

A
PERSWASIVE

4

To frequent
COMMUNION.

By
John Tillotson, D. D.



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Perſwaſive to frequent Communion.

1 Cor. 11. 26, 27, 28.

*For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew
the Lord's death till he come.*

*Therefore whoſoever ſhall eat this bread, and drink this cup
of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of
the Lord.*

*Let ſe a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him of that bread,
and drink of that cup.*



MY deſign in this Argument is, from
the conſideration of the Nature of
this Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,
and of the perpetual Uſe of it to the
end of the world, to awaken men to
a ſenſe of their Duty, and the great
obligation which lyes upon them to the more fre-
quent receiving of it. And there is the great-
need to make men ſenſible of their duty in
this particular, becauſe in this laſt Age by the
ſwarry diſcourſes of ſome, concerning the na-
ture of this Sacrament, and the danger of re-
ceiving it unworthily, ſuch doubts and fears have
been raiſed in the minds of men as utterly to de-
terr many, and in a great meaſure to diſcourage
moſt the generality of Chriſtians from the uſe
of it; to the great prejudice and danger of mens
ſouls, and the viſible abatement of piety by the
croſs neglect of ſo excellent a means of our growth
and Improvement in it; and to the mighty ſcan-
dal of our Religion, by the general diſuſe and
contempt of ſo plain and ſolemn an Inſtitu-
tion of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour.

Therefore I ſhal take occaſion as briefly & clearly
I can to treat of theſe Four points. *First,*

First, Of the Perpetuity of this Institution
this the Apostle signifies
1 Cor. 11. 26. when he saith, that by eating
this bread, and drinking the
cup, we do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Secondly, Of the Obligation that lyes upon
Christians to a frequent observance of this In-
stitution; this is signified in that expression
of the Apostle, as often as ye eat this bread, and
drink this cup; Which expression considered
and compared together with the practice of the
Primitive Church, does imply an obligation up-
on Christians to the frequent receiving of this Sa-
crament.

Thirdly, I shal endeavour to satisfie the Ob-
jections and Scruples, which have been raised
in the minds of men; and particularly of many de-
vout and sincere Christians, to their great dis-
couragement from their receiving this Sacra-
ment, at least so frequently as they ought: Which
Objections are chiefly grounded upon what
the Apostle says, Wherefore whosoever shall eat the
bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily
is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord: and
doth eat and drink damnation to himself.

Fourthly, What Preparation of our selves is ne-
cessary in order to our worthy receiving of the
Sacrament: which will give me occasion to ex-
plain the Apostle's meaning in these words
Ver. 28. But let a man examine himself, and
let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

I. For the Perpetuity of this Institution, im-
plied in those words, For as often as ye eat the
bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the
Lord's death till he come; or the Words may be
read imperatively, and by way of precept, Shew
ye

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forth the Lord's death till he come. In the
three verses immediately before, the Apostle
particularly declares the Institution of this Sacra-
ment, with the manner and circumstances of it,
as he had received it; not only by the hands of
the Apostles, but, as the Words seem rather to
intimate, by immediate Revelation from our Lord
himself, Ver. 23. *For I have received of the Lord
that which I also delivered unto you; that the
Lord Jesus in the same night that he was betrayed,
took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake
it, and said, take, eat, this is my body which is
broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. Af-
ter the same manner also he took the cup when he had
supped, saying, this cup is the new Testament in my
blood: this do as often as ye shall drink it in remem-
brance of me.* So that the Institution is in these
Words, *This do in remembrance of me.* In which
Words our Lord commands his Disciples after his
death, to repeat these occasions, of taking and
breaking and eating the Bread, and of drinking
the cup, by way of solemn Commemoration
of Him. Now whether this was to be done by
them once only, or oftner; and whether by the
Disciples only, during their lives, or by all Chri-
stians afterwards in all successive Ages of the
Church, is not so certain, merely from the force
of these words, *Do this in remembrance of me:*
but what the Apostle adds, puts the matter
out of all doubt, that the Institution of this Sa-
crament was intended, not only for the Apostles,
but for that Age, but for all Christians, and for
all Ages of the Christian Church; *For as often
as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do
remember the Lord's death till he come;* that is, until
the time of his second coming, which will be

at the end of the World. So that this Sacrament was designed to be a standing Commemoration of the Death and Passion of our Lord till he should come to Judgement; and consequently the Obligation that lyes upon Christians to the observation of it is perpetual, and shall never cease to the end of the World.

So that it is a vain conceit and meer dream of the Enthusiasts, concerning the *seculum spiritus sancti*, the Age and dispensation of the holy Ghost when, as they suppose, all humane teaching shall cease, and all external Ordinances and Institutions in Religion shall vanish, and there shall be no further use of them: Whereas it is very plain from the New Testament, that Prayer, and outward Teaching, and the use of the two Sacraments, were intended to continue among Christians in all Ages. As for Prayer, (besides our natural obligation to this duty, if there were no revealed Religion) we are by our Saviour particularly exhorted to Watch and Pray, with regard to the day of Judgment, and in consideration of the uncertainty of the time when it shall be: And therefore this will always be a Duty incumbent upon Christians till the day of Judgment, because it is prescribed as one of the best ways of preparation for it. That *Outward Teaching* likewise and Baptism were intended to be perpetual, is no less plain, because Christ hath expressly promised to be with the Teachers of his Church in the use of these Ordinances to the end of the World. (*Matth. 28. 19, 20. Go and Disciple all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost: and lo, I am with you always to the end of the World.*) Not only to the end of that particu-
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ular Age, but to the end of the Gospel-Age, and
the consummation of all Ages, as the phrase
clearly imports. And it is as plain from this Text,
that the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* was inten-
ded for a perpetual Institution in the Christian
Church, till the second coming of Christ, viz. his
coming to judgment: Because *Sr. Paul* tells us,
that by these Sacramental Signs the Death of
Christ is to be represented, and commemorat-
ed till he come. *Do this in remembrance of me,*
as oft as ye eat this Bread, and drink this
cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come.

And if this be the End and Use of this Sacra-
ment, to be a solemn remembrance of the Death
and Sufferings of our Lord, during his absence
from us; that is, till his coming to Judgment,
then this Sacrament will never be out of date till
the second coming of our Lord. The considera-
tion whereof should mightily strengthen and
encourage our Faith, in the hope of Eternal Life;
so often as we partake of this Sacrament; since
our Lord hath left it to us as a memorial of him-
self till he come, to translate his Church into
heaven, and as a sure pledge that he will come
again at the end of the World, and invest us in
that Glory, which he is now gone before to pre-
pare for us. So that as often as we approach the
Table of the Lord, we should comfort our selves
with the thoughts of that blessed time, when
we shall eat and drink with him in his Kingdom,
and shall be admitted to the great Feast of the
Lamb, and to eternal Communion with God, the
Judge of all, and with our blessed and glorified
Redeemer, and the holy Angels, and the Spirits
of Just men made perfect.

And the same consideration should likewise
make

make us afraid to receive this Sacrament unworthily, without due Preparation for it, and without worthy effects of it upon our Heart and Lives. Because of that dreadfull sentence of condemnation, which at the second coming of our Lord shall be past upon those, who by the profanation of this solemn Institution trample under foot the Son of God, and contemn the blood of the Covenant; that Covenant of Grace and Mercy, which God hath ratified with Mankind by the Blood of his Son. The Apostle tells us that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* This indeed is spoken of temporal Judgment (as I shall shew in the latter part of this Discourse) but the Apostle likewise supposeth, that if these temporal Judgments had not their effect, to bring men to repentance, but they still persisted in the profanation of this holy Sacrament, they should at last *be condemned with the world.* For as he that partaketh worthily of this Sacrament, confirms his interest in the promises of the Gospel and his Title to eternal life; so he that receive this Sacrament unworthily, that is, without due reverence, and without fruits meet for it; nay on the contrary, continues to live in sin whilst he commemorats the death of Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, this man aggravats and seals his own damnation, because he is guilty of the body and blood of Christ; not only by the contempt of it, but by renewing in some sort the cause of his sufferings, and as it were, *Crucifising to himself afresh the Lord of life and glory, and putting him to an open shame.* And when the great Judge of the World shall

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all appear, and pass final sentence upon men,
such obstinate and impenitent Wretches as could
not be wrought upon, by the remembrance of
the dearest love of their dying Lord, nor be en-
gaged to leave their sins by all the ties and ob-
ligations of this holy Sacrament, shall have their
portion with *Pilate and Judas*, with the chief
priests and Souldiers, who were the betrayers and
furtherers of the Lord of life and glory; and shall
be dealt withal as those who are in some sort, *guilty*
of the body and blood of the Lord. Which severe
threatning ought not to discourage men from the
Sacrament, but to deterr all those from their sins,
who think of engaging themselves to God by so
solemn and holy a Covenant. It is by no means
sufficient reason to make men to fly from the Sa-
crament, but certainly one of the most powerful
arguments in the world, to make men forsake their
sins; as I shall shew more fully in the *third* head
of this Discourse.

II. The Obligation that lyes upon all Christi-
ans to the frequent observance and practice of
this Institution. For though it be not necessarily
implied in these words, as oft as *ye eat this bread*
and drink this cup; yet if we compare these words
of the *Apostle* with the usage and practice of Chri-
stians at that time, which was to communicate in
this holy Sacrament, so often as they solemnly
met together to worship God, they plainly sup-
pose and recommend to us the frequent use of
this Sacrament, or rather imply an obligation up-
on Christians to embrace all opportunities of re-
ceiving it. For the sense and meaning of any Law
or Institution is best understood by the general
practice, which follows immediatly upon it.

And to convince men of their obligation here-
unto,

unto, and to engage them to a suitable practice. I shall now endeavour with all plainness and force of persuasion I can: And so much the more, because the neglect of it among Christians is grown so general, and a great many persons from a superstitious awe and reverence of this Sacrament are by degrees fallen into a profane neglect and contempt of it.

I shall briefly mention a *threefold* Obligation lying upon all Christians to frequent Communion in this holy Sacrament, each of them sufficient of it self, but all of them together of the greatest force imaginable, to engage us hereunto.

1. We are obliged in point of indispensable duty, and in obedience to a plain precept, and most solemn institution of our blessed Saviour, that great *Lawgiver*, who is able to save and to destroy, as *St. James* calls him: He hath bid us, *Do this*. And *Saint Paul* who declares nothing in this matter, but what he tells us he received from the Lord, admonisheth us to do it often. Now for any man that professeth himself a Christian, to live in the open and continued contempt or neglect of plain Law and Institution of *Christ* is utterly inconsistent with such a profession. To such our Lord may say as he did to the *Jews*, *why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*. How far the ignorance of this Institution, or the mistakes which men have been led into about it, may extenuate this neglect is another consideration. But after we knew our Lord's will in this particular, and have the Law plainly laid before us, there is no cloak for our sin. For nothing can excuse the wilfull neglect of a plain Institution from a downright contempt of our Saviour's Authority.

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2. We are likewise obliged hereunto in point of Interest. The benefits which we expect to be derived and assured to us by this Sacrament are all the blessings of the new Covenant, the forgiveness of our sins, the grace and assistance of God's holy Spirit, to enable us to perform the conditions of this Covenant required on our part; and the comforts of God's holy Spirit to encourage us in well-doing, and to support us under sufferings; and the glorious reward of eternal life. So that In neglecting this Sacrament we neglect our own interest and happiness, we forsake our own mercies, and Judge our selves unworthy of all the blessings of the Gospel; and deprive our selves of one of the best means and advantages of confirming and conveying these blessings to us. So that if we had not a due sense of our *duty*, the consideration of our own *interest* should oblige us, not to neglect so excellent and so effectual a means of promoting our own comfort and happiness.

3. We are likewise particularly obliged in point of Gratitude to the carefull observance of this Institution. This was the particular thing our Lord gave in charge, when he was going to lay down his life for us, *Do this in remembrance of me*. Men use religiously to observe the charge of a dying friend, and unless it be very difficult and unreasonable, to do what he desires: But this is the charge of our best friend (nay of the greatest friend and benefactor of all mankind) when he was preparing himself to die in our stead, and to offer up himself a sacrifice for us; to undergo the most grievous pains and sufferings for our sakes, and to yield up himself to the worst of temporal Deaths. That he might deliver us from the bitter pains of eternal Death. And can we deny

deny him any thing he asks of us who was going
to do all this for us? Can we deny him this? A
little grievous and burthensome in it self; but
infinitely beneficial to us? Had such a friend
and in such circumstances bid us do some great
thing, would we not have done it? How much
more when he hath only said, *Do this in remem-
brance of me?* when he hath only commended
to us one of the most natural and delightful
Actions, as a fit representation and memorial
of his wonderfull Love to us, and of his cruel suf-
ferings for our sakes; when he hath only en-
joynd us, in a thankful commemoration of his
goodness, to meet at his table, and to remem-
ber what he hath done for us; to look on
him whom we have pierced, and to resolve to
grieve and wound him no more? Can we without
the most horrible ingratitude neglect this dying
charge of our Sovereign and our Saviour, the
great friend and lover of souls? A command so
reasonable, so easie, so full of blessings and be-
nefits to the faithfull observers of it!

One would think it were no difficult matter
to convince men of their duty in this particular
and of the necessity of observing so plain an Insti-
tution of our Lord, that it were no hard thing to
perswade men to their interest, & to be willing
to partake of those great & manifold blessings
which all Christians believe to be promised and
made good to the frequent and worthy Receiv-
ers of his Sacrament. Where then lyes the dif-
ficulty? What should be the cause of all this back-
wardness, which we see in men to so plain, so ne-
cessary, and so beneficial a duty? The truth is,
men have been greatly discouraged from this Sa-
crament, by the unwarry pressing and inculcat-
ing

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of two great truths; the danger of the unwor-
thy receiving of this holy Sacrament, and the ne-
cessity of a due preparation for it. Which brings
to the

I. Third Particular I proposed, which was
to endeavour to satisfy the *Objections and Scruples*,
which have been raised in the minds of men, and
particularly of many devout and sincere Christians,
of their great discouragement from the receiving
of this Sacrament, at least so frequently as they
ought. And these *Objections*, I told you, are
chiefly grounded upon what the Apostle says
1 Cor. 11. 27. *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread,*
or drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty
of the body and blood of the Lord. And again v. 29.
That eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and
drinketh damnation to himself. Upon the mistake &
application of these Texts have been grounded
two *Objections*, of great force to discourage men
from this Sacrament, which I shall endeavour with
the tenderness and clearness I can to remove.

1. That the danger of unworthy receiving be-
ing so very great, it seems the safest way not to
receive at all. *Secondly*, That so much Prepara-
tion and worthiness being required in order to our
worthy receiving, the more timorous sort of de-
vout Christians can never think themselves duly
enough qualified for so sacred an Action.

2. That the danger of unworthy receiving be-
ing so very great, it seems the safest way wholly
to refrain from this Sacrament, and not to re-
ceive it at all. But this *Objection* is evidently of
less force, if there be (as most certainly there is)
a great deal more of a greater danger on the other hand,
in the neglect of this Duty: And so though
the danger of unworthy receiving be avoided by
not

not receiving, yet the danger of neglecting and
contemning a plain Institution of Christ is
the rebey avoided. Surely they in the *Parable* that
refused to come to the *Marriage-feast* of the King
Son, and made light of that gracious Invitatio
were at least as faulty as he who came without
wedding garment. And we find in the conclusio
of the *Parable*, that as he was severely punished f
his disrespect, so they were destroyed for the
disobedience. Nay of the two, it is the great
sign of contempt wholly to neglect the Sacrament
than to partake of it without some due qualific
tion. The greatest indisposition that can be fo
this holy Sacrament is ones being a bad man, an
he may be as bad, and is more like to continue
who wilfully neglects this Sacrament, than he th
comes to it with any degree of reverence and pre
paration, though much less than he ought: And
surely it is very hard for men to come to so fo
lemn an ordinance without some kind of religio
awe upon their spirits, and without some good
thoughts and resolutions, at least for the present.
If a man that lives in any known wickedness
life, do before he receive the Sacrament set him
self seriously to be humbled for his sins, and to re
pent of them, and to beg God's græce and assist
ance against them; and after the receiving of it
does continue for some time in these good resolu
tions, though after a while he may possibly relaps
into the same sins again; this is some kind of re
straint to a wicked life, and these good mood
and fits of repentance and reformation are much
better than a constant and uninterrupted course o
sin: Even this righteousness, which is but as the
morning cloud and the early dew, which so soon pass
eth away, is better than none.

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and indeed scarce any man can think of com-
to the Sacrament, but he will by this confide-
on be excited to some good purposes, and put
on some sort of endeavour to amend and re-
n his life; and though he be very much under
bondage and power of evil habits, if he do
h any competent degree of sincerity (and it
his own fault if he do not) make use of this
ellent means and instrument, for the mortify-
and subduing of his lusts, and for the obtain-
of God's grace and assistance, it may please
d by the use of these means, so to abate the force
power of his lusts, and to imprint such confi-
ations upon his mind, in the receiving of this
y Sacrament, and preparing himself for it, that
may at last break off his wicked course, and be-
ne a good man.

But, on the other hand, as to those who ne-
st this Sacrament, there is hardly any thing
to restrain them from the greatest enormities
life, and to give a check to them in their evil
rse; nothing but the penalty of humane laws,
ch men may avoid, and yet be wicked enough.
etofore men used to be restrained from great
scandalous vices by shame and fear of disgrace,
would abstain from many sins, out of regard
their honour and reputation among men: But
a have hardened their faces in this degenerate
e, and those gentle restraints of modesty which
erned and kept men in order heretofore, sig-
e nothing now a-days. Blushing is out of fashi-
and shame is ceased from among the children
men.

But the Sacrament did always use to lay some
d of restraint upon the worst of men; and if
d not wholly reform them, it would at least
have

have some good effect upon them for a time; it did not make men good, yet it would make them resolve to be so, & leave some good thoughts and impressions upon their minds.

So that I doubt not but it hath been a thing very bad consequence, to discourage men much from the Sacrament, as the way hath been of late years; and that many men who were under some kind of check before, since they have been driven away from the Sacrament, have quite let loose the reins, and prostituted themselves to all manner of impiety and vice. Among the many ill effects of our past confusions, this is none of the least; That in many congregations of this Kingdom, Christians were generally disused and deterred from the Sacrament, upon a pretence that they were unfit for it; and being so, they must necessarily incur danger of unworthy receiving; and therefore they had better wholly to abstain from it. which it came to pass, that in very many places this great and Solemn Institution of the Christian Religion was almost quite forgotten, as if it had been no part of it, and the remembrance of Christ's death even lost among Christians. So that many Congregations in England might justly have taken up the complaint of the Women at our Saviour's sepulchre, *They have taken away our Lord, and we know not where they have laid him.*

But surely men did not well consider what they did, nor what the consequence of it would be, when they did so earnestly dissuade men from the Sacrament. 'Tis true indeed the danger of unworthy receiving is great; but the proper inference or conclusion from hence is not, that men should be deterred from the Sacrament.

ent, but that they should be affrighted from their
is, and from that wicked course of life, which is
habitual indisposition & unworthiness. *St. Paul*
leed (as I observed before) truly represents, and
y much aggravates the danger of the unworthy
ceiving of this Sacrament; but he did not deter
Corinthians from it, because they had sometimes
ne to it without due reverence, but exhorts them
mend what had been amiss, & to come better
pared and disposed for the future. And there-
e after that terrible declaration in the Text, *Who-*
ever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the
Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of
the Lord, he does not add, therefore let Christians
heed of coming to the Sacrament, but let them
be prepared and with due reverence, not as to
common meal, but to a solemn participation of
body & blood of Christ; *But let a man examine him-*
self, and so let him eat of that bread & drink of that cup.
or, if this be a good reason to abstain from the
Sacrament, for fear of performing so sacred an acti-
on an undue manner, it were best for a bad man
to lay aside all Religion, and to give over the ex-
ercise of all the duties of piety, of prayer, of read-
ing and hearing the Word of God; because there is a
pardonable danger in the unworthy and un-
fit use of any of these. *The prayer of the wicked*
that is, of one that resolves to continue so) is an
oblation to the Lord. And our Saviour gives us
the same caution concerning hearing the Word of
God; *Take heed how ye hear*. And *St. Paul* tells us,
that those who are not reformed by the doctrine
of the Gospel, it is the savour of death, that is, deadly
damnable to such persons.

But now will any man from hence argue, that it
is best for a wicked man not to pray, not to hear

B

or

or read the Word of God, lest by so doing
should endanger & aggravat his condemnation? A
yet there is as much reason from this considera
on to perswade men to give over praying, & att
ding to God's Word, as to lay aside the use of
Sacrament. And tis every whit as true, that he th
prays unworthily, & hears the word of God unw
thily, that is, without fruit & benefit, is guilty of
great contempt of God, & of our blessed Saviour
by his undevout prayers, & unfruitful hearing
God's Word, does further & aggravat his own da
nation: I say, this is every whit as true, as he th
eats and drinks the Sacrament unworthily is guilt
of a high contempt of Christ, & *eats and drinks*
own judgment, so that the danger of the unwort
performing this so sacred an action is no otherw
a reason to any man, to abstain from the Sacrame
than it is an Argument to him to cast off all Reli
on. He that unworthily useth or performs any p
of Religion is in an evil and dangerous conditio
but he that casts off all Religion plungeth him
into a most desperat state, & does certainly dan
himself to avoid the danger of damnation: Becau
he that casts off all Religion, throws off all m
means whereby he should be reclaimed & brought
into a better state. I cannot more fitly illustrat
matter than by this plain Similitude. He that ea
and drinks intemperatly endangers his health and
his life, but he that to avoid this danger will not
eat at all, I need not tell you what will certainly
become of him in a very short space.

There are some conscientious persons who ab
stain from the Sacrament, upon an apprehensio
that the sins which they shall commit afterwar
are unpardonable. But this is a great mistake; our
Savior having so plainly declared, that all manner

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sin shall be forgiven men, except the blasphemy
against the holy Ghost; such as was that of the *Pharisees*,
who as our Saviour tells us blasphemed the
holy Ghost, in ascribing those great miracles which
they saw him worke, & which he really wrought
by the Spirit of God, to the power of the Devil.
To fall into sin deliberately after so solemn an en-
gagement to the contrary is a great aggravation
of sin, but not such as to make it unpardonable.
The neglect of the Sacrament is not the way
to prevent these sins; but, on the contrary, the
constant receiving of it, with the best preparation
that can, is one of the most effectual means to pre-
vent sin for the future, and to obtain the assistance
of God's grace to that end. And if we fall into sin
afterwards we may be renewed by repentance; *we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins*; and as such, is in a very lively and affecting
manner exhibited to us, in this blessed Sacrament
his body broken, and his blood shed for the re-
mission of our sins. Can we think that the primi-
tive Christians, who so frequently received this
Sacrament, did never after the receiving of
it fall into any deliberate sin? undoubtedly many
of them did; but far be it from us to think, that
all such sins were unpardonable, and that so many
good men should because of their careful and con-
scientious observance of our Lord's Institution
inevitably fall into condemnation.

To draw to a conclusion of this matter; such
groundless fears and jealousies as these may be a
sign of a good meaning, but they are certainly a
sign of an injudicious mind. For if we stand upon
these scruples, no man perhaps was ever so wor-
shipfully prepared to draw near to God in any duty
of

of Religion, but there was still some defect or
ther in the disposition of his mind, and the
gree of his preparation. But if we prepare
selves as we can, this is all that God expects. A
for our fears of falling into sin afterwards, ther
this plain answer to be given to it; that the da
ger of falling into sin is not prevented by neg
cting the Sacrament, but encreased; becau
powerfull and probable means of preserving us
from sin is neglected. And why should not eve
sincere Christian, by the receiving of this Sac
ment, and renewing his Covenant with God,
ther hope to be confirmed in goodness, and to r
ceive further assistances of God's grace and ho
Spirit, to strengthen him against sin, and to enab
him to subdue it; than trouble himself with fea
which are either without ground, or if they ar
nor, are no sufficient reason to keep any man fro
the Sacrament? We cannot surely entertain so un
worthy a thought of God, and our blessed Saviour
as to imagine that he did institute the Sacrament
not for the furtherance of our Salvation, but as
snare, and an occasion of our ruine and damna
tion. This were to pervert the gracious design of
God, and to turn the cup of Salvation into a cu
of deadly poison to the souls of men.

All then that can reasonably be inferred from
the danger of unworthy receiving is, that upon th
consideration men should be quickned to come t
the Sacrament with a due preparation of mind
and so much the more to fortifie their resoluti
ons of living suitably to that holy Covenant, which
they solemnly renew every time they receive th
holy Sacrament. This consideration ought to con
vince us of the absolute necessity of a good life
but not to deter us from the use of any means
which

1.
which may contribute to make us good. There-
fore (as a learned *Divine* says very well) this Sa-
crament can be neglected by none but those that
do not understand it, but those who are unwilling
to be tyed to their duty, and are afraid of being
obliged to use their best diligence to keep the
commandments of Christ: And such persons have
no reason to fear being in a worse condition, since
they are already in so bad a state. And thus much
may suffice for answer to the *first Objection* con-
cerning the great danger of unworthy receiving
this holy Sacrament. I shall proceed to the

2. *Second Objection*, which was this; That
v. 2. so much preparation and worthiness being
required to our worthy receiving, the more
honourous sort of Christians can never think them-
selves duly enough qualified for so sacred an A-
ction.

For a full answer to this Objection, I shall en-
deavour briefly to clear these *Three things*. *First*,
That every degree of Imperfection in our prepa-
ration for this Sacrament is not a sufficient reason
for men to refrain from it. Secondly, That a total
want of a due preparation, not only in the degree
but in the main and substance of it, though it ren-
ders us unfit at present to receive this Sacrament,
yet it does by no means excuse our neglect of it.
Thirdly, That the proper inference and conclusi-
on from the total want of a due preparation, is not
to cast off all thoughts of receiving the Sacrament,
but immediately to set upon the work of prepa-
ration, that so we may be fit to receive it. And
I can clearly make out these *three things*, I hope
this Objection is fully answered.

That every degree of Imperfection in our pre-
paration for this Sacrament is not a sufficient rea-
son

son for men to abstain from it; for then no man should ever receive it: For who is every way worthy, & in all degrees and respects duly qualified to approach the presence of God in any of the duties of his Worship and Service? Who can wash his hands in innocency, that so he be perfectly fit to approach God's Altar? There is not a man on earth that lives and sins not. The Graces of the best men are imperfect, and every imperfection in grace & goodness is an imperfection in the disposition & preparation of our minds for this holy Sacrament: But if we do heartily repent of our sins and sincerely resolve to obey and perform the terms of the Gospel, and of that Covenant which we entered into by Baptism, & are going solemnly to renew and confirm by our receiving of this Sacrament, we are at least in some degree, and in the main qualified to partake of this holy Sacrament; And the way for us to be more fit is to receive this Sacrament frequently, that by this spiritual food of God's appointing, by this living bread which comes down from heaven our souls may be nourished in goodness, & new strength and virtue may be continually derived to us, for the purifying of our hearts, and enabling us to run the ways of Gods commandments with more constancy and delight. For the way to grow in grace, and to be strengthened with all might in the inner man, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which by Christ Jesus are to the praise and glory of God, is with care and conscience to use those means which God hath appointed for this end: And if we will neglect the use of these means, it is to no purpose for us to pray to God for his grace and assistance. We may tire our selves with our devotions, and fill heaven with vain complaints, and yet
by

1.
all this importunity obtain nothing at God's
and: Like lazy beggars that are always complain-
and always asking, but will not work, will do
thing to help themselves, and better their con-
dition, and therefore are never like to move the
mercy and compassion of others. If we expect God's
grace and assistance, we must work out our own
preparation in the careful use of all these means which
God hath appointed to that end. That excel-
lent degree of goodness, which men would have
fit them for the Sacrament, is not to be had but
by the use of it. And therefore it is a preposterous
reasoning for men to insist upon having the end before
they will use the means that may further them in
the obtaining of it.

2. The total want of a due preparation, not
only in the degree, but in the main and substance
of it, though it render us unfit at present to re-
ceive this Sacrament, yet does it by no means ex-
cuse our neglect of it. One fault may draw on
another, but can never excuse it. It is our great
fault that we are wholly unprepared, and no
man can claim any benefit by his fault, or plead
it in excuse or extenuation of this neglect. A to-
tal want of preparation and an absolute unwor-
thiness is impenitency in an evil course, a resolu-
tion to continue a bad man, not to quit his lusts,
and to break off that wicked course he hath lived
in: But is this any excuse for the neglect of our
duties, that we will not fit our selves for the doing
of it with benefit and advantage to our selves? A
father commands his son to ask him blessing every
day, and is ready to give it him; but so long as
he is undutiful to him in his other actions, and
lives in open disobedience, forbids him to come
near his sight. He excuseth himself from asking his
fa-

fathers blessing, because he is undutiful in other things, and resolves to continue so. This is justly the cause of neglecting the duty God requires, and the blessings he offers to us in the Sacrament, because we have made our selves incapable of so performing the one as to receive the other, and are resolved to continue so. We will not do our duty in other things, and then plead that we are unworthy and unworthy to do it In this particular of the Sacrament.

3. The proper inference and conclusion from a total want of due preparation for the Sacrament, is not to cast off all thoughts of receiving it, but immediately to set about the work of preparation, that so we may be fit to receive it. For if this be true, that they who are absolutely unprepared ought not to receive the Sacrament, neither can do it with any benefit; nay by doing it in such a manner render their condition much worse; this is a most forcible argument to repentance and amendment of life. There is nothing reasonable in this case, but immediately to resolve upon a better course, that so we may be meet partakers of those holy Mysteries, and may no longer provoke God's wrath against us by the wilfull neglect of so great & necessary a duty of the Christian Religion. And we do willfully neglect it, so long as we do willfully refuse to fit and qualify our selves for the due and worthy performance of it. Let us view the thing in a like case; A pardon is graciously offered to a rebel, he declines to accept it, and modestly excuseth himself, because he is not worthy of it. And why is he not worthy? Because he resolves to be a rebel, and then his pardon will do him no good, but be an aggravation of his Crime. Very true; and it will be no less an

1.
ration that he refuseth it for such a reason
under a pretence of modesty does the most
prudent thing in the world. This is just the
ground in this case there is but one thing rea-
sonable to be done, & that is, for a man to make
himself capable of the benefit as soon as he can,
thankfully to accept of it: But to excuse him-
self from accepting of the benefit offered, be-
cause he is not worthy of it, nor fit for it, nor
intends to be so, is as if a man should desire
to be excused from being happy, because he is
obliged to play the fool and to be miserable:
that whether our want of preparation be total,
or only to some degree, it is every way unreason-
able. If it be in the degree only, it ought not
to hinder us from receiving the Sacrament; If
it be total, it ought to put us immediately upon
removing the impediment, by making such pre-
paration as is necessary to the due and worthy re-
ceiving of it And this brings me to the

Fourth and last thing I proposed, *viz* What
preparation of our selves is necessary in order to
the worthy receiving of this Sacrament. Which I
trust you would give me occasion to explain the
Apostle's meaning in the last part of the *Text*, *But*
a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that
bread and drink of that cup. I think it very clear
from the occasion & circumstances of the *Apostle's*
course concerning the Sacrament, that he does
not intend the examination of our state, whether
we be Christians or nor, and sincerely resolved to
continue so; and consequently that he does not
speak of our habitual preparation by the re-
ception of a good life. This he takes for granted,
that they were Christians and resolved to continue
and persevere in their Christian profession: But

7
he speaks of their actual fitness and worthiness
that time when they came to receive the Lord's
Supper. And for the clearing of this matter,
must consider what it was that gave occasion
this discourse. At the 20th verse of this Chapter
sharply reproves their irreverent and unsuit-
carriage at the Lord's Supper. They came to
very disorderly, *one before another*. It was the
stom of Christians to meet at their *Feast of Cha-
ry*, in which they did communicate with great
briety and temperance; and when that was end-
they celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's Su-
per. Now among the *Corinthians* this order
broken; the rich met and excluded the poor from
this common feast: And after an irregular fe-
(one before another eating his own supper as
came) they went to the Sacrament in great dis-
order; *One was hungry*, having eaten nothing
all; *Others were drunk*, having eaten intemper-
ly; and the poor were despised and neglected. To
the Apostle condemns as a great profanation
that solemn Institution of the Sacrament, at
participation whereof they behaved themselves
with as little reverence, as if they had been met
a common Supper or Feast. And this he calls,
discerning the Lord's body, making no difference
in their behaviour between the Sacrament and
common meal; which irreverent and contemp-
tuous carriage of theirs he calls, *eating and drink-
ing unworthily*; for which he pronounceth them
guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, which
were represented & commemorated in their *eat-
ing of that bread and drinking of that cup*. In
which irreverent and contemptuous usage of the
body and blood of our Lord, he tells them that
they did incur the judgment of God; which he
cal

1.
... eating and drinking their own judgment. For
the word *expiation*, which our Translators render
expiation, does not here signifie eternal condem-
nation, but a temporal Judgment and chastite-
at in order to the prevention of eternal con-
demnation, is evident from what follows; *He that
eath and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh
judgment to himself: And then he says, For this
cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many
die: That is, for this irreverence of theirs, God
sent among them several diseases, of which
many had died. And then he adds, For if we would
judge our selves, we should not be judged. For if we
would Judge our selves; whether this be meant of
publick Centures of the Church, or our pri-
censuring of our selves, in order to our future
endment and reformation is not certain. If
the latter, which I think most probable, then
judging here is much the same with *examining our
selves ver. 28.* And then the Apostle's meaning is,
that if we would censure and examine our selves,
as to be more careful for the future, we should
appeare the Judgment of God in these temporal
punishments: *But when we are judged, we are
chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condem-
ned with the world. But when we are Judged; that
is, when by neglecting thus to judge our selves,
we provoke God to judge us; we are chastened of
the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the
world; that is, he inflicts these temporal judg-
ments upon us to prevent our eternal condemna-
tion. Which plainly shews that the judgment here
spoken of is not eternal condemnation. And then
he concludes, wherefore, my Brethren, when ye come
together to eat, tarry for one another. And if any man
unger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together**

unto judgment : Where the *Apostle* plainly sheweth both what was the crime of unworthy receiving and the punishment of it. Their crime was, the irreverent and disorderly participation of the sacrament ; and their punishment was, those temporal judgements which God inflicted upon them for this their contempt of the Sacrament.

Now this being, I think, very plain ; we proportionably to understand the precept of examination of our selves, before we eat of that bread and drink of that cup. But let a man examine himself ; that is, consider well with himself what a sacred Action he is going about, and what behaviour becomes him, when he is celebrating this sacrament instituted by our Lord in memorial of his body and blood, that is, of his death and passion. And if heretofore he hath been guilty of any disorder and irreverence (such as the *Apostle* hath taxed them withall) let him censure and judge himself for it, be sensible of and sorry for his fault, and be carefull to avoid it for the future, and having thus Examined himself, let him eat that bread, and drink of that cup. This, I think is the plain sense of the *Apostle's* discourse ; and that if we attend to the scope and circumstance of it, it cannot well have any other meaning.

But some will say, is this all the preparation that is required to our worthy receiving of the Sacrament, that we take care not to come drunk to it, nor to be guilty of any irreverence and disorder in the celebration of it ? I answer in short, this is not the particular unworthiness with which the *Apostle* hath taxed the *Corinthians*, and which he warns them to amend, as they desire to escape the judgement of God, such as they had already felt for this irreverent carriage of theirs, so unsuitable to the h

1.
Sacrament: He finds no other fault with them
present in this matter, though any other sort
of irreverence will proportionably expose men
to the like punishment. He says nothing here of
their habitual preparation, by the sincere pur-
pose and resolution of a good life, answerable to
the rules of the Christian Religion; this we may
suppose he took for granted. However, it con-
sists in the Sacrament no more than it does Prayer
or any other religious Duty. Not but that it is very
necessary, that none but those who do heartily embrace
the Christian Religion, and are sincerely resolved
to frame their lives according to the holy rules
and precepts of it, are fit to communicate in this
solemn acknowledgment and profession of it. So
that it is a practice very much to be countenanced
and encouraged, because it is of great use, for
Christians by way of preparation for the Sacra-
ment to examine themselves in a larger sense than
is usually all probability the *Apostle* here intended; I
mean, to examine our past lives and the actions
of them, in order to a sincere repentance of all
our errors and miscarriages, and to fix us in the
steady purpose and resolution of a better life;
particularly, when we expect to have the forgive-
ness of our sins sealed to us, we should lay aside all
animosity and thoughts of revenge, and heartily for-
give those that have offended us, and put in prac-
tice that universal love and charity which is re-
presented to us by this holy Communion. And to
this purpose we are earnestly exhorted in the
publick office of the *Communion* by way of due
preparation and disposition for it. *to repent us truly
of our sins past, to amend our lives, and to be in
perfect charity with all men, that so we may be meet
partakers of those holy mysteries.*

And

And because this work of examining our selves concerning our state and condition, and of exercising repentance towards God, and charity towards men is incumbent upon us as we are Christians, and can never be put in practice more seasonably, and with greater advantage, than when we are meditating of this Sacrament, therefore besides our habitual preparation by repentance and the constant endeavours of a holy life, it is a very pious and commendable custom in Christians before their coming to the Sacrament, to set apart some particular time for this work of examination. But how much time every person should allot to this purpose, is matter of prudence; and as it need not, so neither indeed can it be precisely determined. Some have greater reason to spend more time upon this work than others, I mean these, whose accounts are heavier, because they have long run upon the score, and neglected themselves; and some also have more leisure and freedom for it, by reason of their easie condition and circumstances in the world; and therefore are obliged to allow a greater portion of time for the exercises of piety and devotion. In general no man ought to do a work of so great moment & concernment slighty and perfunctorily. And in this, as in all other actions, the end is principally to be regarded. Now the end of examining our selves is to understand our state and condition & to reform whatever we find amiss in our selves. And provided this end be obtained, the circumstances of the means are less considerable; whether more or less time be allowed to this work, it matters not so much, as to make sure that the work be thoroughly done.

And

1.
nd I do on purpose speak thus carefully in
matter, because some pious persons do per-
s err on the stricter hand, & are a little su-
sistulous on that side in so much that unless
y gain so much time to set a part for a solemn
eparation, they will refrain from the Sacra-
nt at that time, though otherwise they be habi-
ly prepared: This I doubt not proceeds from
ous mind; but as the *Apostle* says in another
e about the Sacrament, *Shall I praise them in-
? I praise them not.* For provided there
no willfull neglect of due preparation, it is
ch better to come so prepared as we can, nay
ink it is our duty so to do, rather than to ab-
n upon this *punctilio*. For when all is done,
best preparation for the Sacrament, is the ge-
al care and endeavour of a good life; and
that is thus prepared may receive at any time
en opportunity is offered, though he had no
rticular foresight of that opportunity. And I
rk is that case such a one shall do much
ter to receive than to refrain, because he is
tually prepared for the Sacrament, though he
l no time to make such actual preparati-
as he desired: And if this were not allow-
e, how could Ministers communicat with sick
sons at all times, or perswade others to do
many times upon very short and sudden war-
g?

nd indeed we cannot imagine that the primi-
Christians, who received the Sacrament so
quently, that for ought appears to the con-
ry they Judged it as essential and necessary
part of their publick worship as any other
t of it whatsoever, even as their Hymns and
yers, and reading and interpreting of the
Word

Word of God : I say we cannot well conceive how they who celebrated it so constantly, could allot any more time for a solemn preparation to it, than they did for any other part of divine worship : And consequently that the *Apostle*, who he bids the *Corinthians* examine themselves, could mean no more than that considering the nature & ends of this Institution they should come to it with great reverence ; and reflecting upon their former miscarriages in this matter, should be carefull upon this admonition to avoid them for the future, and to amend what had been amiss ; which to do requires their resolution and care than any long time preparation.

I speak this, that devout persons may not be intangled by an apprehension of a greater necessity than really there is of a long & solemn preparation every time they receive the Sacrament. The great necessity that lyes upon men to live as becomes Christians, and then they can never be absolutely unprepared. Nay I think this to be a very good preparation ; and I see not why men should not be very well satisfied with it, unless they intend to make the same use of the Sacrament that many of the Papists do of Confession and Absolution, which is to quit with God once or twice a year, that so they may begin to sin again upon a new score.

But because the Examination of our selves is a thing so very usefull, and the time which men are wont to set apart for their preparation to the Sacrament is so advantageous an opportunity for the practice of it ; therefore I cannot but very much commend those who take this occasion, to search and try their ways, and to correct them

1.
mselves to a more solemn account of their
sins. Because this ought to be done sometime,
I know no fitter time for it than this. And
perhaps some would never find time to recollect
mselves, and to take the condition of their
sins into serious consideration, were it not
in this solemn occasion.

The sum of what I have said is this, that sup-
posing a person to be habitually prepared by a
religious disposition of mind, and the general
course of a good life, this more solemn actual
preparation is not always necessary; And it is
rather when there is an opportunity to receive
without it, than not to receive at all: But the
rather our actual preparation is, the better. For
a man can examine himself too often, and un-
derstand the state of his soul too well, and ex-
ercise repentance, and renew the resolutions of
a good life too frequently. And there is per-
haps no fitter opportunity for the doing of all
this, than when we approach the Lord's table,
to commemorate his death, and to renew
our Covenant with him to live as becomes the
 Gospel.

All the Reflection I shall now make upon this
course, shall be from the consideration of
what hath been said, earnestly to excite all that
profess and call themselves Christians to a due
preparation of themselves for this holy Sacra-
ment, and a frequent participation of it, accord-
ing to the intention of our Lord and Saviour
in the institution of it, and the undoubted pra-
ctice of Christians in the primitive and best
ages, when men had more devotion, and fewer
excuses about their duty.

127
If we do in good earnest believe, that the
Sacrament was instituted by our Lord in remem-
brance of his dying love, we cannot but have
very high value and esteem for it upon that ac-
count. We think so often as we read the In-
stitution of it, these words of our dear Lord,
this in remembrance of me, and consider what
who said them did for us, this dying charge
our best friend should stick with us, and make
a strong impression upon our minds: Especial-
ly if we add to these, those other words of his, re-
long before his death, *Greater love than this ha-
ve no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends,
ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I comma-
nd you.* It is a wonderful love which he hath expres-
sed to us, and worthy to be had in perpetual re-
membrance. And all that he expects from us
by way of thankful acknowledgment, is to ce-
lebrate the remembrance of it by the frequent par-
ticipation of this blessed Sacrament. And this
charge, laid upon us by him, who laid down
his life for us, lay no obligation upon us to re-
solemn remembrance of that unparallel'd kin-
dness, which is the fountain of so many blessing
and benefits to us? It is a great sign we ha-
ve no great sense of the benefit, when we are so un-
mindfull of our Benefactor, as to forget his
days without number.

The obligation he hath laid upon us, is so
fily great, not only beyond all requital, but be-
yond all expression; that if he had command-
ed us some very grievous thing, we ought with
the readiness and cheerfulness in the world
have done it; how much more when he ha-
d imposed upon us so easie a commandment
thing of no burthen, but of immense benef-
Wh

1.
When he hath only said to us; Eat, O friends;
Drink, O beloved? When he only invites
to his table, to the best and most delicious
that we can partake of on this side hea-

we seriously believe the great blessings which
there exhibited to us, & ready to be confer-
red upon us, we should be so far from neglecting
them, that we should heartily thank God for
every opportunity he offers to us of being made
partakers of such benefits. When such a price
is put into our hands shall we want hearts to
make use of it? Methinks we should long with
David (who saw but the shadow of these bless-
ings) to be satisfied with the good things of
God's house, and to draw near his altar; and
to cry out with him, *O when shall I come
and appear before thee? my soul longeth, yea even
my flesh longeth for the courts of the Lord, and my
flesh longeth out for the living God.* And if we had a just
estimate of things, we should account it the great-
est felicity and judgment in the world to be de-
prived of this priviledge, which yet we do de-
prive ourselves of.

We exclaim against the Church of Rome with
great impatience, and with a very just indignati-
on, for robbing the People of half of this
Sacrament, and taking from them the
cup of blessing, the cup of salvation; and yet we can
patiently endure for some moneths, nay years,
to exclude our selves wholly from it. If no such
benefits and blessings belong to it, why do
we complain of them for hindring us of any part
of it? But if there do, why do we by our own
fault deprive our selves of the whole?

In

In vain do we bemoan the decay of our grace
and our slow progress and improvement in Chri-
stianity, whilst we wilfully despise the best
means of our growth in goodness. Well do we
deserve that God should send leanness into our
souls, and make them to consume and pine
away in perpetual doubting and trouble, if, when
God himself doth spread a Table for us, and
before us the bread of life, we will not come
and feed upon it with joy and thankfulness.

FINIS.