

A
Funeral Sermon,
Preach'd at the Interment of
Mr. SAMUEL STEPHENS
by
Edmund Calamy



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A
Funeral Sermon,

Preach'd at the Interment of
Mr. *SAMUEL STEPHENS*,
For some time Employ'd in the Work of
the Ministry, in this CITY.

Who departed this Life the Fifth of *January*, 1693/4.
in the Twenty eighth Year of his Age.

By *EDMUND CALAMY*.

1 Pet. 1.24. *All flesh is as grass; and all the glory of man, as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.*

Psal. 103.16. *For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

LONDON,

Printed for *Abraham Chandler*, at the *Chyrurgeons-Arms*,
in *Aldersgate-street*, MDCXCIV.

TO THE
READER.

T*Hou hast here an awful Providence to draw forth and exercise thy solemn Thoughts: A Person Young, Strong, Healthful, and of no ordinary Hopefulness and Proficiency in what might render him a Light and Blessing to and in his Generation; but soon cut down by a malignant Fever. I knew him intimately, and greatly valu'd him; and, by my free and frequent Conversation with him, I found him Apprehensive, Inquisitive, Receptive of things in their Evidences, Attentive to what was said, Calm and Modest, but Pertinent in his Replies; and prone to consider Seriously of Matters. But yet the Concernedness of his Soul for Holiness and Heaven, drench'd in a Scrupulous Temper, did too exorbitantly agitate his Imagination, or Fancy; the strength whereof was his bewail'd Unhappiness. For though his Conscience was tender, and his Life blameless, and his Industry evidently great in the pursuit of Things Eternal; yet was he rarely (if ever) free from urgent Doubts and Fears: yet not discernible to any, until related by himself unto some few; and among these, to me; to whom his Resorts were very frequent, free, and grateful: for his ordinary Conversation was not morose, but pleasant and profitable; though, through Self-diffidence and Suspicion, he both kept guard, and much reflected on himself, rather to Censure, than to Exalt himself in his own Conceit, or to extort Self-Commendation from Others. He is Dead: Neither was Providence long about this fatal and awakening Work.*

*Through Providential Conduct, the Author of this Sermon thus entertain'd a great and attentive Auditory, at the
Funeral*

Funeral Solemnity of the Deceased. The Composer of this Sermon (my Dear and Worthy Fellow-Labourer in the Gospel) I could copiously Commend, but will not: He is well known to be more prest by me, and others, than forward of himself to make this serious and useful Sermon publick. The First-Fruits of an hopeful Harvest are not the worse for being early, but the better. Young Timothy, when deserving it, was Commended even by St. Paul, that great Apostle. And Grace, I hope, will keep him safe and humble; and I beg it may do so. But—Manum de Tabula—God's Word and Providence have their loud Call, and solemn Errand to us all. Oh! Hear, Prepare, Fulfil, Dispatch, Pray, Wait and Hope! The Iudge is at the Door; the End of all Things is at hand; we little know when, how near, or how. A Fever (such as made this Spectacle of Mortality) may quickly send us after him, who is lately gone unto the Grave: And what comes next?

Pardon me, Reader, if I vent my very Heart and Wishes in these borrow'd Strains:

O Deus! aut nullo caleat mihi Pectus ab igne;
 Aut solo caleat pectus abigne tui.
 Languet ut illa Deo, mihi mens simul aemula languet!
 Cœlitus ut rapitur! me violenta rapit.
 Ut Paveam scelus omne, petam super omnia Cœlum;
 Da mihi Fraena Timor, Da mihi Calcar Amor.

Luctibus Cætera & Suspiriis.

LONDON,

Jan. 15.
 1693/4.

Thine in and for the Lord,

Whilst Matt. Sylvester.

A

Funeral Sermon, &c.

A Funeral Solemnity (my Friends) is an awful Thing; apt to dispose the Minds of those who are in any wise Thoughtful for Serious Impressions: and therefore affords an Opportunity for pursuing an Exhortation to Piety and Religion, with good Advantage.

Though *Funeral Orations* had their Rise from Heathenish Vanity, yet may they (provided all unjust Commendation of the Dead, and servile Flattery of the Living, be avoided) be exceeding useful, even among Christians, in helping to make the Survivers better; there being nothing that more promotes the Amendment of our Lives, than the serious Consideration and Improvement of the Departure of Others, who are snatch'd away by Death, both on our Right-hand and Left, leaving us behind, who Our Selves also must shortly follow.

B

We

We have now before us the *Corps* of one, who, a Fortnight ago, might rationally have hop'd to have liv'd as long as most here present; One that a few Days ago was Hale and Strong, Healthful and Vigorous, Aimable and Pleasant, Well-Accomplish'd and Useful: But a mortal Distemper seiz'd him, his Strength was on a sudden baffled, and all his Plenty of Spirits exhausted; he is crush'd like a Moth, his Serviceableness is at an end; and we are now going to commit his desented Carcass to the Earth, the grand Principle of its Composition. Who that will give way to Consideration, but must hereupon be provok'd to take up some such Resolution as this? By the help of God, henceforward, whatever I neglect, I'll mind my main Concern; I'll do what I have to do in this World without Delay, since I know not how soon Death may surprize me, and summon me to Judgment? 'Tis the engaging us to make and keep such a Resolution as this, which (humbly imploring Divine Assistance) I at present aim at: And in order thereto, I have pitch'd, for the Subject of my Discourse, on that Passage of Holy Writ which we meet with in

JOHN

JOHN ix. 4

I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.

WHICH are the Words of our Blessed Saviour, ordinarily taken as spoken by him with reference to Himself, discovering his steady Purpose of managing that great Concern for which he came into the World with the utmost Speed and Diligence; and more particularly, his Resolvedness to do as many beneficial Miracles as the short time of his stay here below would allow him. But waving this Sence, I shall consider them as having a general Aspect; setting before us all that which is our plain Duty, and should be our resolved Purpose. For which Acceptation, (besides the Obligation we are under to a Resemblance of our Blessed Lord, in this, as well as in other Respects,) I think I have sufficient Ground, in that, according to one of the most valuable Copies of the New Testament this day in the World, this Passage should be thus render'd, *We must work the Works of him that sent us.* And indeed, a transient Animadversion of the Circumstances of this Verse, will

Viz. That of Beza, reserv'd at Cambridge.

suffice to satisfie us, that it hath nothing in it peculiar to our Saviour; but that he took a convenient Occasion to make his Followers sensible how much they were concern'd, according to their different Capacities, to do the Work that God had set them, in the Time that he had given them, which is short, and very uncertain, and therefore carefully to be improv'd; and that he might insinuate this the better, he brings Himself in for Company.

I shall not go about to try whether or no I could, on a Subject so circumstantiated as this, give you a learned and florid Discourse; but shall only endeavour to be a plain *Echo* of that Providence which is the sad Occasion of our present Concourse, in laying before you, in distinct Propositions, the several Truths which these Words contain; of which I shall afterwards make a brief Improvement, both General and Special.

Now the Truths which these Words naturally present to our Thoughts, are such as these that follow.

I. That we are all sent into this World by God. We must work the Works of him *that sent us*. We came not hither of our selves: We came not by Chance: Our Production's owing to an Agent infinitely Powerful and Wise; who though
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he did not immediately create us out of Nothing, yet order'd dispos'd and actuated those Natural Causes by whose Concurrence we were form'd.

One would wonder how any that have the least spark of Reason, should ever let it enter into their Thoughts, that so Noble a Being as *Man* should be the Workmanship of fortuitous Chance, when we see Men rising up in the World, Age after Age, in a stated Order. And as for that Term of NATURE, of which some are so fond, if they mean by it any thing distinct either from the Author, or the settled Order of Things, they introduce by it a Being of whose Existence they can give no Evidence. But let our Wits argue as long as they please, we may securely defie them to give any Account, how it should come about, that when it was but a little while ago altogether Indifferent whether such Beings should ever have been, or not, one Generation should now so statedly succeed another; unless they'll own the Agency of the Great Creator of all Things, the free Efflux of whose superabounding Goodness gave the first Rise to the World.

'Tis He that manifestly gives Natural Causes their Vertue, sets them on Work, bounds their Influence, determines their Effects, and over-rules and manages them in all their Productions. So that, as Things are now disposed, we as much
owe

owe our Beings to God, as we should do, if, by virtue of his Almighty Word, we should in an instant start out of Nothing. 'Twas He that first shap'd us in the Womb; as we may see, *Psal.* 139. 14, 15, 16. 'Twas He that brought us out of our first strait Confinement, into so large and noble an Habitation as that of this Visible World, *Psal.* 71. 6. 'Tis on Him that we subsist all the time that we are here, and therefore we may be assur'd He sent us hither.

II. A *Second* Truth these Words afford, is this; That we have all of us Work to do here. And need I go to prove this to you? Do we not see all the Creatures, in their several Ranks, according to their Capacities, at work about us? Do we not find that we have Active Natures, Noble Powers, Large Capacities, and Boundless Cravings? And can we then think that we were design'd to be Idle? Should we indeed look into most Mens Lives, we should be apt to think either that we have nothing at all, or nothing of any Consequence to do in this World. But let's but look round about us, or into our selves, and we shall soon be satisfy'd that such active Natures as ours must have an Employment. A Wise Being can never produce Powers to no purpose; a Capacity, without setting it a work: We must have some Work
or

or other to do, or else we should be useless Impertinencies, and insignificant Cyphers in the Creation of God.

Neither can our Work be at our own Choice; we cannot be free to do what we please. It naturally belongs to Him that gave us our Powers, to employ them; to Him that sent us into the World, to allot and cut out proper Work for us in it: And whenever we pretend to cut out Work for our selves, we arrogate to our selves the Prerogative of our Maker; who being an infinitely Wise Agent, and having made us capable of Working, hath designed Work for us; and that such Work as is every way suitable to the Dignity, Excellency and Ability of our Natures.

Now, it's well worth our serious Consideration, what Work it is God design'd us for. And this is a Thought which the greatest Part of the World seldom, if ever to any purpose, harbour; and therefore 'tis no wonder that their Lives are so disorderly, confus'd, and unaccountably extravagant and foolish. I doubt not but there are some Hundreds and Thousands to be found, who never spent one half Hour, in all their Lives, in deliberate Thoughtfulness about the Work for which they were made, and sent into the World. For, can any Man, who will allow himself
soberly

soberly to weigh Matters, ever think that so Noble a Creature as *he* should have no other Work in this World, than to build Houses, and plant Vineyards; take his Pleasure, and live at his Ease, indulging his Appetites, gratifying his Senses, and pampering a short-liv'd Body? to prog for Wealth, and weary himself in heaping together a few Bags of perishing Dust? to hunt for Honour and Credit, Esteem and Applause among his Fellow-Creatures, together with whom he himself must shortly pass off this earthly Stage, so as to be quite forgotten? Can any One, I say, that will give himself leave to think, imagine this to be Work fit for so Noble a Creature as *Man* to be sent into this World for? And yet of how great a Part of Mankind, in all Ages, hath this been the sole Employment! Oh, for God's sake! let us be wiser: Let's but open our Eyes a little, and we shall soon discern quite otherguess Work than this for us to mind. Should I attempt here to be particular, I should soon expatiate beyond the Bounds of a single Discourse: Let me desire you therefore, in short, to observe, that the Work which we have to do in this World, is either Common or Special.

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The great Work that is common to us all, is, while we are in this World, to prepare for another; this Life not being in order to it self, but in order to a better Life. We are sent into this World to be prepar'd, qualify'd, dispos'd and fitted for the noble and refin'd Enjoyments of another State, for which we are design'd; to live a Life of Faith and Patience, that in due time we may be admitted to a Life of Glory.

And a greater Work this is than we are ordinarily aware of: But herein lies the main of it: We are to get our Spirits refin'd, and a New and a Divine Nature convey'd into us; without which, we can never be capable of a Divine Life. In order hereto, there's a great deal of Knowledge to be gotten: We must know the *God* that made us, and in the Enjoyment of whom our Happiness lies: we must know our Apostacy from him, with its sad Effects: we must know the Means of our Recovery, and use them. And here comes in *Jesus Christ*, whom we must know and use in all his Offices: We must know what He was by the Father design'd to do for us; what Advantages he hath procur'd us, and on what Terms. To which Terms we must take care to come up:

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we must heartily return to God, through his Son; give up our selves to our Lord Redeemer's Conduct; obey the Laws that he hath given us; use all the subordinate Means that he hath appointed us; believe and trust in the Promises that he hath made us; follow the Example that he hath set us; and depend on the Assistance of that *Spirit* which he hath purchased for us: We must be continually fighting against the three grand Enemies of our Happiness, the Flesh, the World and the Devil: we must improve all our Faculties, Talents, Abilities, Mercies, Relations, and Enjoyments, for God, like Accountable Creatures; and do all the Good we can to Others. This is the Work that lies upon all our hands: without doing which, we live in vain; we answer not the Ends of Life.

But besides this General, there's Special Work to which God calls some. And this is either Ordinary or Extraordinary: and each of them is of several sorts, which I shan't stay to enumerate: but among them all, there's none more Awful, Sacred and Tremendous, than the *Ministerial Employment*; and none lie under a greater necessity of Diligence, Care and Industry; none stand in need of more Assistance from Above,
than

than those who are call'd to, and employ'd in it. That is a Work, indeed, in it self, unfit for Humane Hands; and yet it must be undertaken and done when God calls to it: and his Goodness is wonderfully seen, in spiriting and fitting any mortal Men, in any tolerable Degree, for it; assisting them in it, and carrying them through it. But 'tis but few who have a genuine Call to such Work as this; nor are all fit to Judge of the Dueness of a Call to it: But to the former we are all Call'd, and we *must* do it; 'tis required of every one of us, by God that *sent us* hither. And so much for the *Second* Observable.

III. The *Third* thing observable, is this; That God gives us a Day in which we may do our Work. *We must work the Works of him that sent us, while it is Day.* Which implies, that we all have a Day to work in. God is not, in any case, like the Egyptian Task-masters, who requir'd Bricks without Straw. He'll give us Time to do the Work he'll require at our hands.

The great Difficulty here, is, with reference to those who die in Infancy, or at any time before they come to Years of Discretion. What Time,

may in be demanded, have such as they to do any Work in? Whereto I reply, That God expects no Work of any sort, of any, for which he gives not Time and Capacity.

As to the Eternal State of Dying Infants, if that be farther enquired, into, we can say no more than this, That those of them who sprang from truly Pious Parents, are reckon'd as a Part of their Parents; and therefore their Parents right acquitting themselves in the Work that God set them, is available for their Good. But as for those of them whose Parents are Irreligious, who have not done the Work for which God sent them into the World, the Scriptures give us no Account; and therefore we may and should be content to be ignorant what becomes of them.

But as for us (my Friends) we have a Day afforded us; and therefore afforded, that we may Work in it. In whatsoever sence well take the Day, we have it: we have Life prolong'd, Offers and Seasons of Grace continued, God's Patience waiting, and his Spirit striving: Some of us have had a long Day of it: We, blessed be God, have Time, and Health, and Strength; Oh! that we had Hearts to do our Work!

IV. A

IV. A *Fourth* Observation is this; That this Day of ours is but short. *We must Work while it is Day.* That implies it won't last long. Which, it's manifest, is principally meant of the Time of Life, which is but short.

And this is a common Theme of Complaint with some; yet as much Forgotten and Overlook'd by others, as if they did not believe it. How mournfully shall we hear some complain, that we no sooner pass through helpless Infancy, and inobservant Childhood, and come; after much Pains and Toil, to get some tolerable Fitness for Service in the World, but we are presently gone; our Days at an end? And yet how carelessly and negligently do the most live? just as if they thought their Day would last always?

But what little Reason is there for the former Complaint, when our Day suffices for our Work? And how unaccountable is the latter Instance of Folly, when our Day, if prolong'd to the utmost Period, is so exceeding short? If we'll but look into Scripture, we shall see things brought in as Emblems of it, that are the most short, brittle and fading, that the whole Creation can furnish.

Let's

Let's consult the Experience of Mankind, in all Ages, and see if our Working-time be not short. How easily may a Man, when the Sun Rises in the Morning, fore-see its Setting, when the Light will be succeeded by Darkness, the Day by Night? As easily may we, while in Health, and Strength, and Vigour, fore-see an approaching Death. How short is our Day, compar'd with the Days of Eternity? even infinitely less than a single Moment, compar'd with the whole World's Duration. Nay, what is our Day now, to that of those who liv'd in the first Ages of the World, but as a short Dream, compar'd to a long Summer's Day? This Point were easily illustrated and prov'd; but it needs neither, so much as Improvement. And so doth,

V. The *Fifth* Observable, which is this; That our Day is not only Short, but Uncertain. For thus much that Passage also implies, *We must work while it is Day*. Which seems to intimate, that it may, for ought we know, last but a very little while; it may expire e're we are aware.

And can there be any thing more evident than this? when so many Thousands of unforeseen
Casualties,

Casualties, Disorders or Distempers may put an end to it? Let's look abroad into the World, and we shall find some of all Ages daily Dying. Who then can tell at what Age his Day may end? at what time his Sun may set? I need look no further for a sensible Conviction of this, than the *Corps* before us; the Looking on which, may (and will, if we consider Circumstances) satisfie us all that our Day's uncertain. But yet,

VI. In the *Sixth* and Last place, though that be Uncertain, this is most Certain, That a Night will, sooner or later, overtake us all, in which no Work can be done, but we must receive our Wages.

Let our Day be never so bright and clear, some time or other the Shadows of the Evening will overspread us; our Sun will set, and Night will come; a Night *in which no man can work*. After which, nothing more can be done, in order to a Preparation for Happiness, or an Escape of Misery; in which no more Means can be us'd, in order to our Amendment; no more Knowledge can be gotten, that can do us any Good: after which, no further Opportunity will be afforded us of repairing to,
and

Heb. 9. 27.

and making use of Christ; and no further Time of Trial allow'd us. Which is as certain, as 'tis, that *'tis appointed to all men once to die*; of which we may be as certain as we are, that now we live.

The Day's our Working-time; when the Night comes, we must expect to receive our Wages. Thus we find it was in the Parable of the *Labourers*, recorded in the Twentieth Chapter of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, and thus 'twill be with us.

When God hath waited upon us, and given us as long a Day as he thinks fit, he'll then call us to an Account, what Work we have done; how we have behav'd our selves.

If we have done the Work for which God sent us hither, he'll Commend and highly Reward us. If we have not done it, his very Look will strike us through with Ternour, and he'll severely punish us: For he *will render to every one according to their Works*. As you may see more at large, if you please to consult *Rom. 2. 6*, and the following Verses.

And

And thus much may suffice for the Doctrinal handling of the Words; the Improvement follows: which might be manag'd to good purpose several ways: But that I may keep within bounds, I'll reduce what I would say for general Improvement to these two Heads.

If these things be so, then certainly it becomes us all,

1. To improve the day we have to work in to the best advantage.
2. Often to think of, and seriously to prepare for an approaching night.

1. Then, *Let us manage and improve the day we have to work in, to the best advantage that may be.*

I'm satisfy'd there's scarce any one among us all, but if ask'd, would say, that we heartily believ'd the forementioned Truths: that but who almost lookt into our Lives could believe us when we say so? Should we every one of us set our selves down seriously to examine what we have done of the work that we were sent into the world for (to do which would be a great instance of our wisdom), what a poor account should we bring in! How much of our day have we spent in doing

nothing! how much in that which comes to nothing! Nay, how much have many of us spent in that which must, so far as it's possible, be undone again, or else we are eternally miserable! How many of us have liv'd the half; nay, two thirds; nay, almost the whole of our day, and are yet to begin our great Work? To what purpose then, I pray, have we liv'd all this while! And as for those of us who have in earnest begun our work, how little of it have we done? how is it done, as 'twere by halves? How little proportion doth our Diligence, and Industry, and Activity in it, bear to the momentousness and greatness of it, to the assistances we have, and the uncertainty we are at? And shall we then refuse to think these things over again in our Secret Retirements? and endeavour, by consideration, to drive them home into our Souls, till all the Powers we have, are awakened to the earnest doing of the Work of him that sent us, while the Day lasts, before the Night over-takes us? Is our working Day so short, and can we then find any of it to lose? Is it so uncertain, and shall we dare to delay? Oh, if we have any sober Reason left, if we are not perfectly mad, besotted, and stupify'd; if we would not in another State fruitlessly torment our selves for ever, let us improve our working time to the best advantage.

That

That we may so do, let us,

1. Begin to work betimes; Which if we could be prevail'd upon to do it, would bring unspeakable advantages with it. Oh, let none of us who think not our selves too young to live, or too young to die, think our selves too young to do that work for which we were sent into the world. The sooner we begin to work, the more ease and peace may we expect in our remaining days, and the more work may we hope to do. If we'll begin to work in our youthful days, and hold on working, we may hope by the Divine Blessing to do Three times as much work as those, who, tho they should live as long as we, yet spend a third part of their day idly, without any ways answering the Ends of Life: And we might expect an increase of our Reward hereafter, proportionable to the increase of our work here. Night may overtake the youngest of us, and therefore we have Reason to go to work out of hand. And the more advanc'd any of us are in years, still the more Reason have we immediately to begin it, if we have not already done it. A delay in this case is *dangerous*, and may be our Ruin. O let's therefore be idle no longer, but *work the Work of him that sent us while it's day.*

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2. Let

2. Let us carefully avoid all those things that would hinder us in our Work. The Weakness and Necessities of our Natures, in our present State, occasion a great many unavoidable Avocations from our great Work. Much of our short day's cut off by Infancy, when we can do nothing; and Childhood, when we are at most capable but of just beginning our Work; By the time that must be spent in eating, and drinking, and sleeping, for the Recruit and support of our Bodies, and in Recreation that's needful for our Health and Refreshment; and a great many other things I might mention, which tho subordinate duties, yet are avocations from that great Work we were made for. We have no need therefore to be in love with Clogs, Impediments, and Embarrasments, as too too many seem to be. Let's rather prudently endeavour to avoid them: if we have any, let's as much as may be lay them aside: Let's watch and strive against all the Encroachments they would make upon that time which ought to be spent in our great Work, like those that are in earnest for Heaven and another World. And,

3. *Thirdly* and *Lastly*, Let us work apace, and do as much Work as ever we can in so *short* and *uncertain a time* as we have to do it in. Our *Day* ha-

hastens, and so let *our Work*. *Whatever our hand finds to do, let's do it with our might*; as the Wise Man expresses it, *Eccles. 9. 10.* Were our day as long as *Methusalah's*, our work is such that we should have no time to lose. But when it is so *short and uncertain*, and we have such *great and important Work* to do, we had need double our diligence; and if we'll take this course, we shall have no Reason to complain of the *Shortness of our Lives*; for he that does the work of Fifty or Threescore Years in Seven or Eight and Twenty, is happier than he that lives so long in the world. Oh, let's earnestly endeavour to make such daily advances, as that our *Work* may be at an End as soon as *our Day*.

2. Let us often think of, and seriously set ourselves to *prepare for an approaching Night*. We are all (*my Friends*) endued with a *Power of Foresight*; Let's in this case make use of it: Let's think with our selves, that as surely as 'tis now Day with us, 'twill e're long be Night; as surely as we now live shall we shortly die; and let's endeavour to yield to the Power of such a Thought. Whenever we are tempted to Delays, to Negligence, Indifference and Remissness in our *Grand Concern*; Let's think how swiftly the Night is hasting towards us, and how earnestly Death is pur-

pursuing after us; and let's act as those that are in expectation of it. Let's resolve with holy *Job*, that we'll *wait all the days of our appointed time, till our change come*, Job 14. 14. Let's not be so foolish as to hear of others Deaths, without reflecting on our own: To accompany others to their graves, without thinking that we must shortly follow them. Let's Live in the day time as those that have night in their view. When the labouring Countreyman sees the night approaching, he'l put to all his strength, and vigorously endeavour to finish his undertaken work ere the sun go down: Let us do so too; and then be our day longer or shorter, our Night will be comfortable; We may lift up our Heads with joy. But on the contrary how doleful will our night be if we work not in the day time! How dismal a thing will it be at the close of our Lives to find just cause for this Reflection, that we have liv'd in vain, without doing that for which God sent us hither! What Horror and Amazement will then seize upon us! What can we then expect will support or cheer us! What Rage and Despair will possess us! Would we not have this to be our case? Then let us by doing our work in the Day, prepare for the Night that's coming. And Oh what account shall we be able to give to the God that sent us hither, if we mind not the
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the *Work* for which he sent us? If we can find time now for *every thing else* but to mind our *main Concern*, how shall we dare to look God in the Face another day? How can we think we stand before his *Bar*, to give an account for all our *Power* and *Capacity*, *Time* and *Opportunity of Working*; for our *Calls*, *Admonitions* and warnings to apply our selves to our work, for all our allurements and enticements, *Helps* and assistances to work? Oh how shall we then stand speechless if now we remain idle! Then be confounded if now we are negligent! Oh then if we love our selves, if we desire to be Happy, Let us by doing the work of him that sent us while the day lasts, prepare for that night which approaches, in which no work can be done, but we must receive our *Wages*. And thus much may suffice for *general Improvements*.

And now that I may follow this *present Stroke of Providence*, whither it seems more particularly to direct its *Voice*, give me leave to address myself to you, my Brethren, of the *Younger Sort*, whom God is pleased to call to *publick Work* in his *Vineyard*.

One of our small Number's gone. and he none of the *inconsiderablest* neither. God set him a *Work* for a little while, and then call'd him away;

way; and hath not this a Voice, and that to us particularly? Our Deceased brother, and God by him seems to cry aloud to all of us, to work the works of him that sent us while 'tis day, ere the night overtake us.

The work, my brethren, to which we have set our hands is sacred and awful; 'Tis enough, I profess seriously, to make our hearts to ake, and our Knees to tremble, to set our selves solemnly to think upon it. 'Tis difficult work: Difficult in it self, and more peculiarly so, by reason of the circumstances of the time wherein our Lot is cast. It hath ever indeed been difficult to bear up Gods honour in the world, to vindicate his truths from contempt, to engage men heartily in his service, and to bring Souls to *Heaven*: But how are the difficulties encreased upon us, thro' the desperate malignity of many, the Lukewarmness and indifference of most; The peevishness and morosness of some, and the Giddiness and wantonness of others! Alas for us, what shall we do to promote *that Wisdom that is from above, that is pure, and peaceable, and gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of good fruits, without partiality and without Hypocrisy*, in the Age we live in, in which the wisdom of the world so much prevails, and true Religion is so like to *expire*? 'Tis true, *Our Reverend Fathers*, thanks be to God, do as yet
bear

bear the Brunt of the Day; and God grant they may long do so. But alas, the Prophets dont live for ever, any more than others; Within a few years they'll all drop off, and the burthen will lie on young shoulders: And what shall we then do? What shall we do to stem that Tide of Atheism and Irreligion, that hath overflown us? What shall we do in opposition to the Scepticism by which we find so many unravell'd and undone? What shall we do to recover the Power of Godliness, of which our Fathers tell us so much, tho we can see so little, it being almost lost? What shall we do to root out those Prejudices which have so long been rivetted in many peoples minds? What shall we do to pacific those angry Heats, and stop those raging Contentions vvhich have continued so long, till they have almost eat out the Spirit and Life of Religion? What shall *we* do to revive True, Generous, Catholick Christianity? Our Difficulties seem rather to *grow* than *diminish*: And shall *we* not then, out of a sense of the great opposition *we* shall meet with on all sides, take great care to qualifie, dispose and fit our selves for the *Great Work that will lie upon us*, by treasuring up of *Knowledge* daily, laying aside of Prejudices our selves, and taking up nothing but upon good Grounds, by studying the things that make for Peace on all hands, by arming our
F selves

selves vvith resolution to go through good report and bad report, to be above *Smiles* and *Frowns*; and aboveall, by keeping up an intimate Acquaintance vvith that God vvho gives us a Commission, and vvho alone can give us assistance and success? And yet in the mean time the *Day we have to work in* is short and uncertain; We *know not* but our Work may be at an end as soon almost as *we* begin; and therefore *we* have need carefully to improve all opportunities of Service, and to *work apace*. It is indeed enough to surprize us, vvhen *we* consider all things, to think that God should have rais'd up so many of us in so discouraging Times as *we* have pass'd through; that he should have given us any tolerable competency of Fitness for his Service, and that he should in any measure *own us* in it. But alas, my Brethren, let's not be too confident; God can nip budding hopes; he can, if he pleases, *just show us to the World*, and then *snatch us away again*. Let's take care lest *we* by our sins, provoke him to lay us aside, as *Vessels wherein he hath no pleasure*. Let's *work* therefore for God, *without Self-seeking*: Let's take care to recommend Religion to others by our Lives: Let's love as Brethren, and studiously *strengthen*, and *no ways weaken* one anothers hands: Let's apply our selves diligently to our Work, and let this Instance of our Mortality quicken us: Let's often
think

think this Work of ours *will soon be at an end*; in which, if we have been faithful, we shall be amply rewarded; for we shall shine as Stars in God's Right Hand. If we have been idle, negligent and careless, our punishment vwill be proportion'd to our sin. Let's not be so fond as to feed our selves with hopes of a long time of use and service to come; but in the Day let's foresee our Night: Let's seriously bethink our selves that *Death will soon seize us*, and summon us to Judgment; Our Souls will take their flight, and leave our Bodies behind; and we must be beholden to our surviving Friends to do that last Office for us which we are now going to do for the Relicks of our Deceased Brother, Mr. SAMUEL STEPHENS.

Of whom I shan't say much to you, though I could, if I thought it needful. As for his Family, 'tvas Noble and Honourable in *Heavens* *Blas-* *[[?????]]ry*, it having been successively employed in the Work of the Ministry ever since the Reformation, his immediate Father only excepted; Which Gap the *Two Brothers would have made up*, if both had liv'd: But blessed be God that hath spared us One Branch of so Worthy a Stock. As for the Person of the Deceased, *he was design'd for the Ministry* from his Younger Years; and had as Good Advantages all along, for the acquiring

the needful Accomplishments for it, as this Land would afford to those under our Discouragements. Which *Advantages* he so Well Improv'd, as at length to become a Workman that needed not to be asham'd. *He* had a Sense of *Religion* instill'd into him in his early Days, about the Fourteenth or Fifteenth Year of his *Age*; ever since *which time* he hath been observed, by those that *knew him*, to have had a very tender Conscience. *He* was noted for his frequency in Prayer, even *while a School-Boy*, the serious performance of *which Duty* argues the Greatest Love to God of any. *He* had a most *awful Sense* of the Ministerial Employment, which those with whom he had any *intimacy*, will readily testifie. *He* was very backward to begin to preach, though by his most *Judicious Friends*, judg'd sufficiently qualified, and earnestly prest: thro' his great humility, and *unwillingness* to rush into such a work. And I could tell you of a Worthy Divine, to whom he to his dying day, us'd for the most part to read his *Notes*, before he'd Venture with Them *into the Pulpit*. *His Spirit* hath many a Time been so over-awed by a sense of *the Sacredness* of the Work he was engaged in, that he hath been afraid to persist in it, and almost perswaded *to turn his Thoughts another way*. And indeed he was humble and modest to a Fault. *His Natural Temper* exposed him somewhat to Melancholy;

lancholy; and one thing that tended to make *his Life uneasy*, was his great *Scrupulosity*, and fear of offending God in *the smallest matters*, where *others* could apprehend no danger. But in *this* he was on *the safest side*, tho *the most uncomfortable*. But he had *the happiness* to be able to conceal *his inward Trouble* from *the Observation of the World*, by a free, pleasant and cheerful Conversation, by which he avoided discouraging *others*, of which *he was fearful*. I look upon him to have had as much of True Generosity in *his Natural Temper*, as most I know. *He*, from *his heart*, scorn'd to do any Thing that was mean, or base, or servile; and abhorr'd every Thing that in the least lookt like undermining.

He ever retain'd a most grateful sense of the *Kindness* of those *Worthy Gentlemen*, and *others*, who were *his Friends*; and was *always* ready, to the *utmost of his Capacity*, himself, to do any Office of Kindness for any.

Having been for some years employ'd occasionally in *the Preaching Work of the Ministry*, it so pleased God, that a Mortal Distemper seiz'd him, which depriv'd the *Church* of an useful Servant, and *us* of a Fellow-Labourer, that might have been very helpful. *His* Distemper with Violence seiz'd *his head*, the Rage whereof was Visibly increased by those awful *Thoughts of Eternity* where-
with

with he was possessed. I mention *this*, the rather, that I may thence take occasion to warn those who will defer, and put off *their great work* to a Dying Bed, from this Instance, and others of the like *nature*, often to be met with, to see their folly, and grow wise. For several days before he dy'd, his Distemper deprived him of *the free use of his Reason*; and so it happens in many Cases: who then, *in his Wits*, would put off the *Great Work he was sent into the World for*, to such a Time? And yet this may be the case of any one of *us*. Our *Eternal State* may be irrevocably fixt even before we die, and we *absolutely incapacitated* to do any thing in our Soul-Affairs. But I hope and believe our deceased *Brother's Work* was *not then to do*, but was finished before.

After that *his Natural Strength* (which *was very great*) had for some days grappled with a *malignant Fever*, he was forc'd to yield, a Rent was made, *his Soul took its flight*, and left his Body lifeless, in *the Eight and Twentieth Year of his Age*. *His Work's* soon done, but not too soon for him, who I hope is happy. We are now going *to commit his Body to the Earth*, there to lye and rot, which will *shortly* also be *the Case* of every one of *us*. *His Toil, and Warfare, and Combat, and all painful Work is at an end*. He's taken away from those *Evils* which we may live to see. For who knows
what

what is coming upon us? We may, for ought we know, meet with miseries that we little think of, before we dye: But blessed be God that we have another Life, of Rest, and Peace, and Joy, in hope, and that tho we cant know what will befall us here, yet we know this assuredly, That Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their Works do follow them.

Rev. 14. 13.

FINIS.

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