

SERMONS

TO

Young Persons,

On the following SUBJECTS:

VIZ.

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| I. The Importance of the
RISING GENERATION. | tendance on the LORD'S
TABLE. |
| II. CHRIST FORMED
IN THE SOUL the
Foundation of Hope. | V. The ORPHAN'S HOPE. |
| III. A DISSUASIVE from
KEEPING WICKED
COMPANY. | VI. The Reflections of a
PIOUS PARENT on the
Death of a WICKED
CHILD. |
| IV. The Young Christian
invited to an early At- | VII. YOUTH reminded of
approaching Judgment. |

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L O N D O N :

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S E R M O N I V.

RELIGIOUS YOUTH invited to Early
COMMUNION.

ISA. XLIV. 3, — 5.

I will pour out Water upon him that is thirsty, and Floods upon the dry Ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy Seed, and my Blessing upon thine Offspring; and they shall spring up as among the Grass, as Willows by the Water-courses. One shall say, I am the LORD's, and another shall call himself by the Name of Jacob, and subscribe with his Hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the Name of Israel.



IN the first Hearing of these Words, you will easily apprehend, that they afford Abundance of very proper Matter for a Discourse to young People; but you may perhaps be surprized when I tell you, that

I shall take Occasion from them to address religious Youth, with a large Invitation to an early Attendance on the Table of the LORD.

THIS is a Surprize which I do not at all affect to give: For to press in a Scripture to serve a Purpose foreign to its original Design, and to turn a mere Allusion into an Argument, is, in its Degree, to *handle the Word of GOD deceitfully*, (a) and is indeed an Injury to it, rather than an Honour. So that I much fear, that by thus attempting to make every thing of the Scripture, we shall at length come to make nothing of it: For those seemingly distant Extremes approach nearer to each other, than some seem to be aware.

BUT I hope, my Friends, you have learnt to judge of the Pertinency of Scripture to any Purpose in hand, not merely by the first Sound of the Words, but by an attentive View of its Sense and Connection; and when the Words I have been reading are diligently examined, they may appear more suitable to my Design, than you at first apprehended.

THO' GOD had before been reprov-
ing *Israel* with great Severity, and *setting their Sins in order before them* (b), he intimates
Purposes

(a) 2 Cor. iv. 2.

(b) Psal. l. 21.

Purposes of Grace and Mercy, which he yet entertained toward them, unworthy as they were (*a*). And, in order to prepare them for farther Favours, he promises, in the Words of the Text, to pour out upon them an abundant Effusion of the blessed Spirit. Now we well know, by a Multitude of Scriptures, which I must not particularly enumerate, that it was to be in the latter Day, *i. e.* the Gospel-times, that this glorious Promise was most eminently to be fulfilled (*b*).

THE blessed Effects, which were to attend its Accomplishment, are described in great Variety and Elegance of Language. They are represented by the Refreshment which *Water* gives to *him that is thirsty*, and which plentiful *Floods* of it afford to the *Ground*, when scorched with the Summer's Heat. Accordingly it is said, that they, and their Offspring too, should flourish in Religion, *like the Grass* when thus abundantly refreshed, or *like Willows by the Water-courses*; the Verdure of which is so delightful, and the Growth so speedy, that no more proper Emblem could have been chosen. Thus should the Souls of the Children flourish, thro' the divine Blessing on the Instructions

L 3 of

(*a*) Isa. xliii. 22—28. (*b*) Compare Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. Zech. xii. 10. Joel. ii. 28. Acts ii. 17. John vii. 38.

of pious Parents, and other Methods appointed by GOD for their religious Improvement: And in the next Words the Prophet uses still greater Plainness of Speech, to let us know that their Number should be considerable, and their Resolutions for GOD firm and determinate. One and another, this Man and that, should come and own his Relation to GOD, should publickly enter himself into the Engagements of his Covenant, and put in an humble Claim to the important Blessings it was intended to convey. *One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the Name of Jacob, and subscribe with his Hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the Name of Israel.*

SOME very celebrated Translators and Critics understand the Words, which we render, "*Subscribe with his Hand unto the LORD,*" in a Sense a little different from that which our *English* Version has given them: They would rather render them, "*Another shall write on his Hand, that he is the LORD's (a);*" and they suppose it refers to a Custom which formerly prevail'd in the *East*, of stamping the Name of the General on the Soldier (*b*), or that of the Master on the

(a) The *Hebrew* is, *זֶה יִכְתֹּב יָדוֹ לַיהוָה*, which the *LXX* translate, *επιγραψει εν χειρι αυτου, το ονομα κυριου.*

(b) *Sicut Milites Imperatoris Nomen in manu scriptum*

the Slave (*a*); as this Name was sometimes born on the Forehead, so at other Times on the Hand; and it is certain that several Scriptures, which may easily be recollected, are to be explain'd as alluding to this (*b*). Now from hence it seems to have grown into a Custom amongst some Idolatrous Nations, when solemnly devoting themselves to the Service of any Deity, to be initiated into it by receiving some Marks in their Flesh, which

scriptum habebant, Grot. Manui suæ inscribent Sacramentum Jehovæ, sicut Milites, &c. Bren. Vide Aetius, viii. 12. Sigon. 1. 8. 11. 5. August. Ep. xx.

(*a*) Servi etiam olim Stigma Manui inultum ferebant, ex quo agnoscerentur, *Mercator. Vid. Ham. on Rev. xiii. 15.*

(*b*) Thus 'tis said *Rev. xiii. 16, 17. That all Men, —bond and free, received the Mark of the Beast in their Right-hand and their Forehead; and that without it none might buy and sell: And on the other hand, we read, Rev. vii. 2, 3. of an Angel, that had the Seal of the Living God—to seal his Servants on the Forehead. In Allusion to this also our Lord promises, Rev. iii. 12. I will write upon him that overcometh, the Name of my God, and my new Name. On this Account Christians are said to be sealed by the Spirit until the Day of Redemption, Eph. iv. 30. as by his Operations God owns them as his, and secures them to himself: And to this GOD seems to refer, in those condescending Words, Isa. xlix. 16. I have graven Zion on the Palms of my Hands. So also Ezek. ix. 4. “To this Custom, some think Saint Paul alludes, when he speaks of the Marks of Christ, which he bare in his Body, Gal. vi. 27.” *Potter's Arch. Gr. Vol. 2. p. 8.**

which might never wear out (*a*). This Interpretation the Original will certainly bear, and it here makes a very strong and beautiful Sense, since every true Christian has a sacred, and an indelible Character upon him, which shall never be erased. But if we retain our own Version, it will come to nearly the same, and evidently refers to a Practice which was sometimes used amongst the *Jews* (*b*), and which is indeed exceeding natural, of obliging themselves to the Service of GOD, by setting their Hand to some written Articles emphatically expressing such a Resolution. So that you see it must imply, that they who were, by the Influences of divine Grace, brought to a serious Sense of Religion, should, in a publick and solemn Manner, express their Subjection to GOD, and their Readiness to enter into Covenant with him; and whatever Rites should by him be appointed as the Tokens of such a Resolution, the Text must intimate a chearful Compliance with them: For it would be most unrea-

rea-

(*a*) Quos Deo alicui consecrabant & initiabant, hos Stigmatibus inurebant, *Pitisc. Lex. in Inscrip.* And *Luc. de Diis Syr.* says, Certis Notis compunguntur omnes; alii quidem in Vola Manus, alii in Cervice; &c. The manner of doing it is described by *Prudent.* *Œt. SEP. X. 1076, &c.* And many Commentators suppose this Rite to be referr'd to, *LEV. xix. 28. Ye shall make no Marks in your Flesh.* Vid. *Poli Synops. in Loc.*

(*b*) *Neh. x. 29.*

reasonable to imagine that any, of such Characters, and in such Circumstances, would prefer any Form invented by themselves, or dictated merely by human Prudence, to the express Ordinance and Institution of GOD. Now forasmuch as it is evident, that, under the Christian Dispensation, the Lord's Supper is appointed to such Purposes, the Text must imply an Attendance upon it; and when we see young Christians presenting themselves at this Holy Solemnity, and joining themselves to GOD and his Church in it, we may properly say, *they subscribe with their Hand to the Lord, and surname themselves by the Name of Israel*; just as we may say, in the Old Testament Phrase, that *Incense is offer'd, and a pure Offering* (a), when holy Souls are pouring out their Prayers and their Supplications before the Throne of Grace, though Odours and Victims no longer accompany their Devotions.

I HAVE surely said enough, and perhaps more than enough, to account for my choosing these Words to introduce the Discourse I have in View; in which I am to press those young Persons, whose Hearts GOD has touched by his sanctifying Grace, to subscribe; as it were; with their Hand, by entering themselves early into Christian Communion; and

(a) Mal. i. 11.

and eating and drinking with our Lord at his Table. In order to which, I shall,

- I. PROPOSE some plain and important Arguments, to engage to such an early Attendance on this sacred Institution.
- II. ANSWER some Objections, which are most frequently urged to excuse the Neglect of it: And,
- III. CONCLUDE with hinting at some Reflections and Inferences, which seem naturally to present themselves.

MAY divine Grace render this Attempt the Means of leading many young Persons into a Conviction of their Duty and Interest, and of *adding unto the Church such as shall be saved!* (a)

- I. I AM to offer some plain and important Arguments to engage religious Youth to an early Attendance on the Supper of the Lord.

AND before I enter on these, I must intreat you to remember, that 'tis to *religious* Youth only, that I address the Invitation. I well know, my Friends, that the sacred Institution, I am now recommending, is a most
awful

(a) Acts ii. 47.

awful and solemn Thing. I know it was intended, not only as the Commemoration of a Redeemer's dying Love, but as a Seal of our Covenant-Engagements to God thro' him; so that to attend upon it without a sincere Desire of receiving Christ Jesus the Lord, and devoting ourselves to him, is a Profanation that renders us, in some Degree, *guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*(a). I am very sensible, that for any to approach it in so unworthy a Manner, is not only in itself a sinful Action, but may, in its Consequences, prove a Snare to their own Souls, a Stumbling to others, and a Dishonour to the Church. And therefore, far from encouraging such Persons to come, I should think it a very necessary Duty to labour to the utmost to dissuade them from it, and, if Providence gave me an Opportunity, to prevent their Admittance.

BUT I have frequently found, and I believe it has been the Experience of many of my Brethren in the Ministry, that young Persons, not only of a very sober and regular Conduct, but even those who have appear'd most deeply impress'd with the Concern of their Souls, and experimentally acquainted, so far as we can judge, with regenerating Grace, have, in many Instances, shewn a strange Coldness to this blessed Institution;

(a) 1 Cor. xi. 27.

stitution; and we have known not a few who have grown old in the Neglect of it. I apprehend therefore, that a Regard to the Authority and Glory of my great Master, to the Comfort and Improvement of your Souls, and to the Edification and Joy of the Church in general, concur to require, that I offer you, my younger Friends, some publick Admonitions on this Head; to which I now desire your very serious Attention.

AND here permit me more largely to plead the Weight of a dying Redeemer's Command, as well as the Honour, Pleasure, and various Advantages of an early Compliance with it.

I. THE Ordinance, to which I now invite you, is the known Command and Institution of a dying Redeemer.

I NEED not enlarge on the Proof of what is so apparent. You undoubtedly know, that *Matthew*, and *Mark*, and *Luke* agree in giving us the History of its Institution (*a*). And *St. Paul* afterwards received it by express Revelation from Christ (*b*), and accordingly relates it, in a very circumstantial and pathetick Manner; telling us, not only that Christ commanded that this should be done in remembrance of him; but also that; by

(*a*) *Mat.* xxvi. 26—28. *Mark* xiv. 22—24. *Luke* xxii. 15—20. (*b*) *1 Cor.* xi. 24; &c.

an Attendance upon it, our *Lord's Death* is *shewed forth till he come*; plainly thereby intimating (what the Ends of the Ordinance do farther evince) that it was to continue in the Church to its remotest Ages: So that on the whole you exceedingly mistake, if you imagine this to be mere Matter of Choice; in any other Sense than as all the Duty of a rational Creature is so. Our Lord has plainly determined the Matter by his own sacred Authority, leaving this Ordinance in Charge to all his Followers. I say *to all*, for there's no Limitation as to the Age of those that should attend it. 'Tis a Command to Young and Old, as well as to Rich and Poor; and all, that are capable of understanding it, are oblig'd to comply with it, and thereby to do their Homage to their exalted Sovereign, and express their Gratitude to their most generous Friend. And can you in Reason refuse your Compliance? Methinks the Name of the Son of GOD should carry along with it an Authority too great to be despised, and the Name of your Redeemer a constraining Love too forcible to be withstood; especially the Name of a dying Redeemer. Surely, my Friends, if a dying Parent, or Brother, had given you a Charge almost with his expiring Breath, you could not lightly

have acted contrary to it. How much greater Regard do you owe to what the blessed Jesus appointed, as the Apostle most pertinently observes, *the same Night in which he was betray'd*(a)! Had it been some hard Thing that he had then injoin'd, and had the Reason of it been unknown, so that it had appear'd as a mere arbitrary Constitution, the Neglect of it had been foolish and ungrateful. Had it been a more painful Rite than that of Initiation amongst the *Jews*, more laborious than their frequent Pilgrimages to *Jerusalem*, and more costly than the Sacrifices they offer'd there, the Precept of our dying Lord had carried in it an abundant Answer to all that Ease or Interest could have pleaded against it: How much more, when the Reason is so evident, and the Observation, in all Respects, so easy! Judge, I pray you, whether it should be neglected. Judge, whether it be a decent Thing, that, when we are sitting down to break and eat Bread, and pour forth and drink Wine, that we may represent the Breaking of Christ's Body, and Pouring forth of his Blood, and seal our Covenant-Engagements with him, more than one half of the professing Christians in the Assembly should rise, and either leave the Place, or withdraw to a Distance

(a) 1 Cor. xi. 23.

from the holy Table. What is this but to say, “ We will now have nothing to do with the Memorials of a crucified Saviour?” Will you, my Friends, thus separate yourselves from us? What if others were to learn of you, and to imitate your Example? Where would the Ordinance quickly be? Nay, where would it already have been, had this Temper prevail’d? Where but in our Bibles? for there it would still have stood, to condemn our ungrateful Disobedience, as it condemns yours.

2. AN early Attendance upon this Ordinance will be truly honourable to you.

I wish I could say, that the Omission of it were, in the Repute of the Generality of professing Christians, so dishonourable as it ought; but it is now grown so common, that much of the just Infamy of it is worn off. Nevertheless, if we will seriously consider it, we must own, that where Reason and Duty require any Practice (which I have already proved to be the Case here) the more frequently it is neglected, the more honourable is a Regard to it; as it argues a laudable Fortitude of Mind to oppose a prevailing Evil, by which Multitudes are born away. And who, that hath any Sense of Generosity and Good-

ness, would not wish to signalize himself on such an Occasion as this?

I APPEAL to your own Hearts, my Brethren, even when you have divested yourselves of every Sentiment of Ostentation and Pride (which I would not desire to press into the Service of the Sanctuary) would it not afford you a rational and pious Pleasure to reflect, that your Fellow-Christians might say, with regard to you, “ These are Persons, who are happily distinguish’d from most of their Companions, by Obedience to GOD and Gratitude to their Redeemer; they dare stand up for the Honour of his Institutions, and of his Name, in the midst of all the Languor, and all the Impiety of a degenerate Age. Far from running with others to the same Excess of Riot, they do not only secretly retire, that they may converse with GOD; and devote themselves to him, but they have the Courage openly to appear in so good a Cause. Far from being ashamed of CHRIST, or of his Words, in this *adulterous and sinful Generation*(a), they readily expose themselves to all the glorious Reproach of a determinate Adherence to him. Thus do they publickly declare, that their Hearts are touch’d with a Sense of his Love, and inspir’d with Resolution for
“ his

(a) Mark viii. 38.

“ his Service. And as they are thus *planted*
 “ *in the House of the Lord*, we hope they will
 “ *flourish to old Age* there (a); so that Gene-
 “ rations, which are yet unborn, shall be re-
 “ fresh’d by their Shade, and nourished by
 “ their Fruit.” Thus will you, like *Jabez*
 (b), be *more honourable than all your Brethren*,
 if, like him, you *call upon the Name of the*
 LORD, or, in the Language of the Text,
subscribe with your Hand unto him.

3. LET me plead the Pleasure which
 this Ordinance affords, as a farther Ar-
 gument for an early Attendance upon
 it.

If your Hearts have been touch’d by rege-
 nerating Grace, you must surely know,
 that Communion with GOD thro’ a Media-
 tor is unutterably delightful, and must own,
 that when you enjoy it, your Souls are *satis-
 fied, as with Marrow and Fatness* (c). If this
 be the Case, I am sure you would look with
 an holy Scorn on any sensual Gratification,
 that could be brought into Comparison with
 those sublime and sacred Entertainments.
 Now, when you consider the Lord’s Supper
 as an Ordinance of divine Appointment, you
 have just Reason to hope, that GOD will
 honour it with his gracious Presence; nay,
 M 3 when

(a) Psal. xcii. 13.

(b) 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10.

(c) Psalm lxiii. 5.

when you consider the Nature and Design of the Institution, you may probably expect some peculiar Sweetness and Delight in it, beyond what you have hitherto known. I say not, that you can be absolutely secure of your finding it; for it becomes the Sovereignty of the Ever-blessed GOD, not to confine himself, invariably, to any Method of Operation; lest his Agency should at length be disregarded in it, and the Honour transferr'd to the Instrument: But I speak of what may probably be found; and I think I might here appeal to all considerate Persons, who know any Thing of the Workings of the human Mind; for I persuade myself they would be compell'd to allow, that a regular Attendance on *such a Solemnity* has a direct Tendency to produce the most delightful Sensations in a Soul deeply impress'd with the great Principles of our Christian Faith.

OH, my Friends, what a Scene is there opened, when, by these lively Memorials of his dying Love, the *Lord Jesus Christ* is evidently set forth as crucified amongst us! (a) Surely the Spectacle must be delightful, even to Creatures who are themselves perfectly innocent and holy! Surely the Angels, who probably are present in the Churches while the Solemnity is perform'd,

(a) Gal. iii. 1.

form'd, must attend it with a pleasing Mixture of Admiration, and of Joy. "Thus," may they be ready to say to each other, "thus was the great Design accomplish'd! "In such Sufferings did the Son of GOD expire! By such surprizing Steps of Condescension, and of Love, were apostate Creatures recovered to their GOD! Thus was the flaming Vengeance of the divine Majesty atoned; and now he is graciously smiling upon them; and these happy Souls are sitting, as around their Father's Board, and anticipating the Entertainments of our celestial World."

But the Guest, who is called to sit down at such a Banquet, may well be supposed to feel some tender and transporting Pleasure, beyond that of such an angelick Spectator.

"THESE, oh my Soul," may the Believer say, when the Bread is broken, and the Wine poured out, "these were the painful Sufferings, which the blessed Redeemer endured for such a Wretch as I am; for he loved me, and gave himself for me. (a) He was bruised for my Transgressions, he was wounded for mine Iniquities. (b) All these dreadful Conflicts of Nature did he pass thro', to avert from me that Weight of Wrath, which would otherwise have overwhelmed me beyond all Hope of
" Deli-

(a) Gal. ii. 20.

(b) Isa. liii. 5.

“ Deliverance. And here are the Em-
 “ blemms of his dying Love and his living
 “ Care. Here are the precious Seals of
 “ that everlasting Covenant established in
 “ his Blood, which, as it is *well-ordered in*
 “ *all Things, and sure, is all my Salva-*
 “ *tion, and all my Desire.*(a) By these To-
 “ kens doth a faithful GOD assure me that
 “ my Sins are pardoned, that I am admit-
 “ ted into his Family, and intitled to all
 “ the invaluable Blessings of his Children.
 “ Delightful Thought! I have nothing now
 “ to do, but quietly to sit down, and wait
 “ with a holy Silence and Tranquillity of
 “ Soul for the Intimations of my Father’s
 “ Will, till he calls me to dwell in his
 “ House above. Yet a little while, oh my
 “ Soul, and thou shalt rise to nobler Enjoy-
 “ ments than even these; for the Bread
 “ thou hast now been eating, and the Wine
 “ thou hast been drinking, are Pledges of
 “ a divine Banquet above, in the visible
 “ and immediate Presence of the blessed
 “ Founder of this sacred Feast. The Secu-
 “ rity of the Covenant, I have this Day
 “ been sealing, will continue in full Force
 “ when the Bands of Nature are dissolved;
 “ if I *drink no more* with my Saviour *of this*
 “ *Fruit of the Vine here, I shall drink it new*
 “ *with him in his Father’s Kingdom;*(b) and
 “ there-

(a) 2 Sam., xxiii. 5. . . (b) Mat., xxvi. 29.

“ therefore may encounter Death in the
 “ triumphant Accents of good old *Simeon*,
 “ *Now, Lord, lettest thou thy Servant depart*
 “ *in Peace, for mine Eyes have seen thy Sal-*
 “ *vation.* (a)

THROUGH the divine Goodness I hope we can say *we speak what we know; and testify*, not only what we have heard from the Experience of others, but what we have ourselves tasted and felt. Thus is GOD visiting and refreshing our Souls, while we are attending at the blessed Ordinance; and why will you not come and share with us in the Entertainments, so sincerely and so freely offer'd? Is he not saying unto you, *Eat, eat, oh my Friends; and drink; yea, drink abundantly, oh my Beloved?* (b) Why then do you wrong your own Souls, as well as affront his Goodness, by neglecting the Invitation? Would you come thus early, you might promise yourselves a peculiar Welcome, and a peculiar Pleasure. Many painful Reflections might by this means be prevented; and the Evidence of your Sincerity be more happily secured; not to say, that while your Spirits are brisk and active, you may feel the Impressions of those sacred Passions, which are so suited to this Occasion, with greater Energy, and greater Tenderneſs, than

(a) Luke ii. 29, 30.

(b) Cant. v. 1.

than could be expected under the Decays of Nature, in the Evening of Life.

I SHALL only add, that these sublime Pleasures are not limited to the happy Moments, which you spend in an immediate Attendance on this Feast of Love; but they may be renewed, and perhaps sometimes increased, by Reflection; whereas that often brings a Sting along with it, more than sufficient to ballance all the Sweetness to be found in irregular, sensual Delights.

4. AN early Attendance on the Lord's Supper would be very useful, as well as entertaining.

IT might probably be useful both to yourselves and others.

1. IT might be useful to yourselves in a Variety of Respects.

I consider that I am now speaking to them that look upon Improvement in Religion as their highest Interest; and therefore shall only endeavour to shew you what a Tendency this Ordinance has to assist you in this; and that is so evident, that I need not dwell largely on Particulars, which, when suggested in a few Words, may furnish you with Matter of ample Meditation.

THE preparatory Exercises of Devotion might be very awakening and edifying to
you.

you. The Review of your Conduct, which you would be taking on the Approach of these solemn Seasons; the Prayers and Praises you would then be addressing to GOD, and the Meditations in which your Minds would be employ'd, would rouse you out of that Lethargy, into which you may be ready to sink, and which the best of Men find too frequently prevailing.

THE Views of a bleeding Redeemer, of a reconciled GOD, of a confirmed Covenant, and a World of approaching Glory, which this Ordinance so naturally exhibits, would strengthen, as well as delight your Souls; and, by Virtue of the Refreshments receiv'd at these Solemnities, you might be enabled to go on your Way rejoicing, and to make a sensible Progress in your Journey towards the Heavenly *Canaan*.

THE Remembrance of those solemn Engagements, with which you would then be binding your Souls unto the Lord, would be a ready Answer in Hours of future Temptation. You would start back with Horror at the Thought of alienating your Services from a GOD to whom you had so seriously and publickly devoted them; and of returning to those Follies and Sins, which you had in a peculiar Manner covenanted against: For this would appear to be adding Sacrilege and Perjury to the Guilt of all your other Offences.

I SHALL

I SHALL only add here, that, by entering thus early into the Communion of a Church, you will be brought under the more immediate Inspection of the Pastor of it, and likewise of your Christian Brethren; whose faithful and tender Admonitions may be of great Assistance to your unexperienc'd Youth, and happily promote your Progress, both in the Paths of Prudence and of Holiness. Nay, the very Thoughts of having drawn upon you the Eyes of a Society, and of others too, would engage you to some more than ordinary Care, that you might not incur their Censure, or disappoint the Expectations which many have rais'd of you. And, in Confirmation of all this, I cannot but observe, that many of the most eminent Christians, I have ever known, were found amongst those, who in their early Days took this Method of giving themselves to GOD and his People.

I MIGHT farther shew you, that your Compliance with the Exhortation I am now enforcing, might be useful to *others*, as well as to yourselves. This is indeed, in part, a Consequence of the former; for, the more your own Souls are advanced in Knowledge and Holiness, the more capable, and the more ready will you be, to promote the Interest of Christ in the World, and to do Good to those that are round about you. But I would

would especially lead you to consider, that your Attendance itself, separate from these remoter Consequences of it, might probably be useful to others.

OTHER young Persons would, very probably, be awaken'd to a Sense of their Duty by your Example; and those who are more advanc'd in Years may be shamed out of their Neglect, when they see those, who are so far below them in Age, getting the Start of them here. Nor have Instances been wanting within the Circle of our own Acquaintance, where Parents have been stirred up to a holy Emulation, by the early Zeal of their own Children in this Respect. It will be a Joy to all that wish well to the Cause of a Redeemer, to see that GOD is giving him *Youth, like the Drops of Morning-dew* (a), and causing Converts to flock to him, like *Doves unto their Windows*: (b) But Ministers will have a peculiar Share in the Pleasure, when they *see of the Travel of their Soul*, (c) and find, that there are at least some Instances, in which they do not labour in vain, and *spend their Strength for nought*. (d) Especially shall those of us, who are entering on the Work of the Lord, (e) rejoice to meet our

N younger

(a) P^{sa}l. cx. 3. (b) Isa. lx. 8.

(c) Chap. liii. 11. (d) Chap. xlix. 4.

(e) N. B. This Sermon was first preached several Years ago, *April 14. 1725.*

younger Brethren at this Ordinance, as it will give us Encouragement to hope, that Religion will not die in our Hands, and be buried in the Graves of our more aged Friends; but will be supported and adorned by you, and transmitted to those that are yet unborn. The Joy of our Heart on this Occasion may add Vigour, as well as Pleasure, to our Labours; and so, thro' the Concurrence of Almighty Grace, may have a Tendency to render them still more successful.

LET me then intreat and conjure you, by the Authority of the King of Glory and of Grace, and by a Regard to the Honour, the Pleasure, and the Usefulness of your Lives, that you no longer persist in the Neglect of an Ordinance so sacred and noble, so delightful and advantageous.

I AM persuaded you must know, and own, that the Arguments I have urged are both evident and weighty; and yet I fear you will find something to oppose to them, which, if it be not examined, may prevent, or at least diminish, their Success. I proceed therefore,

SECONDLY, To obviate some Objections, which may be offered in excuse for a longer Delay.

AND here I shall not raise Difficulties merely to canvass them, but confine myself
to

to such Objections, as I have heard some urge on this Occasion; and shall briefly suggest some Hints by way of Answer to them. And if the Enumeration be not so large, or the Reply so full, as you could wish, you know where you will be always welcome to propose your Scruples as freely, and to state them as amply, as you please.

1. THE most obvious Reply to the preceding Address is, that “you fear
“ you are not prepared for this Ordinance, and therefore apprehend,
“ that your Attendance upon it would
“ prove dangerous; rather than beneficial.”

To this I answer; if the Case be indeed thus, I have already told you, that you are not the Persons to whom I have been addressing. Nevertheless, give me Leave to remind you, that you ought not rashly to form such a Conclusion against yourselves. I am sure the Matter requires a very attentive Examination, and perhaps, on such a Review, you may find Things are not so bad as you imagine.

You say you are not prepared: But I hope you know, that there's a great deal of Difference between the Nature and Importance of an actual and habitual Preparation. Actual Preparation consists in those

extraordinary Devotions, which, when Opportunity permits, we should use in our Approach to this Sacrament; and therefore supposes such an Approach to be determined, and consequently there can be no Room, in the present Case, to object the Want of that.

BUT you fear that you are not habitually prepared, *i. e.* that you are not Persons of such a Temper and Character, as Christ, the great Lord of the Feast, has invited and will welcome to it. To determine that, consider the Purposes for which the Ordinance was appointed, and observe how far your present Temper corresponds to them. It was appointed to commemorate the Death of Christ, and, in this View, all are fit for it, who regard him as the great atoning Sacrifice, and desire that their Hearts may be affected, and their Lives influenc'd by a Sense of his dying Love. 'Tis a Pledge of our mutual Affection to each other, even to all our Brethren in the Lord; and, in this Respect, all are prepared for it, whose Hearts are divested of all turbulent and unfriendly Passions, and overflow with undissembled Charity and diffusive Benevolence. True, will you perhaps say; but is it not also designed as a Seal of the Covenant of Grace? It certainly is; and it must be a very criminal Profanation to attend it, while an *Alien from that Covenant*; your Determination

mination therefore must turn on the Answer which Conscience will make, as to your Readiness to enter yourselves into it. For if this be your prevailing Desire, and stedfast Resolution, you have not only a Right to the Ordinance, tho' it be a Seal of the Covenant; but its being appointed by Christ, in this View, is an additional and very weighty Argument for your immediate and frequent Attendance upon it. And here the Question is in short this; "Do you sincerely desire
 " to make an unreserved Surrender of your-
 " selves to GOD, as your Owner, Ruler,
 " and supreme Felicity, with an humble
 " Dependence on the Mediation of his Son,
 " and the enlivening and sanctifying Influ-
 " ences of his Spirit?" If this be your prevailing Desire, and sincere Purpose, you may assure yourselves of the kindest Welcome, tho' your Graces may be attended with a great deal of Imperfection and Weakness. But if you are Strangers to such a Desire, I must allow the Objection in its full Force, and own, that you have no Business at the Table of the Lord.

NEVERTHELESS I cannot part with you so. Oh my Friends, is there nothing mournful, and, I will add, is there nothing dreadful, in such a Conclusion as this? "I have
 " no Business at the Table of the Lord; I
 " have no Part in this blessed Repast, be-

“ cause I have no Part in that Redeemer,
 “ whose Death is commemorated there:
 “ And therefore I am shut out, by his own
 “ Appointment shut out! And is not that
 “ a sad Intimation with respect to what is
 “ yet to come? When I enter on the invisi-
 “ ble and eternal State, as I this Night may,
 “ will he admit me to live and reign with
 “ him in a World of Glory, who would
 “ not allow me so much as an Approach to
 “ his Table on Earth? Oh my Soul, it is
 “ too plain thou must be separated from
 “ his blisful Presence, and driven to an
 “ eternal Distance, whence thou wilt behold
 “ with despairing Eyes those pious Souls,
 “ who have eaten and drank with him here,
 “ sitting down with him in his Kingdom.”
 This will not seem a light Matter then: Oh
 that it might now be duly regarded!

FROM all this it will appear, that if this
 Objection from an unprepared Temper be
 true, it ought not to be lightly passed over,
 but should rather be seriously considered; and
 the Removal of it, thro’ divine Assistance,
 immediately attempted; since, till you are
 prepared for this Sacrament, you cannot be
 prepared for Heaven; and consequently are
 in Circumstances of the extremest Danger;
 and daily walk on the Precipice of eternal Ruin.

BUT I would hope, many of you, on
 Enquiry, find this is not your Character and
 Case.

Case. The Unfitness you object will amount to no more than this; that you find Grace weak and languid in your Souls, tho' you have Reason to hope you are not wholly destitute of it. And is this a just Excuse for absenting yourselves from so confirming and edifying, as well as so delightful an Ordinance? 'Tis just as reasonable, as if you were to plead, "I am very faint, and therefore I will not take the most noble, reviving Cordial. I am very weak, and therefore I will refuse the most nourishing and strengthening Food." Thus much for the first Objection. 'Tis more than Time that I proceed to those that remain.

2. OTHERS fear, that the Society of Christians, to which they would join themselves, may be unwilling to admit them into such a Relation."

Now I must own, that if this Objection be made by Persons who have been notorious on account of their Immoralities, and who are but lately recover'd to a Sense of divine Things, it will not admit of an immediate Answer; nor can I invite such to this sacred Ordinance, till they give Evidence of the Reality of a Change in their Heart, by an apparent Reformation of Life, and some steady and prevalent Resolution in a religious Course.

Course: In the mean time, a Regard to the Honour of a Christian Society may oblige the Church to be a little reserved towards such Persons; and such a Reserve is consistent with the greatest Tenderneſs towards them, and the moſt affectionate Concern, that they may not *break the bruised Reed,* or *quench the ſmoking Flax.* (a)

BUT as for ſuch young Perſons, or others, who have been preſerved from ſuch Irregularities, whoſe Conduct has been fair and honourable, and who have not only arrived at a competent Knowledge of the great Truths of Chriſtianity, but have for ſome time been impreſs'd with them, ſo that they have form'd a determinate Reſolution for the Service of GOD, and, it may be, for ſome Years made Trial of his Ways; far be it from us, my Brethren, to ſay one Word to diſcourage your Approach. On the contrary, we would rather invite it; for we know 'tis moſt evidently reaſonable, that when the *Spirit* appears to ſay, *Come,* the *Bride,* i. e. the Church, ſhould echo back the Call. (b) We know, my Friends, that we are not the Maſters of this holy Feaſt: We know that it is not for us to ſet Bounds of our own about this ſacred Table, and ſay, "Thus low muſt you bow" "to us, before you take your Seats there." This is a Conduct, which we not only abhor,

(a) Matth. xii. 20.

(b) Rev. xxii. 17.

as Inhumanity to you, but dread, as an insolent Usurpation on the Rights of our common Lord. If you have indeed *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, you will not sure be unwilling, with Meekness and Modesty, to *give some Reason of the Hope that is in you* (a); and blessed be GOD, we have not *so learned CHRIST* (b), as to make our own Phrases, or Forms, or any Thing singular in our own Experiences, or the Customs of our own Society, the Standard by which we judge either of the Faith, or the Piety of our Brethren.

3. You may, perhaps, farther plead,
 “ That you fear, lest, if you should
 “ enter into the Church, you should
 “ dishonour it by an unsuitable Beha-
 “ viour, which might bring a Reproach
 “ on Religion, and its blessed Author.”

BUT give me Leave to say, that this very Fear argues such a Tenderness, and such a Humility of Soul, as may in a great measure answer itself. I hope you *go forth in the Strength of the Lord*, as well as *making mention of his Righteousness alone* (c): And you must know, that if a bare Possibility of falling into Sin were to exclude from this Ordinance, the most confirmed Christian upon Earth could not dare to approach it. But while
 you

(a) 1 Pet. iii. 15. (b) Eph. iv. 20.

(c) Psal. lxxi. 16.

you see your own Weakness, and maintain, on the one Hand, such a Jealousy over yourselves, and, on the other, such a Zeal for the Honour of Religion, 'tis a certain Evidence, that you are not yet left of GOD, and a most comfortable Sign, that he will *never forsake you*. Nay, I will add, that I know none more likely to prove the Ornaments of a Society, than those who have such humble Apprehensions, lest they should prove its Reproach.

4. O T H E R S may be ready to excuse their absenting themselves from this Ordinance, “ because 'tis so commonly
“ neglected by professing Christians.”

Now as for this, I bless GOD, 'tis far from being a singular Thing amongst us, to see the Table of the Lord furnished with Guests, and young Christians taking their Places there. I speak it with great Pleasure and Thankfulness. But suppose it were otherwise; what if the Neglect of this Institution were much more common, both amongst the Aged and the Young, than it is in most worshipping Assemblies; could you have the Heart to draw an Argument from thence?
“ My dearest Friend, my most gracious Be-
“ nefactor is generally neglected; his dying
“ Command, his dying Love is in a great
“ measure

“measure forgotten; and therefore I will
 “forget him, and I will neglect him.”
 Say, Christians, could a generous Mind re-
 concile itself to such a Thought? Could a
 pious Soul draw such a Consequence as this?
 Methinks the Argument lies quite the con-
 trary Way: “Therefore, Oh my compassi-
 “onate Saviour, will I attend with the grea-
 “ter Solitude, that I may, if possible,
 “shame others out of their Neglect; or at
 “least, may in part supply their Lack of
 “Service, and bear my own Testimony
 “against an ungrateful Generation, who
 “call themselves thy Disciples, and neg-
 “lect this distinguishing Badge of their Pro-
 “fession, this gracious Memorial of thy dy-
 “ing Love.”

5. O T H E R S may plead the Apprehen-
 sions of “aggravated Guilt, and Ruin,
 “if after sacramental Engagements
 “they should apostatize from GOD.”

To this I answer, that I hope you, my
 Friends, are not so unacquainted with the
 Nature of this Ordinance, and the Consti-
 tution of the Gospel, as to imagine that it
 consigns us over to certain Damnation, if in
 any Instance we afterwards deviate from the
 Paths of our Duty; for if it were so, *who*
could be saved? But 'tis probable your Fears
 refer to total Apostasy. If so, I readily
 own,

own, that, should this be the Case, it would in a dreadful Degree inflame your Guilt, and inflame your Misery, that you had not only *known the Ways of Righteousness,*(a) but that you had *eaten and drank in the Presence of the Lord.*(b) But have you any Thoughts of drawing back from him, that you are thus cautious to avoid an instituted Ordinance, merely because, in that Case, it would aggravate your Ruin? So would every Prayer you offer, and every Sermon you hear; but should that Thought drive you from the *Throne of Grace,* or the House of GOD?

NAY, to strike home; I will add, that with regard to you, my Friends, the Caution comes too late. I speak to those who have not only *tasted of the good Word of GOD,* and *of the Powers of the World to come,*(c) but have made trial of the Ways of Wisdom and Piety, and have had some Experience in them; and as for you, I must plainly and faithfully declare, that it is not for you, of all People in the World, to think of gentle Flames, and tolerable Damnation. No, my Brethren, that Hope, wretched as it is, is unavoidably cut off from you, and all your Schemes must be for certain Salvation, and exalted Glory. And tho' 'tis always the Duty of him, that *thinketh he standeth,* to
take

(a) 2 Pet. ii. 21. (b) Luke xiii. 26.

(c) Heb. vi. 5.

take heed lest he fall (a), yet you have all imaginable Reason to trust the Promises of an everlasting Covenant, and the great Redeemer, who hath declared, that *he will give unto his Sheep eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his Hand* (b), or *separate them from his Love* (c). If you fear the dreadful Consequences of Apostasy, which would, indeed, be dreadful beyond all your Fears, keep near to him as the *great Shepherd*, and let those very Fears rather engage you to an early and diligent Attendance on this, and every other appointed Method of Approach, than drive you away from it. 'Tis most reasonable to say, Since there are so many Professors, that *draw back even to Perdition* (d), *I will wait upon the LORD, that I may renew my Strength* (e), and so be enabled to *endure to the End* (f), that I may *receive the End of my Faith in the Salvation of my Soul* (g). If your Fears operate thus, they may be a Means of preventing the Evil, you are so apprehensive of.

ON the whole, I hope that when you weigh all I have been saying, and compare it with whatever can be objected against it, you will be convinced of your Duty, and engaged

(a) 1 Cor. x. 12. (b) Joh. x. 28. (c) Rom. viii. ult.
 (d) Heb. x. 39. (e) Isa. xl. 31.
 (f) Matth. xxiv. 13. (g) 1 Pet. i. 9.

gaged to an immediate Compliance with it. I have enlarged so copiously on these Things, that I can only mention two or three Inferences, which will naturally arise from what I have been laying before you.

FROM hence we might infer, that great Care out to be taken to instruct Youth in the Principles of Religion, that they may not be destitute of such an Acquaintance with them, as is one necessary Part of Preparation for this Ordinance, tho' far from being alone sufficient.

WE may also infer, that more aged Christians ought carefully to cultivate serious Impressions, which may be made on the Minds of the Children, Servants, and other Friends of the rising Generation, that they may be engaged to an early Compliance with their Duty; while, on the other hand, great Care ought surely to be taken, that there be nothing rigorous and severe in the Terms of Admission, which may bear hard upon that Modesty and Tenderneſs of Spirit, which is generally to be found in young Christians, and most eminently in those of the most hopeful and amiable Characters.

As for those of a more advanced Age, who have lived in the continual Neglect of this great and excellent Institution, I hope they have long before this inferred the Guilt and Folly of their Omission, which so evidently
appears

appears from all I have been saying, and is attended with many other Aggravations, which my Time will not now permit me to mention.

I SHALL therefore conclude with observing, that those young Persons, who, thro' Grace, have been convinced of their Duty in this Instance, and brought to an early Compliance with it, have abundant Reason to reflect upon it with Pleasure and Thankfulness. I think it is one of the most important Blessings of my Life, that there are many such in the Church here; many who, thro' the divine Goodness, have lately been added to it. It would not be easy for me, my dear Brethren and Friends, to say how great Pleasure your Presence and Society adds to my Sacrament-days; or what a delightful Prospect it gives me, not only as to the Comfort of my own more advanced Age, but as to the Support of Religion here, when I am no longer amongst you. I, and our more aged Friends, have Reason to rejoice on this Occasion; but surely you yourselves have much greater Reason. Permit me to remind you, that it will be a most proper Expression of your Thankfulness, to labour with the utmost Care to engage other young Persons, your Brethren and Companions, to come and share with you in this Feast. I hope your own Experience of the Pleasure,

and Advantage which attends it, may be added to the other Arguments I have been pleading. As for your own Conduct, let me most affectionately intreat, and most solemnly charge you, not only by all other Arguments, but by your sacramental Vows; by the Eyes of GOD, and of Man, that are upon you; by all our Expectations from you, and all your Engagements to us, that, *as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so you walk in him.* (a). And may Almighty Grace strengthen and quicken you in your Progress; and crown that fair Morning, which is opening upon us in so hopeful, in so delightful a manner, with a long, a bright, and a prosperous Day! A M E N.

(a) Col. ii. 6.



S E R M O N V.