**The Virtues Which Adorn Religion**

 Ezekiel Hopkins 1633-1690

[Titus 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Titus%202.10), "That they may adorn the doctrine of god our savior in all things."

RELATIVE Duties are, of all others, both the most difficult to perform; and, when performed, the best and surest trials of true Christianity and of the power of real godliness.

Difficult they are, because most of the temptations, which assault us, are chiefly bent against the careful and conscientious discharge of these. For they so often come to be put in practice, that the Devil can never want either matter or occasion for his suggestions. They are so interwoven with our lives, and mingle themselves with all our actions and concerns, that it must needs be much harder not to miscarry here, than it is in other duties of religion, which do not so frequently call upon us: inasmuch as it is far more difficult not to do that negligently, which we are to do always; than that, which only now and then requires our care and attendance. And our own experience, I believe, can sufficiently testify, that it is a greater task, and that we are gladly to use more force and violence upon ourselves, to demean ourselves as Christians at home in our own families, in our shops, in our trades and daily employments, than in the church and the more solemn and immediate worship of God.

And, as Relative Duties are the most difficult; so are they the most certain and infallible evidences of true grace that can be given. For, as persons usually wear masks and masks abroad, but lay them aside when they come home: so the hypocrite, however he may be masked and disguised in duties which are beside his ordinary course of life; yet, when he returns to his domestic and ordinary converse, he will certainly lay aside his mask, and appear in the management of his daily affairs, to be what indeed he is, unjust and unconscionable. For, truly, it is almost impossible to lay such a violence upon nature, as to personate and counterfeit that, which must be perpetual and customary. And therefore it fares with such as with players; who, though upon the stage they act the parts of kings and nobles, yet strip off all their pomp and ostentation in the tiring-room, and return home, to their abject and sordid life again.

Now, upon both these accounts, both because they are difficult and because they are the surest testimonies of our sincerity, we find the Apostle so often inculcating the practice of these Relative Duties upon Christians. Neither do I know any one subject, on which he is either so large or so pressing. We have ample directions given us concerning our demeanor in them, 1 Corinthians 7 throughout the whole chapter: Ephesians 5 from the 22d verse to the end: Ephesians 6 from the 1st to the 10th verse: Colossians 3 from the 18th verse to the end of the chapter: and [Colossians 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Col%204.1) and [1 Timothy 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Tim%206.1), [2](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Timothy%206.2). Nay, there is scarce any Epistle, wherein the duties of our relations are not pressed upon us, as the greatest part and the best evidence of true Christianity. So, in this chapter of my text, the Apostle exhorts Titus, who was constituted overseer of the Church of Crete; both to a sedulous care of performing his own duty towards them, as standing in that spiritual relation; and likewise earnestly to urge upon them the performance of their Relative Duties, according to the capacities and stations wherein they respected each other: and, that he might rightly divide to each their portion, he directs him what instructions he should give the aged, verses 2, 3 that the men should be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience: to the women; that they should, not be false accusers, or make-baits, sowing strife and dissension by idle tattle and groundless rumors; that they should not be given to much wine, but should be teachers of good things: to the younger; verses 4, 5, 6 that the women should be sober, and love their husbands, and their children; that they should be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, and obedient to their own husbands: that the men should be sober-minded, not puffed up with vain-glory and self-conceit, the sins usually of that age: and then, in the 9th and 10th verses, he descends to the duties of servants; and lays an injunction upon him to exhort them, that they be obedient unto their own masters, pleasing them well in all things: not answering again, when they are reproved; not to purloin from them, but to be faithful in the trust which is committed to them.

These are the duties, which Paul gives in charge, to so great a pastor as Titus, who was set over the whole island of Crete, as the chief pastor in dignity, and I think in authority and jurisdiction too. These, I say, are the duties, which so great an Apostle enjoins so great a Pastor earnestly to press upon them. But, alas! have we not many, so superciliously proud and so puffed up with a vain conceit of their greater perfection, that they would account that minister flat and dull, who should insist upon such low things as these are? Nothing, now-a-days, is thought worthy an auditory, but some high mystical speculations; which, too often, are as far from being intelligible, as they are from being practical. And, for these common and daily duties of a Christian Life, they undervalue them as below their attainments: and leave them to honest, moral men; as fit for such only, whom they despise and undervalue too. Let me tell such pharisaical spirits, that it is not their sublime notions, nor their refined phrases; it is not any affected, new-fangled way of expressing the awful and tremendous truths of the Gospel; it is not their despising the weaknesses of some, nor their judging the miscarriages of others: but it is the careful and conscientious practice of these mean and slighted duties of a Christian Life, that gives a luster to religion, and makes the face of it look beautiful and amiable. And therefore the Apostle, after he had given such a strict and particular charge concerning these sundry duties, subjoins the reason why he would have him so instant in exhorting them to these: and that is in the words of my text, That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

Now, here, I shall,

I. Show WHAT IT IS to ADORN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

And shall consider

What is meant by the Doctrine of God our Savior.

What it is to adorn this Doctrine.

i. To the FIRST, briefly.

Though God be an essential name, and therefore common to each glorious Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, yet that addition of our Savior seems to restrain it to the Second Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God our Savior in a most especial manner. And this Doctrine of God our Savior, here spoken of, is nothing else but the Gospel of Christ; containing, both those truths which Christ himself immediately taught, and those also which he by the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles and penmen of the Scripture to reveal unto the world.

Now the whole sum of this doctrine of Christ consists in these Two things:

In Principles, containing the Mysteries of Faith.

In Precepts, enjoining the Duties of Obedience.

Some things in the Doctrine of our Savior we are to know and believe, which could never have been discovered to us, but by divine revelation. Such are, the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Redemption of the World by his death and passion, the Way of obtaining Justification and eternal Salvation by believing; and such other profound truths, which neither reason, nor the works of creation and providence, could ever have disclosed to us, but are now made known only by the Gospel.

Other things in this doctrine, we are commanded, not only to believe, but to practice. And those are, not only all the duties of the Moral Law, respecting both God and Man, which are now taken into the pale and within the protection of the Gospel; but also the duties, which immediately belong unto the Covenant of Grace; such as our believing on Jesus Christ, accepting him in all his offices, and relying upon him alone for life and eternal happiness.

This, in sum, is the Doctrine of God our Savior: and, by this, we may the easier give a resolution to

ii. The Second thing propounded: WHAT IT IS TO ADORN THIS DOCTRINE.

And that I shall do, both Negatively and Positively.

1. Negatively.

(1) It is not to add any new beauty or excellency unto it, which was not in it before.

For this doctrine is every way perfect and complete: and so it is affirmed to be, [James 1:25](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/James%201.25). Whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty. There is nothing superfluous, nothing defective in it: but a perfect symmetry, and harmony of parts; each of them, as it is in a beautiful body, lovely in itself; and all of them, taken together, mutually setting off and making each other more beautiful and lovely. Here need no Unwritten Traditions, to which the Romanists give an equal veneration with the Scriptures: for, either their traditions are consonant to Scripture, and so are unnecessary; or contrary to Scripture, and so are pernicious: and, if it be said, they may be diverse from Scripture and yet not contrary to it, as delivering down to the world those truths and those duties, concerning which the Scripture has made no mention, I answer, This is not to be diverse only, but contrary; for the Scripture itself has said, [2 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Tim%203.16), [17](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Timothy%203.17), that it is all given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works: there can, therefore, be no Unwritten Traditions joined in commission with the Scriptures: but, if they speak according to that word, they may be received as truths rightly collected from it; but if they lay down doctrines repugnant to Scripture, or teach anything as necessary to be believed and embraced which is not contained in those Sacred Oracles, they ought to be rejected as old lies, and tales forged by the old Father of Lies, only to deceive the minds of the simple. And those, who think their religion beautiful because of these, take trash and dung for ornaments and monstrousness for beauty: and, in their opinion, that giant, mentioned 2 Samuel 21:20, who had six fingers on each hand (more than nature intended), must pass for the most lovely person. Certainly, the doctrine of Christ is so entire and perfect, that it needs no new additions, to eke it out; nor any of the paint of the Anti-christian Jezebel, to beautify and adorn it.

(2) To adorn the Doctrine of Christ, is not to dress it up in any new fashion or new mode of religion.

Truly, there is a kind of garb of religion now abroad. We must not speak, and I am sure we do not act, like the Christians of elder times: their simplicity and plainness, both of speech and of conversation, is now worn as much out of request, as their clothes are: and those truths, which warmed their hearts and saved their souls; those truths, by which they lived, and for which they would have died; are now looked upon, by the sprucer Christians of our age, as old-fashioned things, and so laid aside. Some trim it up in uncouth phrases, and never think they speak like the oracles of God, unless they speak that which cannot be understood by the wit of man; and, like the priests of Apollo, are then inspired, when they utter unintelligible riddles and ambiguities: as if to adorn the doctrine of Christ, were to veil it; and it were then most beautiful, when most obscure. Others think they adorn it, when they are still altering and changing it; casting out this way, and bringing in another; and then finding fault with that: as if religion were designed not to reform us, but still to be reformed itself; and were made to no other purpose in the world, but only to be mended. This is not to adorn the doctrine of Christ, but abundantly to disparage it; when either we think to add any new excellency unto it, which before it had not; or to dress and trick it up in new fashions and new modes of religion. It is not to be done by old traditions, or new opinions, or any fantastical and affected way of delivering and expounding the truths of the Gospel.

2. But, Positively:

To adorn the doctrine of God our Savior, is, to live conformably unto it. For the doctrine of Christ consists, as I told you, in Two things: the Mysteries of Faith, and the Duties of Obedience. And we adorn this doctrine, when we live suitably to both of these.

(1) When we endeavor to live according to the Belief of those Mysteries of Grace and Mercy, which are revealed in it.

In this doctrine it is, that we have the glad-tidings of happiness and salvation restored unto mankind by a Mediator: that the forfeiture we had made of our very lives and souls to the justice of God, is now redeemed by our Surety Jesus Christ; who has undertaken the desperate work of reconciling sinners to a holy and jealous God, and has himself filled up that ìåãá ÷áóìá, that vast and unpassable gulf, which was between Heaven and us; laying his cross for our bridge, and himself for our way to pass over into eternal bliss and joy. Now we are said to adorn this doctrine of God our Savior, when we live answerably to the obligations which the grace of the Gospel lays upon us: what obligations they are, the Apostle tells us in the two next verses after my text: The grace of God, that brings salvation, has appeared to all men; Teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. It is the greatest reproach which can be cast upon the doctrine of Christ, that it makes men libertines, or gives them indulgence to sin. Some may possibly so argue, that, if Christ procured happiness and salvation for them, there lies no necessity upon them to exercise holiness and strictness; but they may live at random, for Christ has done all: this is that cursed inference, which the Apostle, all along in his Epistles, confutes and abhors: Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! and this is the greatest reproach that can be cast on this doctrine, that it should hold forth Christ as a patron of licentiousness, who was the greatest pattern and example of holiness and purity. No, certainly, he never intended by satisfying the justice of God, to encourage the wickedness of man; nor, that the promises of the Gospel should be produced to invalidate the precepts of the Law: but, as the Apostle tells us, verse 14 of this chapter, He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The proper influence, which divine mercy should have upon us, is to conform us to the divine purity: so says the Apostle, [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Cor%207.1). Having these promises, the promises of Heaven and glory through Christ, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God: and, [1 John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20John%203.3). Every man, that has this hope in him, purifies himself even as God is pure. Now when the grace, which is exhibited to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is suffered to have this kindly effect upon us, by a sweet and genuine attractiveness to engage us to a holy and blameless life, then is our conversation such as adorns the doctrine of God our Savior.

(2) To adorn this doctrine, is, to live conformably to the Commands of it; requiring from us the Duties of new Obedience, in order to our eternal salvation.

Now these commands of the Gospel, are the whole Moral Law; which is taken into the protection of it, and fenced about with the super-added authority of Christ's sanction. It is only through the grace of the Gospel, that the imperfect obedience of a believer is at all available to his salvation, since the Law of Works accepts not of any obedience under the degree of most perfect and absolute: so that when we endeavor, according to the uttermost of our power and ability, to conform our lives to the commands of the Gospel; when, by our universal holiness and obedience, we strive in all things to please God, then do we adorn the doctrine of Christ. We credit our profession, and set it off to the esteem of others, when our practices answer our pretenses.

This is, in the general, to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior; to live suitably to the grace revealed in it, and to the duties enjoined by it.

II. Ornaments serve for two uses and intents. The one is, to cover the nakedness of those, who wear them; the other, to beautify and set them off to the esteem and acceptance of others. Now such A HOLY GOSPEL-LIFE, ADORNS THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, BOTH THESE WAYS:

i. It HIDES THE NAKEDNESS, and TAKES AWAY THE SHAME OF RELIGION.

For nothing is a greater blemish and reproach to our profession, than the unsuitable lives of professors. I need not tell you, what a discredit Christians have brought upon Christianity itself, by their disorderly conversation. It were not so much to be lamented, if the shame of it lighted only upon those, who were guilty: but the name of Christ is blasphemed through their miscarriages; and every one is ready to cast the dirt and mire into which a professor falls, into the very face of religion itself; and to upbraid Christ with the crimes of those, who pretend to be his followers, and of his retinue.

I. There is a Twofold Shame and Reproach, which befalls religion by the loose lives of those who profess it:

Wicked men are hereby induced to think, that it is but Fabulous and a mere mockery.

That it is but Frivolous, and altogether unnecessary.

(1) They think that religion is but Mockery; and all, who profess it, are but a company of dissemblers and hypocrites.

Indeed, there is nothing, which can convince the world that there is any reality in religion, but the conforming of our lives strictly according to its rules and precepts. And we may well impute the increase and growth of the atheism that is now abroad, to those strong arguments which men have drawn from the lives of Christians, to confute the doctrine of Christianity: for, may they not justly conclude, that it is impossible that such men should believe what they profess, while their lives are so down-right contradictory to their creed? did they think it true, that there are eternal rewards and eternal punishments prepared to be dispensed to men, according to their works; did they think it true, that Hell, and wrath, and flames, and chains, and intolerable torments, must be the eternal portion of those, who reject the faith and disobey the commands of the Gospel; could it be possible that they should live at such a rate of vanity, looseness, and profaneness, as they do? And, upon this, they conclude all to be but a well-couched fable; and give the holy and everlasting Gospel of Christ, the lie. And what shame can be greater than this? It is a sad accusation, [Romans 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom%202.24). The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you: how so? because, as in the former verses, they rested in the Law, and had a form of knowledge; and were confident, that they were guides to the blind, and lights to them that sit in darkness: eminent professors it seems they were, like the men of our days: well, but mark; You, therefore, which teach another, teach you not yourself? You, that make your boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonor you God? You, that profess the Gospel, do you transgress the Law? You, that pretend to near communion and acquaintance with God, do you live as without God in the world? You, that preach a man should not steal, nor lie, nor swear, nor be drunk, nor commit adultery; do you lie, and steal, and swear? are you unclean? are you intemperate, and as vile as the worst and vilest? Tremble at it: the name of the Great God is blasphemed among wicked wretches, through you: those, who were before profane, you make atheistical, scorning and deriding the Gospel of Christ as an idle whimsey; and, because they see so little in their lives, conclude that there is no difference at all, between those who are called Saints, and those who are called Sinners; but only, that the one have their tongues a little better hung, and their fancies a little higher screwed up, than the other. And, truly, I cannot but with shame and sadness reflect upon it, that the men of our profession are herein extremely guilty, who, by the unsuitableness of their conversation to the purity of their doctrine, make too many in the world believe, that it is their trade only to gull and cozen men; and persuade them to believe, what they are wiser than to believe themselves. Let us beware, lest these their blasphemies be not at last charged upon us, who, through a worldly, loose, and carnal conversation, have made religion even to stink in their nostrils. It is only the strictness of a gospel-life, which can convince the world, that religion is anything real. And, if ever you would redeem its lost credit, show, by the strictness and holiness of your lives, that you do indeed believe the doctrine which you profess; and that you look upon it as that doctrine, by which you expect to be judged at the Last Day.

(2) The disorderly conversation of professors, as it tempts wicked men to think religion to be a false and cunningly devised fable; so, at least, it tempts them to look upon it as altogether Needless.

Now what disgrace can be more foul, than to impute frivolousness to a doctrine, which calls itself the oracles of God, the only rule of holiness, and the only way to happiness? and to make that superfluous and unnecessary, whose chief excellency consists in its usefulness and tendency to our salvation? And yet this reproach upon the Gospel, through the licentiousness of those who profess it, will be almost unavoidable: for, if we compare the strict precepts of Christianity with the loose lives of Christians, we shall be shrewdly tempted to conclude, that certainly these men have found out an easier passage to Heaven, than by the strait way and the narrow gate. And, questionless, this very thing has been a stumbling-block, at which many have fallen, and dashed themselves to pieces: for what can they think, when, on the one hand, they hear holiness and purity so much recommended, so earnestly pressed upon us by the doctrine of Christ; and, on the other, see it so generally neglected and despised, by those who pretend themselves to be most studied and versed in that doctrine; but that, doubtless, these men do know somewhat, which perhaps they are reluctant to divulge, that gives them a dispensation from the practice of that godliness which they profess? and so they think that God uses them, as some tradesmen do their customers; that he asks high for Heaven at first, but, when it comes to the issue, will fall of his price, and let them have it at a far easier rate than his first demands. And this, I am confident, is the very reason, why those very few, who walk strictly and holily, and demean themselves inoffensively both towards God and man, are yet so despised and hated in the world: some despise and scorn them, as a company of poor silly souls, who have less wit and more honesty by half than needs: others hate them, as a company of impertinent busy-bodies in religion, who serve only to raise the market for Heaven, and readily give God all that he asks: but, generally, the world looks upon them, as too precise; and as making too much ado about that salvation, which else would come at an easier rate. Look to it, lest this disrespect and vilifying of the power of godliness and practical holiness, lest the contempt and obloquy that is cast upon a severe and mortified life, be not charged upon you, who, by a vain, carnal, frothy, and light conversation, have persuaded the world, that Christ was a more strict preacher than he will be a judge, and that his laws serve rather to show what holiness is than to exact it.

And thus I have shown you, how that, by the unsuitable lives of professors, this Twofold Shame will befall religion itself; that wicked men will be ready to account it either False or Frivolous.

2. And, upon both accounts, consider what dreadful Consequences will follow.

(1) To bring this blemish upon religion, that it is either false or unnecessary, is, in a great measure, to evacuate the death of Christ, and to frustrate one of the great ends for which he suffered.

There were Two great and important Reasons of Christ's death:

The one was, the Satisfaction of Divine Justice, as a Redeemer.

The other, the Attestation of the Truth of his Doctrine, as a Martyr. He has sealed to the world, by his own blood, both the certainty and necessity of the doctrines which he taught: and therefore Christ himself tells Pilate, [John 18:37](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2018.37). To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. And the greatest testimony, which he gave to the truth of the Gospel, was upon the cross; laying down his life, and shedding the last drop of his most precious blood, rather than he would disavow or recant the least article of that holy doctrine which he had delivered. And therefore we have that expression, [1 John 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20John%205.8). There are three, that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: which, I think, may be congruously enough expounded, if we here take the first of these witnesses, the spirit, for the spirit or soul of Christ, which he breathed forth when he gave up the Spirit; and the water and blood, to be that mixed stream, which flowed out of his side when the soldier's spear opened unto us that fountain of life and salvation. These three bear witness on earth to the doctrine of Christ, that it is both true in itself, and necessary also to eternal salvation.

Now consider, you, who, by a loose and wanton conversation, give occasion to the world to suspect either the one or the other, what do you less than invalidate the death of Christ; and bring men at last to believe, that he died for that which is either false or frivolous? which is the greatest affront and indignity, that can possibly be put upon our Lord and Savior. Must not the world think it very strange, that Christ should willingly submit himself to so cruel and ignominious a death as that of the cross, for the confirmation of a doctrine, which few of those who profess the truth of it will yet be persuaded by all the rewards it propounds to put in practice? must they not needs judge it a most absurd thing, to spread a religion, and then die for it too, the rules and precepts of which are either impossible or unnecessary to be observed? And, if they look into the lives of Christians, and take notice how vastly repugnant their actions are to the rule which they profess; what else can they think, but that Christ lost his very death as well as his life, when he died to confirm such a religion, whose laws are so rigorous that they cannot be kept, or whose indulgence is so large that it cannot be out-sinned? Is this a doctrine, worth such pain and shame, worth martyrdom and the cross, which has so little influence upon those who embrace it, to conform their lives to the principles which it teaches? are the rewards which it promises so inconsiderable, or the punishments which it threatens so easy and gentle, or the evidence which it gives of the certainty of both so glimmering and obscure, that it cannot prevail with those who own it, to abandon their vices or their present pleasures, for future fears and hopes? And, what! shall we think such a religion can ever bring its followers to Heaven, when as it cannot bring them to virtue? Believe it, this reflects highly upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and lays an imputation, either upon his sincerity or his wisdom, in dying for a doctrine, which ordinarily has no more power over those who profess and own it, than only to name them Christians.

(2) Consider, that the profession of religion, without a suitable practice, tends only to harden the hearts of wicked men, and to strengthen their hands in their course of sin and profaneness.

For such is either the weakness or corruption of human nature, that we are sooner led by examples, than by precepts; and follow the herd, rather than the guide; accounting nothing a surer mark of the right way, than the tracks of others who go before us. Now when wicked men shall see you, who are a professor, live unanswerably to that religion you make show of, will they not be ready to bless themselves in their ways, and to cry, Peace, Peace, to themselves; since you, who think well of yourself, and whom others perhaps think well of too, are in reality no better than they? "Do not I see," may such an one say, "that those, who are taken for Saints, are proud, and impatient, and covetous, and revengeful? And if such men get to Heaven, as they pretend they shall, why may not I? It is true, indeed, they talk of self-denial, and contempt of the world, and communion with God, and great spiritual enjoyments; but look into our lives, and mine is as harmless and innocent as theirs. If they let themselves loose to the pleasures of the world, drink until wine inflames them, discourse lewdly and lasciviously by tropes and metaphors, cozen and cheat in their bargains, and overreach the simplicity of those that trust them for their profession, why may not I; and yet be altogether as good a Christian, and in as safe a way of salvation, as they? They talk, indeed, of experiences, and acquaintance with God, and ravishing joys, and melting desires, and a road of words that I skill not: but, certainly, if God will not condemn them, though they do nothing more than I, but only talk; neither will he condemn me, for not talking as they do." And so they give themselves the reins, and boldly fly out into all manner of impieties: neither taking up the profession of religion, which they rightly judge to be of no worth without the practice of it; neither will be brought to the practice of religion, judging that needless, because they see it neglected by you who profess it. And so you make them sevenfold worse than if you yourselves were profligate and avowed sinners, denying the form of godliness, as well as the power of it. For a wicked and debauched sinner, though he may prevail upon others to draw them into the same excess of riot with himself; yet his example is not so likely to harden men in sin and to seal them up under impenitency, as the loose examples of a hypocritical professor: natural conscience will struggle, and tumult, and draw back, when we follow those, who pretend no other, but to go Hell: they cannot but with remorse reflect upon it, that ever they should suffer themselves to be led by such as they know to be in the ready way to damnation. But, when they see those, who pretend highly to Heaven, and entertain flourishing hopes of glory and salvation; who stand sainted in every man's calendar, and whom all conclude to be of those few that shall be saved; when they see such as these indulge themselves in any way of wickedness, they presently take heart by such an example: and, if they think not, that they may do the same with a good conscience, yet they conclude, that they may do it without any prejudice to their salvation; and so sin quietly without regret, and perish and go down to Hell with good company. Well, beware, lest their sins be not at last set upon your score: for, though they shall die in them, as the Prophet speaks, yet certainly God will require the blood of their souls at your hands; who, by encouraging them through your loose example covered over with a dissembled holiness, have only made their crimes your guilt; and shall be punished eternally in Hell, both for your own hypocrisy and their profaneness.

(3) The unsuitable and unholy lives of professors, must needs induce wicked men to think that their ways are better than God's.

What else can they conclude, but that certainly religion and piety is some sour, morose thing; when they see those, who pretend most to it, steal away to refresh themselves with the pleasures of sin? has not holiness delights enough within itself to content you? are not peace of conscience, calmness and serenity of mind, the love of God, the performance of duty, the consolations of the Holy Spirit, are not all these joy enough for you, but you must needs break the hedge, and stray into the world's common; as if you wanted pasture, or those pastures wanted verdure and refreshment? is not a whole Eden sufficient for you, but you must likewise taste of the forbidden fruit? What is this, but to give a most wretched occasion to wicked men, to applaud their choice, and to think it much better and wiser than yours? what a disparagement is this to religion, that those, who embrace it, must be beholding to sin and wickedness, for all the pleasant hours they enjoy! as if to sigh and weep, to be sad and melancholy, were the only employment of a Christian's life; or as if, indeed, there were not more true content and pleasure to be found in tears and sighs, in sad and serious thoughts, than in all those impure and muddy delights, for which you forsake them. No: if ever you would adorn the Gospel and win over others unto the profession and obedience of it, live so, that the world may see a Christian can live upon the allowance that God gives him; and that you do not belong to so hard a Lord and Master, as that you must be necessitated for your work, to serve Him; and, for your recreation, the Devil. While you seek your divertisement in the pleasures of sin, wicked men cannot but think religion a mere drudgery, and themselves the only happy men; when they see those, who pretend much to enjoy God in the ways of holiness, forced to come over to their loose and sinful ways, that they may enjoy themselves. For shame, Christians! cast not such a disparagement upon religion: but let it appear, that it can maintain its servants upon its own; and has enough not only to employ, but to delight them too.

(4) The unholy and unsuitable lives of Christians embolden others to sin more deeply and desperately, than else they would have done.

For always those, who are led by examples, make them lose somewhat of their rigor and severity. So that whatever scope and allowance you give yourself, others, who observe your course and manner of life, will be sure to enlarge it to themselves: and so, by a wretched improvement, a small sin in you shall become a great and heinous one in them; and you too be guilty of it, who, by your miscarriages, have given them encouragement to imitate and exceed you. You, who are an eminent and glorious professor, the eyes of the whole place are upon you, to observe and watch your demeanor: they conclude, that you aim at nothing less than the highest pitch and degree of glory; and, therefore, if you can indulge yourself such a liberty, certainly they may allow themselves a larger scope; and, though they fall short of you, yet they hope that they shall not fall short of Heaven; wherein, if they may shine but as stars, it is all they expect, while you shinest as the sun in the firmament. This is our wretched temper, that we are not ambitious for Heaven and happiness, but content ourselves if we think we may have any share and portion in it: and, while we mark the failings of those, who yet we think shall be highly advanced in glory, we are apt to conclude, that though we allow ourselves a greater freedom than they take, yet we may be safe at last, although not so glorious. Thus, a foolish vain word in the mouth of a professor, may come to be an oath of another man's: an equivocation in him, may improve to be a gross lie in another: if he speak but slightly of religion and the things of God, others will be emboldened openly to scoff and deride them: if he carry on his affairs by underhand craft and cunning dealing, not showing that downright sincerity and plainness in his affairs, which a Christian and an honest man ought to do; others, who observe this, will be thereby encouraged to cheat and defraud. For in the following of examples, we always bate something; and those examples, which give us any kind of liberty, we shall soon turn into licentiousness. It is a sad thing to be exemplary, unless we are also most strict and severe; so that the world can find no flaws, no defects in our conversation: for, otherwise, we must answer for their sins, which our miscarriages have emboldened them to commit.

And thus I have, at large, showed you, the great disgrace and discredit, which professors bring upon religion, by the unsuitableness of their lives to their principles and profession. They make the world believe it to be either false, or needless: and so they do, in a great measure, evacuate the death of Jesus Christ; make wicked men secure and impenitent in their sins; induce them to think that their ways are better than God's; and encourage them to sin more daringly and desperately, than else they would.

And yet, notwithstanding these great mischiefs, mischiefs which strike at the very life of piety and religion; notwithstanding these which follow upon an unholy conversation, what is the ordinary rate at which professors live, but vain, frothy, sensual, and worldly? yes, as far removed sometimes (I speak it with shame) from the honesty of common men, as they would be thought to be from the pollutions and impieties of the world? Now, must it not needs be a stumbling-block to many, when men shall speak at such a rate of spiritualness, as if some angel sat upon their tongues; and yet live at such a rate of vanity, and it may be of profaneness too, as if legion possessed their hearts? What shall we judge of such men? if we judge the tree by the leaves, what else can we think of them, but that they are trees of righteousness and plants of renown? but if we look to their fruits, envy, strife, variance, wrath, pride, worldliness, selfishness, what can we think of them, but that Heaven and Hell are now as near together, as these men's hearts and mouths? May we not use the same speech that the Apostle does, concerning the Corinthians, [1 Corinthians 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Cor%203.3)? You are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men? If the Apostle could have laid in a charge against these Corinthians, not only of envy, strife, and division, but of hatred, bitterness, and implacableness of spirit; of brain-sick opinions and self-seeking practices, joined with the utter neglect and contempt of the glory of God, as justly as we can against the men of our times: certainly, his reproof would not have been so mild as to tell them they walked as men, but rather that they walked as devils. Such are a reproach to religion; a grief and a shame to true Christians, who are jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, and cannot, but with bleeding hearts, observe the dishonor that is cast upon the ways of God, by those who will be saints in spite of holiness. They are so many stumbling-blocks laid in the way of others, embittering their spirits against the profession of holiness, since they account it no better than hypocrisy and gross dissimulation; or, else, encouraging them, by their evil examples, to continue in their wickedness and profaneness.

Thus I have shown you the First Use of Ornaments, which is to hide shame and nakedness; and that it is only a holy life and conversation, which can hide the shame of religion: for, where the life is unsuitable to the profession, it reflects this Twofold shame upon religion, that it is either Fabulous or Frivolous, either Untrue or Unnecessary. And I have shown you the sad Consequences that will follow upon these.

ii. Another Use of Ornaments, is, TO BEAUTIFY THE PERSON, WHO WEARS THEM; AND TO SET HIM OFF TO THE ACCEPTANCE AND ESTEEM OF OTHERS.

And, thus also, it is only a holy and strict life, which can adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. Nothing does make religion so lovely and taking in the eyes of others, as the holy lives of those who profess it. And, to this, must we impute the wonderful growth of Christianity in the primitive times, when it gained more nations and countries in its persecuted state, than it can now gain persons in its flourishing. And the reason of its success was, that it had all the attractive charms, which are fitted to work upon the minds of men not altogether brutish: for, though it still retains the same innate beauty; the sublimeness of its mysteries, the purity of its commands, the majesty and authority of its word, the excellency of its rewards, and the dreadfulness of its threatenings, and the clear and infallible evidence of all these; yet that, which added a mighty grace and luster to it, was the holiness and innocency of the professors of it; their meekness, patience, love, charity, single-heartedness; and, in every respect, a blameless demeanor, which made religion wonderfully successful in the world; mankind being rather affected by the eye than the ear, and more taken by what they saw than by what they were told of the excellency of Christianity. And therefore we find, [Acts 2:45](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%202.45), [46](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%202.46), [47](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%202.47) that when they charitably supplied the necessities of others, when they lived together with one accord, in singleness of heart, they had favor with all the people; and many were added to the Church, even as many as should be saved. This is the way to set off religion, and to make it amiable to the world. It is not to dress it up in uncouth expressions, nor to speak of the things of God in a singular and affected phrase; no, nor only to discourse of them in Scripture-language, and to make it only the business of the tongue. The holy and everlasting Gospel, which you profess, is not an are of speaking but of living well.

First. The blameless life of a Christian gives life to religion; adds as much beauty to religion, as natural life does to a man.

Take a dead corpse, and, though it has the same features, the same lineaments and proportion, which it had before; yet how ghastly and frightful a spectacle is it! and that very face, which was beautiful and pleasing while living, yet terrifies and scares us, when the life and soul is departed from it. So is it here: the doctrine of the Gospel, in itself considered, separate from practice, is but a dead letter; and, though there be a great excellency in it, as there is in the frame of a dead body; yet it has not those charms and allurements, which it has when the lives of Christians put life into it. The strictness and severity of its rules and precepts would rather fright and deter men from embracing it, than invite them; until they see the beauty of holiness, in the practice and good example of others.

Secondly. A holy and suitable life adorns and commends the doctrine of Christ our Savior, as it testifies the energy and efficacy, which it has upon the consciences and conversations of men.

The excellency of a doctrine is chiefly seen in the power that it has to work upon the hearts and affections of those who profess it. Now when it shall appear to the world, that this doctrine of Christ has been effectual to the opening of the eyes of the blind, the taming of stubborn and refractory sinners that it has been able to rend rocks in pieces, and to draw rivers of tears out of stony hearts: when it shall appear what a mighty change it has wrought upon those, who seemed most boisterous and intractable; bringing them upon their knees to grovel in the very dust, before that God whom they have daringly offended; and that a few words of it should be able forever after to keep them in such an awe of his Dread Majesty, that they would rather die a thousand deaths, than willingly do anything which it forbids: when it shall calm all their passions, subjugate their very thoughts, govern all their actions; that they shall not dare to think, but by a law and rule; nor to speak, but under the control of their religion; nor to fear, nor rejoice, nor grieve, nor be angry, but upon permission from this: how mightily will this exalt and magnify the power of Christ's doctrine, and set it forth as triumphant in the world and over the world! It is the number, not of professors, but of converts, that is the glory of any doctrine. And this glory is peculiarly due unto the doctrine of Christ: all other doctrines of the world, though there be too many who own them, yet how few are converted by them to a sober and holy life? all the grave and elaborate precepts of Heathen Philosophy, which taught virtue with a great deal of skill, and all possible advantages of wit and reason, yet, as Origen against Celsus observes, never converted but two, from a vicious and debauched life: and, for all other ways of religion, it is generally and truly observed, that the most zealous in them were usually the most lewd and dissolute: it is true of them all, what Christ speaks of the Pharisees, [Matthew 23:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%2023.15). They compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, they make him seven times more the child of Hell than before. But, it is the peculiar glory of the doctrine of Christ, that those, whom it makes true proselytes, it makes truly pious. Envy not, I beseech you, this glory to it; but let it appear, that it is the only divine doctrine in the world, by having such a powerful influence into your practice, as no other doctrine has, or can have. Raise your actions to such a divine height, that moralists, with all their civility, may be forced to confess, there is somewhat more in your lives, than nature or any other instruction can possibly bestow.

But this is only, in the general.

Let me now commend to your practice some particular duties; wherein, methinks, the true and genuine spirit of the Gospel does most eminently appear. And, oh! that you would forever remember to honor the doctrine of Christ which you have embraced, and to adorn your profession, by the constant practice of these following graces.

1. Love, and Brotherly-Kindness one towards another.

This is the very badge and distinguishing character of a Christian: [John 13:35](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2013.35). By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one towards another. Love is a most beautiful grace; and that, which sets a great luster upon religion, and makes it beautiful too. It was that, which the Heathens took most especial notice of in the Primitive Christians; when they would not only communicate their estates one to another, but even expose their lives and offer their blood for their brethren: this made their very persecutors cry out, "See how dearly these Christians love one another!" We are all fellow-members of the same body mystical, whereof Jesus Christ is the Head: now as there is a sympathy in the body natural between the members, (for if one member suffer, all the rest suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the rest rejoice with it;) so ought it to be among Christians; for we are the body of Christ, and members in particular, as the Apostle speaks, [1 Corinthians 12:26](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Cor%2012.26), [27](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Corinthians%2012.27). What a strange unseemly thing were it, for the members of the body to make an insurrection one against another! for the hand to pluck out the eye; or for one hand to cut off the other! alike unseemly it is for those, who are united together in the same body of Christ, to be divided in their affections or practices, or to rend and tear one another. This has been the great sin and unhappiness of our days: one limb of Christ has torne off another, as a limb of Antichrist: some have separated, and become schismatical; others are become unnatural, and rejoice in the sufferings of their fellows: the weak have censured the strong; and the strong despised the weak: and, upon such petty differences in judgment and opinion, have arisen such vast breaches in love and charity; breaches, wide as the seas, and, without a miracle, as incurable: as if it were sufficient ground for quarrel, that one limb is not just of the same make, size, and proportion with the others. For shame, Christians! let us all, who hold the same Head, Christ Jesus, be all united together in the same Spirit, and exercise mutual love and mutual forbearance. Or else, believe it, if the sheep divide among themselves, and separate and scatter, the Great Shepherd will send in those dogs or wolves among them, that will make them run together again.

2. Another duty, which adorns the doctrine of Christ, and recommends it to the acceptance and esteem of others, is, Love to our Enemies; and a ready forgiving of the wrongs and injuries, which have been maliciously done against us.

This is a duty highly pressed upon us by the Gospel. Very few of the Heathens, though they went far in many excellent points of morality, have ever attained to this height and perfection: and therefore Tully tells us, ulcisci te lacessitus potes; and, again, odi hominem, et odero utinam ulcisci poteram: and Aristotle, in his Rhetoric‡, Ôï ôïõò åêèñïõò ôéìùñåéóèáé êáëïí äïêåé, etc: "It is good," says he, "to revenge ourselves upon our enemies: for it is but just to return the same measure we have received; and it is manly not to be overcome in anything." But the Gospel has taught us another way of overcoming our enemies: [Romans 12:21](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom%2012.21). Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good; by praying for them, by doing them all kind offices of humanity and respect. While we thus manage all the differences which we have here with others, whoever gets the better in this world; yet, certainly, at the Last Day, the victory and crown will be adjudged ours. This is that, which our Savior Christ greatly insists on, [Matthew. 5:44](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt.%205.44). I say unto you, Love your enemies: bless them, that curse you: do good to them, that hate you: and pray for them, which despitefully use you and persecute you: and he adds an argument, that is very cogent and enforcing, from the example of our Father: verse 45. That you may be the children of God: for he causes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust: God does good to all, even to his enemies; and this should be our pattern to do good also to our enemies: especially considering, that, in doing good to them, we indeed do good to ourselves; for we pray for the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to our forgiving others those trespasses which they commit against us: but, while we keep and nourish any rancouring or revengeful thoughts, we do but put in a caution against our own prayers, and bind our iniquities upon our souls, yes and make our very prayers the most dreadful curses that can be uttered against us; For, if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our Heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses: [Matt 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%206.15). Revenge is utterly contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. As Tertullian speaks well: There is no difference, between him that does an injury, and him that requites it; nisi quòd ille prior in maleficio deprehenditur, at ille posterior; "but only that the one is wicked a little sooner than the other." Yes, indeed, the best way of revenge, if we study that, is to requite wrongs with kindnesses and good offices: what says the Apostle, [Romans 12:20](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom%2012.20)? If your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for, in so doing, you shall heap coals of fire on his head: by heaping coals of fire on his head, may be meant, either that you shall kindle in him a regret and tormenting displeasure, that he cannot vex, nor discompose you, and so shall make him the instrument of your revenge upon himself; or you shall kindle in him such a sorrow and compunction for having causelessly wronged you, as shall burn him like fire, until he has given you abundant satisfaction; or, else, lastly, you shall kindle upon him the coals of everlasting fire in Hell, for persisting obstinately to hate and injure you without cause or provocation: and that is a revenge to purpose; a revenge, which belongs unto him, who has said, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it.

3. Patience under tribulations and afflictions, is a grace, which does exceedingly adorn the doctrine of God our Savior: when we are under any chastisement from the hand of God, or any persecution from the rage and wrath of man, quietly to submit without either repining or murmuring.

A Christian should pass through the world, with as little noise and tumult as may be. Wicked men may roar and swagger in it: it is their country: but it is only a Christian's road, through which he is traveling to his country; and it were a vain and endless thing, should he stop to take up a stone, and cast at every dog that will bark at him in his passage. But, because I have elsewhere treated at large concerning this grace of patience, I shall not farther expatiate here.

4. Humility, and Lowliness of Mind, is a grace, which does mightily adorn the doctrine of Christ.

And, therefore, [1 Peter 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Pet%203.4). It is called the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. A proud, supercilious, self-conceited Christian is a monster in religion. As any exuberance and wen in the body is a great deformity and blemish to it; so these professors, who are high-swoln and puffed up with conceit, are but wens in the body mystical; they are but blisters, which contain nothing in them but ill humours, and bring a great deal of deformity and discredit upon that holy religion which they profess.

There is a twofold pride; childish, and devilish.

A Childish Pride, I call that, which is conversant about the body: through which men adorn that, beyond decency; and then think themselves by so much better than others, by how much their clothes are finer.

A Devilish Pride is that, which lurks within: when men are proud of their excellencies and perfections; proud of their wit, of their judgment, of their elocution, or any other of God's gifts. Yes, and pride is such a rust and canker, as can seize on the purest metals: there may be some proud of their very graces; yes, proud of their very humility.

Now, though the former pride be more ridiculous, yet this latter is more pernicious and baneful; and both are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, and bring a blemish upon the professors of it.

There be Two things in pride, which make it so unlovely: Unsociableness, and Contention.

A proud man is an unsociable man. He looks upon all others as below him, hates a rival, and scorns to have an equal. If all will not veil to his opinion in matters of dispute, or to his humor in matters of practice, he takes himself as affronted by them; and, because he has given himself a kind of sovereignty over others, looks upon himself as wronged, if others will not do so too, and let him control and govern them as the only fit and able person to do it. Hence we may commonly observe, that, though there is a kind of love and delight between all other sinners one towards another; as the drunkard loves his pot-companion, and seeks his company; the thief joins himself in society with those who are thieves, and every one labors to rub his vice upon as many as he can: yet never was it seen that two proud men could agree together: for none is a greater enemy to pride in any but himself, than a proud man; and that, because this is a vice that always seeks superiority and preeminence, which a proud man cannot bear in any but himself.

Again, pride is always contentious, full of strife and brawl. And it must needs be so: for, as tumors and swelling boils in the body are very sore, and the least touch makes them ache and rage; so these swelling, proud men, if they be but at all touched in their repute or interest, yes or but in their fancy and opinion, presently rage and storm, and cannot bear, no not the least thing which they imagine to be an injury done them; for proud flesh is always tender. And, therefore, says the Wise Man, [Proverbs 13:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Prov%2013.10). Only by pride comes contention. Now how unseemly a thing is this intractable humor! how infinitely contrary to the doctrine of Christ! The Apostle commands us, [Philippians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Phil%202.3) that nothing be done out of strife or vain-glory; but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves: a temper, which, when it shall please God to redeem religion from all the contempt and obloquy that is cast upon it, he will inspire into the hearts of professors. I am sure I can see but very little of it abroad in the world: no; we are grown now to that pass, that he is thought the best man, who can find the most fault and make the most strife: and whoever has but wit enough to make a quick and smart reply, begins to think of setting up for himself and being the head of a sect and party, and conceits himself fit to be a judge and controuler of all orders and of all offices, whether civil or sacred. For shame, O Christians! boast not yourselves beyond your own line: if you have any place in the body mystical of Jesus Christ, keep yourselves within your proportion: know your own measures, and your own bounds. If you be an eye, and so can guide the rest of the body; or if you be a hand, and so are useful for the service of the body; whatever be your place, your parts, your gifts, whatever member you are, be not a swoln one: let not pride blister you; for, if you give way to this kind of tumors, you will be so far from being an ornament, that you will only be a blemish and deformity to the body of Christ.

This is a Fourth Grace, which I would recommend to you as adorning the doctrine of God our Savior.

5. Obedience to our Magistrates and Rulers, does exceedingly become the profession of the Gospel.

See what the Apostle says of it, [1 Peter 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Pet%202.12). Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God. But how may this be done? He presently subjoins, verses 13, 14. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors.… sent by him: and observe the reason of this injunction, verse 15. For so is the will of God, that, by well-doing, you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. We ought still to walk by the same rule; and, by our submission and obedience to the powers which God has set over us, make it appear, that religion is not faction; and that, in whatever man's law and God's do not contradict one another, our obeying of man's is but part of our obeying of God's; who has commanded us to be subject unto the higher powers, not only for fear and upon politic respects, but for conscience sake, and has threatened all resistance and opposition with damnation: [Romans 13:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom%2013.1), [2](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%2013.2).

6. It does much adorn the doctrine of Christ, to be just and upright in our dealings with men.

It must needs be a most foul blemish to religion, when those, who profess it, shall pretend to high spiritual enjoyments, and yet neglect the duties of common and moral honesty; and be as unjust towards men, as they would be thought devout towards God. Would to God this blot were as easy to be wiped off, as it is obvious and easy to be observed! it has made religion to stink in the nostrils of profane persons: and wrought in them such an inveterate hatred against all profession of godliness, that now the world flies and avoids all that make show of it as dangerous people; and thinks it not safe to converse with those, who will dare once to talk of convening with God. It is a shame and grief of heart, to hear the blasphemies which are daily uttered against holiness upon this very account: what is more common in men's mouths, than, "Have a care how you deal with such an one! Why, he is a Saint; and will lay his hand upon his heart, and cheat you with a sigh and a 'Truly.' Well, of all men in the world, deliver me from having to do with a Saint!" I would not mention such things as these to you, did I not know them to be ordinary and common reproaches. I beseech you, O Christians, for the Gospel's sake; if not for your own credit, yet if you have any respect left for that piety to which you pretend, if any sense of the reputation of that religion for which you profess you are ready to lay down your very lives, redeem its lost honor; and make it appear to all the world, that Yes and Nay is as true a dealer, as oaths and curses. Consider that dreadful place, [1 Thessalonians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Thess%204.6). Let no man go beyond or defraud his brother in anything; for that the Lord is the avenger of all such: his justice will certainly punish your injustice; and, though you may have an advantage, through the ignorance or easiness of those with whom you deal, to overreach them, yet, believe it, there is a day coming, wherein the false weights shall be themselves weighed, and the scanty measures be themselves meted by a standard that is infallibly true. Possibly, your bargains and contracts may proceed so with those, who are persuaded to trust you, because of your profession, that they can have no advantage to recover their right by Law: beware you give them no occasion to rail at the Gospel; nor to accuse themselves of folly, for thinking that a professor could be an honest man. Remember, there is a day coming, wherein a thousand witnesses shall be produced to testify what agreements and compacts you have made: all accounts shall be balanced, and so much found resting due, which you shall certainly pay, though not to those whom you have wronged, yet to the justice of God, who is the Great and Universal Creditor: he is the avenger of all those, who, by wronging others in their estates, wrong them most of all in their souls, and embitter their hearts against that religion and profession which deluded them. Especially, the scandal is so much the more gross, and the wound that religion receives the more incurable; when rapine, and extortion, and injustice, shall be done under pretense of advancing the Gospel, and promoting the honor and glory of God: what is this else, but to bring him into a partnership with them, and to make him the receiver of their thefts? to transgress the law, that we might please the Lawgiver; and to be wicked for God's sake? as if it were a service done to him, to make use of the First Table of the Law to break the Second in pieces; and, that to be zealous towards God, required we should be unjust towards men. Let it appear, by your equity and justice towards all with whom you deal, that you do indeed believe that Gospel which you profess; and which teaches you to despise whatever this world offers, at the price, either of a sin against your religion, or of a reproach upon it.

7. It does mightily adorn the doctrine of God our Savior, as to be just and upright in our dealings with men, so as not to overreach and defraud them in what is theirs; so neither to be too rigorous and strict, in exacting what is our own.

We ought, in some cases, jure nostro cedere, "to part with our own right;" and, rather than be contentious, to sit down by the loss of what others unjustly take from us. Whereas those, who will strain their right to the utmost extent, and still have recourse to the summum jus, "the most rigid exaction of whatever they can lay claim to," if they turn not justice into oppression, yet they turn it into wormwood, as the Prophet speaks, and make it bitter and unpleasing: if they do not injury to others, yet certainly they injure themselves; and they injure the reputation of that religion they profess, which requires us not to stand upon punctilios, but to give a meek concession one to another; and votes him, who yields, both to have the better cause and to be the better man. And yet I do not condemn, where violence and injustice deprive us of what is necessary to the sustentation of life; where what they take from us is more than we can well spare, without some notable inconvenience: I do not, I say, condemn those, who seek to recover their own by legal and allowed courses: in this case, I know the law is good, if it be lawfully used: and therefore the Apostle (1 Corinthians 6:1. Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?) condemns not suing for our right, but suing for it in such a manner as to bring a shame and scandal upon the Gospel: he forbids them, in any case of difference among themselves, to have recourse to the heathen tribunals for justice; but would have other Christians to take up the matter, and compound it between them: they must not bring such a disparagement upon religion, as that the Heathens should ever know there were any differences and contentions among Christians; and therefore they must not plead for right in their courts, but choose out some of their most prudent brethren to be arbitrators and umpires between them, standing to their award. So, now, it is a great discredit to Christianity, for those, who profess it, to be always quarreling about small things; and those little concerns, which though they may belong to them, yet it does not belong to Christians to be contentious about them: when men shall stand upon every trivial right, and, rather than part with the least that they can call theirs, will embroil themselves and others in troublesome and endless suits; this argues, that they have not such mean thoughts of the world, as the doctrine of Christ requires, since they prefer any small and petty concern of it before Christian peace and quietness, which the Gospel has highly recommended.

Our Savior has given us our rule in this case: [Matthew. 5:40](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt.%205.40). If any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also: and, in the verse foregoing, Resist not evil; but whoever will smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Now because these places seem to contain something peculiar to the doctrine of Christ, I think I shall not much digress, if I give you a brief comment and interpretation of them.

Resist not evil: that is, you, who are but private men, forbear to vindicate and right yourselves according to your own discretion: for passion and self-love may make you immoderate, and cause the revenge to be far greater than the offence. But, if the injury be greater than is fit to be borne, this does not forbid you to have recourse to the magistrate, for he bears not the sword in vain. Revenge is an untamed thing: and it is well for mankind, that God has challenged it to himself; Vengeance belongs unto me, says the Lord; and has appointed magistrates, whom he calls gods, committing to them the dispensation of temporal vengeance, reserving to himself the dispensation of eternal.

Yes, so far must we be from being judges in our own cause, that our Savior adds, Whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also; which must not be understood as literally obliging us: for neither Christ himself, nor his Apostle Paul, invited the injuries which were done them; but rather sharply reproved those, who unjustly smote them. To turn the cheek, therefore, signifies nothing else, but to bear patiently the affronts which are done us: and so we have it, [Lamentations 3:30](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Lam%203.30). He gives the cheek to him, that smites him: and so it is prophesied of Christ, [Isaiah 50:6](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Isa%2050.6) that he should give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair: that is, he should suffer meekly and patiently those indignities, which were done unto him. All, that either the example or precept of Christ lays upon us, is, to bear such personal injuries calmly, and to be willing rather to suffer a second than to revenge the first. And this is far enough from that sense, which that scoffing apostate Julian put upon the words, when, commanding some Christians who were brought before him to be buffeted, he asked them in scorn, "why they did not follow the commands of their Master, who bid them turn the other cheek also?"

It follows: If any man will sue you at law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. Neither must this be understood according to the letter, as if we were bound to reward those, who injure us: but, thus much it teaches us; that, about small matters, things which we can easily be without or else easily procure, as a coat, or a garment, or the like, we should not be contentious; but rather recede from our right, than rigorously pursue it with strife and quarrels.

And, truly, this is a temper worthy of Christians. But how rarely is it to be found! Pride, and passion, and self-interest have, now-a-days, eaten out the meekness, charity, and patience of a Christian Spirit. Many hot professors there are, who, with Peter, are ready to pray for fire to come down from Heaven, and consume those who offer them the least injury: and many, who are more ready to take from others what is justly theirs, than to yield up anything of their own to the unjust possession of others: many, who would rather smite on both cheeks, than suffer on one. Certainly, Christian meekness is perished from the earth: and, if we would find any remarkable examples of it, we must turn over the ancient monuments of the Primitive Church; for our latter ages can furnish us with very few. Be persuaded, Christians, to bring this again into practice. Nothing will more commend your religion, nor set it off to the esteem of others, than this: for, when they shall see you bear notorious wrongs and affronts, with a conquering patience; when they shall see you part with your right rather than strive about it, and willingly forego those things wherein others place a great part of their content and felicity: what must the world conclude, but that certainly these men have a most excellent religion; a religion, doubtless, that assures them of far better and more excellent things than these, since it can prevail with them so easily to give up their concerns, which ethers so highly value! And, indeed, upon this very score, the Apostle sets it, [Hebrews 10:34](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Heb%2010.34). You … took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance.

This is the last particular duty, on which I shall insist, as adorning the Gospel. Many others there are, too numerous indeed to be severally discoursed of: as the filling up of our relations with the duties appertaining to them; self-denial, and a holy contempt of this world; charity and liberality, in relieving the necessities of others; a mutual forbearing to censure and judge one another, a sin that mightily abounds in this age, wherein every one thinks so much the better of himself, by how much the worse he thinks of others; a cheerful contented spirit under every dispensation of God's providence towards us; with several others, which I cannot now stand to treat of particularly.

And thus I have dispatched the Doctrinal part of this subject: and shown you, both what it is to adorn the doctrine of Christ; and, likewise, how a holy and pious life, that is conformable to the precepts of our religion, does it in general, and in particular.

III. All, that remains farther to be done, is to EXHORT you thus to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things; that, as you have taken up the name and profession of the Christian Religion, so you would walk worthy of both, and of the vocation with which you are called.

Sensible I am, that the temptations, which lie against a strict and gospel-conversation, are many and discouraging. The careless examples of those, whom we yet think well of; the enmity of the world, which lies in wickedness, and will be sure to hate those, who, by being more severe and precise than themselves, upbraid their crimes; the reluctance of the flesh against a doctrine, which engages us to subdue and mortify it; the rigor and difficulty of Christ's precepts, and vain hopes and presumptions of God's indulgence: are, all of them, such powerful orators, that he, who would carry it against all these, had need use very forcible motives; such as should not only persuade, but compel; and give such reasons, as should not only convince, but necessitate. But this not being in the power of man, I shall only show you how reasonable this exhortation is, notwithstanding all the prejudices that lie against it; and doubt not, but I shall speak so much on the behalf of strict piety and godliness, that murmurings and repinings shall be the only objection left, which I must leave to the efficacious persuasions of the Holy Spirit to remove and answer.

The grounds of all, I shall lay in Two particulars:

That the profession of the doctrine of Christ, is most rational.

That it is most rational we should live according to the profession we make.

i. The FIRST I shall but briefly speak unto, because I take it as granted by all of us.

Yes, even those lewd, profane wretches, who hate the professors of religion and godliness and make them their sport and scorn, yet have not the profligate impudence to avow that it is for their profession; but pretend it is for their hypocrisy, because they do not act suitably thereunto. Yes, the very Devil himself is forced to acknowledge, that this is the doctrine, which shows unto us the way of life and salvation: [Acts 16:17](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2016.17). All other religions in the world are nothing else but a fardel of ridiculous fopperies; which the Devil could never have imposed on mankind, did he not love to make men fools, and to triumph over their reason as well as their souls.

The excellency of this doctrine of Christ appears in these Three things:

In the Sublimeness of the Mysteries which it teaches.

In the Purity of the Duties which it enjoins.

In the Transcendency of the Rewards which it promises.

1. Its Mysteries are most sublime and lofty.

And, no wonder, for in them is contained the manifold wisdom of God. A Trinity in Unity; the incarnation of the Son of God; that the Immortal God should die, and that, by his death, he should give life to the world; that his blood and sufferings should satisfy divine justice, and expiate our offences; and, indeed, the whole method of redemption, are mysteries, which far surmount the highest flight of reason: and yet are therefore the more rational, and do the more oblige us to believe them, because the same reason tells us, that that cannot be the wisdom of God, which may be comprehended by the weakness and foolishness of man.

2. Its Precepts are most holy and pure.

As for the idolatrous worship of the Heathens, it was barbarous, and commonly cruel or obscene; insomuch that Cato, though it was the only religion which he knew, was ashamed to be present at its solemnities. And, for the Jewish Religion, so much of it as is not incorporated into the Gospel, though there were nothing in it dishonest nor unlawful; yet it consisted in external observations, as circumcision, and sacrifices, and ablutions, which God in wisdom imposed upon them to amuse and busy them about the ceremonies of their own religion, who were so naturally prone to fall into the idolatry of others. But the doctrine of Christ teaches us to worship Him, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth; to employ ourselves in those works, which have an innate and inseparable goodness in them: it requires us not to circumcise our flesh, but our hearts; not to offer up blood of bulls and goats unto God, but even our own, if it be necessary, in bearing witness to the truth and for the glory of God; not to wash our garments or our cups, but to cleanse ourselves from all pollutions both of the flesh and spirit; not Scrupulously to abstain from some kinds of meats, but temperately to abstain from excess in any kind of them. This is the doctrine, which commands us to trust God with all our affairs, to, take his promises for security, to love and fear him who is infinitely good and infinitely great, as the whole of that service which he requires from us. This alone reaches to our thoughts, and to our affections: and lays the axe to the very root of our vices; judging those secret motions of our souls, which are unaccountable to any but God alone; condemning rash anger for murder, and an unchaste glance for adultery; and, penetrating into the inmost recesses of the heart, ransacks and censures all the wickednesses that lie latent there. And this shows that it is excellent above all other doctrines in the world, and only divine.

3. Its Rewards are most transcendent.

That, which neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, God has prepared for those that love him. Other religions either speak doubtfully of a future reward, or else promise such an one as is mean and sordid; sensual rewards, fitted for brutish religions: but our Savior Christ, after he has commanded us to love God, promises us the eternal fruition of the God we love; promises no less for the reward of our love, than the object of it; assures us, that, after a short life spent here in his service, we shall be released from all the miseries and troubles of this life, and received up to a better; where all our hopes shall be crowned, our desires satisfied, all our past labors fully recompensed; where both soul and body, as they have been here partners together in serving God, so shall be partakers together of inconceivable happiness, our souls irradiated with the clear vision of God, our bodies irradiated with the brightness of our souls, and both forever to remain in eternal joy and glory.

This is the religion, and the doctrine of God our Savior.

And, judge now, whether it be not most rational to profess it. Were there any other, that were either so mysterious in its revelations, so pure in its precepts, or so excellent in its promises, the world were not much to be blamed if it should adhere unto that: but, when all others, so far forth as they differ from this doctrine of Christ, are but rude and beggarly elements, enjoining either what is impure or unnecessary; and promising rewards abject and sordid, some of which reason itself teaches us to hate, and some to despise; then, certainly, it will follow, that, if it be not folly to embrace and profess any religion at all, it is folly not to embrace and profess this. But, there are some deep impressions and characters engraved upon natural conscience; of the notion of a deity and a supreme power, who ought to be feared and served by us; and that it is altogether as necessary for us to be religious, in some way or other, as to be men. Many practical atheists there are, even among Christians themselves, who live as without God in the world: many such fools, who say in their hearts, There is no God; who, by having loose and erroneous opinions of a deity, serve him not as he requires: but, for a contemplative atheist, that shall set it down as his deliberate and resolved judgment, that there is no God, I very much doubt whether any instance can be given of such an one. Now, then, if, to embrace some religion be so natural and rational, if all other religions in the world fall infinitely short of the excellency of the doctrine of Christ, it remains, that it is most rational for us to believe and profess this doctrine: to own it to all the world, that we are Christians; and that the Holy Scriptures, wherein are contained all the precepts of our religion, are the rule by which we are to walk. Let us not spare openly to profess this, and to make it our continual employment to discourse of the precepts and constitutions of our Savior's doctrine, for fear of being scorned as professors or hated as hypocrites: for, certainly, if this doctrine be in itself most excellent, the possession of it must needs be most rational; and they are only weak or malicious fools, who speak either against the one or the other.

ii. As the Profession of the doctrine of Christ is most rational, SO IT IS MOST RATIONAL TO LIVE ANSWERABLY TO SUCH A PROFESSION.

If it be most rational to profess it, then certainly it is most rational to practice it; unless we intend to be only wise in notion, and fools indeed. What excuse can such men plead for themselves, at the dreadful Day of Judgment? Must they not needs be self-condemned, condemned out of their own mouths and by their own profession, when those things, which they have owned to be most excellent, have been most neglected by them? and that God and that Savior, whom they have professed with their lips, they have denied in their lives?

Suffer me to lay before you these following considerations.

1. Consider, that the profession, without the practice of religion, is but mere hypocrisy; and hypocrisy is the greatest folly in the world.

The hypocrite dallies and plays with God; and thinks to conceal himself from those eyes, before which all things are open and bare: which is infinitely more foolish, than if one should go hide himself in a net. You infinitely disparagest that God, whom you pretend to serve: for, while you lift up your eyes or your hands to him, while you flatterest him with your mouth and yet your heart is far estranged from him, you do but cast a reflection upon your God; as one, that is so weak, as to be pleased and put off with fair words and empty shows. What base and unworthy apprehensions of his Divine Majesty must needs lie lurking in your heart, while you think to cover over an ungodly, unholy life, with pretenses of piety and devotion! you votest with those, [Psalm 94:7](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ps%2094.7). The Lord shall not see, neither shall the Holy One of Jacob regard it. A hypocrite must deny, either the omniscience of God, or his justice; and, at least tacitly, conclude, either that he takes no notice of his sins, or that he will not punish them: and, so, is worse than an atheist: for, as Plutarch, though a Heathen, speaks well, That it would be a less injury done him, if any should absolutely deny that ever there was such a man as Plutarch, than if he should grant that indeed such an one there is, but that he is a fool, or unjust, or vicious, etc.; so, says he, They speak not so ill of God, who deny there is such a being, as they do, who acknowledge him, but yet think him unwise or unholy. This, every hypocrite does; who, while he professes there is a God, and gives this God some external homage and service, and yet will dare to be loose and vain in his conversation, unjust and oppressive in his dealings, must needs believe, either that this God does not see him, or will not revenge. But, you fools, when will you be wise? He, that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he, that formed the eye, shall he not see? He, that chastises the heathen, shall not he correct? he, that teaches man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vain: [Psalm 94:8–11](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ps%2094.8%C3%A2%C2%80%C2%9311). Does not your religion represent God to you as the searcher of the heart, and trier of the reins? as a God, who looks quite through you, and discerns every breathing of a thought and of a desire in you? as an all-seeing and all-knowing God, who will bring every secret and hidden thing into open and public judgment? Live, then, according to these truths: live as always under the eye and observation of your God; as one, who are accountable to him, not only for the more remarkable actions of your life, but for every cogitation of your heart, and every the least motion of your soul; or, else, you prove yourself to be a very fool, in not believing a religion which you do profess, or else in not practicing a religion which you do believe.

2. Consider: Your profession has beautified and adorned you: it has honored you in the esteem of all serious and sober persons; who think well and speak well of you, because of that profession and appearance of piety and godliness, which is in you.

Now, as your profession of the doctrine of Christ has commended you to the esteem and acceptance of good men; so do you commend that doctrine to the esteem of evil and wicked men, by a life altogether suitable to the precepts of it. Sadden not the hearts of the children of God, by your miscarriages: they have received you as a brother, and as a fellow-member with them of the same body mystical: approve yourself, by the continued holiness of your life, to be worthy the repute which they give you. Never think to maintain it by any hypocritical, dissembling arts: a rotten limb will at last fall off, and stink in all their nostrils: if your profession be not sound, your apostasy will be most certain. Keep up the credit of that religion among wicked men, which has given you so much credit among the good: let them never have an occasion, through your miscarriages, to open their black mouths, and to blaspheme the holy and reverend name of God.

3. Consider: There is no other way left to redeem and vindicate the lost credit of your religion, but by a life suitable to the precepts of it.

Its honor lies bleeding, and is insulted over by wicked men; who scorn and deride it, who triumph in its disgraces, and ask, "What now is become of your God, and of your godliness?" Christians, if you have any kindness for either, show the profane world, that, even in this languishing state of religion, yet there is beauty and luster enough left in it, to dazzle the eyes of all who look maliciously upon it.

(1) Redeem its credit, as to the Doctrines of it.

Be not giddy, wavering, and uncertain; but sound in the faith: not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. Let not every glaring delusion, every skipping light, every whiffling pretender to new notions, pervert your minds with good words and fair speeches, which the Apostle gives as the character of a company of deceivers in his days, [Romans 16:18](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom%2016.18) and agrees but too well with a great many in ours. The errors and heresies, which have thus crept in, have torn the church in pieces; and each sect and opinion has gained so many proselytes, that, between them, they have made a great many atheists; who, seeing that Christians are not yet agreed what to believe, will themselves believe nothing; and, knowing that many tenets in vogue are false and absurd, are strongly tempted to reject all, even those that are true: as Averroes, that learned commentator upon Aristotle, refused to become a Christian, because of that monstrous error of Transubstantiation; and gave this reason for it, Cùm Christiani adorant quod comedunt, sit anima mea cum Philosophis: "Since the Christians eat what they adore, let my soul be among the Philosophers." Now, Christians, retrieve this lost honor of your religion; and let it appear, by your holding fast the form of sound words, that the doctrine of Christ is certain in the principles which it teaches; and that the truths of it are built upon such clear evidence, that neither the subtlety of those who lie in wait to deceive, nor yet the malice of those who oppugn them, could ever shake or make you forego your belief.

(2) Redeem the credit of religion, as to the Duties which it commands.

Let it appear, that the most severe duties which it imposes upon you, as mortification, self-denial, contempt of the world in its pleasures, profits, and honors, are not so unreasonable nor impossible, as the world takes them to be, by your constant and cheerful performance of them. Recover again that credit, which others, or perhaps you yourselves, have formerly made it lose through a loose and vain conversation, by your holiness and strictness for the time to come. Convince the world, that debauchery is not necessary; and that the doctrine of Christ was not given, only to take up your more serious or melancholy hours: but that it is an universal rule for the guidance of your whole life, and that it has an influence into all your actions. Until you do this, religion must needs suffer and bleed; and, I pray God, it may not utterly expire, and die among us.

(4) Consider, for your encouragement, that, if you thus adorn the doctrine of Christ, it will forever adorn you; and, as you have made it glorious in the world, it will make you forever glorious in Heaven.

This is the reward, which it promises. It will put a wreath of beams, a diadem of stars, a crown of glory upon your heads: Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father: [Matthew 13:43](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%2013.43). And therefore those, who are careful to adorn the doctrine of Christ, are but like those, who put ornaments and hang jewels on those clothes, which themselves are to wear: the beauty and luster, which reflect from them all, redound to themselves. So we are promised, [1 Samuel 2:30](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Sam%202.30). Them, that honor me, I will honor. And, to shut up all, consider that place of the Apostle, [Galatians 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gal%206.16). As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.