defect which he is aware the person does not possess.

Detraction or Backbiting.

2. *To backbite* any one is to disclose without just cause his faults and defects and even to depreciate his good qualities and merits.

3. *Just cause* exists when the person to whom the disclosure is made is in a position to have the faults and defects in question corrected or is in danger of suffering some injury except for such disclosure.

4. The detractor commits a sin even if he keeps strictly within the truth, for charity forbids us to take away without just cause the good repute of our neighbour.

5. There is no detraction if the fault or defect is object of common knowledge or is public property, but in no case is show of malice justifiable.

6. Detraction can be a mortal sin, for St. Paul tells us that « Railers (in latin *maledici*: backbiters) shall not possess the kingdom of God ». (*I Cor.* VI, 10.)

7. Both calumny and detraction are mortal sins if what is said is *per se* of a grave character and does serious injury to the person's reputation.

8. In both there may be aggravating circumstances, as, for instance, if the calumny or detraction refers to one's superiors or to persons consecrated to God or includes a great many persons or is uttered before a number of people.

9. It is forbidden to be interested in listening to calumny and detraction, for to do so is tantamount to actually taking part in it.

10. If in our presence calumny or detraction is being indulged in, it is our duty to stop it if we can; if we cannot, we ought to try and turn the conversation into another channel or, at least, by remaining silent, show that it is displeasing to us.

11. Except with just cause, we are forbidden to carry to any one what we have heard said against him. In Proverbs (VI, 19.) we are told that « the Lord hateth him that soweth discord among brethren », i. e., the talebearer and mischief-maker.

12. The slanderer, the backbiter and the mischief-maker are bound to repair as far as they can the injury they have done to their victim.

13. To this end the slanderer must state as publicly as he can that the slanderous stories he has put into circulation have no foundation at all; the backbiter should go about extenuating, and pleading excuses for, his victim's failings and make the most of his merits; and the mischief-maker should do his best to minimise the effects of his tale-bearing and restore friendly relations between the parties he has estranged.

Rash Judgments.

14. We judge a person rashly if we form an unfavourable opinion regarding him upon insufficient or even no grounds at all.

15. To judge rashly is wrong, because both justice and charity forbid us to think evil of any one without good and sufficient cause.

Explanation of the Plate.

16. *At the top* we see Joseph being led away to prison on a false charge brought against him by Putiphar's wife. This wicked woman burning with a guilty passion for Joseph, one day pressed her suit on him; but he, unwilling to commit sin, rejected her advances and sought safety in precipitate flight, leaving behind his cloak in her grasp. She turned this fact to her advantage and accused him of attempting to violate her. Putiphar believed the calumny and cast Joseph into prison. (*Gen.* xxxix.)

17. *The small picture on the left* shows the high priest Aaron and Mary, his sister, on their knees before the Ark of the Covenant. Observe the Almighty coming down « in the pillar of cloud. » The pair had murmured against their brother Moses. So the Lord summoned them for having calumniated His servant Moses and covered Mary with a leprosy which lasted seven days. (*Num.* xii.)

18. *The small picture on the right* shows St. Paul at Malta, where he had landed after shipwreck in a storm. He was well received by the inhabitants, who made a fire for him. as it was cold and raining. Paul, having gathered a bundle of sticks, threw them on the fire, when « a viper, coming out of the heat, fastened on to his hand. And when the barbarians saw this, they said one to another: « Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, who, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance doth not suffer him to live. » But shook off the viper back into the fire and took no harm. (*Acts.* xx, 8.)
