The Execution of Moses Paul

On 2 September 1772, in New Haven, Connecticut, Moses Paul was hanged for murdering Moses Cook at David Clark's tavern in Bethany. Murders were not common in eighteenth-century Connecticut, but this crime seemed common enough. Paul was just the sort of person colonists expected to commit murder, and the circumstances were ripe for him to do so. For generations, Congregational ministers had proclaimed from their pulpits that drunks were dangerous and that excessive alcohol consumption was the root of much graver sins, especially violent crimes like rape and assault. And this drunk was an Indian. Everyone knew that Indians were prone by nature both to drink excessively and to become violent when drunk. Not surprisingly, the story of Paul's crime as reported in the colonial newspapers conformed in every particular to the behavior considered typical of the colony's Native inhabitants.

Chamberlain, Ava. “The Execution of Moses Paul: A Story of Crime and Contact in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut.” *New England Quarterly*, vol. 77, no. 3, Sep. 2004, pp. 414-50.

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*My poor unhappy brother* MOSES;

As it was your own desire that I should preach to you this last discourse, so I shall speak plainly to you.—You are the bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. You are an Indian, a despised creature; but you have despised yourself; yea you have despised God more; you have trodden under foot his authority; you have despised his commands and precepts: and now, as God says, be sure your sins will find you out. And now, poor Moses, your sins have found you out, and they have overtaken you this day; the day of your death is now come; the king of terrors is at hand; you have but a very few moments to breathe in this world.—The just laws of man, and the holy law of Jehovah, call aloud for the destruction of your mortal life; God says, "Whoso sheddeth mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed." This is the antient decree of heaven, and it is to be executed by man; nor have you the least gleam of hope of escape, for the unalterable sentence is past; the terrible day of execution is come; the unwelcome guard is about you; and the fatal instruments of death are now made rea|dy; your coffin and your grave, your last lodging, are open ready to receive you.

Alas! poor Moses, now you know, by sad, by woful ex|perience, the living truth of our text, that the wages of sin is death. You have been already dead; yea twice dead: by nature spiritually dead. And since the awful sentence of death has been past upon you, you have been dead to all the pleasures of this life; or all the pleasures, lawful or unlawful, have been dead to you: And death, which is the wages of sin, is standing even on this side of your grave ready to put a final period to your mortal life; and just beyond the grave, eternal death awaits your poor soul, and the devils are ready to drag your miserable soul down to their bottom|less den, where everlasting wo and horror reigns [. . . ] what could you say for yourself? for you have been brought up under the bright sun-shine, and plain, and loud sound of the gospel; and you have had a good education; you can read and write well; and God has given you a good natural understanding: and therefore your sins are so much more aggravated. You have not sinned in such an ignorant manner as others have done; but you have sinned with both your eyes open as it were, under the light, even the glorious light of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. [. . .]

But let us now turn to a more pleasant theme.—Tho' you have been a great sinner, a heaven daring sinner; yet hark and hear the joyful sound from heaven, even from the King of kings, and Lord of lords; that the gift of God is eternal life, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. It is a free gift, and of|fered to the greatest sinners, and upon their true repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall be welcome to the life, which we have spoken of; it is offer|ed upon free terms. He that hath no money may come; he that hath no righteousness, no goodness, may come; the call is to poor undone sinners; the call is not to the righteous, but sinners, calling them to repentance. [. . .]

Sirs, We may plainly see, from what we have heard, and from the miserable object before us, into what a doleful condition sin has brought mankind, even into a state of death and misery. We are by nature as certainly under sentence of death from God, as this miserable man is, by the just de|termination of man; and we are all dying creatures, and we are, or ought to be, sensible of it; and this is the dread|ful fruit of sin. O! let us then fly from all appearance of sin; let us fight against it with all our might; let us repent and turn to our God, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may live forever; let us all prepare for death, for we know not how soon, nor how suddenly we may be called out of the world.

Occom, Samson. “A Sermon, Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, an Indian.” *Evans Early American Imprint Collection Text Creation Partnership*, 2011, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N09814.0001.001/1:4?rgn=div1;view=fulltext.