

*A Funeral Sermon for the late
Reverend Mr. John Sheffield*

by

Edmund Calamy



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A FUNERAL

S E R M O N

For the late REVEREND

Mr. *John Sheffield*,

Minister of the GOSPEL

IN

S O U T H W A R K .

Who departed this Life, *Jan. 24. 1725/6,*
An. Ætat. lxxiii.

By EDMUND CALAMY, *D.D.*

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To the REVEREND

Mr. *William Sheffield.*

Dear SIR,

IT was at your
 Request, that I
 drew up and
 preached, and
 now publish this Discourse,
 upon Occasion of the Death
 of your Excellent Father,
 A 2 whom

whom I greatly honoured living and dying.

As it was out of his singular Respect to the Work and Office of the Sacred Ministry, which he was himself engaged in with so much Satisfaction, that he devoted you his Eldest Son to the same Service; so have you both in your Father and Grandfather that have gone before you, such admirable Examples to imitate, that I am abundantly satisfied your following them as they followed Christ, cannot fail of rendering you a great Blessing in the
Church

Church of GOD. And as you and I (Sir) have herein the same Happiness, so I think we cannot well wonder, if upon this very Account we have the more Eyes upon us, and find the more expected from us. May we but plentifully partake of the same Spirit of Piety and Prudence, Catholicism and Charity, as was conspicuous in our Progenitors, and though we may have our Exercises and Difficulties, yet we need not fear but we shall have our Comforts too, either here, or hereafter, or both.

I AM

I AM truly sorry, that your Circumstances in the Service wherein you have been ingaged, have hitherto been so discouraging: And yet as your easy Chearfulness under what is so apt to dishearten, has been a plain Proof that no selfish Views or Regard to secular Interest influenced you in your Adherence to Nonconformity, so I cannot but hope, that the Integrity you have this Way discover'd, (which certainly must be upon Principle, or it is not to be accounted for) will at length recommend you to the Favour

your and Esteem of the more Considerate and Judicious at the present, as well as secure you of an abundant Reward from a gracious GOD hereafter.

THAT He that was the GOD of your Fathers, may also be your GOD and Guide, your constant Helper, and fixed Portion; that he may remarkably sanctify to you the Removal of your Affectionate Earthly Parent, and help you to fill up his Room both in your own Family, and in his Church: That you together with your Brother and Sisters, may have the Blessings of your
pious

pious Progenitors multiplied upon you, according to the Tenour of GOD'S Gracious Covenant: And that your present Usefulness may be eminent, and your future Crown proportionable: Is the hearty Prayer of

Dear SIR,

Your Respectful Friend

and Brother, and

most humble Servant,

E. CALAMY.

*Westminster,
Feb. 5.
1725/6*



JOB V. 26.

*T h o u s h a l t c o m e t o t h y
G r a v e i n a j u s t A g e , l i k e
a s a S h o c k o f C o r n c o m -
e t h i n h i s S e a s o n .*

THO' *Job* who is the great Subject of this Book was very eminent for his Piety, yet was he as eminent for his Trials and Afflictions: Nor were they at all peculiar to him. Finding the Hand of GOD heavy upon him, he was full of Complaints. His Friends that came to comfort him, knew not how to bear with his Freedom, or make any Allowance for the Bitterness of his Spirit: And so miserably were they out in their Notions, that they rather aggravated than lessened his Trouble, by their vehement Harangues. *Eliphaz* began the Attack, and tells him in the foregoing Chapter and this,

B

That

That as far as he had observed, 'twas Sin and Wickedness that was the sole Cause of Misery and Destruction; whereas true Piety led to a general Prosperity. If therefore *Job* would be as happy as he now was miserable, this Counsellor gravely admonishes him to avoid Wickedness as what would be his Ruin; and to be faithful and punctual in his Duty And then he takes upon him to give him Assurance, that he should not miss of being singularly blessed of God. He tells him that upon this Condition, he should be free from Trouble, have his Wants supply'd, be saved from common Calamities, and fearless in threatenng Dangers: He should be *In League with the Stones of the Field*, and *at Peace even with the brute Beasts*: Wheresoever he pitched his Tabernacle he should be safe, and his Posterity after him should be numerous and prosperous, and he should be able to behold them with Comfort: And finally, he should not die a violent or untimely Death, but be carry'd to his Grave, as Corn into the Barn, when fully ripe and fit to be gathered. And in this, which is the Sum of what he had to say, he is very positive, and intimates that so also were his other Friends as well as he: And he seems to go such a Length, as to put *Job* upon concluding, that since it was so far from being thus, that it was quite otherwise with him, he might gather that he was a real Stranger to true Piety, and that he could have nothing of it, but a faint Appearance at the most.

I SHAN'T

I SHAN'T meddle with the other Things touched on; but that which is mentioned last, *viz.* the *coming to the Grave in a full Age*, is what my Thoughts will be at present confin'd to: and about this 'tis evident that *Eliphaz*, was out in his Reasoning. For tho' *Length of Days is in Wisdom's Right Hand*, and Holiness of Life has an Aptness through the Divine Blessing to prolong our Days; yet neither is living to the most advanced Age a necessary Fruit of true Piety, nor is going down to the Grave more early, any certain Sign that Persons are quite destitute of it, or really worse than their Neighbours. Without staying then upon *Eliphaz's* Reasoning about this Matter, and the particular Application he puts *Job* upon making of what he advances, which is not to be justify'd, it will be my Aim in my present Discourse, to make some such Reflections upon *coming to the Grave in a full Age, like as a Shock of Corn cometh in his Season*, as may be of common Use. And I hardly know a Subject of Meditation that could be more seasonable in the present Juncture, when we are met together in the Divine Presence, with a Disposition I hope to make a right Christian Improvement, of the Decease of a faithful Servant of CHRIST JESUS, who having brought much Glory to GOD in the Course of his Life, and done much Good to the Souls of Men, (and that particularly in this Place of Worship in which

Prov. iii.
16.

we are now assembled) is in the Course of this last Week gone to his Grave in this very Circumstance. For I think we may as safely say of Good Mr. *John Sheffield*, as of any one of his Character, that has in these Parts lately left this World of ours, that he is *come to his Grave in a full Age, like as a Shock of Corn cometh in his Season.*

IT is an old Observation, that no Man is to be accounted Blessed or Happy till he dies. By that time, we have seen all that we can see concerning Men, but not before: And no more then remains, but the final Consequence, which will ever be answerable to the Premises foregoing. Let Death come upon us when or how it will, it *we die in the LORD*, our Happiness is secur'd; bur not otherwise. And yet the Time and Season as well as the Way and Manner of our Dying, and quitting the Stage of this lower World, may have something in it that deserves Observation. It is so particularly, as to *coming to Grave in a full Age*, upon which I desire you to accompany me in the following Remarks.

I. WE must all of us without Exception *come to our Graves*, at the Time and Season, as well as in that Way and Manner, that the Great GOD, who is Lord of Life and Death, has appointed us. As the Grave is the common *House appointed for all Living*, which we are to enter upon, when
we

we quit our present crazy Tenements, so is the Time of our entring there of GOD's own ordering. 'Tis He that *turneth Man to Destruction*, and says. *Return ye Children of Men. Every Man's Days are determin'd, the number of his Months are with GOD: He has appointed his Bounds that he cannot pass.* He had an Hand in our Concepcion and Birth, and appointed the particular Time of our Entrance into this World; and there is to the full as much Reason thar He should have a Hand in our Death, and mark out the Time of our last Departure, after which we are to be seen here no more. Since he hath *numbered the very Hairs of our Heads*, it is not to be doubted but that He hath also number'd the Days of our Lives. And if a Sparrow doth not fall to the Ground without our FATHER's Order, we have very little Reason to imagine, either that a Soul should take its Flight up to Heaven, or that an humane Body which is naturally a Piece of his curious Workmanship, and which when sanctified is the Temple of the HOLY GHOST, should fall to pieces, and be crumbled to Dust, and left rotting in the Grave, without his express Commission. He numbers our Days with great Exactness, and has in his Infinite Wisdom appointed the Means to convey us one after another, out of this World. If one dies in Peace, and another is killed in War; if one perishes by Famine, and another by a mortal Distemper; if *one dies in his full Strength, being wholly at Ease and Quiet,* while

Psal. xc.
3.Job xiv.
5.Matth. x.
30.Job xxi.
23, 24, 25.

while his Breasts are full of Milk, and his Bones moistned with Marrow, and another dieth in the Bitterness of his Soul, and never eateth with Pleasure; if one goes down to the Grave when he has seen but few Days, and has had but little Time to gain Experience, and another after he has made full Trial of every Thing that this World can afford, and found all to be Vanity and Vexation of Spirit; 'tis according to the Orders of our Heavenly FATHER. If we look to the tragical Death of good King *Josiah*, there appears nothing at first View, but the rash Heat of Youth, which carry'd him against all Reason, to fight with great Obstinacy against *Pharaoh Neco* the King of *Egypt*: But if we search farther into the Matter, we shall see good Reason to adore the Wisdom of GOD'S Decree, which had determined the Removal of this Pious Prince into his eternal Rest, before He took in Hand the Sword of Vengeance, therewith to punish his People for their soul Idolatry. By this Means He punctually fulfilled the Prophecy of *Huldah*, by whose Mouth He had express'd himself in these Words: *Behold, I will gather thee unto thy Fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy Grave in Peace, and thine Eyes shall not see all the Evil which I will bring upon this Place.* Whereas on the other hand we are told as to *Moses*, the Jewish Lawgiver, that he was *an Hundred and twenty Years old when he died, and yet his Eye was not dim, nor his natural Force abated*: Neither the Strength of his Body, nor the Activity of his Mind was discernibly

2 Kings
xxii. 20.

Deut.
xxxiv. 7.

discernibly lessen'd; he could still speak, and write, and move, and walk as well, and his Understanding was as clear, and his Memory as strong as ever. And this seems to have been given in to him as the Reward of his Services, and particularly to have been the Effect of his extraordinary Meekness. His being so hale and vigorous in so advanced an Age, was not merely from the Constitution of his Body, or his peculiar Manner of living, or the Skill of Physicians; but God was pleased wonderfully to lengthen his Days, in order to the serving of his Purposes. *David* looking up seriously to GOD, cries out *my times are in thy Hand*: And he seems to have taken no small Comfort in that Thought. And we also instead of regretting it, should be pleased with considering and observing that our Times also are in His Hands. And they being in his Hands, we may upon good Grounds conclude, that they are in the very best and safest Hands they could possibly be in: And that we shall not any of us go down to the Grave a Moment sooner, or in any other Way and Manner, than all Things being considered is best.

Psal.
xxxii. 15.

SOLOMON tells us that *to every thing there is a season, and a Time to every purpose under the Heaven*: And he particularly declares, that *there is a Time to be born, and Time to die*. But the Time is of GOD's ordering and appointing; and without him neither Accidents, nor Second Causes of any sort, could

Eccles.
iii. 1, 2.

could at all contribute to it, or have any Influence either to deferr or hasten it.

II. IF Persons quit this earthly Stage ever so soon, or while they are ever so young, their *Age* is aufficiently *full* if they do but belong to God, and are but in a State of Acceptance with Him through the Mediator provided. Let such as really are the People of God, for whom there is a rest remaining above in a better World, die when they will, they die in a *good Age*; and it may in the same Sense be said that they die in a *full Age* too. Tho' they die and are cut off in the very Spring and Flower of Youth, yet their *Age* is *full* enough. They do not die before they are ripe. Whenever a pious Man dies 'tis Harvest time with him. Let him with respect to Nature, be cut down while he's ever so green and tender, let him be crop'd in the Bud or Blossom, yet with respect to the Grace of GOD, he never dies before he is come to Maturity. And we may observe that GOD soon and quickly ripens those his Servants, whom he designs speedily to bring down to the Grave. Easily can He so work upon them by the efficacious Influence of his Spirit, as that however it is as to others, the Seeds of Grace shall in them remarkably ripen for Glory: Whereas wicked Men on the contrary, tho' they may be ripe for Destruction, are never ripe for Death. They are in reality, as unfit and unready for it, tho' they have liv'd ever so long, as if they
had

had liv'd but a single Day. Supposing that the Providence of GOD should not give any of us a long Life, if yet by his Grace we are but enabled to make a good Use of, and to be well satisfied with, the Portion of Time that is allotted us, we may well enough be said to *come to our Graves in a full Age*. For that Man lives long enough in this World, that has done his Work here, and is fit to be transplanted and removed. Such an one may say with *Seneca* the Philosopher, upon good Grounds, (I am sure upon much better Grounds than he *could* do) *Vixi quantum satis est*: I have had enough of Life. He may with old *Simeon* sing his *Nunc Dimittis*, and say. *Lord now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace*. Though a Good Man should not die old, yet he may be sufficiently *full of Days*, and be satisfied with living in this lower World, and earnestly long to be removed into a better Place, and to breathe in freer Air. In all Ages, we have had a good Number of Periods, that have parted with Life betimes compared with others, that have yet had so much of it as to desire no more. And the Goodness of God herein is to be ador'd, and calls for our hearty Admiration and thankful Praise.

III. To *come to our Grave in a full*, that is an advanced Age, is a Thing that naturally appears desirable to all Mankind. Where can we meet with any that don't wish, and long, and hope to live to grow old? We are for being as full of Days

as may be, before we come to lie down in our Graves, and take up our Lodging in the House of Darkness in which we are to have our last Apartment. All of us are for coming as near as may be, to *Threescore Years and Ten, or Fourscore Years*, which is represented as the common Period or Standard of humane Life. When we read in our *Bibles*, of *Abraham* the common Father of the *Israelites*, that *he died in a good old Age, an old Man and full of Years, and then was gathered unto his Fathers, being an Hundred threescore and fifteen Years old*; and of *Isaac* his Son, that *he was gathered unto his people, being old and full of Days, his Days being an Hundred and fourscore Years*; and of *Job* that notwithstanding all his Afflictions and Sorrows, *he died being old, and full of Days*; and of *David*, that *he died in a good old Age, full of Days*, being about *Threescore and ten*; we are naturally apt to wish that it might be so also with us. There are scarce any to be met withal, but what reckon that a most heavy Curse that was denounced against *Eli*, when he had offended *GOD*, who was told from the *LORD*, that *there should not be an old Man in his House*. This was very sad! well might he be deeply affected!

To die old, most certainly in the Case of pious Persons, has its Advantages. They that having been truly devoted to the Blessed *GOD*, have spent their Lives in his Service, when they come to be
advanced

Psal. xc.
10.

Gen. xxv.
7, 8.

Genesis
xxxv. 28,
29.

Job. xlii.
17.
1 Chron.
xxix. 28.

1 Sam. 2.
31.

advanced in Years, are commonly wearied with the Toils and Cares of this Life, willing to die, and apt to long with great Earnestness for the Rest of the Life to come. In a premature Death, the Soul is as it were taken away unwillingly, and Persons are dragged or hurried to their Graves, without having their Consent asked about the Matter: Just as it is said to the foolish Man in the Parable, who thought himself wise; *thou Fool, this Night thy Soul shall be required of thee;* and thou shalt be forced to give it up whether thou wilt or no. But in a full Age, Soul and Body fall asunder as it were willingly. When a Shock of Corn comes to be fully ripe, it readily yields to the Sickle. So when pious Persons die at a full Age, they commonly come to their Graves quietly and with Ease. And to be sure 'tis naturally very desirable, time we mayn't any of us be laid in our Graves, till we are willing to die, and can lay down our Heads contentedly, without being forced to it.

Luke xii.
20.

WHEN King *Hezekiah* was told by the Prophet *Isaiah*, that *he should die and not live*, we are told that *he wept sore*. He had good Reason to be concerned, because he was now in the midst of his Usefulness: For he had begun a Work of Reformation, which in all likelihood, if he had now died, would thro' the general Corruption of the People have fallen to the Ground. Besides, had he at this Time

2 Kings
xx. 1, 3.

gone off the Stage, he would have died Childless, and so the Peace of his Kingdom, and the Promise to *David* with respect to his Family, would have been in Darger. Upon both these Accounts he could not but be concern'd, to be so soon and suddenly called away: He most earnestly begged a farther Respite, and his Prayer was heard, and fifteen Years more were added to him. We find also that another Good Man, (tho' who that was is hard to say) finding himself in no small Danger, made this his earnest Request to GOD, *Take me not away in the midst of my Days.* He begged earnestly of GOD, that if it were his Will, he would spare him to do him yet farther Service, and to be made riper for Heaven. And we meet with a like Request from *David*, who when under some Death threatning Distemper, cries out, *O spare me, that I may recover Strength, before I go hence and be no more.* He made it the Matter of his Request to the ALMIGHTY, that it would please him to raise him out of his low Estate, and continue him yet a little longer upon Earth, till by his Grace he was rendered fitter for a Removal from hence: And that he might to Advantage finish the Work of Life, before his Life came to an End, that so he might at last go down to the Grave with Peace and Comfort. And such like Requests as these, when they are tempered with due Submission to GOD's Disposals, are most certainly very allowable,

Psal. ii.
24.

Psal.
xxxix. 13.

ble, either with respect to ourselves or others.

IV. To *come to the Grave in a full Age*, is in the Word of GOD often represented as no small Blessing. It was promised to *Abraham*, as a Mark of GOD's special Favour to him, that *he should go to his Father's in Peace, and be buried in a good Old Age*. And in the fifth Commandment of those Ten, which were given by *Moses* to the Descendants of *Abraham*, a Promise was given to dutiful and obedient Children, that their *Days should be long in the Land which the LORD their GOD gave them*. It is therefore declar'd by *St. Paul* that this was *the first Commandment with Promise*; and that GOD hereby intimated, that he was very desirous *that it might be well with them, and that they might live long on the Earth*. And tho' fume Difference must be allowed for, between the Times of the *Old Testament* and those of the *New*, with respect to Promises of temporal Blessings, yet still they that out of Conscience inwards God, and a sincere Affection to Him, keep this and other of his Commandments, may safely depend upon it that it shall be well with them, and that they shall live as long, and have as much Prosperity upon this Earth, as would be for GOD's Glory, and as He in his infinite Wisdom sees would be good for them: And what they may seem to be cut short of upon Earth, shall be abundantly made up in that Eternal Life, and
Heavenly

Gen. 15.
15.

Exod. xx.
12.

Ephes. vi.
2, 3.

Heavenly *Canaan*, which GOD will not fail to bestow upon them. And in such a Case as that, we may very lately leave it to GOD to choose for us.

ON the other hand, not to live to advanced Years, is in the Sacred Scriptures very commonly represented as a Curse, and a Mark of GOD's Displeasure. Thus 'tis said of *the bloody and deceitful Man*, that he *shall not live out half his Days*: And as for such as deserve that Character, (who are in reality the very worst of Men) there being such a Declaration as that upon Record against them, we need not wonder, often to find and have Occasion to take notice that they don't live half so long as Men live ordinarily; and as they might have lived according to the Course of Nature, and as they themselves expected to live. Let a wicked Man indeed die when he will, he does not live out half his Days. Either he is cut off before he has lived out half the Course of Nature, or before he has lived a quarter of his Desires: Either he lives not half so long as he might, or not a tenth, not an hundredth Part so long as he gladly would. And therefore whensoever he dies 'tis out of Season. Never did he keep Time or Season with GOD: And therefore GOD has no reason to mind or regard his Time or Season, in his Dealings with him and Dispensations towards him.

'Twas

'TWAS wisely said of *Solomon*, *Be not wicked over-much for why shouldst thou die before thy Time?* For tho' none can in one Sense die before their Time, yet there are many that die before they come to the natural ordinary Term of humane Life; and *before* they arrive at that *full Age*, which they otherwise might have reach'd before their Dissolution. For either their horrid Wickedness awakens the publick Justice of the Land against them for the Common safety; or else the Divine Vengeance for their enormous Crimes may hasten their End, before it would otherwise have come upon them. Tho' none can die before GOD'S Time; yet many the before their own Time: That is, they are called hence, before they are any way fitted or prepared for a Removal. And this is what we should be afraid and dread the Thoughts of. But to live out our full Time, is all along in Scripture represent- ed as a very valuable Blessing.

Eccles.
vii. 17.

AND we may observe that in that great *Restitution* that is promised in Gospel-Times, (which we must suppose to be yet future, there not having been as yet any thing answerable to it in a raised Sense, since the first Commencement of the Gospel-Dispensation) this is mentioned as one great Privilege, that *there should be no more there an Infant of Days, or an Old Man that hath not filled his Days*. Men shall then generally reach that *full Age*, which before was but the

Isai. lxx.
20.

the particular Lot of here and there one. And if the general reaching this be a great common Happiness, (as the Prophet seems plainly to insinuate,) then its being in any Measure reach'd by some particular Persons, while this general *Restitution* remains suspended, may very well be own'd a considerable Favour.

V. SUCH Persons as live in Sin and Wickedness, and continue doing so, let them reach ever so *full* an *Age*, are yet in a very unfit State to die, and be laid in their Graves. As it cannot be laid that every pious Man dies in a full old-Age, so neither can it be said of a wicked Man, that he is at all secured or relieved by living to an Age that is ever so full of Days. The Misery indeed that awaits him is this way a little respited: He is kept our of Hell, and the Divine Vengeance is stav'd off so much the longer: but when his allotted Time is come, he is rather worse than better; having such long continued Patience and Forbearance, which he has shamefully abused, to answer for. Though a *Sinner* be an *Hundred Years old*, and should not come to his *Grave* till then, yet should he be *accursed*: And as much *accursed* as if he had died ever so soon, or ever so long before. Nay, he will be rather the more *accursed* then, in that as the Apostle has expressed it, *Despising the Riches of GOD's Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering, not knowing, (or not duly considering) that the Goodness of GOD led him*

Isai. lxx.
20.

Rom. ii.
4, 5.

him to Repentance, (and worked that Way) he after his hardness and impenitent Heart, spent all the Time, in treasuring up Wrath unto himself against the Day of Wrath.

LET the wicked Man live ever so long, he is neither full of living, nor happy dying. He is not full of living; for he still wants something more, and is for a farther Respite: So that if he were sole Judge, his Measure would never be full. Take him at what Instant you will, you'll find him as hungry and thirsty after more Time, and more Days, when he is ever so old, even as when he was a Child. He can never say he has enough; but would willingly live still. And indeed, we need not wonder that that Man should think it good to be here, who either knows not, or has no Hopes of, any better Being elsewhere. He that has not some Hold of everlasting Life, is never pleased to let go this present Life, never *full* of it. It is one of the saddest Things in the World, to see an old Man, that has spent all his Days in the Pursuit of Vanity and Folly, when he has no Strength of Body left to live any longer, and his Spirits are quite spent and wasted, to have still a strong mind to live! Though if he could be farther respited, I cannot see the least Shadow of a Reason to believe or hope, that it would be to any better Purpose than he lived before!

D

AND

Eccles. x.
3.

AND as a wicked Man tho' never so old, is never full of living, so neither can he be happy dying. For *in the Place where the Tree falleth, there it shall be.* The Foundation of Happiness should have been laid before.

VI. To live for a long Time here on Earth piously and usefully and then *come to the Grave in a full Age*, is most certainly an unspeakable Happiness. All must own it to be a great Mercy to the truly Pious, to live to a *full Age*, without having the Number of their Months or Days cut off in the midst. Death comes at that Time the more seasonably, and to is the more welcome: Even as Corn is just then cut down and housed, when it is fully ripe. Till then it is suffered to stand in the Field: But then it is not allowed to stand so much as a Day longer, for fear least it should be shed and scattered.

Acts xxi.
16.

WHEN Persons are *Old Disciples* as *Mnason of Cyprus* was, of whom particular Notice is taken in the Apostolick History, they are to be greatly respected. It is a very honourable Thing, to have been enabled by the Grace of God, to continue long, even for many Years, in a regular Course of Duty, under manifold Trials and Temptations: To continue stedfast in the Faith, and patient in Hope well rooted and grounded in Love, and growing more and more prudent and
experienced

experienced, to a good old-Age. Such Persons are really a goodly Sight; and to such as have any thing of true Goodness in them, it is pleasant to behold them, whether Living or Dying. Such Persons as these are Witnesses for GOD in a degenerate World, and affecting Proofs of the Truth and Reality of Religion. They mightily recommend the Ways and Service of GOD to others, and are upon that Account to be the more highly valued. Ancient Teachers in the Church of Christ, that have been faithful in their Stations all their Days, are particularly to be much esteemed. Younger Preachers may be often more followed, because of their greater Life and Vigour in Pulpit-work: But Older Ministers are to be greatly valued, on the Account of their Prudence and Experience. Hence it was that the Apostle seems to have reckoned it a sort of Recommendation, when writing to *Philemon*, he could stile himself *Paul the Aged*. Being so, he seems to have thought he ought to be the more regarded. Phil. ver. 9.

WHENSOEVER the hoary Head is found in the Way of Righteousness, 'tis really a Crown of Glory: 'Tis a wonderful Ornament. Old-Age is most certainly very Venerable, when a Man's past Life has been truly vertuous and useful: And a peculiar Honour is due to those, who have long been spending their Time and their Strength in doing Good to Mankind, It Prov. xvi. 31.

is unspeakably better to be full of Grace, than to be full of Days. But to be full of Days and Grace too, is peculiarly Venerable! To be full of Years, and at the same time full of Faith, full of Good Works, full of the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by JESUS CHRIST unto the Glory and Praise of GOD, is surprizingly Beautiful, and beyond all the Comliness or Sprightliness, or Acuteness of Youth. That is a *full Age* indeed, that is full of Goodness: And for Persons to die in a *full Age*, when they are ready and ripe for Death, cannot but be peculiarly comfortable and blessed.

VII. WHEN Persons *come thus to their Graves in a full Age, like as a Shock of Corn cometh in his Season*, I must own that for my Part, I cannot see any great Ground or Room upon any account, for Lamentation. We are told indeed, that when Good King *Josiah* died, the Prophet *Jeremiah* lamented for him, and all the Singing Men and Singing Women, spake of him in their Lamentations: And it was not without good Reason: Because he not only was an admirable Prince, but was cut off in the Morning of his Life, and left the People that survived him in great Trouble and Perplexity. We read also that *devout Men* carried Stephen to his Burial, and made great Lamentation over him: And neither was that without Reason; For tho' he was a Man of great intrinsick Worth, and like to prove a mighty Blessing to a wicked World, yet he

2 Chron.
xxxv. 25.

Acts viii.
1.

he was treated most inhumanely and barbarously, and his Removal was a great and common Loss, because he was well qualified for Service, and likely to be greatly Useful in the Church, both as a Deacon, and as a Disputant; and withal, according to the Course of Nature, there was a very fair Prospect of his being so, yet for many Years, had he but been suffered to live unmolested. In such a Case therefore there was room for Lamentation, and it must be owned to have been very proper.

BUT when a Faithful Minister of Christ, or a Pious private Christian, after many Years continued useful Service, *comes at last to his Grave, in a full Age, like as a Shock of Corn cometh in his Season*; to pretend to make great Lamentation, is a Thing that I cannot but account improper and unbecoming: 'Tis a Thing for which there is no Occasion, and 'tis not to be justified. I think we should rather rejoyce, that such have finished their Course well, and have got safe through all their Toil and Warfare, all their Combats and Conflicts, and are gone to the Possession of the Rewards that are promised, and to receive the *Crown of Righteousness*, that was *laid up*, and kept in reserve for them: And methinks, they that loved and esteemed them the most, should rejoyce the most heartily upon such an Occasion.

² Tim.
iv. 8.

IT is indeed an affecting Thing to loose Good and Holy and Useful Men out of our
World;

World; and to see them carried off by Death, when so many Useless Persons still survive, and we have comparatively but very Few, of whom we can have any Hope, that they will tread in the Steps of those that are gone, and help to fill up their Room. On this Account, and with this View, I readily grant we may be well enough concerned for ourselves when we meet with a loss of this Kind: We may be allowed to lament the Degeneracy of the Age we live in, and to wish they were otherwise, and might grow better. But as for the Persons removed in such Circumstances, we have more Reason by far for Joy than Lamentation, having good Satisfaction that after great Exercises, Fatigues and Difficulties, they at length are got to Rest; and having *sown in Tears*, are now *reaping in Joy*, to their abundantt Comfort. And why then should we lament!

Psal.
cxxxvi. 5.

I GRANT, the Decease of such Pious Persons as Mr. *John* or even Mr. *James Janeway*, who both of them died young; and of Mr. *Nathanael Oldfield*, Mr. *Thomas Kentish*, and other such-like among us, might decently enough be lamented; seeing there was Reason to hope that their Labours might have been serviceable in the Church of CHRIST for many Years, had but GOD been pleased to spare them: But who can pretend to take on for the Death of such an one as Good Mr. JOHN SHEFFIELD, who after great Activity
for

for many Years in his Endeavours to promote the Common Salvation, is now at Rest in the LORD, after he was worn out with *Labour and Sorrow!*

I CANNOT I must confess pretend to say, but that it well enough becomes you that were the Children of the Deceased, to shew a tender and affectionate Respect, after the Removal of so Excellent a Father, in whose Steps I hope you will carefully tread, and unto whose *God* I hope you will carefully adhere, and then you may depend upon it, that your Father's GOD and your own GOD will bless you.

AND as for you also, that were for so many Years the Beloved Flock of the Deceased, who had him so long holding forth the Word of Life among you, to the GLORY of the Great GOD, and I hope also much to your own Spiritual Benefit and Advantage; you I must own, would not be grateful to his Memory, should you be altogether unaffected at his Removal.

BUT when a decent Respect is paid to him that is now gone, I think it highly becomes you to bless God and be thankful, that he whom you had so much Reason to value and honour while he continued with you, now rests from all his Labour and Sorrow, and will have no more Complaints or Uneasiness, but is entred into Peace, and will therein
abide

abide to Perpetuity. You must allow me to tell you, that it would be very preposterous, to lament him as lost, who is where he would be, and has reached his Heart's Desire. He is safely lodged and housed, out of the reach of any farther Storms or Tempests, Trials or Temptations. He is where he shall neither sin nor sorrow any more: No more will he tell of his disheartning Pains and Aches; nor will he have any farther Hindrance or Molestation in the Service of his GOD and SAVIOUR. What do any of you then mean, to bewail, him as lost, who at length has found what his Heart was all along most set upon! Why should you harbour any Thing like a Desire to keep him any longer here below, when his Usefulness was quite over, and there was nothing but *Labour and Sorrow*, and the Shadow of Life left remaining; but at the same Time very comfortable Hopes as to another Life! Dry up your Tears, I beseech you Sirs, in such a Case as this, and spare them for those Occasions, in which they will be more proper and becoming, and less liable to Censure.

You don't I believe expect from me, who appear at this Time before you at the Request of the Relatives of the Deceased, any large *Encomium* of him that is gone: He did not need it; nor do I know any Occasion for it. And yet I could hardly forgive myself should I be
wholly

wholly Silent: And therefore shall add the following Hints.

Our Deceased Friend Mr. JOHN SHEFFIELD was the Son of Mr. *William Sheffield*, the worthy Minister of *Ibstock* in the County of *Leicester*, from which Living he was ejected, by the *Act for Uniformity*, in 1662; under the Pressure, of which unhappy Act, the Son as well as the Father continued Groaning all his Days. I have already published to the World some Account of the Father *, which I take this Occasion frankly to own, was drawn up for me, and delivered to me, by this his Son that is now gone to rest, who had the Spirit of the Father in him.

I HAVE been informed that our Mr. *John Sheffield* was designed for a Trade, and was sent from Home upon Trial in Order to it: But his Inclination being strongly bent for Learning, he was never easy till he was remov'd, as he was in a little Time, that he might follow his Studies: And God who all along design'd him to be an useful Agent in spreading the Gospel of his Dear Son, so ordered it as that he had very good Assistance in pursuing his Studies, without going far for it, under the Tuition of Mr. *John Shuttlewood*, who was ejected from *Raunston* in the same County of *Leicester*,

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* Abridgment. Vol. 3. Pag. 421.

but liv'd afterwards in *Northamptonshire*, and was (I am informed) a very acceptable and useful Minister, not only in the Place where he laboured stately, but in the Country round about. And of this Mr. *Shuttlewood* and his great Sufferings for *Nonconformity*, there is a pretty large Account given in *the Conformists fourth Plea for the Nonconformist* †, now above Forty Years ago. 'Tis the common Apprehension of those that knew him, that this Mr. *Shuttlewood* was a very Worthy and Learned Man, and deserv'd much better Treatment than he met with from an ill-natured World. He bred up a Few, (and it was but a Few) for the Ministry in the troublesome Times he lived in; but was driven up and down from one Place to another, and not suffered to be at rest. Mr. *Sheffield* followed him in his several Removes, and pursued his Studies with great Diligence and Application, and in due time came out into the World, well qualifi'd for Ministerial Service.

AFTER his Entrance upon it, I am inform'd, the first Place he was at for any Continuance, was *Temple Hall* in *Leicestershire*, where he was Chaplain to Mrs. *Palmer*, and there he married his Wife, and set up a Meeting for stated Religious Worship, which he took Care to keep

†Pag. 79, 80.

keep up, as long as he continued in the Country, tho' he preached also at *Atherstone* in *Warwickshire*, in which Place he at length had his stated Abode. And he took, (I am told) abundance of Pains, in making Excursions from thence into several Parts of the Country round, where he preached frequent Week-day Lectures, in which his Labours were generally very acceptable and useful, and many found Cause to bless God for them, and do so to this very Day. He was called from thence into these Parts, upon the Death of Worthy Mr. *Nathanael Vincent* †, who had been a most useful Preacher and a great Sufferer, in this Borough of *Southwark*. And what sort of Person he was after his Removal hither, and what was the Doctrine that he taught, and what sort of Life and Conversation he led among you, and how God was pleased to own him for the Good of Souls, you yourselves best know. I say then to you, as the Apostle to his *Hebrews*,* *Remember him that had the Rule over you, who has spoken unto you the Word of GOD, whose Faith follow, considering the End of his Conversation.* And thus doing, you'll meet him again with Comfort at the great Day.

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† Of him I have particular Memoirs in the Continuation of the *Account* of the Ministers, Lecturers, &c. who were ejected or silenced after the Restauration in 1660, which is going shortly into the Press.

HE was a substantial Scholar, and studied exceeding hard in his younger Years, he had very valuable inward Furniture, a good Stock of useful Knowledge, and a warm Heart, which is ever a vast Advantage in miniderial Service. He preached as one that did himself believe what he delivered to others: And he shewed he truly did so, by the agreeableness of his stated Practice. He had studied his Bible much, and was reckon'd by as Ingenious a Gentleman as Mr. *John Lock* (with whom he often had free Conversation, when he was visiting a Friend of his in *Essex*, who lived in his Neighbourhood,) to understand it well, and to excell in explaining difficult Texts. He was ever much for Scriptural Divinity, and for making the Bible his only Standard: A great Lover of plain practical Preaching; and should that ever come to loose its Credit among the Dissenters, it may easily be prognosticated it will be fatal to them. He was zealous for the Gospel Doctrine of the Grace of God; but no Man could be more vehement against turning that into Wantonness. He was one of great Integrity and plain heartedness; and never did I know a greater Enemy than he was, to any thing that looked like Dissimulation, or double dealing. He was a true *Moderate Nonconformist*; And no Man could be more remote than he from being a Schismatick. For, he was always, for *speaking the Truth in Love*; and
never

never confined his Charity to a Party, but was for loving all that adhered to the common Head. He was much for *Catholick Christianilty*: And therefore did he the less relish the National Establishment, and therefore was he the more contented to renounce the Emoluments of it, because he thought it set up such a sort of *Uniformity* as hindred *Unity*, and turned the *National Church* into a mere Party.

HE could readily allow others to differ from him, without his being in the least displeas'd; and was a great Enemy to Jealoulies and Suspicious, among the Servants of the same common Matter, if they had not a plain Foundation to support them, or there was any way of avoiding them. And therefore was he the more concern'd for the unhappy Heats and Animosities there have been among us, because he was convinced they had a natural and direct tendency, to eat out those poor Remains of Piety and Charity we had yet left, which he thought it was our common Concern, in Interest as well as Duty, to preserve and improve with all possible Care.

He was a Man of Courage, and not to be frighted or daunted, where he apprehended the Honour of GOD, or the Interest of the Souls of others was concern'd. He was also a Man of Prudence, and managed his Affairs with Discretion, and
without

without Noise; to which he was so little inclin'd, that he took this for his Motto, *Qui bene latuit, bene vixit*. He was very agreeable in all respects, not only to those that were his Fellow-Labourers in the same Worshipping Society, (Mr. *Joshua Bayes* formerly, and Mr. *Harry Read* more lately) but also to the Body of his Brethren in the Ministry, by whom he was greatly respected.

'Tis well known that he laboured for many of the latter Years of his Life under great bodily Disorders, and most sorrowfully complained of frequent grinding, wasting, linking Pains, which baffled the Skill of the Physicians, and so far prevailed, that no Means that could be used, afforded any great Relief. And this will hardly surprize any one, when I have added, that his Body being opened, there were taken from thence two Stones, the one out of his Bladder, and the other out of his Left Kidney. The former was smooth, and not so large as some that I have seen, and if it was well lodged, and kept unshogged, so as not to come at the Neck of his Bladder, it might not ordinarily give him Pain: But the latter was rough and craggy, as well as very large, considering the Part from which it was taken: It filled up the whole *Pelvis* of the Kidney, and stopped a Passage that Nature required should have been kept open; it had several Protuberances, and a rough Spike of a considerable length,
which

which ran into the *Ureter*, which must needs occasion him most exquisite Pain and Torment. But in and under all, he was remarkable for his Patience, and the even Composure of his Spirit. Often when I have been in his Company, and asked about his Welfare, he has told me he was very bad, and in abundance of Pain, and Uneasiness: And he has many times declared this with a sort of a Smile, which was an Argument of the great Serenity of his Mind. But as his End drew near, he sunk under the Heaviness of his Pressure, and his natural Spirits seemed quite to fail him. While he kept in Heart, it was his greatest Uneasiness to be wholly laid aside from his beloved Work; and he would complain that he was quite useless: But then he would recoiled himself afterwards, and discover his Resignation in Imitation of his Blessed MASTER, who when He was hardest put to it, said. *Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.* And at last, he resigned his Spirit unto GOD that gave it, in the Seventy-third Year of his Age after he had been for Forty three

† In the of his Ordination here produced, he is said to have been ordained in 1682, and to have been then about Twenty-seven Years of Age, and so by computing he will be found to be but about Seventy, at the time of his Decease: But a near Relation of Mr. *Sheffield's* convinced him some time before his Death that he was Three Years older, and that his Age was mistaken in the *Certificate*.

three Years an Ordained Minister of the Gospel *. And so at length, according to my *Text*, he *came to the Grave in a full Age as a Shock of Corn cometh in his Season*. And it is a Thing to be admired at, that he held out so long. *Censorinus* said of *Aristotle* the Philosopher, who had a very crazy Body, that it was more strange he should live to his *Climacterical* Year, than that he then died: And I think it may with equal Reason be said of

* He was Ordained in 1682, when Nonconformity was in its lowest Ebb, and thought by some to be effectually crushed, by the Severities that had been used against it. I shall here add the *Certificate* of his Ordination, which runs thus: “forasmuch as Mr. *John Sheffield*, aged about Twenty-seven Years, hath addressed himself to us, desiring to be Ordained a Preaching Presbyter, and hath exhibited to us sufficient Testimonials of his unblameable Life and Conversation, and of his good Progress in Learning, and finding him to be duly qualified and gifted for that holy Imployment; We have approved him, and upon the Day and Year hereafter mentioned, we have proceeded, solemnly to see him apart, to the Office of a Preaching Presbyter, and Work of the Ministry, with Fasting and Prayer, and Imposition of Hands. In Witness whereof, we have hereunto subscribed our Names, the Twenty-seventh Day of *September*, in the Year of our Lord, according to the Computation of the *Church of England*, One thousand, six hundred, eighty-two.

John Shuttlewood, of *Subly*,

Rich. Swynsen, of *Barton*.

Matthew Clark, of *Bouden*.

Richard Southall, of *Dodlington*.

of our good Friend Mr. *Sheffield*, that it is rather to be wonder'd that he should live to Seventy-two, than that he then died. He now *rests from his Labours, and his Works follow him*. As for the written Works, that he has published, they are but few ||; ^{Rev. xiv.} _{13.} But as for his Works and Labours, which he performed for CHRIST, while he was here upon Earth, he is now enjoying the Fruit of them above, and will continue doing so, for ever and ever.

THAT I may at length then draw to the Close of my Discourse, I shall only farther add a few Hints and Admonitions, to Younger Persons, and to those that are Elder, and to all in common. And,

I. I BEGIN with the Younger Persons. Let me beg you to remember and consider, that Death may come and cut you off in your Prime, long before you reach a *full Age*. Depend not therefore upon a long Life, but get ready to be gone from hence upon any Call or Summons. Be you ever so strong or hale, yet should GOD withdraw from you that Divine Vertue that sustains you, you would soon pine and languish, and sink down into the Grave, from whence there is no return. Consecrate therefore the First-fruits
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|| I can't hear of any Thing he has published, besides a Tract, Intituled, *Salvation by Grace*, upon *Ephes. ii. 8*. And a Sermon Preached to the Societies for *Reformation of Manners*.

of your Life, and the Flower of your Days, to God, and this will be the best Way to make Old-Age, if you should live to it, peaceful and happy. Let it be your earnest Endeavour, even in this boiling Age of Life, to wean your Hearts and Affections from this present World, and from all its deceitful Vanities and Pleasures, that You may find your chief Joy, and highest Delight, in a Holy GOD, and a Merciful JESUS. Feed not your Fancies with the Hopes of having many Years to spend in Ease and Comfort: But remember that there is no Part of Life that is free, from its Evils and Crosses, Cares and Uneasinesses. Forget not, that Green Fruit has sometimes a secret Worm that devours it, as well as the ripest; and that fresh Blossoms have Prickles, as well as the full blown Roses. Be assured, you'll have lived sufficiently, if you do but live well, and are at the same time prepared to die well. Be ready to glorify GOD both in Life and in Death, and then CHRIST JESUS will be Gain to you, both while you live, and when you die, whether that be sooner or later.

2. As for you that are advanced in Years, allow me to take this Occasion to put you upon considering soberly, that tho' others often do die, yet you most certainly must do it, and that in a very little Time too. And are there not some of you, that have even one Foot in the Grave already? And is it not then
high

high time to prepare and get ready for another World? If you should find that your outward Man decays, endeavour that the inward Man may be renewed Day by Day. Let your weak Bodies that stoop down towards the Earth, into which you are dropping, help to lift up your Minds towards Heaven, where only you can safely or comfortably dwell to Perpetuity. Remember that Grey Hairs, with which some of your Heads are besnow'd already, me the Shame, and should be the Sorrow of Old-Age, if they are not *found in the way of Righteousness*. There are some of you, that will be at a *full Age* quickly, and in a little Time: And yet if then you are out of CHRIST, and estranged from Him, it will be as much out of Season for you to come to your Graves, as at any Time foregoing. Apply then to Him with all possible Earnestness, and secure your Interest in Him without Delay, for fear the Days of Darkness should come and surprize you at unawares; and you should find them to be many and doleful. And then,

3. I THINK it highly concerns us all in common to take care to improve the Death of Elder Ministers, who we see ever and anon dropping away from among us. They are all of them going. Sirs: Therefore improve any such, the more carefully while you have them. And when they are gone, think of the Good they did while they were with you, and

be thankful: And think also of your own Unprofitableness under them, and be humbled, as you have good Reason. Forget not the Spirit they were of, and the manner of Life they led; and endeavour to keep the Relish of both, fresh and lively.

This Borough of *Southwark* has had many Holy, Humble, Useful, Heavenly Ministers of Christ labouring in it, that are now at Rest in the Lord. I beseech you dread the Thoughts of having the painful Labours of any of them rising up in Judgment against you another Day. But though Ministers die one after another, yet *the Word, of the LORD abideth for ever*. That is still the very same that it was; and the same GOD has the residue of the same SPIRIT, to make it effectual. The faster Elder Ministers die, pray you the more heartily for an Effusion of his Spirit upon Younger Ministers that come in their Place. You that worship GOD stately in this Place, have Reason to be thankful in this respect, that your Aged Pastor deceas'd has such a Succelfor. Prize your Mercy, and improve it. Don't think GOD alters because the Minister alters. When *Moses* was dead, God was pleased to address himself to *Joshua* in such remarkable Words as these: *As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee*. God's Work must still go on, and He will not be without some to do it. The Ministers of each successive
 Generation

Generation enter into the Labours of the Generation foregoing: And He that was with the Predecessor will be with the Successor, if he sets to the same Work, in the same Spirit. One Generation of Ministers goes after another. Some come to their Graves younger, and others in a fuller Age. and God still finds some to rise up in their Room. But as the Prophet declares with abundance of Solemnity, Judah *shall dwell*, (or abide, or be inhabited) *for ever, and Jerusalem from Generation to Generation*. As GOD'S Truth shall still remain, so his Church shall continue in the World, even to the End of Time: And all the living Members of that Church of his, shall be established in their Happiness to the utmost Ages of Eternity. And whoever they are that die, and are laid in their Graves, we both may and should comfort ourselves and one another with these Thoughts and Hopes.

Joel iii.
20.

FINIS.