

Samson Occom's Sermon, Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul,

September 2, 1772

[Excerpt]

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From The PREFACE.

The world is already full of books; and the people of God are abundantly furnished with excellent books upon divine subjects; and it seems, that every subject has been written upon over and over again: and the people in very deed have had precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little; and so in the whole, they have much, yea, very much, they have enough and more than enough. And when I come to consider these things, I am ready to say with myself, What folly and madness is it in me to suffer any thing of mine to appear in print, to expose my ignorance to the world.

It seems altogether unlikely that my performance will do any manner of service in the world, since the most excellent writings of worthy and learned men are disregarded. But there are two or three considerations that have induced me to be willing, to suffer my broken hints to appear in the world. One is, that the books that are in the world are written in very high and refined language; and the sermons that are delivered every sabbath in general, are in a very high and lofty stile, so that the common people understand but little of them. But I think they can't help understanding my talk; it is common, plain, every day talk: little children may understand me. And poor Negroes may plainly and fully understand my meaning; and it may be of service to them. Again, it may in a particular manner be serviceable to my poor kindred the Indians. Further, as it comes from an uncommon quarter, it may induce people to read it, because it is from an Indian. Lastly, God works where and when he pleases, and by what instruments he sees fit, and he can and has used weak and unlikely instruments to bring about his great work.

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INTRODUCTION.

By the melancholy providence of God, and at the earnest desire and invitation of the poor condemned criminal, I am here before this great concourse of people at this time, to give the last discourse to the poor miserable object who is to be executed this day before your eyes, for the due reward of his folly and madness, and enormous wickedness. It is an unwelcome task to me to speak upon such an occasion; but since it is the desire of the poor man himself, who is to die a shameful death this day, in conscience I cannot deny him; I must endeavor to do the great work the dying man requests.

I conclude that this great concourse of people have come together to see the execution of justice upon this poor Indian, and I suppose the biggest part of you look upon yourselves christians, and as such I hope you will demean yourselves; and that you will have suitable commiseration towards this poor object. Tho' you can't in justice pray for his life to be continued in this world, yet you can pray earnestly for the salvation of his poor soul, consistently with the mind of God. Let this be therefore the fervent exercise of our souls: for this is the last day we have to pray for him. As for you, that don't regard religion, it cannot be expected, that you will put up one petition for this miserable creature: yet I would intreat you seriously to consider the frailty of corrupt nature, and behave yourselves as becomes rational creatures.

And in a word, let us all be suitably affected with the melancholy occasion of this day, knowing that we are all dying creatures, and accountable unto God. Though this poor condemned creature will in a few minutes know more than all of us, either in unutterable joy, or in inconceivable wo, yet we shall certainly know as much as he, in a few days.

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