



Dr. Chacher's

ERMON

AT THE INTERMENT OF

GOVERNOR SUMNER.

Young & Mians, Pr's.

S E R M O N

PREACHED JUNE 12, 1799,

REFCNS

His Honor MOSES GILL, Esquire,

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR AND COMMANDER

IN CHIEF ;

The Honorable the COUNCIL, SENATE and
HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES,

OF THE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts,

AT THE *INTERMENT* OF

HIS EXCELLENCY

INCREASE SUMNER, ESQ.

WHO DIED JUNE 7, 1799, ET. 53.

BY PETER THACHER, D. D.



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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

In SENATE, June 13, 1799.

ORDERED, That the Hon. JOHN TREADWELL, Esq. with such as the Honorable House may join, be a Committee to wait on the Rev. Dr. THACHER, and thank him for the Sermon preached by him, at the request of the two Houses, at the Funeral of His (late) Excellency INCREASE SUMNER, and to request a Copy thereof for the Press.

Sent down for Concurrence,

JOHN C. JONES, *President pro tem.*

In the HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES, June 13, 1799.

Read and Concurred, and Mr. FESSENDEN, and Mr. SMITH of Boston, are joined.

EDW. H. ROBBINS, *Speaker.*



S E R M O N.



I. SAMUEL, XXV. 1.

*AND SAMUEL DIED, AND ALL THE ISRAELITES
WERE GATHERED TOGETHER, AND LAMENTED HIM,
AND BURIED HIM AT HIS HOUSE IN RAMAH.*

THE frailty of human life ; the vanity of human greatness ; and the uncertain nature of all human events, are now presented to us in a light the most striking. The sable urn before us contains all that was mortal of one of the most amiable and excellent of men ; a man who was happy in his family, warmly beloved by his friends, and elevated by the free suffrages of his fellow citizens to the highest station which it was in their power to bestow ! In the midst of his days ; while the honors of the world crowded thickly upon him ; and while we hoped that he might be useful and happy for many years to come ; Death, with inexorable hand, has seized him ; his sun has gone down at noon ; and we are now assembled to pay our last respects to his remains, to consign them, with decent solemnity, to the tomb
where

where they shall moulder into dust, and arise no more “till the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised!”

To assist us in improving this melancholy providence, is the design of the following discourse. And how could we more naturally introduce it than by the account of the death and funeral of SAMUEL, who was long the Chief Magistrate of *Israel*, who travelled for many years through the nation to dispense judgment and justice, who maintained a fair and honorable reputation to the end of life; and who, when he died, was attended to the grave by the heads of the tribes of *Israel* with deep and sincere regret?

SUCH a testimony in favor of any man, and such universal sorrow when he is taken away from life, are stronger evidences of his real virtue than any which the poetic page, or the sculptured marble can produce. We do not lament the useless or the wicked. We do not mourn for those whom we did not esteem and love. A whole community is never involved in woe and sadness, unless it has lost a friend, a benefactor, and a useful servant. And thus, the tears of the public embalm the memory of a wise and virtuous Ruler. They will transmit his name with honor to posterity in the annals of his country.

SAMUEL does not appear to have possessed the fire of imagination and brilliancy of genius which too often astonish and delude the world. He was not
a conqueror



a conqueror who extended by arms the dominions of his Country, or gave it a false glory by splendid victories. He had a strong and capacious mind, which could easily discern the just and the fit, and could steer calmly the vessel of State when a more impetuous pilot would have dashed her on the rocks. An understanding clear and informed, a will regulated by reason, and never warped or corrupted by passion ; with affections warm but not violent, sincere but not ardent ; a knowledge of the tempers and feelings of mankind ; and an acquaintance with the events of past times and the history of the world, rendered SAMUEL more competent for the place which he filled, than would those shining talents which too often lead their possessors to distress their country and desolate the world, that they may procure to themselves the fame of victory and the glory of conquest.

EARLY and sincere piety formed a striking trait in the character of SAMUEL. Dedicated to GOD by a pious parent, he was stationed in the tabernacle from his youth. Through a long life he preserved the “ fear of GOD which is the beginning of wisdom,” and the respect to duty which is the strongest incentive to public virtue, and the most powerful restraint from a breach of trust. We find him strictly attentive to the ordinances of religion and the institutions of divine worship. But we find him more careful of the weightier matters of the law, of the great duties of morality and obedience. For, he expressly declares to SAUL, when he had neglected submission

submission to the plain will of GOD, under pretence of reserving an offering to the LORD, “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

IN the present age of wonders, when the results of the wisdom and experience of many ages are viewed as the dreams of aged and feeble insanity ; when nature is placed in the throne of nature’s GOD ; and the religion of CHRIST, mild, gentle and benevolent, like its Divine Author, is represented as a cruel and ferocious superstition : In this age of theory and innovation, Religion has been considered by some men and some nations as an injury to society, and incompatible with the character of a good Ruler. But, when we consider the deep influence which Christianity felt in its power, has upon the very tempers and dispositions of men ; how it leads them to fear doing wrong ever so privately, and desire to do right, though no praise should attend them ; how it places us always under the eye of the Deity, and brings death and judgment near to our view. When we thus view Religion in its nature and effects, we shall perceive it to be one of the most powerful and energetic principles which can operate upon the human mind. This principle reaches where no human law nor earthly consideration can extend. It operates as powerfully when no eye beholds it as when surrounded by thousands. It penetrates the heart. It governs the temper. It guides the conduct. It fortifies us against affliction, and renders prosperity more valuable and sweet. The Ruler who embraces the spirit, and copies the example



ample of CHRIST ; who relies on the promises, and is animated by the hopes of the Gospel, will “ serve his generation according to the will of God,” and will be “ received into everlasting habitations.”

WHEN a man is under the influence of Religion, it will make him strictly upright, and will lead him to pay a close attention to the great duties of justice and integrity. This effect had religion upon SAMUEL. For many years he was a Judge among the People, and distributed justice to the aggrieved and oppressed. “ And SAMUEL,” says the sacred historian, “ judged *Israel* all the days of his life, and he went from year to year, in circuit, to *Bethel* and *Gilgal*, and *Mizpah*, and judged *Israel* in all those places, and his return was to *Rama*, for there was his house, and there he judged *Israel*, and there he built an altar unto the LORD.” His patient attention to the parties who litigated, his enlightened endeavors to find out the truth, and his candid, impartial decisions according to the evidence produced, procured him the esteem and veneration of all, even of those whom justice obliged him to condemn. We find SAMUEL always honored and esteemed in the nation of *Israel*. He was received with the utmost respect wherever he went. His decisions were implicitly followed. When the ear heard him, then it blessed him, and when the eye saw him, then it gave witness to him.”

WHEN he acted as Chief Magistrate of *Israel*, he “ approved himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Although his sons conducted im-

properly in their subordinate capacity, yet it does not appear that he countenanced or supported them, nor do we ever find a single charge of incapacity, of partiality or injustice brought against him. His administration was easy to himself and useful to the People, and would have continued to the end of his life, had not that love of change, which strongly marks the human character, but often defeats its own purposes, led the People to desire a King. Then how must his heart have triumphed, when, with the firm and manly voice of dignified integrity, he could appeal to the assembled tribes of *Israel*, in this energetic language! “Behold, here I am; witness against me before the LORD and before his Anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose whole ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? And I will restore it to you.” His satisfaction must have been perfect, when the People with one heart and one voice replied, saying, “Thou hast not defrauded us nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man’s hand.” Happy Magistrate! Who was not only “approved of God, but accepted of the multitude of his brethren!”

SAMUEL was a man of mild and gentle manners. When the most direct attacks were made upon his family, and when the People applied to him to resign his power, he possesses, perfectly, calmness of mind. We do not hear a reproachful word from him, nor a single reflection on the ingratitude of those whom he had so long and so faithfully served. Mildly he remonstrates

remonstrates with the People upon the impiety and folly of their conduct. He does not suffer himself to be affected with the personal slight to him which their application implied. He does not assail them with the asperity which stings, or the bitterness which provokes. This mildness of manners, this patience of contradiction, is of great use to those who rule over men, because it gives dignity to the character. It disarms resentment, and conciliates esteem.

BUT with all this mildness of manners the Patriarch of *Israel* still possessed the firmness and decision which his religion dictated, and his station required. When the Hebrews required to have a King, like the nations about them, SAMUEL did not hesitate to reprove them severely for their ingratitude to GOD, who was then their Ruler, and to shew them that they were enslaving themselves and their posterity, in order to attain an empty pageant. Superior to the love of popularity, which induces a man to conceal his sentiments or flatter a multitude, he firmly and decidedly proves to them that they are injuring themselves and destroying their own security. So honest and independent was he, as to hazard the displeasure of the People and his own influence over them, rather than encourage them to that which was hurtful to their true interest. It was in obedience to GOD alone, that the Prophet fixed SAUL on the throne ; and GOD gave them a King in his anger, and took him away in his wrath."

It was the earnest solicitude of the Prophet of *Israel* to establish such a constitution of government as should guard them from the dangers which they had precipitately brought on themselves. "Then SAMUEL told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD." He knew that such a precaution was necessary to prevent the *Israelites* from becoming subject to the capricious humors or tyrannical passions of their King. Where the powers of Government and the liberties of the People are accurately defined, and proper checks are established to prevent the encroachments of one upon the other, there true freedom is enjoyed, and there alone man exercises his rights. From this principle, the wise, the patriotic and the good have always exerted themselves to form and to support definite and free Constitutions of government.

THE love of GOD, and his country, animated this good man, to exert himself in the cause of Religion and liberty. These noble principles warmed his bosom, governed his mind, and regulated his whole conduct. A respect to the approbation of GOD, "who hath pleasure in uprightness," a sincere wish to promote the spiritual and temporal happiness of the People, whom he loved, induced him to exert his utmost energies in serving the religious and civil interests of his fellow-citizens. The prosperity of his Country gave him the most sensible pleasure ; and when the clouds of adversity enveloped it, when it suffered



suffered from his own folly and rashness, his joy was turned into sorrow.

THE unsullied reputation and the faithful services of SAMUEL, during his life, made his death a subject of deep regret to the people of *Israel*. They loved him while his existence here was continued, and when the common lot of all men befel him, they deeply mourned the melancholy event. The tribes of *Israel* assembled; they bedewed his bier with the tears of genuine affection and gratitude, and buried him honorably in the tomb of his ancestors. This is the duty which we are now called to perform.

The character, briefly drawn, of SAMUEL in the past discourse, so strongly resembles that of our deceased Friend and Governor, as that little need be said in addition to it. Your own minds must have made the application.

ENDUED with strong and vigorous faculties of mind; favoured with the advantages of a public and liberal education; impressed with a sense of that Religion which forms men to virtue, kindness and charity, he was early called by his fellow-citizens to fill places of public trust and honor. As a Magistrate, a Legislator, and a Judge, he discovered the wisdom, the firmness, and impartiality which are so justly celebrated in the character of the text. His honor and integrity were never impeached, and had he made the same appeal to the People as SAMUEL did, he would have received the same answer.

His wise and faithful conduct in offices of less dignity ; their confidence in his patriotism, integrity and abilities, led the People of this Commonwealth to call him to the office of their Chief Magistrate. This confidence was fully gratified. The warm and decided Friend of our Federal and State Constitutions ; the warm and decided *enemy* of all foreign interference in the affairs of our government ; the watchful Guardian of the Civil, the Judicial and the Military interests of the Commonwealth, he was daily more and more esteemed and respected. His appointments were judicious, and he meant to confine them to men of virtue and abilities. He supported the honor of the State with dignity. His own deportment, while it was easy and agreeable, while it discovered the mildness of manners, the unassuming kindness which formed so striking a part of his character, was never such as to diminish our respect and esteem for him.

Kind, charitable and good ; wishing well to every one, and desirous of promoting their interests, GOVERNOR SUMNER was universally beloved and honored. He was among the few men who, though he had many friends, warm and affectionate friends, yet, so far as my knowledge has extended, never had a personal enemy. Even those who on political subjects differed from him, and the interests of whose party led them to oppose his election, expressed personal respect for him in life, and now profess deeply to lament his death.

THIS good man was a warm and decided friend to the Religion of CHRIST. He early professed this Religion, and his life appeared to be formed by its divine and sacred precepts. Thus influenced by its temper, and governed by its commands in life, he was animated by its hopes, and supported by its consolations, when he came to die.

SHALL I call upon you, my brethren, on this occasion to admire and imitate the tender husband, the wise and affectionate father, the dutiful son, and the faithful friend ! The grief which rends the bosoms, and the tears which fill the eyes of those to whom he was thus related, prove the justice of this part of his character, and display its amiableness in the most striking manner.

AND now, seeing “ a Prince and a great Man has fallen in our *Israel* this day,” let us humble ourselves under the divine correction ! Let us admire and adore those dispensations of Providence which we cannot comprehend ! And let us learn the lessons of wisdom, which an event so solemn and affecting is calculated to teach us.

HIS HONOR, the Commander in Chief, while he laments the Friend, whom, with so much harmony, he accompanied in the public walks of life, will hear the voice of Providence speaking loudly to him, and teaching him that the most elevated station, the most affluent circumstances, and the warmest esteem and affection of our friends and fellow-citizens, cannot
secure



Secure us from the arrests of the King of Terrors. The duties, to which he is now called, are difficult and important. May God give him wisdom and grace to discharge them usefully and well ! “ As his day is, so let his strength be also !” And when the common lot of the great as well as the small, the rich as well as the poor, shall befall him, may he, like his excellent Predecessor, leave behind him the “ good name which is better than precious ointment.”

LET me call upon our Civil Fathers of the Council, the Senate and the House of Representatives, to contemplate the solemn scene before us, and see the vanity of human greatness, the insufficiency of the highest honors to “ retain the spirit in the day of death !” There you behold the end of all flesh :—There you see the goal at which every man, who runs the race of life, must, sooner or later, arrive !—Thence you may learn that the hour hastens when all those distinctions, after which many men eagerly pant, will soon be levelled, and become lighter in our view than the dust of the balance !—Although “ ye be called Gods,” yet here you find that “ ye shall die like men and fall like one of the princes !” Remember, when discharging your important public trust, that the eye of God is upon you ; that “ he has pleasure only in uprightness ;” and that when your bodies shall lie under the cold hand of Death, like the beloved dust before you, it will be of more importance in your view to be conscious of one act of true Religion or of public virtue, than to have possessed

possessed the highest honors which man can bestow. Learn, from this affecting Providence, to be more diligent, active and faithful in all the relations of life; so that, when you shall be gathered to the dust of your fathers, those around you may “mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace !”

WITH the afflicted widow, the fatherless children, the bereaved sisters, and the numerous relatives and friends of this excellent man, we mingle our tears ! We hold out to them, while we wish to feel ourselves, the consolations and supports of Religion. We do not “mourn as those who are without hope.” Our Friend is gone from us, but we trust that his unembodied spirit now inhabits the courts of glory, and has become “a pillar in the temple of our God !”

AND now behold, my brethren and fellow-citizens, behold how the “fashion of this world passeth away !” See how insufficient are the best earthly enjoyments to satisfy the cravings of the immortal soul, or to protract for a moment our existence in this world ! Learn that the faith of CHRIST and the discharge of our duty, is the “one thing needful ;” that while life, and health, and reason are granted us, they should be improved for the purpose of preparing for another world by performing the duty which we owe to God and man in this ! “Now is the accepted time” ! Let us improve it to secure “an interest in the better part which can never be taken away from us,” and to pre-
pare



pare us for the “rest and the triumph which remain to the people of God !”

THE Religion of CHRIST, our guide in life, and our support in death, which regulates us in prosperity and gilds our darkest moments with light and comfort—This Religion teaches us to look beyond the grave to an heaven of infinite glory ! It teaches us to deposit the precious remains of our Christian friends in the dust, with “a sure and certain hope of their resurrection unto eternal life.” Yes, my brethren, Death shall not retain his dominion over them ! They shall burst asunder his iron bands ! They shall awaken to a new and eternal life ! They shall ascend to “their Father and our Father, to their God and our God ;” and “with the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads !”

AMEN.

