

A
Devout Contemplation
On the *Meaning* of
Divine Providence,
in the Early
DEATH
Of Pious and Lovely
Children.

Preached upon the *Sudden* and Lamented
DEATH of
Mrs. *Elizabeth Wainwright*.
Who Departed this Life, *April* the 8th. 1714.
Having just compleated the Fourteenth
Year of Her *Age*.

By *Benjamin Colman*,
Pastor to a Church in *Boston*.

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of the *Town-House*. 1714.

To my Honoured FRIENDS, the Mourn-
ful RELATIVES of the *Deceased*

Mrs. Elizabeth Wainwright.

IT may doubtless become that *Pastoral Relation* which it has pleased the DIVINE PROVIDENCE to Honour Me with toward many of You, to give You this publick Expression of my deep Sympathy in your present Sorrow, and to minister as I am able to your Support under it, and Profit from it.

I pray GOD to Sanctifie to Your Selves, & to your Families the many surprizing Breaches, which have within a few years been made upon that late Flourishing part of your Family; and in particular the sudden Death of this Lovely BRANCH which we now mourn. You had a great deal of Pleasure & Comfort in Her the few days that GOD spar'd Her to you; nor did the Town show a Child more Amiable in Person, or more Innocent and Vertuous in Behaviour; of a more sweet Disposition, or seemingly better Inclined: not a Child scarce of greater Hopes, or more universally Esteem'd. So fair a Mind in so fair a Body was indeed worthy to be lov'd. Nor was She without the happy Signs of a Spirit of true Devotion toward GOD, as well as full of endearing Love and Goodness, Humility and Meekness toward all whom She Convers'd with: those Ornaments which are in the sight of GOD of great Price.

The Dedication.

I shall never forget the *Agonies of Distress* I found You in, as *Many* of you as could suddenly get together on the *Alarm* of her Unexpected *Change*: Nor wou'd I have You to forget y^{ur} own gracious Expressions of *Humiliation* and holy *Fear*, *Sacrificion* and *Adoration*, in the transports of your Grief on that sad Occasion. O the *Astonishing Spectacle* we then had before our Eyes, of the *Vanity* of our *Best Estate* in this Life! What a poor thing are *Riches*, or *Children* and *Families*, or any *Earthly Enjoyments* to build any *Expectation* on: Our *days upon Earth* are as a *Shadow*, and there is no *abiding*.

Many of You, my *Good Friends*, are in the *Prime* of Life, and *some* in your *Youth*, just *Entring* on a *Vain World*, in *Superior Circumstances* with respect to *Outward Rank* and *Estate*. Suffer me therefore to *Exhort* You to get above these *empty transitory Temptations* that do surround You, and endanger you. You have the more need to think often of *Death*, and of *parting* with every pleasant *Object of Sense*; to withdraw your *Hearts* from things below, and betimes to get that *Faith* in *CHRIST*, and in the *Life to come*, which is the *Victory that overcometh the World*. The more *GOD* has given You of *this World*, the more are you obliged to *devote* your selves to the *Service* of *GOD* in your *Generation*, as good *Stewards* of those *Talents* He has put into your *Hands*.

Suppose that *GOD* should call one or other of You to die, as suddenly as He call'd away your
dear

dear and blooming Relative a few days ago, amidst your *Acquisition* of Riches, and just as you have bro't all your *Designs* to bear for this World; have you considered how to give up all these *Abortive* Labours and *frustrated* Hopes! Have you set your Eyes and Heart upon a *Better World*?

I'm sure You must needs agree with me, that this is your *Wisdom* and true Interest, and will be your *Honour* and *Comfort* Living and Dying.

I heartily wish You this *Grace*; and pray GOD to make You great *Blessings* in your Day, to spare you long to live unto His own Service and Glory, and to *Establish His Covenant* with your *Children*, whom He gives you to bring up in His *Fear*.

I am with great Affection and Respect,

Your Obligated and Unworthy Servant,

in the Gospel of CHRIST,

Benjamin Colman.

T O T H E

Children

Of the T O W N.

I take this Opportunity to *Address* you, into whose hands this *Sermon* may come, for your *Souls Good*. You have seen many of your *Own Age* Buried in the *Winter* past; divers of *whom* died very hopefully, and made a gracious End. You have *been Sick* (most of you) *your selves*; and many of you may remember the *Religious Frames* you were then in, and the holy *Desires* and *Purposes* you then had. Some have been so wrought upon by their Danger, that I hope truly they have been bro't home to CHRIST. I wish the number of *such* were greater.

You are *now*, many of you, much *affected* with the *Sudden Death* of Mrs. *Wainwright*; and now while your Hearts are *warm and tender*, I wou'd press you to *lay it to heart*, and receive Instruction from it.

Which of you all are more *likely* or *worthy* to live than the *Deceased Child* was? Where is there any One among you *fairer* in Body or in Mind? Which of you have a *fairer prospect* for this World than

She

She had ? But that which was best of all, she appear'd to be *Pious and Gracious*.

I remember well with what delight and *thankfulness* she once and again Entertained the good *Counsels* and *Exhortations* I have given Her about Her *Spiritual State*. I have the *Comfort* now that I did my Duty toward Her in this particular, and it much *Endear'd* me to Her. I now call upon you, *Child*, while you read these *Lines*, that you mind your *Soul*, and pray to GOD daily, and fear to Sin, and make Religion your *Business* betimes; remembering the *Words* of the LORD JESUS, which He spake when He was twelve year old, Luk. 2. 49. *Wist ye not that I must be about my Fathers Business!*

I have reason to think that the deceased *Child* was accustomed to *Secret Prayer*. They who have had Opportunity to *Observe*, have told me of her careful *Retirements*. Nor may I forget her gracious Care and Concern for her younger and only *Sister*, who lay dangerously Sick of a Fever but a few dayes before Her own death: *Lucy*, said she, do you pray to GOD now for your self? and did you pray before you were taken Sick? This looks as if she were no stranger unto *Prayer* her self. Her last words also were to ask the Prayers of Others for Her.

A *Praying Child* is, I hope, a *Gracious One*. *Children*, do you Pray to GOD daily for your *Precious and Immortal Souls*? Will you not be put upon doing so by this Example? May you not die so suddenly as not to have time to pray at last? Shou'd you not Adore the GRACE of GOD that spares you? and Improve the space He gives you? and say, as *One* of our lovely *Children* did to Her Mother on this Occasion;
GOD

GOD has many ways to bring Souls home to Himself, and it may be this is to be the means of bringing me to Him.

O that we cou'd see a serious Concern in our Children for their Everlasting Interests? how wise and grave and amiable wou'd they then be? how happy and safe under the Care and Love of Divine Providence! in what Honour and Esteem wou'd they pass through the World? How Useful and what singular Blessings wou'd they be in it? how pleasant, easie and chearful might they live, free from vanity and the Wounds of guilt! and in what peace might they at last hope to Die?

This Mercy and Grace I wou'd in particular wish from **GOD** unto the Surviving Sister, the only Immediate remaining Branch of this broken Family; Beseeching Almighty **GOD** (if it may be His Will) to Restore Her perfectly from Her present Languishments, to Adorn Her with His Grace, and grant Her Long to Live, and be a Mother in Israel.

A Devout Contemplation

On the Early

DEATH

Of Pious and Lovely

Children.

J E R. IX. 21.

For Death is come up into our Windows, and is entred into our Palaces, to cut off the Children from without, and the Young men from the Streets.

HOW often doth the Great GOD repeat His Calls to us to look into our Graves ! and how reasonable is this Melancholly Subject ever to us thro' our whole Life ! The affecting Strokes of His Providence return surprizingly

upon us, every now and then, as the Clouds after
the Rain.

We have had a dark and sorrowful long Winter by reason of the Untimely Deaths (as we are ready to say) of many of our dear Children, and hopeful Young People. And now this last Week a very sudden awful Death has taken away One of the fairest Flowers in this Garden of GOD; One of the most Blooming and Lovely Children in the Town or Land, whether we speak of Body or Mind.

I wou'd take this Occasion therefore, for the profit both of Elder and Younger Persons, to recollect the Contemplations which I have sometimes had on the Meaning of Divine Providence, in such grievous distressing Dispensations.

Our Context is one of the most mournful Chapters that you can find in all the Holy Scripture. Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet, does in the most pathetic words that Art can chuse and lay together, excite Himself and others unto Holy Sorrow on the foresight of the Calamities coming upon Judea and Jerusalem, by the conquering and cruel Arms of the King of Babylon. He wishes that his own Head were Waters, and his Eyes a fountain of Tears, that he might weep day and night, for the slain of the Daughters of his People. He weeps for their Sins, which he therefore Enumerates; and then He weeps afresh over the prospect of GOD's Judgements, the sorrowful Fruit, and dreadful Punishment of their Sins: in which he must be a Spectator rather than a

Man, who is not affected with the Hand and Anger of Divine Providence.

This was the bitter Mourning in the Context : v. 15. Therefore thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the GOD of Israel ; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with Wormwood, and give them water of Gall to drink. v. 17. Consider ye, and call for the mourning Women, that they may come,--and let them make haste, and take up a Wailing for us ; that our Eyes may run down with tears, and our eye-lids gush out with waters : for a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion ! How are we spoiled ! --Hear--O ye Women,--and teach your Daughters wailing, and every one her Neighbour Lamentation : for Death is come up into our Windows, and is entred into our Palaces ; so cut off the Children from without, and the Young men from the Streets.

What can be more soft, passionate and moving, than the strain of the Context ? and what wound up the strings of sorrow unto this High Note, but Death come into their Windows, to cut off the Children and Young people from the Streets ! Well does the Prophet call for the tenderest hearts, and the shrillest voices, even of Women, to raise the Lamentation on this account.

All Divine Judgments call for our Sorrowing under Gods Hand and Rod. While God distributeth sorrows in his Anger, our Eyes should pour out tears unto God. We ought to weep with him that is in Trouble, and our Eyes should mourn by reason of

of affliction. But in no *Instance* does *Nature* teach & even force sorrow, more than in *Bereavements* and the Death of *Children* : This was the voice in *Rama*, *Rachel* weeping for her *Children*, and would not be comforted; &c. It was said of *Mary*, she goeth to the *Grave* to weep there; a Melancholly place indeed to draw forth the Tears of Relations.

But I'm aware that many may be too apt of themselves to *indulge Grief*. I will forbear therefore to Enlarge any further on the *Context*. Death is come up into our *Windows* : *scil.* of the Chambers where the Sick lay. There's no locking our Doors against this *Officer*, when he comes to Arrest, or serve his Execution. Or rather, as a *Thief* in the Night *Steals in* at the Window, so does Death often steal as *suddenly* into our Houses, ere we are aware. Nor does it enter into the Cottages of the *Poor* only, but into the Houses of the Rich, the Dwellings of Rulers, and the Palaces of *Princes*. But that which I shall only attend to is, that it spares not the tender pleasant *Children*, nor the hail and promising *Youths* ; These, a most sad part of its Execution, it cuts off from the Streets. The Streets, where the Young people were wont to *Walk*, and where the Children us'd to *Play*.

All the *Observation* that I shall raise from the Words, is this :

DOCT.

D O C T R I N E.

That abundance of the Children of Men, and of our most hopeful, pious and promising Children do Die Young.

A very plain, and poor, little Observation you'll be ready to say ; what any Child may make, and I would pray them to do so. I'm sure, you don't think that I intend to labour in the proof of this obvious Truth, and Universal Experience of Mankind. There is great *Inequality* as to the length of peoples lives here in the Body, tho' at the *longest* the life of man is very short ; as a Vapour that endureth but a short time. There are the *untimely Births* which never see the Light : and many that are *Born alive*, yet only number a few breaths, hours and days, and expire again, without fulfilling their *Week* or *Month*. What brittle and tender things are our *Babes*, and what multitudes die in *Infancy* ! Delights, lent us for a year it may be, and then taken (we hope) to the Delights of God for ever. In *Childhood* the blooming flower falls too, and *Autumn* comes almost before the *Spring's* begun. If thro' a million Dangers, mortal to others, we get up to *Youth*, yet how suddenly and often does Death cut down the verdant budding plant ! And when from Youth we are got to *Manhood*, even then in the prime of our strength we are often snatcht away from Families,

lies, from Service, and from all Worldly Enjoyments. Job 21. 23. *The number of his months are cut off in the midst; he dies in his full strength, his Breasts are full of Milk, and his Bones are moistened with Marrow.*

Thus is it with the Children of Men; and this happens alike to all, both to the Evil and the Good. Now my Design is with Modesty and Holy Reverence to Enquire into the Reasons of Providence in this particular, which tho' it may sometimes appear very dark, and be very grievous to particular persons, yet certainly is in it self very Wise, and Holy and Gracious.

I am to Observe then, that abundance of our hopeful and lovely and promising Children, and those too that are really Pious and Godly in their Childhood, do Die Young. It always has been, and still is so. Righteous Abel, the first fruits of fallen Man to God, the first Martyr for Religion, and the first-born of the Grave, died young. Enoch was no Old Saint in his Day, tho' ripe for Heaven, when God took him. He died not, it's true, but was the Earnest to the Old World of the Resurrection. The ten Children of Job, who we hope Inherited their pious Fathers Sanctity, and Prayers, died together in their Youth. Heavy the Tydings to their amazed Parents---The House fell upon the Young men, and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Sometimes the Holiest, and whom God loves best, he takes soonest. So

So it was we know in the peaceful Death of the young Prince *Abijah*. 1 King. 14. 13. *He only of Jeroboam shall come to the Grave, because in him there was found some good thing.* To name no more, Our Blessed Saviour himself has sanctify'd an Early Death by dying in the prime of the Life of Man.

And now give me leave to do some Honour unto the *Divine Providence*, (as it shall enable me) in ordering these Early Deaths. It is a thing very grievous to us, lamentable to see, and heavy to bear, and so it should be; yet we may not complain of the *Divine Government*, no not in this; however grievous it be to *Grace and Sense* together. Let the *Sovereign GOD* call soon for them that fear him, and are but beginning to serve him, and so are likely to honour him, and be Blessings in the World; whose *Hope and Crown* they are; yet is he easily justified in his doing, and clear in his judging thus. Now that I may begin right on this *Argument*, which is one of the deep things of God; Let me say,

1. *The Sovereignty of God* is enough, and instead of a thousand Reasons, to his Creatures. in any of the Dispensations of his Providence, which may be dark to them. I'm afraid that the *Sovereignty of God* is not at all conceived of, nor adored by multitudes of Christians, as it ought to be. The Scripture every where speaks in the most exalted strains that can be about it. And when the Dispensations of God are such as surprize and confound

our

our weak Reason and Understanding, then very often instead of going about to satisfy our scruples, and level them to our Capacity, it bids us *worship*, instead of *arguing* about the Unsearchable Councils of Heaven; and contemplating the Greatness of God to be *dumb*. So in Gods dealings with his Servant *Job*, when he and his Friends had been contemplating the possibility of such Inflictions on an Upright person; at last *Elihu* takes up the Argument, and reproves them all for presuming to talk so freely of the Great GOD; asking them if God were to give them Account of what He did or could do? or if they must be dissatisfy'd with the Almighty's Actions when ever they could not account for them? He vouchsafes them no other satisfaction but the Greatness & *Dominion* of God; and when God himself spake afterward out of the *Whirlwind*, it was in the same lofty Style and Reasoning; proper to, and worthy of a God. *Job* 33. 12, 13, 17. 36. 22, 23, &c.

Very justly may the Great GOD *disdain* to let us reason with him against any Circumstances which He orders for us, either in respect of Life or Death. Shall not the *Clay* ly still under the *Potter's* skilful Hand? *Balaam* was provok'd to stand corrected by his *Ass*; and yet the *Ass* taught the Prophet with Justice and Mildness: Yet *Vain Man*, that is born like the Wild *Asses* Colt, would be wise before God, even to reprove his Maker!

Let me further observe here Two Things.

1. *Life*

1. *Life and Death are among those things that absolutely belong to the Divine Sovereignty.* Who but the God of the Spirits of all flesh shall say, when our Souls shall come into these dwellings of flesh, and when leave them? The Key of *Hades* is in his Hand, and it is one of the *Insignia* of his Supreme Dominion. The Life he gave is his own, and shall he not do what he will with it?

2. *God is to be resigned to even with respect to the degrees of present Serviceableness, or Future Glory.* We should desire indeed a *Distinction* in both *Worlds*, owning our selves unworthy mean while of a Name in either of them. But in the midst of *Usefulness* here, and of the prospect of *Advancement* in a better World, we must bear a spirit of absolute *Submission* if God call us to Die. To do much we should always desire, that we have done no more, should be our Humiliation; that we have done any thing is matter of Thanksgiving, and if it must be no more, we must (like our Famous and Eminent Mr. *Mitchel* when a dying) bless God for the least, which we never deserv'd, and so resign our else desired Life. If we have any place in the *Firmament* of Glory, we must leave it to God to ordain our *magnitude* and *brightness* there; and as one *Star* differs from another *Star* in Glory; so it the *Resurrection* of the Dead. Now he that telleth the Number of the *Stars*, and calleth them all by Name, has done the same in Numbring the *Elect*, and making them *Vessels of Honour*.

I proceed now to say,

2. *Our lovely, gracious Elect Children cannot be too soon in Heaven.* Happiness and Bliss in the fulness and perfection thereof can never come too soon. If God takes the *Elect Infant* from the *Mother's Breast*, or the *Father's Knees*, to Himself an infinitely better Father; pray, what loss is it? How blessed is it for the *Babe* that no more days or months were ordained for it in this scorching and freezing world of ours! in this world of Sin and Affliction! Will the *Babe* pine after the *Mother's Breasts*, when Angels have taken it in their brighter Arms to carry it to, and lay it in the Bosome of JESUS; the Good Shepherd of Souls, who layes the *Lambs* in his Bosome? Surely 'tis best of all to go to an immediate Everlasting Rest, since God ordains it; never to have felt at all the Evils of guilt or trouble which the Godly are here so often groaning under! Well then, we are never too young to be happy: Happiness can never come too soon; that Surprise must at last be exceeding pleasant.

3. *Sometimes it has been the desire and choice of Holy Children, with submission to the Sovereign Pleasure and Wisdom of God, not to have a long continuance here in this World.* This is a rare thing indeed, yet we lately had an Instance of it in our Neighbourhood, in that Excellent Youth, the Son of Major Fitch, whose gracious Example, and lamented Death will not be soon forgotten. It was

a pretty frequent passage with him, that he saw little in this World to make one desire to live long here. 'Twas a sign that his heart was soon and strangely set on Heavenly Things. This requires some very comfortable degrees of hope and good assurance of our Interest in a better Life. There are but few even of the Children of God in advanced years, who upon settled and weighed principles of Devotion, arrive unto an habitual willingness to Die. Yet some strange Instances of it have been found under the Early Impressions of Divine Grace: The fear of Sin, the longing for freedom from it, and the desire to be with Christ, may sometimes excuse even the desire to be dissolved, preserving Resignation to God: but the Glorifying God on Earth, the Serving our Generation according to the Will of God, and the Believing in the Al sufficiency of the Grace of God to keep us thro' the World, must make Life when prolonged, not only easie, but delightful to us, and an Esteemed Mercy of God to us. Certainly to abide in the flesh is very needful and desirable, while to live is Christ: but when we change this thought, and can say to ourselves ---to me to die is Gain, it may be difficult not to verge too much with the Holy Apostle in his desires rather of a dissolution; & to groan being burdened in this Tabernacle; knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, Phil. 21. 23. 2 Cor. 5. begin. Some Good People have wish'd for a Sudden Death; but most of the Children

dren of God with great Reason joyn rather in that part of our *Littany*, to be *preserved from it*. However, it very much takes away the *darkness* of the Dispensation, when it comes to be the matter of a devout persons desire and choice. But these are *Extraordinary Cases*, not to be bro't into *Example*, nor to be commended to our Imitation ; & therefore not to be insisted on.

4. *Possibly God may have consulted the Spiritual advantage of a desirable and gracious Child in its Early Death*. I mean both in respect of *Grace* here, and *Glory* hereafter. Had the Child lived, you know how certainly it had been *exposed* in this place of sin, temptation and danger : what from the *Snake in the Grass*, latent Indwelling Sin, and that *Adder in the Path*, the Devil and Satan ; what from an *Insuaring World*, and the lusting flesh resisting the *Spirit* in all its heavenly desires. It is a Circumstance of great happiness to be once safely past all these *hazards*, & out of the reach of these mortal Enemies and *fiery darts* ; never to be tempted, nor to sin more ; but to be confirm'd in a State of Grace, and ascertain'd, possess'd of Everlasting Happiness. Now God only knows how little a longer time might have been improved ; how little might have been got by it, how much might have indeed been suffered by it. It is a sad truth, but a certain one, that many Good people have found little or no advantage to their *Spiritual Life* by length of time. They were Converted young, it may be, and

and if they had died young, they had been in the same place in Heaven, if not in a better, then having liv'd to more years. How often have people gone backward, quench'd the Spirit of Grace, and hurt their own Souls. Take the Instance of *Solomon*; how gloriously did he begin, and outshone in Grace, as he did in Wisdom and Dignity: He was the *Wonder* of the Church, as his *Temple* was of the World: He went before the very *Ministers* of Religion, and the Lords Prophets in zeal and in devotion: and now had he died young, his Grace had been without a *stain* upon it: but he liv'd to show the *frailty* of the Greatest *Saint* in a State of Worldly *Affluence*, and the hazard there is from *Sensual Objects* in our greatest Attainments here below. I dare not presume to think whether his fall has put him a great way *back* in the List of the Glorify'd, his Repentance and Recovery being glorious in our Eyes; but certainly if his *Graces* had not been brighter above, had he died in his unspotted youth, and before his fall, yet had his *Name* among Saints on Earth been so.

We are *Sailing* in a very tempestuous and uncertain *Sea*, like *Mariners* that sometimes set out with a fair and strong *Gale*, and make half their Passage in a few days; but then they meet with some rough contrary Winds that force 'em to *Ly by* at least, if they are not *driven back*, and have many a League to measure over again, if ever they *make* their Passage at all. If the *Ship* springs a *leak*, tho' it do
not

not founder, but after many hardships the Port is gained, yet the Loss and Damage sustained is usually very much. So are there many that Set out well in their Youth, and at last get to Heaven, but it is sorely *shatter'd* and *broken*, through their falls before one temptation and another in their way. The Floods do not *drown* them in perdition, but yet thro' their ill Conduct and foolish Management much of their rich Freight and Lading is *damnify'd* and thrown Overboard. They can show the *Riches* they once had put aboard them, but alas, *canker'd* and *marr'd* now : they are not when they die, even what they were in their early years, but their *Beauty* marr'd by the advance of *Age* ; which tho' it be natural to the *Body*, yet it is unnatural to the *Immortal Soul*. They die *Penitents* it's true, but not *Proficients* ; and tho' they get to Heaven at last, yet no higher there than if they had died in their younger days.

Upon all, say, if it is not very possible that God may graciously have consulted the Spiritual Advantage of many an Elect Vessel of Mercy, in their Early Death. We have no *foresight* of things to come, but God has the most perfect that can be ; and tho' there's no foresight of Grace in the Saints before it is given, but only in the purpose of God to give it, for in our corrupt nature it never could be at all but of his free Gift ; yet in the best of Saints there's an easie foresight to us all of Corruption ready to break out upon all Occasions, with-

out Gods restraint and prevention thereof: and to God it is open and naked how good people will act if they come to be in these and those Circumstances. Some God permits for wise Ends, and the Good of others, to live and shew the prevalency of Corruption in them, against suitable strivings and measures of his Grace; and others God prevents from being like Instances and Sufferers, by a happy Early Death: And tho' he does not say, as to particular persons (and less may we) that this is his End; yet possibly it may be so in the very Instances we are mourning over. Indeed for ought we know, had they liv'd they wou'd have grown in Grace more and more; and it is meet for us to suppose and hope it wou'd have been so: but 'tis as true, that for ought we know it wou'd have been otherwise: and it is not at all amiss for us to satisfy our selves after this manner; when the matter is necessarily left so doubtful to us, and hazardous. But so much for this particular.

5. The Righteous are sometimes taken away from the Evil to come. As the Prophet observes, Isa. 57. 1. And sometimes it's certain, that Hopeful and Pious Children are so, as Abijah was: 1 King. 14. 13. And King Josiah too, to whom it was promised as a token of Divine Favour; 2 Kings 32. 20. That because his heart was tender and humble before God, therefore he should be gathered early to his Fathers, & his Eyes should not see the Evil that was coming on Judah and Jerusalem.

Long Life here in this World is unavoidably attended with *many Sorrows*, especially if a person be pious and devout. *Mens own Sins*, and the Sins of *others*, especially of *Relatives*; our *Afflictions* also by *Bodily Pains* and *Sickness*, and by *Bereavements* in Estate and Relatives, multiply Grief upon us thro' our present *Pilgrimage*, and make the days of the years of it very Evil. They that die young are soon out of this *dark and suffering Scene*; if they had liv'd longer, there had been possibly many things which they little foresaw to have imbitter'd their lives to 'em; yea, the very things (many of 'em) wherein they promis'd themselves the most comfort. How often have the Relatives that Survive come to bless their *Departed Dead*, saying, *Blessed are the closed Eyes that never saw these things*. This is true, both as to *Sins* and *Judgments*, and those both *publick* and *private*. For *Instance*, it may seem to us every way to have been happier for *Eli* to have died young, than in his *Age* to have seen the Iniquity of his *Sons*, and their Death in their Sins, together with the Captivity of the *Ark*, which he died under the heavy Tydings of. How bitter is it to a Godly person, to live and see Children and Brethren grow up and prove *Apostates* from God, Children of *Belial*, and perishing under the Judicial Strokes of Divine Providence. *It is better never to live to bear, than to bring forth these Sons of Sorrow*. God sees (says the late Excellent Mr. N. Taylor) 'the rising Storms to

‘to come, and when they wou’d Overfet the *Ves-*
‘*sel,* and therefore dispatches the Sailing Orders,
‘and provides a safe *Harbour*: His *Greens* he early
‘*Houses* also in a warm place, because they are so
‘tender, that the sharpness of the coming Weather
‘wou’d ~~rip~~ and kill them. The mean while there’s
‘Corn that can endure the cold of *Winter*, and the
‘heat of the *Summer*; and it is fitting that it stand
‘and grow full ripe, and be gather’d when it is
‘turn’d white for the *Harvest*. The hopeful Youth
is sometimes taken away in favour from the Evil to
come.

6. Many things respecting the *Nature of Saving*
Grace are to be learn’d from, and are seen in the
Early Deaths of pious and hopeful Young people.
As,

1. It shows us that *Grace* intends not to secure us a
long *Life* here in the *Body*. No, it is the assimilation
of the *Soul* unto another *Life*, and its preparation
for it: it is to wean the *Soul* from the sensitive
life, and to raise it above the same: it points the
Soul unto the life of spirits in holiness and happi-
ness that is to come; and on no pretence therefore
can it fix the heart down in any desires or pro-
spect of living long here. Indeed, *Grace* never short-
ned any ones life here, but has prolong’d rather ma-
ny a mans; length of days are in her right hand, and
long life shall she add unto thee: Prov. 3. 16. There
is nothing in a principle of *Grace* and Holy living,
but what tends to the preservation and lengthning

out of mans life. It bears antipathy to, and detestation of all those *Intemperances* and vicious *Excesses*, which shorten mens days. It does by *trust and prayer* commit us to the care & blessing of the God of our lives. It desires to live to his Glory; and it secures to us that so far as God sees it best for us, we shall live in his world. But no further can a principle of Grace look to a continuance of the present life. No, the first and chief *Relation* of Divine Grace, and *Benefit* from it is unto a life to come. Col. 3. 3. *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in GOD.* The *Spiritual Life* only is worthy to be called *our Life*; and *this* is hid with *Christ*; as the life of the *Branches* is hid in the *Root*: So are our Hopes for Eternity deposited and laid up with *Christ* in Heaven.

2. Again, The Death of pious Children teaches us this also of a *Principle of Grace*, that where it once is, the *Soul* is safe. Let Death come as soon as it will after a persons *Conversion*, when once a Sanctifying Change has passed on him, be he never so young, the *Soul* is safe. It is indeed very desirable to us on many accounts, that there be some good space granted to us for the *Exercise* of Grace, and the *Actings* of the Regenerate Life: that so the Great GOD may have some Honour and Service from us, the fruits of that Grace which He hath implanted in us; and we some good Evidence and hope of His Grace in us, and of our Title to Eternal Life; that so we may at last die in peace and

Comfort

Comfort as well as Safety. But this is not *absolutely necessary* : and a person really dies in peace, in a State of Salvation, and goes to Heaven, if a Change be truly wrought in the Soul, tho' God do not spare him any length of time to bring forth the fruits of his Grace. And the Early Deaths of pious Ones may satisfy us, *That Salvation depends, not on length of time for the continued Exercise of Grace* ; tho' it be in its self a Favour of GOD greatly to be desired, if it may be His Will.

3. Hence also does it evidently appear, *that Salvation is not of Works, but of Free Grace altogether.* If it were of Works of Righteousness wrought by us, it were much to be apprehended that they who die young could never be saved. If *Infants* are saved, it must be of free Grace, for these can have no Works of their own : no, not so much as one *Act of Faith* are they capable of : and yet *of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.* Multitudes of *them* are sanctify'd and justify'd, and taken to Heaven. In some proportion it is thus with him that dies young : suppose within the *Month* or the *Year* wherein the Grace of God has taken hold of his Heart ; when he is but just beginning to live to GOD, is but turning to Him in his own apprehension, and by his own confession has done nothing for Him ; but was beginning he hop'd in earnest to think of doing something, & *Now* must be gone : However, he dies in Christ and goes to Him : but then how rich and free is that Grace which saves him? *Where*

is *Boasting*? Where is any life of working so much as to be imagined?

Wherefore to finish this *Head*, How amiable and adorable doth this render *saving Grace* to us! that however young we die, 'tis possible to be saved by it; that how soon soever it takes possession of us, it puts us into a secure and happy State. O how lovely and desirable a thing then is it! how very valuable and precious!

See you *One* that has but just begun to seek and serve GOD, and GOD has so suddenly, instantly, presently rewarded and glorified him! when CHRIST his Judge shall name this *Child* with honour in the *Last Day*, what can it answer?--- LORD, when did I ever serve Thee? What did I ever do for Thee? From the day that thy Grace found me, I had not a year, not a month, not a week (it may be) allowed me to live to honour Thee! No, Gracious LORD! in the day almost wherein thou didst please to *Sanctify* me thou didst also *Glorify* me. E'er I cou'd find thy Grace in my Soul, I found my self taken to thy *Glory*; and as I was but beginning to seek thy Mercy, I found my self Embraced in the Arms of it.

O what should render GOD & His Grace more amiable to us, than his glorifying it after this manner to the young Penitent, the *Infant Saint*! No sooner born from *Above*, than taken *Thither*.

7. And *lastly*, The Death of those that are pious and gracious in their Youth is of excellent Use, and great

great Necessity, to quicken and excite their Acquaintance, Friends and Relations to an instant and careful Preparation for their own Dying Hour. Many are the Instructions and Admonitions in it, both to Elder and Younger People. It may be of great Service to Survivors. And this is a Reason worthy of a Good GOD, whose care is for the Souls of many in his Providential Dealings with One.

Let me then *Observe*, and so make the proper Application of the Doctrine, in this Illustration of it.

1. That to be sure in the Early Death of pious Children, there are many Useful Admonitions intended to those that are Young. Younger Friends and Relatives should take the Warnings of GOD, which are firstly and directly meant to them.

You must be admonish'd, O Young Person, that you your self may die soon and suddenly likewise. You should never see one of your Own Age buried, or one younger than your self die, but you should seriously think--'It might have been my turn as well, or mine may be the next, and within a few days (if not to day or to morrow) I may follow. What am I better than my Companion? or it may be my life is not of half the worth that his or hers was! nor has been half so well improved or redeemed! or if it has, yet this makes no difference; since the best die young.

See one proof of that Truth, Psal. 39. 5. *Verily every man at his best Estate is altogether Vanity.*

A Flourishing Youth and Piety met together seem one of the best Estates of Man: the strength of our years united with the strength of Grace. 1 Joh. 2. 14. *I write unto you young men, because ye are strong, &c.* Yet in this *Vigour* of Nature and Grace both, may we suddenly expire and vanish away.

Wherefore *Early Religion is the highest Wisdom, and Interest of all the Children of men*; the most *Important* and necessary thing that can be. You can never begin too soon to think of your Souls, since you may every day look to die. This alone ought to awaken you to *remember your Creator* in the days of your Youth, and as you enter upon this life, to chuse that *Good part* which can never be taken away from you; and to *Seek first* the Kingdom of GOD, and his Righteousness. The *Funeral* of every *Infant* or *Child*, calls all the Children in the *Streets* to be thinking of, and preparing for their own Death: for if you are not too young to *Die*, neither are you to be *Religious*, and to make your Souls your care.

It warns you now in your Youth, that you need *better Friends & Dependance* than any in this World, and a *better Portion* than this World can flatter you withal. For be you in the arms of your *Parents*, or bereav'd of them can you number up a great many *Friends* that heartily respect you, and care for your Interests? Are the *Comforts* of this Life furrounding you and your *Worldly Estate* increasing upon you? Yet a day or an hour may snatch

snatch you away from all; while your helpless Friends stand in Amazement and Sorrow about you, to see you expire. *That Child alone is safe & happy, who has the Great GOD for its Father, and Guardian and Portion.*

Children! Let me put it to you, whether you have ever yet began to think of your Souls, your Sins, your Saviour, your Baptism, your Dying Hour, and of Eternity. Do you pray, do you fear to sin, do you take any care to be Saved? O what Reason there is to fear that few of you little consider any thing of this nature! which of you almost has any tho't about Death now in your Childhood? You scarce seem to apprehend it possible, and much less do you realize it as very likely, that you may die young. Will you never begin to think, Young People? not one sober tho't of your Eternal State, tho' you see so many of your own Stature in the Grave. GOD teach thee betimes so to number thy days, as to apply thy heart unto Wisdom.

GOD can make the Death of your Companions a most awakening and effectual Sermon to you: and it may be worth anothers dying to do thy Soul good, and bring thee home to Christ: It preaches to thee in a more affecting manner than any meer words can, and in the happy season to Relatives, when their affections are stirred, and their Souls the more easily come at. And O that our Young people wou'd but hear the good Counsels from the Funerals of their pious Friends that die young!

young ! how well worth were it their dying, be-
times to fasten such Instructions for the Salvation
of others.

2. The death of hopeful Children and Young
people may be of great Spiritual Advantage also
to *Elder persons*. *Parents* should be quickned in
Holy Living, by the death of their Children ; and
the *Grey Head* should receive Instruction & Awa-
kening by the fall of the blooming Youth. There
are many things said to them that are in Advanced
Age, in the Death of their *Juniors*.

Are these fallen so *soon*, how *long ago* then might
I have been in my Grave ? may the *Elder Christian*
say. Adore the Sovereign Grace of GOD, that
has so long spared you. Had you been cut down
thus soon, think what had become of you, & where
had you been long since ? Consider why God spares
you. *Shame* your self for your Defects, and *fear* :
If the *green tree* be fell'd, laden with Blossoms, or
first ripe fruits ; what then shall be done to the
dry ? Shall *that* stand always *barren* and unprofita-
ble, to *cumber the Ground* ? What ? see we a Child
Older in Grace, and wiser and better than we in
Years ? our selves not so *ripe* for Heaven, as those
that were *Unborn* when we were Men & Women !
So the *Army of Israel* blush'd when they saw the
ruddy Boy excel them all in Faith and Valour.

Are so many *Young Ones* in Heaven, and are we
Old and never like to get thither ? How can we
bear the thought, or how shall we when Death
comes ?

Are

Are so many Young Ones in Heaven; and You O Aged Believer so little Ready in your own Account? Your Evidences so little clear? Your Interest in Christ so doubtful? Your Days spun and worn out to so little purpose? How should it quicken you to give all diligence in making your Election sure?

Do so many Younger die in Christ, and have not we had all their Opportunities, and more by far than all those which they have so well and timely Improved? How will they rise up in Judgment against us, and condemn us! O fatal difference between man and man! Some dying young in Christ, others living old Christless.

Take the Alarm, O Dying Aged Sinner! if one come to thee from the Dead thou wilt repent! & that too as we paint the bright Angels of GOD with a Youthful Mein and Air! let him tell thee with a charming voice of the Glories he has so soon pass'd into, and invite thee tho' so late to seek a part in those unspeakable and Eternal Felicities! What? will not this Glorious Vision it self Convert thee! No, tho' one come like Lazarus from the Bosom of Abraham unto you.

You that are Parents, be you quickned to think seriously of dying your selves. The fruit of your Bodies are already (some of them) in the Grave; how soon may you look to be there too? Death that has already torn out some of your Bones, will soon pierce your Heart. Parents are so se-

cure and forgetful of their own Mortality, that Death must needs lay its cold hand on their Bosome, and take their Babes thence, to awaken 'em: And surely they will sensibly feel themselves Mortal, while they see a part of themselves Interr'd already. . . . So *David* graciously improv'd the death of *his Child*,---*I shall go to it*. Say thus, O *Parent*, to thy self: I shall soon follow; and be it thy care (O my Soul) so to improve thy present Sorrows, and the Residue of thy few Evil Dayes in the flesh, that I may meet *mine* whom I have committed to *Christ*, with Joy in His Presence at the last.

Three words of Advice let me leave with *Parents*, respecting their *Children*.

1. To begin betimes to Institute them for GOD. We must give them up to GOD in *Baptism*; and as soon as they are able to learn teach them to know God, and fear Him, and serve Him. Betimes tell 'em of their Precious Souls, and of their Glorious Saviour, and of their Dying Condition. . . Put them betimes on preparing for Death: they will die never the sooner for it, but may much the better, and you'll have the more peace and comfort in their death, if they are *suddenly* taken from you. Your Children are daily liable to the stroke of Death, where then (O Parent) is your Care or Love or Kindness to them, if you do not what you can to prepare 'em for it! And how reverently ought Children to
mind

mind what their Parents say to 'em about their Future and Everlasting Interests.

2. *Let Parents prepare betimes to part with their lovely Children, and get their Soul even as a weaned Child; even before they wean their Babes from their Breast.* We must look for *Abrahams* trial and Emulate his *Faith*, Gen. 22. 2. *Take now thy Son, thine only Son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him up to Me.* Our best are GOD's Due; What He made for Himself, and lends for a while to us. GOD comes into His *Garden*, and plucks which flower He pleases, and which but the most beautiful & fragrant, do men gather? Let the Great GOD take his own, & let us make *Abels* acceptable Offering, the best of our Flock. The *Shunamite*, that Great Woman, had one wondrous Son, a special Gift of Heaven to her in Reward of her *Piety*; but soon had She the sorrow to see him die, and that very suddenly, in her lap: She made no *Shriek* in that terrible *Surprize*, nor so much as shew'd her Distress to Her Household; no, not to her *Husband*, the partner of her Joyes and Grievs: She went to GOD, i. e. unto his *Prophets* feet, where her humble silent *Action* spake those Anguishes which no Words could utter: the mean while her Resignation to the Will of GOD, & her Contentment therein, was most admirable: the Child was dead, yet said she,---*All is well.* Give me leave thus to *Paraphrase* it.

What GOD Ordains is *Well* and *Best*.

It's *Well* with *Ours* when gone to Rest.

We'll with *Us* who stay behind,
 more from Earth and Flesh resign'd,
 We're patient, pray'ful, meek, resign'd.

3. *Let us be Comforted and quieted in the Death of* *honest Children.* A Child in Heaven is well provided for, well dispos'd of, well preferr'd. It has a good Portion, is gone to a good Father, to a good Family, to good Company; to an Everlasting Rest, and to Infinite Blessedness. The Covenant of God embraces our Children with more tenderness, than our Arms ever did. Blessed are the Dead in Christ, that are soon pass'd from Sin and Sorrow here, to the Eternal Fulness of Holiness and Comfort in the Presence of GOD for ever.

We must not repeat *Jacobs* Error, who supposed himself *Bereaved*, when *Joseph* was only *Advancing* under the special Favour of Providence in *Another* *Country*. He would needs be an *Inconsolable* Mourner, and go down into the Grave after his Son mourning. But in time he heard of all his Glory in *Egypt*, (which what was it to the Glory of the least of our *Little Ones* that behold the Face of God in Heaven) and then the good *Patriarch's* Spirit revived, and he said,---*Joseph my Son is yet alive, I'll go and see him before I die.* Truly, so, O Christian, the Child thou mournest over may be now in Heaven and Glorify'd; It is thy Hope and Faith it is so: let thy sinking Spirit then revive and say,---By the Grace of God, I will endeavour so to live, that I may See it in Glory when I Die.