

SERMON XXI.

PHILIP. I. 27.

Only let your Conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ.

Ministers of the Gospel *Gregor. Nyssen* compareth to *March 19.*
 Schoolmasters, who as they have different natures
 162½.
 and tempers to deal with, so they should have Wis-
 dom to observe it, and accommodate themselves ac-
 cordingly. Sure our blessed Apostle had, and therefore knew
 when to comfort and encourage, and on the contrary, when he
 had just occasion durst both chide and strike. So he had a *Rqd*
 for the unruly *Corinthians*, 1 *Cor.* 4. 21. and if the *Galatians*
 will play the Truants in Christ's School, slide back from the
 Truth of the Gospel, he will not be Tongue-tied. O foolish
Galatians, who hath bewitched you? Chap. 3. 1. But let the *Thes-*
salonians receive the Word with joy, and practise it so as they be-
 come Examples to others, 1 *Thes.* 1. 6. 7. Then instead of chi-
 ding, you shall hear him boasting of them. What is our hope and
 joy, or Crown of rejoycing? Are not ye? &c. 1 *Thess.* 2. 19. And
 for our *Philippians*, let them at the first entertain the Gospel, *Act.*
 16. and continue stedfast in that Fellowship, *Philip.* 1. 5. at the
 first when he parted from *Macedonia*, let them communicate to his
 wants, Chap. 4. 15. and once and again, when he was at *Thessa-*
lonica, v. 16. and now again, when he is Prisoner at *Rome*, let
 their love flourish again (v. 10.) in sending to him by *Epaphroditus*,
 (v. 18, 19.) their debt to the *αλ*, something to sustain their Ghostly
 Father, who could not now provide for himself (which was the
 occasion of his writing this Epistle) and then he cannot mention
 or remember them, but he must thank God for them, Chap. 1. 3.
 Yea then they are his *ἀγαπῶντες ἐπ' αὐτῷ*, Chap. 4. 1. His dear-
 ly beloved, and longed for, his Joy and Crown. And therefore though
 he cannot for the present come and bring his thanks, yet he hopes
 he shall ere-long, and mean-while from Prison (which the Church
 of God is beholden to for most of his Epistles, as *Bez.* well ob-
 serves) he writes and sends this as an acknowledgment of their love,
 A a a and

and as a *token of his own*. But lest any should say βῆς ἐπὶ γλῶτ-
 τῶν, or think that their Gift was like a School-boys Nosegay
 which he giveth to his Master to save him from a whipping, and
 his Gain the Cause why he was so indulgent, as in particular he
 professeth against it, *Chap. 4.* So the general carriage of this Chap-
 ter plainly sheweth, that for all their bounty he would not make
 them wantons, and therefore after the Inscription and Congra-
 tulation in the 11 first Verses of this Chapter, which is the first
 part of it, and a Narration of the success and event of his af-
 fections from the 12th to the 27th, which is the second part;
 there is a third part begun in the Text, and continued in the se-
 quel of the Epistle; wherein he calleth for something else, which
 would be far more acceptable to him than their former benefi-
 cence, in general set down in the words I have read. μόνον ἁγίστῃ
 ἐναγγελίᾳ τῇ χρεῖσθ' πολιτεύεσθε. *Only let your Conversation be*
such, as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.

The first word μόνον being a corrective, and a transitive Par-
 ticle, may accordingly have a double reference: either to his
 coming again to them immediately before spoken of, which whe-
 ther it did afterward come to pass I say not, because I find the
 judgments of Interpreters different about it. His own words
 are πεποιθὲς διδα, vi. 25. and they sound a confident assurance;
 and yet here, as correcting himself, or rather as passing it by, as
 though he had said, *verum de me videris Dominus*, &c. as Calvin
 expresseth it; What-ever becomes of me, I leave that to God,
 only do you your duty, *Only let your Conversation be such as be-*
cometh the Gospel: or if we take it transitively, whereby he pas-
 seth from the Preface of his Epistle to the Body of it, as divers
 Interpreters think, and refer it to all that went before, then it
 would plainly mean thus much, That whereas God hath done
 great things for you (which are set down in the former part of the
 Chapter) hath brought you to the *fellowship of the Gospel*, and so
 hath begun a *good work in you*, and will perfect it to the *day of Christ*,
 hath turned my afflictions (which otherwise you might have
 stumbled at) to the *furtherance of the Gospel*, and hath purposed
 to free me from my Bonds for the *furtherance of your Edification*
and Comfort; seeing, I say, that God hath done so much for his
 part, *Quod reliquum est*, &c. that which is now wanting lieth
 upon you to look to, and that, *only that you have your Conver-*
sation so as may become the Gospel of Christ.

But

But to leave that relative consideration of the words ; in them absolutely considered we have these particulars.

1. Something to be ruled ; That's *their Conversation*, πολιτεύεσθε.

2. The Rule, and that's the *Gospel of Christ*.

3. And thirdly the Agreement, which must be betwixt their Conversation and this Rule, in that word *ἀξίως* only let your Conversation be *as becomes* the Gospel of Christ.

For the first, the thing to be ruled, *their Conversation*. The word πολιτεύομαι here used properly signifieth to govern a City or Common-wealth, and thence cometh to signify a man's governing himself, whether in publick or private. And though I confess the word πολιτεία in the Greek Fathers commonly signifies a Mans behaviour and carriage in general, as likewise this Verb πολιτεύομαι, *Acts* 23. 1. Where Paul saith, *Men and Brethren, ἐγὼ ἐν πάσῃ συνειδήσει ἀγαθῇ πεπολιτευμαι τὰς θεῶν*, and therefore translated, *I have lived in all good Conscience before God*; yet I cannot say, but that both here and in other places it hath some reference to Men we converse with, and therefore though not excluding our inward and spiritual service to Godward, yet especially intending our carriage towards others, *our Conversation* (as ours translate it) in civil and Christian Society.

2. Now the *Gospel of Christ* is the Rule our *Conversation* must be squared by, that second & better Covenant, which Christ is both the *Preacher and Subject* of ; and therefore here called *His Gospel*.

3. Which they and we all must *walk worthy of*. So the words sound *ἀξίως πολιτεύεσθε*. Nor would some proud Justiciary stick pethaps hence to ground the worth and merit of his *good works* and *meanings*. Nor do I deny but this word signifieth so much in some other cases, but not in this. No, Beloved : In this sence we *are not worthy of the Crums that fall from God's Table* (as our Church confesseth) and therefore much less of these dainties, which we have before prophesied of, *Isa.* 25. 6. *Ἀξίως*, then, is as much as *ut convenit*, as *Beza*, *quemadmodum decet*, according to the Syriack Interpreter, *convenienter & competenter*, as *Musculus*, or *pro dignitate*, as others have it ; that is, as is convenient, and fitting, as becometh and will be for the honour of the Gospel ; that our lives and the Gospel should be like two Tallies agreeing in every thing, or (as the word *ἀξίως* as it cometh of *ἄγω* signifieth) as though our lives and the Gospel being put into two Ballances were in *equilibrio* not for equality of

worth or weight, but for fitness and correspondency. And so I take it includes these two, both which our English word *becometh* here used includeth.

1. That our lives should be answerable and agreeable.

2. And thence (in the second place) such as will not disgrace and dishonour, but become *and adorn the Gospel of Christ*, which we profess. And that's the duty which the Apostle here commends to his Philippians, and I now to your consideration and practise.

A duty, we might think, which every ingenuous temper would be soon moulded to, that calls on him for no more, than that he would *walk worthy* of himself and his Profession; especially our complete Moralists, who often strive more for good carriage than a good Conscience, and we above all, who labour (perhaps some times too earnestly) to be *dignified Men*; I wish it were always in the Apostles sense, when he calleth on us to *walk worthy of the Gospel*. But something sure there is in it that he so urgeth it, makes it his *only thing* here; and elsewhere becometh earnest suiter for it, *παρακαλῶ ἐν ὑμῶς ἀξίως περιπατεῖσαι*, *I beseech you that you would walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith you are called*, Ephes. 4. 1. is so earnest for it, that he useth all means to effect it by Exhortations, Consolations, Obtestations, *παρακαλῶντες, παραμυθόμενοι, μαρτυρούμενοι*; that they would *walk worthy* not only of the Gospel, but of God himself, who had called them to his Kingdom and Glory, 1 Thess. 2. 11, 12. And therefore for the further opening of it, give me leave briefly to shew,
1. Wherein this *worthy behaviour* especially consists, and then,
2. The Arguments couched in the Text, which may move all to endeavour after it, that so we may better urge it in the Application.

For the first therefore in general; The Scripture often makes mention of a certain *σεμνότης* and *εὐχημοσύνη*, which is ordinarily translated *Honesty*, but signifieth generally that τὸ ὀρέπον, that decent and holy carriage of a Christian; which the Apostle not only here, but again in the fourth Chapter of this Epistle points at in his *ὅσα σεμνὰ, ὅσα ἀγνὰ, ὅσα προσφιλῆ, ὅσα εὐφημα* &c. *Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these things.* A sufficient commentary upon this ἀξίως περιπατεῖτε.

But yet more particularly; As the Spouse hath both an Eye and a Chain, wherewith she ravisheth the Heart of her Saviour,
Cant.

Cant. 4. 6. so I conceive one part of this *Conversation* consists in that outward grave sober and amiable behaviour, which becometh all, but especially a Christian, which the Apostle brings the *Corinthians* to Epist. 1. Chap. 11. 13. *Judge in your selves, is it comely, &c.* which goeth through all both Vertues and Graces, and giveth a splendor to all: nor yet only that which Ethicks help the Moralist to, but a Christian decency made up of gravity and amiableness; the one arising from a serious and settled course of Godliness, and the other from inward peace of Conscience, there being a Calm within, and therefore there must needs be a Serenity without. And truly why should the Gospel only make Men untoward? or why should professors of it be especially blamed for bad natures and harsh carriages? Seeing *Plato's* Divinity was, that *Pulchrum & Bonum* were the same, and the same word signifieth both; why should they be severed in us that profess more Divine Philosophy? Not that I doubted that many such imputations are false of many Men; accounting it unmannerliness and frowardness, when the Godly will *not run with them into the same excess of Riot*; Nor that I condemned all, whose natural dispositions are more rough, and so their carriage in this respect less amiable. No I know the Lord had use of *John Baptist's* more retired and austere, as well as of our Saviour's more amiable and pleasing behaviour; Nor did he that first preached in that regard at first blemish the Gospel.

And yet I must needs say that the *Lacedemonians* prayed well, when they desired of God, *ut pulchra cum bonis iis tribueret*; and it would be well if Christians now would joyn both. For if it be that, by which an Animal exceeds that which is Inanimate, that together with *bonum* it can *appetere pulchrum*, which the Inanimate skills not of; let it never be that, in which a Christian shall be inferiour to another, that whatever care he hath for the *lawfulness*, yet he should have none for the *decency* of his behaviour. If *Aristotle's* happy Man is always attended upon with his *Pulchritudo* and *Gratia*, It's pity that our blessed Man should want either. But this is only the *Chain about the Spouses Neck*; the *Fringe* of that Garment that makes a Christians Profession and behaviour comely & glorious. And indeed were this all the Grace that could commend him or the Gospel, we might well say of it, as some of them did of theirs, that it were *eburneum detrimentum*; the painting only of (perhaps) a foul Face, not a *vital fulgor*, by which they use to define true Beauty.

2. And therefore, as they use to say, that *Gratia est vitale, quod & spirituale*; so (in the second place) there is a more *spiritual* and *live* Beauty, which addeth lustre to a Christian's both Life and Profession. I mean true sanctifying *Grace*, which makes both himself, & whatsoever proceedeth from him in this sense truly *Gracious*. And that this becometh the Gospel of Grace, we may be assured it's not the Pope's triple-Crown, nor the Cardinal's Scarlet, nor the Papist's excessive pomp in their service, no nor their speaking and writing for the honour of it, that commends it to the World so much as the faithful expressing the Life and Power of it in our Lives and Carriage; for, before most of these were heard of, what was the reason that a few mean Fishermen and others of the like condition could ever have been able to lead the whole World Captive, even *compel all to come in*, and to *subject* themselves to the *professed obedience of the Gospel*? Was it not, because that Christ and his Spirit (as he had promised them) was with them? not only in their Preaching, but also in their Carriage and Behaviour, so that they who otherwise were contemned as base, and accused as *deceivers*, could yet *commend themselves to Mens Consciences* though not to their lusts; that they could appeal both to God and Man in this case; *Ye are Witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we have behaved our selves among you that believe*, 1 Theff. 2. 10. So that though in other respects men looked at them as *the filth and off-scouring of the World*, yet in *this* they were *the Glory of Christ*, 2 Cor. 8. 23. In a word, so many Graces are as so many Jewels that *adorn the Gospel*, and make the Spouse of Christ *glorious*. So there is a *Beauty of Holiness*, Psal. 29. 2. yea, a Majesty, and that's more. Thus by *Faith the Elders received a good Report*, Heb. 11. 2. And by true saving Wisdom, Solomon assureth us, we shall receive *στέφανον καὶ τῶν*, as the Septuagint, *a Crown of Glory*, as ours read it, Prov. 4. 9. Every particular Grace is part of a Christians Beauty. But as they use to say *Pulchritudo non est partii, sed compositi*; so the perfection of Beauty ariseth from *all Graces*, and a *Perfection in all*. Which, though we cannot here attain to, yet if we strive after it what we can, we shall surely procure either love or reverence. If the *Amisbleness* of Holiness will not *allure*; the *Majesty* of it will *daunt* the proudest Scorners; and why may it not allure the most obstinate, seeing it wins Grace in God's Eyes, and therefore may justly challenge it in ours? And here now I might open such a Cabinet of precious Jewels, I mean

2 Cor. 4. 2.

mean so many several Graces, as were they put on, and worn by us, would so beautify every part of a Christian, that you should not see a *Mordecai* riding on *Abasuerus* Horse with his Imperial Robes and Crown, or another *Joseph* with *Pharaoh's* Ring on his Hand, and a *Chain of Gold* about his Neck, with the People bowing the Knee, and crying *Abrek*; but a Man of God, *partaker of the Divine Nature*, and well-nigh already glorified, and so both himself and his profession glorious in the Eyes of God, and Angels. But all these curious pieces I have not now leisure to view; many of them you may in the following Chapters of this Epistle. I shall content my self with two; which the Apostle unfolds in the latter part of this Verse, in which he useth a Metaphor taken from an Army, in which two things are required for the comeliness and safeguard of it; Unity amongst themselves; and Valour in beating back the adversary. Proportionable to which, two things he telleth us will become us in our warfare.

1. Mutual Love, *that you stand fast in one Spirit with one Mind.*

2. Constancy and perseverance in the Profession of the Truth; *striving together for the Faith of the Gospel.*

In the first place therefore for Love and Unity. How well it suits with the Gospel we may conceive, in that it's called the *Gospel of Peace*, Ephes. 6. 15. And therefore agreeth not with our Heart-burnings and Dissensions: Brings us glad tidings of our reconciliation with God, and therefore, as *Joseph* to his Brethren, bids us *take heed we fall not out by the way*. Thus we see, it fits well; and would it not be as comely as sitting? Yes, surely. And therefore our Saviour makes one part of his Spouses Beauty, that *her Teeth are like a Flock of Sheep, whereof every one beareth Twins*, as well to express Love as Fruitfulness. And was it not this true-hearted Love, in having all things common, in continuing (ὁμοθυμαδόν) with one accord in the Temple, in eating their Meat with gladness and in singleness of Heart, and the like, which made those first Christians (Acts 2. 46, 47) *have favour with all the people*; that, because the multitude of them that believed were of one Heart and one Soul, therefore great Grace was upon them all, Acts 4. 32, 33? And the same, believe it, would be upon us all, if we, as they, according to the Apostle's Exhortation here, would now stand ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ λύχῃ in one Spirit; that is, having one and the same spirit of Grace dwelling

ling in us, and thence *with one Mind, Will and Affection*; or, *in one Spirit*, (as some expound it) *in one Judgment*: not *one Paul*, and *another Apollos*, not some *Lutherans*, and others *Calvinists*, not some *Remonstrants*, and others *Contra-Remonstrants*; but all of one mind in Christ: for as they use to say of an unnatural Birth that hath two Heads, if it have but one Heart, though it be to be taken for one Man, yet it is a Monster: So as long as we have *one Heart*, and agreeing in the main we may *grow up into one Man*: yet, it as many *Heads*, there be so many *Opinions and Judgments*, it will be, if not unnatural and monstrous, yet, I am sure ungracious and unseemly. For we should *stand ἐν ἐνὶ ψυχῇ*, and withal *ἐν μιᾷ ψυχῇ* with one Soul and loving affection to each other, without hatred and variance, and strife and seditions, in the Bowels of Mercy and meekness, and tender affection, *forbearing and forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*; which if we did, and were thus knit together in Judgment and Affection, how much it would adorn and advantage the Gospel, I say not, because I cannot sufficiently. Yet this I can, that however bodily and outward comeliness may be called (as it is) *Concors discordia, & amica inimicitia*, yet in this inward and spiritual Beauty *Plato's Divinity* is again true, that makes *Unum and Pulchrum* the same; a chief part of it consisting in this Holy Unity and Uniformity.

2. Which adds strength likewise to that other Grace of constancy and Perseverance in the Profession of the Truth, when we do not only stand together, but *stand fast, and fight for the Faith of the Gospel*, as our Apostle addeth. Which how answerable it is likewise to the Gospel, this only were sufficient to manifest, in that it shews what Christ endured for us, and therefore may justly call on us to indure something for him; and truly if it bring to us *the sure mercies of David*, we should not be answerable to it, if we should prove flinchers. If it be an *everlasting Gospel*, *Revel. 14. 6.* It would be very unfit that we should be like those *περὶ ὧν λέγει, Matth. 13. 21. which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away*. Nor can we more dishonour the Gospel, than if by falling off in harder times we proclaim to the World, that we find not so much good in it, as at first we thought for; as on the contrary, we cannot otherwise bring more credit to it, than whilst we do *συναναπαθεῖν τὰς ἐν αγγελίᾳ, take part* (and happy afflictions, in which we have such a blessed Partner) *with the Gospel in its afflictions* (as the Apostle's phrase is

is 2 *Tim.* 1. 8.) we let all Men know, that we indeed account it *εὐαγγέλιον*, *good News*, which we will willingly dye for. This is that for which *Justin Martyr* and *Eusebius* for the honour of Christ set him before the chiefest of the Heathen Philosophers, that he had so many thousands ambitious of shedding their Blood in the defence of his Cause and Gospel: which none of them could say of their followers. Yea this Glory reflects upon our selves likewise. So *Peter* assures us, that if *we be reproached for the Name of Christ, a Spirit of Glory remains upon us*, 1 *Pet.* 4. 14. yea, though we dye for it, yet *Stephens Face will even then shine as an Angel's*: So that however some indeed, like our nice Dames that would *ἐντερωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί*, cannot endure Persecution, Galat. 6. 12. would not have their Heads cut off in Christ's Cause, for spoiling their Beards, would profess the Gospel, but it must be *ἀναιμακτὶ ἀκοντῖ*, as thinking Blood and Dust would spoil their effeminate Beauty; yet, believe it, a noble Christian-Souldier is most glorious (as the Scripture saith of his Saviour, *Isa.* 63. 1.) *in his Clothes died red, in his own and Enemies Blood*. Such resplendent Stars shine brightest in such Frosty Winter-Nights. *There be three things, saith Solomon, which go well, yea there are four which are comely in going* (and that comeliness for kind, is that which we now speak of) *a Lion, which is strongest amongst Beasts, and turneth not away for any; a Grey-Hound, an Hee-Goat also, and a King, against whom there is no rising up*, Prov. 30. 29, 30, 31. I may add one more to those four; and yet add nothing to Scripture, viz. a resolved and settled Christian, which indeed in this kind exceeds them all. For if a valiant Knight bravely mounted be one of the three most glorious sights in the World, how glorious a spectacle will it be to see *the Man of God* armed with that Heavenly Panoply, riding in triumph, *more than conquering*, trampling under foot both frowns and favours of either flattering or persecuting World, and all the Enemies of his Salvation so gloriously, as that Death, which takes away his Life, addeth to his Glory! Thus those noble Heroes, those Christian-Worthies, I mean those blessed Martyrs, lie now in honour, not only *with Swords under their Heads*, which was the Heathen Worthies honour, *Ezek.* 32. 27. but, as they say at the Head of *Mabomets* Tomb there is such a Carbuncle that lightens all the Room (though otherwise dark) where it is; so truly this Crown of Martyrdom, is so beset with such sparkling Rubies, that still they *shine like Stars in the Firmament*;

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mament; their constancy lightens their Graces, and the red dye of their Blood was the best Vermilion to adorn their Tombs: *the Blood* of them long since *dead* yet *speakes*, as condemning the ungrateful World, who so used them; so to the Eternal Renown both of them and the Gospel.

And thus we have seen the way how we may *walk worthy of the Gospel*. If now we enquire after Arguments to perswade us to endeavour after it, the Text affords us three. The first in the word *πολίτευε*, because our Life is a *Conversation*. And secondly, because it's the *Gospel*. And thirdly, the Gospel of *Christ*, which we must labour thus to *adorn*.

First, our life is a *Conversation*, we live amongst others, and they either *good* or *bad*: and in regard of both, we have need, what we can, to be careful.

As, first, we should consider, that we live in the *Bosome of the Church* amongst the faithful, are Citizens of the *City of God*, the *Heavenly Jerusalem*; and therefore it stands us in hand that *ut Calorum municipes nos geramus* (as some read the twentieth Verse of the third Chapter of this Epistle) so as may be for the honour of our selves and Country. For let *Rome* be *ἡ πόλις ἡ ἰχυροῦς*; Revel. 18. 10. & *μεγάλη*, Revel. 14. 8. Let *Venice* pride it self in being called *the Rich*, and *Milain* the *Famous*, and *Bononia* the *Learned*, &c. Yet *Jerusalem* is ambitious of no greater Title, than to be stiled *ἀγία πόλις*, *Matth.* 4. 5. to tell us that are true Denisons there, what we should be, that, however, if we lived in *the Land of Cabul* (as *Hiram* called the Cities that
 1 King. 9. 13. *Solomon* gave him) I mean, in Sinks of Superstition and Profaneness, we might have some pretence for putting in practice that Devilish Proverb, *Cum lupis ululandum*, as if in the old Lacedemonian Common-wealth Theft might have besetmed us, or if in *Plato's* Polity, shameless Community, or if in *Epicurus* his School, brutish Luxury and the like, yet that the Church of God will be no Pander for our Lusts: and therefore whosoever by his bad Life shall stain its Beauty, however he may be reckoned in the outward number, yet in truth is but a *Stranger from the Common-wealth of Israel*.

2. But besides the Faithful, there are others worse affected: which, as long as we are here below, we must sometime converse with. *Wicked and unreasonable Men* more than enough, that at our least slips will be ready to say, as they, *Ezek.* 36. 20. *These are the people of the Lord*, these are the devout Professors of our times

times, and the like or worse. If the kindred of Christ will say *He is mad*, the Pharisees will be animated to say *be hath a Devil*, *Cartwright*. Mark 3. 21, 22. And therefore we have good cause to be wary. Some *Michals* there will be, that will deride *David*, when he behaveth himself most seemly; but will be sure to lay on load when they find him tripping. It's with a Christian, as with a Man in the Sun-shine; which way soever he turneth himself, he will have a black shadow either go before him, or follow him; as *Tertullian* complained in his time, were he a Sober Wife Man before that he was converted to be a Christian, then he turned Fool, and his former worth added to his present baseness: but if before-time he had been lascivious and vicious, no better Argument against the Christians, that they all were but a company of such like persons; so that if they could not find a fault, yet malice would make one. And then, how *circumspectly* had we need to converse, that, whereas *this way is every where spoken against*, our lives may speak for us, when neither we nor others can; and that whereas we may be sure that there will ever be some that will *speak all manner of evil of us*, our carriage may shew that it's *falsely*, and for Christ's sake rather than our own, and so either win such as *speak against us as evil doers* (1 Pet. 2. 12.) or at least not harden them in their evil courses, but put to *silence the ignorance of foolish Men*, (v. 15. of that Chapter,) yea and *make such ashamed, that falsely accuse our good Conversation in Christ* (in the 16th. verse of the following.)

A second Argument to perswade us is, That it is *the Gospel*, that we should thus adorn; which truly may challenge so much at our hands: for if we look at it in it self, it's *the Glorious Gospel of our blessed God*, 1 Tim. 1. 11. yea *Glory; exceeding Glory* in the Abstract, 2 Cor. 3. 10. Pity therefore that it should be stained by our foul Conversation, which should be *kept without spot, unrebukable*, as *Paul* exhorts Timothy, 1. Tim. 6. 14. Or if we consider what it is to us, it will require no less at our hands; for it is no other than the King of Heaven's Pardon, sent to us Condemned Wretches, that brings glad tidings to us of Freedom and Salvation. And how unfitting then would it be for us to take it and trample it under foot, or any ways slight and abuse it. And yet no better do wicked Men deal with it, who, as they are said (in this sence) *to do violence to the Law*, Ezek. 22. 26. So in a manner by their foul lives they *put* both Christ and his Gospel to *an open shame*. Well: but sure so good News deser-

veth a better welcome, and what can such Men expect, which do not only *neglect*, but in a manner *despise so great Salvation*? Fearful it will be when our Physick proves our Poyson; and the Gospel, that should speak Peace to our Comfort, shall witness against us to our Condemnation. How much better would it seem and profit us, that whereas God hath entrusted us all with the Gospel, that we would now stand out ἐν τῇ ἀπολογία ἡ βεβαιώσει τῷ Ευαγγελίῳ, as the Apostle exhorts in the 7th verie of this Chapter, *in the Apology* of it, that whereas it is accused for a Doctrine of Licentiousness, our lives might shew that the Gospel doth not abrogate the Law, but that that part of this second Covenant is true, that indeed God *puts his fear into our Hearts*, *that we depart not from him*: and again ἐν βεβαιώσει, *in the confirmation of it*, that whereas the Devil and his Instruments labour by all means to subvert both it and the Professors of it, we would now, as the Apostle's word is, συναθῆσαι, *strive together for the Faith of the Gospel*; in all our Enterprises have this laid down beforehand, *no quid Resp. detrimenti*, &c. that the Gospel be not prejudiced, that our weaknesses redound not to the weakning of the common cause, yea, with *Paul*, 1 Cor. 9. 12. *suffer any thing, suffer all things, rather than binder the Gospel of Christ*.

3 But if all this yet will not, yet, seeing, as the Apostle adds, it's *the Gospel of Christ*, let him at least prevail with us to give due respect to him in the Gospel: For him we acknowledge to be our King. And would not our bad lives make strangers accuse his Laws and Government? He is our glorious *Head*, and would not our deformed behaviours make his mystical Body like some Hippocentaure or Monster, as the Fathers use to urge this against their semi-Christians? In a word, we profess our selves *Christians*, so that though we have riches, and honours, and other such outward dignities, yet we will do Christ so much honour, as to be named (from none of these, but) only from him *Christians*. And doth it not then stand us in hand to take heed, lest we only in truth get the honour by having such a glorious Name called upon us, and Christ rather the dishonour by having his Name put upon them that are altogether unworthy? as though our Blessed Saviour had not endured shame enough for us already, that we need now again cast more upon him, and so in a manner *again Crucify the Lord of Glory*? No: Beloved, he endured shame enough in that shameful Death, and therefore we had

had need live to his praise; shame in wearing that *Crown of Thorns*, but it was, that we should be made τὸ μονογενὲς θεὸς στέφανος (as *Nyssen* speaks) the *Crown of Christ* of precious stones, instead of that of Thorns. And therefore we need look to it, lest whilst we remain ungodly in the Bosome of the Church, we be no better than *Briers and Thorns* again platted into this glorious *Crown*, and at last he say to us, *Friend, how camest thou hither?* For be we assured, that however He is our Mediator to reconcile us to God, yet he will never unite those that are and still remain in their filthiness to such a Sacred Majesty: and though he be pleased to admit us into his service, yet God forbid it should ever be said of us in this case, as it was of *Shebna* in another, that we should be the *shame of our Lords House*, Isa. 22. 21.

More shame then for our carnal Gospellers, that by their foul *Use* 1. lives cast shame on the Gospel of Christ, that swear, and lye, and drink, and drab, and yet forsooth must needs be good Christians, that are *lawless and profane*, and commit the rest of the sins reckoned up, 1 *Tim*, 1. 9, 10. which the Apostle there calls ἀντικειμένα, flat contraries to the *sound Doctrine of the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God*, and yet would spit in that Man's Face, that would deny them to be as good Professors of the Gospel as any. It was part of the Primitive Churches Apology, τὸ ὄνομα ὡς ἔλεγχον λαμβάνετε. The Name of a Christian only was their accusation, *quia nominis est praelium*: but for other matters they were proceeded against *presumptis, non probatis criminibus*, as *Tertullian* speaks: And I would to God it were no more now, that in these happier days, when through God's infinite Mercy we need not be ashamed of the profession of Christianity, we were not now a shame to it by our bad behaviours. I confess Christians in those former times were thought badly enough of. *Christi-anum omnium scelerrum reum*, &c. others thought so, and it was well they did but think and suspect what they could not prove. Now Turks and Infidels think we are loose and licentious, and it werewell they did but think so. Profane Wretches say that many professors of the ways of Grace are Hypocrites, and it were well they did but say so. They say, the best of us answer not our Profession; and it were very well if it were their saying only, and that we could answer all their accusations, as *Paul* did *Tertullus* his slanders, *Acts* 24. 13. *Neither can they prove the things, whereof they now accuse me*. Nay, rather are there not many that instead of living as it becometh the Gospel, (as the Prophet

speaketh of the Jews) even *separate themselves to that shame*, Hof.
 9. 10: that betake themselves to such shameful and base practices,
 as a barbarous Pagan would blush, a *Socrates* or *Aristides* would
 swoon to behold? and so even *teach Men wickedness*, as God com-
 plaineth of the Jews, *Jer.* 2. 33. or rather oftentimes do that
 which they are ashamed to commit, and so *justify them in all*
their abominations, *Jer.* 2. 17. I speak not this to disgrace my
 Religion, or my Brother that beareth the Name of Christ as
 well as my self; as though the *Turks* live like Men, and we like
 Dogs, as they are pleased to call us; or that there were more
 Atheism and Prophaneness in *England*, than in *Italy*; or that
 there were more Villany committed in our Churches, than in
 those Popish *Cages of unclean Birds*; or as though *Campion's*
Brag were true, *Catholicos esse qui argentum resolvant quod de-*
bent, &c. Nor yet favouring those rigid Censurers, (however
 other Men bear that blame) that for any unseemly carriage of
 Professors cry out presently of Hypocrisie, which in another
 Man would be more charitably imputed to Humane frailty:
 Yet we cannot but conceive how dishonourable it is to Christ
 and the Gospel, for the *Daughters of the Philistines* to be *ashamed*
of the lewd ways of Gods People, *Ezek.* 16. 27. for *Turks* and
Pagans (as we know *Amurath* the second at the Battle at *Varna*
 did) to pray to Christ to revenge the Christians Perfidy. Little
 do we consider what Dishonour God hath amongst them by our
 sinful carriage, nor how many bad turns we do, not only to
Turks and *Pagans*, in keeping them off from embracing the
 Gospel, which we so disgrace, but likewise to many poor Chri-
 stians under their Tyranny, whilst through the Christians
 wicked behaviour they *think they do God service*, and a great
 benefit to poor Souls; whilst they constrain them to Abjure their
 Faith and Baptism: And so we kill two at one stroke, namely,
 we harden the Persecutor, and hazard the Christian's either
 temporal Life, or Faith and Salvation. Thus we are an occa-
 sion of their denying Christ, and in so doing do little better our
 selves. For *Tertullian*, and those first Christians thought that
 there was another way, than by open denying of Christ, to be
 excluded from the Name of a Christian, *Si faciamus qua faci-*
unt non Christiani, excludimur, saith he. And therefore let
 us look to our selves in this respect: for the *Jew* blasphemes
 Christ, the *Turk* prefers *Mahomet* before Him, and the poor
Indian and barbarous *Pagan* lives like a Beast in a Man's shape.

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These things, and the like, they do: Take we heed therefore lest, whilst we equalize or exceed them in these or the like, we hazard not the Benefit of our Christendom.

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And therefore, to conclude with Exhortation, we are all to be intreated, that whereas we all (however some do injuriously impropriate the Name, I say, whereas we all) would be accounted *Evangelici*, Professors of the Gospel; that we would not now deal with the Gospel, as the *Jews* did with the Law, who carried it along with them in their Clothes, but not in their Hearts: So we have it only in outward Profession, but express it neither in Heart nor Life: But as we have a *worthy Profession*, so let us *walk worthy of it*, and let us ever account it as our Duty (with *Paul*, *Rom.* 1. 16.) *Not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*, so our happiness, if we be not a *shame to it*, but rather *adorn it* by an holy conversation, that our Lives and the Gospel, like two Glasses reflecting one upon another, may give mutual lustre to each other; that (on the one side) the Gospel may be an Argument of our praise, as *Paul* saith *2 Cor.* 8. 18. of a Brother, that *his praise was in the Gospel*: And (on the other) we may add something to its Beauty; That what *Paul* said of the Law, *Rom.* 7. 12. all Men that look on our Lives, may confess of the Gospel, that it's *Holy, Just, and Good*, when they see it makes us so. Especially this concerns us that live in these Places and Times: For, if the Apostle, *Rom.* 13. 13. when this *Son of Righteousness* was in a manner but new risen, called upon them to *walk ευχαριτώντας ὡς ἐν ἡμέραις*, we may well think what the Lord expects of us, upon whom this glorious Light hath so long shone in its full Brightness. However the *dark night of Ignorance* draweth a Vail over the *Pagans* shame, yet sure the least mote will be seen in our *Sun-shine*; so that, as what is but *פְּתִילָה*, i. e. *Folly* (or somewhat unfavoury) in the *Prophets of Samaria*, *Jer.* 23. 13. In the *Prophets of Jerusalem*, (*Ver.* 14.) is *שָׂרָה וְרָרָה*, a Matter so horrible as might make a Mans hair stand up an end (as the word signifieth): So what in a *Pagan's* mouth is but an idle word, in a Christians (in a Minister's especially, as *Bernard* observes) is well nigh a Blasphemy. Yea, that very *ευπραπλία* (as some expound it) which in their opinion and behaviour is a Virtue, we must look at as the thing not fitting, *Ephes.* 5. 4. Take we heed therefore that we do not now *Contra solem mingere*, (as the Proverb is) that *We rebel not against the Light*, as *Job* phraseth it, *Chap.* 24. 13. But when

when we are about the commission of any Sin, let us bethink our selves where we are, it's *holy Ground* we stand on; in Gods House and Temple: And therefore *Holiness* becometh it for ever: And therefore would be very unseemly, if we deal with it as *Jehu* did with the *House of Baal* (2 Kings 10. 27.) *make it a Dringht-House*, a Sink and Dung-hill for all the Filth of our soul Courses: For if a sin committed in a *material* Temple adds to the Abomination, sure the Holiness of this *Spiritual* Temple makes sin committed in it, *out of measure* sinful. Consider, I say, where we are. Our Life is a *Conversation*, and therefore we had need look how we *behave our selves in the House of God*, (as *Paul* speaks to *Timothy*) and that we have *Preaching lives*, by which we may speak a word of Comfort and Encouragement to the Godly, of Reproof to the conviction and conversion of the Wicked, and may be Examples to all, as *Paul* said of the *Thessalonians*, 1. *Epist. Chap. 1. v. 7.* ὡς ἐγενήδαμεν ὑμῶς, τοιοῦτος in the plural Number, to signifie, as *Beza* fitly notes upon the place, *Tot fuisse veluti constantia Typos, quot erant Thessalonicensium capita.*

Consider likewise what it is we profess; It's a *pure Religion*; and therefore, as a pure Virgin, cannot but blush at the unseemly behaviour of her followers. It's an *high Calling* we are called to, *Phil. 3. 14.* and therefore we should *walk worthy of it*, *Ephes. 4. 1.* It's a *Glorious Gospel*, 2 *Cor. 4. 4.* and therefore more shame for us any ways to blemish the Glory of it. Unworthy we, if we walk not answerable; unworthy of Christ, if we *trample under-foot his Blood*; unworthy of the Gospel, if we dishonour it, and therefore worthy to be condemned for that, which we will not be saved by.

Consider, Lastly, What we our selves are, that I may not (because indeed I cannot) say more. we are *Christians*. And then (as *Nehemiah* said) *Shall such Men as we* do this *great sin*, both *against God* and our Profession? Christians were wont to be able to challenge all their Accusers, and clear themselves of all false Accusations, with a *Fama sola conscia est scelorum Christianorum*. Yea, *Eusebius* makes a Christian, and one that excels in Grace, to be Terms convertible: By which Argument he proves, that *Abraham*, and the Faithful before him, ἔργων ἐὶν, καὶ οὐ νόμων (though not so called, yet) in effect were true Christians. And we may observe in *Pauls* Epistles, that when he speaks of those sins which other Men are ordinarily defiled by,

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he still excepts the Christian. As, whereas others *work all uncleanness with greediness*, yet *you have not so learned Christ*, Ephes. 4. 20. And, *Such were some of you, but ye are washed*, &c. 1 Cor. 6. 11. And others are like *Ground which beareth Thorns and Briers, which is nigh to Cursing*, &c. But, Beloved, we are *persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany Salvation*, Heb. 6. 9. All this to teach us, that whatever other Men be, or do, yet that we should think those sins, which will stand with another Man's Profession, are notwithstanding unworthy of us that profess the Gospel; who should shine *ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ*, Phil. 2. 15. *Providing for things honest in the sight of all Men*, Rom. 12. 17. That they seeing our holy Demeanour, may glorifie our Saviour, whom we partly adore and partly imitate; and reverence His Gospel, which we profess and adorn. And lest any should think, that thus to live belongs to them that need mind nothing else, and thus to *adorn the Gospel* is for such only, whom God hath adorned with greater Gifts, and set in more eminent Places, and so put upon greater Occasions and Employments. Give me leave to add this, that, as I said before, every saving Grace is part of a Christians beauty, even *the Feet are beautiful*, Rom. 10. 15. And the Gospel may not only be adorned by exact looking to the great things of the Law, but even in the use of things in themselves indifferent. So *Paul* speaks of *Apparel becoming Women professing Godliness*, 1 Tim. 2. 10. And so we may of the use of Meat and Drink, and Recreations; in all, in the least we may, we must labour to have *our Conversation as becometh the Gospel*. And for the Persons whom this concerns, they are all, none excepted. For though (I confess) by how much a Man's Place and Gifts are more eminent, he be further engaged in this Duty; and so the Magistrate especially is bound to look to it, that both private Carriage and publick Government be for the credit and advantage of the Gospel; and above all, we the Ministers of the Gospel are in a especial manner entrusted with it, as *Paul* speaks of himself, 1 Thes. 2. 4. And therefore as it is most fearful, when our lives are so Scandalous, that with *Eli's Sons* we *make Men abhor the Offering of the Lord*, even despise that, which they see we so abuse: So on the contrary, it would be more seemly for us to *magnifie the Gospel* as well by our Living, as by our Preaching; so that whilst by the one we labour to *beget Men to God*, by the other (I mean a Godly life) we might as it were hang

goodly Pictures before them, as they use to do before Women conceiving, that the Birth may be more beautiful; so that they may conceive (as *Jacob's Sheep* did whilst they looked upon the *Rods*) whilst they look upon us for Examples of decent and godly Behaviour. But though we especially, yet not we only, but every Christian of what rank and condition soever, is entrusted with the credit of the Gospel. For proof of which, I refer you only to the second of the Epistle to *Titus*, where indeed he begins with him as the Minister, and for his Doctrine, he must speak such things which *become sound Doctrine*, ver. 1. and for his Life, he would have him in all things *show himself a Pattern of good Works*, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to speak of him, ver. 7, 8. But yet withal he calleth for a *Behaviour becoming Godliness in old Women*, for they must be *ἐν κατανήμοις ἡρεσπετείς*, ver. 3. And for young Women, whose more wanton Behaviour, might have expected some exemption, yet he tells them that it belongs to them also to look to their Behaviour, *that the Word of God be not blasphemed*, ver. 5. And Servants lastly, which perhaps might have thought, they had enough to look to, if they could procure only their Master's profit and credit; yet in so doing, he tells them, there is another thing they must look after, *ἵνα τὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεὸς κοσμήσιν ἐν πάσιν*, That they adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, ver. 10. So that the meanest Vessels in God's House, are *Vessels of Honour*, and none in the Church so low, but that as his sins may dishonour, so his holy and decent Behaviour in his rank and condition may bring some Credit to the Gospel.

Now what an happy thing would it be, if we would from the highest to the lowest, set our selves in good earnest to the Practice of this Duty? What a glorious sight would it be to see the Magistrate governing, and the Subject obeying, the Minister preaching, and all of us in some measure living so as *becometh the Gospel*? Such a well-ordered Army, where every one did so keep his Place and Rank, would be a Spectacle fit for an Angel's sight and admiration. Sure they would not be ashamed then to behold us. (as now oftentimes they are at our Abominations) but might well look at us as in a manner emulating their Divine Hierarchies, and practising that here, which at last together with them we shall be taken up with in Heaven for ever.

Which I may add as a further Motive to this Duty, and with which in a word I will conclude.

Beloved, This life of ours should be but a *Preludium* to Heaven, which we all look after. Now there is no sinful or unbecoming Behaviour of any, but all are and do that which *becomes* their *glorious Condition*, and therefore it would be well, if we would in this respect begin our Heaven betimes here on Earth, and labour to *adorn* our selves and *the Gospel*, with those Graces *here*, which will be the greatest part of our Glory *there*. Indeed, as the *Romans* were wont to hang their *Bells* about the Necks of their Free-born children, which, when they came to Man's Estate and Age, were laid aside: So *Chrysostome*, in his Preface to this Epistle observes, that some Graces, that adorn us here, we shall not need there; not *Faith*, because the Promise is fulfilled; not *Repentance*, because no Sin to cause it; nor *Bountifulness*, because no Poor to receive it (which yet in this our Non-age we must in part be adorned with). But besides there are others, as Holiness and Purity, Love of God and our Brethren, and the like common to both Estates; here defective, but there made fully perfect. And in regard of all, even whilst we are here below, we must labour to have *our Conversation in Heaven*, Phil. 3. 20. Begin to do that now, which we shall do there for ever: Begin to Tune and Sing that *new Song* (in the *Revelation*) here, which will be turned into those Heavenly *Hallelujahs*, there to be Sounded out by us with the whole Quire of Heaven to our everlasting comforts.

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