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A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

method in reading the Gospels. We must abide by 'sheer history,' and trace the real experience of Jesus as He moved steadily forward in the venture of faith in the Father, the reality of which was to be vindicated in the supreme hour of His life. We must disinter the real history from the cerements of dogma.

Even when we come to Caesarea Philippi and Peter's confession we must not carry back into it what we know of developed truth. At Caesarea Philippi the Jewish faith and hope in God mounted to its highest pitch in the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ of God. Nevertheless it was Jewish faith, not, as we say now, Christian faith. The recognition of that is of absolutely first importance. It was Jewish faith in God more than faith in Himself as the Christ of God. It was not faith in what He as Christ would do, but in what God would do through Him. Higher than that peak the faith of the disciples could not rise.

The faith of Jesus Himself did rise higher. But the claims that Jesus had made for Himself as the Christ were all along grounded not upon what He Himself could or would do, but on the action, the Will of Him in whom He trusted. Taken by themselves as self-assertions, they are the claims of a madman, as many clever men have declared, from

Bernard Shaw upwards or downwards. But they were not self-assertions. They were the absolute expression of filial trust in His God and Father. Thus at the climax everything hung upon Him in whom He trusted. And thus, in the steadfast going to His death by Jesus as the Christ of God, the faith of the Old Testament reached its crisis.

Its justification came in the Resurrection. The New Testament throbs with fulfilment and verification. The Resurrection was the ratification and vindication of the faith of Jesus, and therefore of all faith. It sets the seal for ever on His interpretation of existence. Out of it sprang, with the force of light dispersing darkness, and of life swallowing up death, and of mercy obliterating sin, the gospel of God with which the New Testament rings. The Resurrection is, then, the primal fountain of the Christian gospel of God. And the rest of the New Testament, after the Gospels, is the record of the expansion of this earliest gospel from its initial limitations. The Acts in particular is the drama of such expansion. And the Epistles tell how the Resurrection, as an external event, became an inward fountain of redemption from sin and of new life with righteousness both to the Jew and to the Gentile. And so every great gospel word in the New Testament is an affirmation about God.

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## The Ninth Commandment.

BY PROFESSOR JAMES MOFFATT, D.D., D.LITT., NEW YORK.

LIKE the third, the ninth commandment is concerned with a vice which finds expression in speech. In later days charges may have been occasionally laid before a court of justice in written form, as was the case in Egypt and elsewhere throughout the Ancient East; but normally in Israel a witness made his statements orally, appearing in person to give evidence either as a plaintiff in his own suit or in support of another complainant; he might also be summoned as a witness in some public trial, to state what he had seen or heard. Seating

himself before the elders or priests who were already seated in the primitive tribunal, he was called upon as a loyal member of the community to tell, without fear or favour, what he knew either for or against the accused. Hebrew procedure attached the highest importance to the duty of veracity in a witness, but the temptations to make partial or untruthful depositions were so subtle, the possibilities of a witness being bribed or bullied by a wealthy defendant or an influential plaintiff were so notorious, and the tendency to allow personal

antipathies to colour evidence was so prevalent that Hebrew literature contains repeated and explicit warnings against false witness. The ninth commandment is the most concise, but the later statement in the Book of the Covenant enables us to understand the implications of its stern prohibition. 'You must never tamper with a poor man's rights in court. Avoid false charges, never have innocent and guiltless people put to death, nor acquit bad men. You must never accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds even men whose eyes are open, and it destroys the case of a good man' (Ex 23<sup>6-8</sup>). Or again, 'You shall not be guilty of any injustice; you shall not be partial to a poor man, nor defer to a powerful man' (Lv 19<sup>15</sup>). No doubt, such warnings apply to judges as well as to witnesses, but they indicate vividly the sort of temptations into which an ordinary witness might fall. Also they hint that dishonest evidence might lead to judicial murder, as it did in the case of Naboth. In that sense the ninth commandment becomes a special application of the sixth, just as in another light it might be taken as a particular application of the sixth; 'God,' said Luther, 'will as little permit us to injure or underrate our neighbour's good name, his character or integrity, as to deprive him of his goods and money.' But the sin of bearing dishonest testimony with its violation of good faith was so widespread a form of injustice to one's neighbour or fellow-Israelite that this commandment had to be added to the other two. Few sins are so frequently and sharply pilloried in Hebrew literature as this. It was a note of religious ethics to brand and expose such a ramified form of dishonesty; psalmists and sages as well as prophets were keenly alive to the mischief thus wrought in the community.

Six things the Lord hates,  
 ay, seven he loathes:  
 haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
 hands that shed innocent blood,  
 a mind with crafty plans,  
 feet eager to go mischief-making,  
 a false witness who tells lies,  
 and him who sows discord within his group  
 (Pr 6<sup>16-19</sup>).

Such denunciations were designed to rouse and train the conscience, in the spirit of a passage like Dt 19<sup>16-19</sup>. 'If a malicious witness appears against a man to accuse him of evil-doing, then the two parties in the dispute shall appear before the Eternal, that is, before the priests and the presiding judges; the judges shall investigate the matter carefully,

and if it turns out that the witness is malicious and that he has given false witness against his fellow, you must treat him as he meant his fellow to be treated; so shall you eradicate evil from your midst,' the evil of treachery to God and His community which breaks up the fabric of society. As the sixth commandment, with its prohibition of murder, naturally assumed the right and the duty of the community to fight on behalf of freedom and faith as well as to inflict capital punishment, so the ninth implies a judicial system with severe penalties for the guilty, whether the latter were, as we say, in the dock or in the witness-box. The latter form of public duty readily became an occasion for offending God carelessly or deliberately. 'You must never repeat a baseless rumour,' one law-book enjoins; 'never side with a bad man, to give malicious evidence. You must not follow a majority to do wrong, nor must you bear witness in court so as to side with an unjust majority, neither must you be partial to a poor man's plea' (Ex 23<sup>1-3</sup>). It was a form of untruthfulness which, though confined to perjury, was specious and varied.

The Calas and the Dreyfus trials in France, or the perjuries in the Popish Plot which disgraced seventeenth-century England, are only outstanding examples of false evidence, being concocted and accepted on a large scale for partisan reasons. But the open scandal of such occurrences must not blind us to the working of a similar spirit in the non-legal spheres of human intercourse. Now and then the construction of malign reports, without ever reaching a court of law, may actually kill the victim. In the January of 1822, for instance, William Erskine, the Sheriff of Orkney, a cultured and respected lawyer, was raised to the bench in Edinburgh as Lord Kinneder; by the month of August the judge was dead, literally killed by a cruel calumny which weighed on his sensitive spirit, 'an idle story of a love-intrigue, a story alike base and baseless, which would have done honour to the invention of the devil himself.'<sup>1</sup> So his

<sup>1</sup> In a paper on the 'Metaphysics of Gossip,' contributed recently to *The International Journal of Ethics* (July 1936, pp. 492-499), a philosophical writer semi-humorously, but only semi-humorously, asks whether the modern indulgence in gossip, with its malign love of evil for evil's sake, does not point to the activity of a personal Devil. When gossip, irresponsible discussion of what are or are supposed to be faults and flaws in other people, has an aim, it is slander or libel, though often it is aimless, in the sense that the speaker is not out for personal profit. Yet it is inspired by a satanic delight in evil for evil's sake which stimulates dislike and 'builds up walls which more forcibly

friend, Sir Walter Scott, wrote with indignation. The judge's friends sifted the scandal and disproved it, to the satisfaction of all right-minded citizens. Yet nothing that his friends could do availed to rouse the judge. He never recovered from the shock. 'And so died,' said Scott, 'a man whose head and heart were alike honourable to his kind, and died because he could not endure the slightest stain on his reputation.'

Short of this tragic effect, the vice of tale-bearing may destroy the victim's peace of mind, and if ugly rumours against him spread, they may affect not only his financial or social position but his influence. The writer of *Ecclesiasticus* (28<sup>13</sup>. 14. 18) had this in mind when he wrote trenchantly :

Curse the whisperer and double-tongued,  
for he has destroyed many that were at peace.  
A third person's tongue hath shaken many . . .  
Many have fallen by the edge of the sword,  
yet not so many as they that have fallen  
because of the tongue.

Indeed, the rabbis called the slanderer's tongue 'the third tongue,' not simply because it made mischief between two other parties, but because it killed or ruined three people, the slanderer himself, who was guilty of mortal sin, the slandered, and those who listened to the discreditable tale. Despite the strict enforcement of penalties for perjury in modern civilization, there are still communities in which evidence may be either hired or silenced by unscrupulous litigants, and judges misled. But there are numerous cases which evade the law of libel. Private and social relationships are repeatedly damaged by loose talk, by whispering scandal, or by malicious insinuations, which poison life outside any law-court. A Hebrew witness was a full-grown man. Literally the ninth commandment did not apply to women. But its wider range covers the talkativeness of both sexes. Though Pope, Sheridan, and Thackeray loved to expose this sin in women, Shakespeare drew Don John and Borachio as well as Iago when he depicted the malign spirit of detraction and malicious insinuation. It was men, not women, who brought

separate individuals from one another than do physical and economic barriers.' It loves to dwell on the lower sides of human nature, till it constructs an unreal world of its own, as it destroys real vision. 'When we start to gossip, it is not infrequent that we end in an open war. We refuse to see a thing or person, as the case may be, except in a dubious light or shaded colours; and by making the shade darker and darker we often lose sight of the object altogether.'

false witness against our Lord and St. Stephen. This is a sin of our common humanity, whether it is wanton or careless, and whatever the motive may be, self-interest or a sinister delight in discrediting some one in our circle. It is not the fair sex who are specially unfair.

The Westminster Catechism sets down, among the detailed sins forbidden by the ninth commandment, not only 'giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses,' and forgery, but 'undue silence in a just cause . . . speaking the truth unseasonably or maliciously to a wrong end . . . lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, talebearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring, misconstruing intentions, words, and actions . . . unnecessary discovering of infirmities, raising false rumours, receiving and countenancing evil reports . . . envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, endeavouring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy.' Some of these moral defects and dangers are laid bare in the Epistle of James. So far as the religious world is concerned, perhaps the most prevalent source of dishonest testimony lies in party spirit. When Queen Mary, nearly two and a half centuries ago, overheard some of her court ladies indulging in scandalous gossip, she would quietly ask them if they had ever read her favourite sermon. It was Tillotson's *Against Evil-Speaking*, one of the classical deliverances on the ninth commandment. The preacher begins by declaring that he had 'pitched upon one of the common and reigning vices of the age, calumny and evil-speaking, by which men contract so much guilt to themselves and create so much trouble to others,' and incidentally remarks that 'the zealots of all parties have got into a scurvy trick of lying for the truth.' The best of people may be tempted to believe and repeat anything that is discreditable to those of whose opinions they happen to disapprove. They insinuate or disseminate reports to the personal disadvantage of their opponents, as though they were justified in thinking evil of such creatures. They have no scruple about spreading suspicions of the motives or conduct of the other side. It is still possible to do this in politics, as Berlin and Moscow have recently shown, to arraign opponents on cleverly trumped-up charges and produce dishonest evidence for the supposed sake of the State. But even in religious circles a similar spirit may work, in defiance of the ninth commandment. The groves of Trivia at Cumae lay near the sacred shrine of Apollo, and irresponsible gossip, alive with detraction, is seldom far from circles of piety.

Short of this, though not less heinous, is the carping, censorious temper, which also tempts people of definite convictions, when they realize that others do not share their tenets or follow their particular habits. William Law has drawn this character in his *Serious Call*. He describes 'a pious, temperate, good man,' a church-goer and a liberal giver, and yet, 'when he visits, you generally hear him relating how sorry he is for the defects and failings of a neighbour. He is always letting you know how tender he is of the reputation of his neighbour, how loth to say that which he is forced to say, and how gladly he would conceal it if it could be concealed.' 'He even seemed to both himself and others, to be exercising a Christian charity at the same time that he was indulging a whispering, evil-speaking temper.' As Byron put it, with regard to a woman, such a person is

Skill'd by a touch to deepen scandal's tints  
 With all the kind mendacity of hints,  
 While mingling truth with falsehood, sneers with  
 smiles,  
 A thread of candour with a web of wiles.

The danger of this temper is that the speaker has no private end to serve, but poses as a real lover of truth and goodness. The more quietly and reluctantly, to all appearance, the thing is done, the more mischief it does. The rumour becomes effective as it is concealed under a specious concern for high ends. In point of fact, this sin of dishonest witness against the character of another person implies that one possesses some weight and influence. It is only those who are known or believed to be honest whose opinion is asked or believed. A notorious liar or any one who is considered avowedly unreliable would carry little or no influence by what he said against others.

A characteristic illustration of slander occurs in the story of Nehemiah, against whom a dangerous accusation was whispered, to the effect that he was secretly plotting against King Artaxerxes. Tobiah, an unscrupulous Ammonite, and Sanballat, the imperial viceroy of the Samaritans, apparently set the calumny on foot, till it buzzed through the Oriental bazaars. For some reason an Arabian emir, called Gashmu, saw fit to lend his influence to the evil report, and his reputation winged it. 'It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel, for which cause thou buildest the wall; and thou wouldest be their king' (Neh 6<sup>6</sup>). Who could refuse to believe the report when a man like Gashmu gave it the imprimatur of his approval? For some

who might hesitate to give birth to a discreditable tale do not realize that by listening to it and passing it on they are morally responsible for circulating the poisonous innuendo or imputation against another man's good name. To endorse a slander is no less evil than to start it. Some who would not stoop to frame a misrepresentation will not scruple to give it currency, once it is brought under their notice, especially if every one seems inclined to believe it. If taken to task, they may plead that they were innocent of inventing the scandal. Nevertheless they are bearing dishonest testimony as they take up the ugly tale, clothe it with their authority, and set it forward in their circle.

Even with nothing to gain, people may break the ninth commandment by the sheer love of being witty at the expense of a fellow-being. They will indulge in uncharitable criticism of his motives or actions for the sake of appearing smart. Many who read or watch a play like *Othello* and are shocked, do not seem to realize that in minor ways they may be guilty of speech that lays them open to punishment for infringing the peace and honour of their neighbours by picking a reputation to pieces or insinuating that So-and-so is not so high-minded as people think, or as he himself claims. Casual words become cruel and unjust, even when they rise from no deliberate purpose except that of gratifying one's own sense of superiority or displaying one's powers of cynical epigram.

To speak evil of other people is not to speak of some evil that they may have done or said. Upon occasion moral criticism and blame have to be outspoken, in the interests of integrity. Just as the sixth commandment, with its prohibition of murder, never touched the fighting duty of Israel nor the right to inflict capital punishment, so the ninth simply prohibits malicious, careless testimony, to the damage of another's character, without denying the moral instinct of open reprobation for evil in any circle. It is a duty, for example, to hint that some person may not be reliable, when we find others likely to be led away by his influence, or to mention flaws in a man's character, if they are being missed by the credulous. Yet even here the evidence has to be given with scrupulous care, and with strict guard against private pique and a secret relish for detraction, against the tendency to put the worst construction upon other men's actions. For one case of fair, deserved exposure there are probably three which breathe some reckless animadversion or uncalled-for detraction.

'Judge not, that ye be not judged,' our Lord

told His followers. For the censorious temper besets those who have definite convictions, which tempt them to be hasty or exaggerated in summing up the character of those who differ from them. It is a warning against uncharitable judgments, however earnestly people may feel; for passion and prejudice easily enter into such sweeping verdicts, and personalities may lurk under the robe of moral indignation. Again, when the suspicions felt by the scribes deepened into charges of blasphemy against Him, till they attempted to discredit Him with slanders, He put His finger on a manifestation of the sin against which the ninth commandment had been levelled. 'I tell you, men will have to account on the day of judgment for every light word they utter,' every hasty, unexamined attack on a goodness which they have resented and denied in their fellow-men.

'For by your words you will be acquitted,  
and by your words you will be condemned'  
(Mt 12<sup>36</sup>. 37).

It was the considered judgment of Lord Acton that the subtlest influence which bred prejudice with its crop of dishonest, hasty testimony in social life, was 'not family, or college, or country, or class, or party, but religious antagonism.' Certainly this produces a widespread temptation to ignore the ninth commandment, and one which is most

readily overlooked. Yet the other sources are not to be ignored. There are few occasions, indeed, when it behoves us to be more vigilant than when our opinion is asked about some one whom we dislike, for personal reasons or upon grounds of creed. Yet prejudice warps and sours the mind even when there is no serious antipathy, unless we weigh our words well before allowing ourselves to endorse an accusation against any one in conversation, however light the matter seems to be. In a playful, unguarded tone we may talk in such a way as to lend currency to a depreciation of some one's character, not meaning to do any mischief and yet almost unconsciously weighing the scales of public opinion against him by some casual, unexamined words. It is not difficult to observe this vice in newspapers; not only the articles but the very way in which information is presented may amount to unfair testimony. What is much more difficult, though not less needful, is to realize that in ordinary conversation which turns upon the actions and opinions of our fellow-men a similar spirit of dishonest judgment may well beset us, and that, for all the good-humoured criticism of others which occupies so much of our talk, there ought to be at the back of our minds not only a scrupulous regard for veracity, but a deep sense of moral responsibility in uttering a syllable to the disadvantage of others.

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## Christ and Health.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND A. A. DAVID, D.D., BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL.

SALVATION is a great and sacred word. But in common usage it has lost part of its content and something of its power. What is the first idea it brings to the minds of most people who see it in print or hear it spoken? It is that of deliverance from punishment deserved. We inherit this association from a time when God's punishment was conceived in a form so terrifying that in many minds there was hardly room for the rest of the word's meaning. In these days we have changed our thought about the penalties of sin. The awful fact of requital remains. We must not disguise it. But we no longer define it, nor does the fear of it hold the place it once had in the Christian appeal. Now therefore is the time to explore the other side,

the positive side, of salvation, and, without forgetting that *from* which Christ delivers us, to see more clearly the state *into* which we are to be saved.

It is interesting, and I think significant, to observe how the translators of the New Testament have dealt with σωτηρία and kindred words. In Lk 19<sup>9</sup>, when Zacchæus has shown his change of heart, Jesus is made both by Tyndale and by Wycliffe to say, 'This day is healthe come to this housse.' So in Ac 27<sup>20</sup>, where A.V. and R.V. translate 'all hope that we should be saved—(τοῦ σώζεσθαι ἡμᾶς) was taken away,' Wycliffe gives 'al the hope of oure healthe was don away.' Again in 27<sup>34</sup>, where Paul urges the crew to take