

## REV. SAMUEL COOPER

*Another complex member of the Long Room Club is the Reverend Dr. Samuel Cooper, pastor of the Brattle Street Church. Cooper did not use his pulpit as a political tool, but stayed with well-preached sermons based on the Bible. His church was an extremely popular one, for many of the wealthy merchants attended regularly. Among his parishioners were several members of the Long Room Club, including John Hancock, John Adams, Samuel Adams, among others. He appears briefly in Johnny Tremain when Johnny tells him how much he owes the Boston Observer, a code for the time of the next meeting of the Boston Observers. The problem is that Tremain tells him on the Sabbath, when Cooper is greeting his parishioners at the end of the morning service. A lady takes exception to Tremain carrying on business on the Sabbath, and Cooper has to cough repeatedly to cover his laughter. In the book, Cooper was never visible for any public gathering involving the Boston Tea Party, which fit his role as he walked that fine line between church and state.*

*Samuel Cooper did keep a diary, but it is the most mundane of documents. Nothing outside his comings and goings is mentioned. Before the Revolution, the only evidence that showed Samuel Cooper's strong convictions was his correspondence. He had a long and detailed correspondence with Benjamin Franklin, as well as Thomas Pownall, former governor of Massachusetts and Whig member of Parliament. George III even received copies of his letters to both Franklin and Pownall after the Revolution began!*

*Cooper was a close advisor and friend to John Hancock. He entertained and accepted dinner invitations from many members of the Long Room Club. Samuel's brother, William Cooper, who as town clerk knew a great deal about Boston's political affairs, was indeed very close to his brother. But most Bostonians, if asked their opinion of Rev. Samuel Cooper, would have told you what an outstanding minister he was, and how he was the best preacher in Boston. They would, however, note one thing that puzzled them. What was Rev. Cooper's political viewpoint? He didn't appear to have one!*

### **Letter from Benjamin Franklin to Samuel Cooper, 13 January 1772**

London, Jan. 13, 1772

Dear Sir,

I have now before me your several Favours of July 10, Aug. 23, and Nov. 5. A long Journey I took in the Summer and Autumn for the Establishment of my Health, prevented my answering sooner the two first. I hope the State of your Health also is mended by your Retirement into the Country, as mine has sensibly been by that Journey.

You have furnished me with a very good additional Argument against the Crown's paying its Governors, viz. that the propos'd Independence is impolitic on the part of the Crown, and tends to prejudice its Interest, even consider'd separate from that

of the People, as it will prove a strong Temptation to Governors to hold a Conduct that will greatly lessen their Esteem and Influence in the Province, and consequently their Power to promote the Service of the King. Indeed the making it a Rule among our selves that the Governor is to have his Salary from our Assemblies, tho' his publick Conduct should be willfully and maliciously prejudicial to the Province, has the *same Tendency*; of which the Conduct of Governor Bernard while he was constantly and regularly paid by us, is a considerable Proof. And therefore, in my Opinion, if we would have our Power of granting the Support operate with any Weight in maintaining an Influence with the Governor, it should have been withheld from him, and we should withhold it in part or in the whole, according to the Circumstances, as often as such a Conduct appears in any Governor. Otherwise the Power, if in such Cases it is not to be used, would seem of very little Importance. And since the Assembly have of late Years, and under such great Provocations, never attempted to abridge or withhold the Salary, no Reason appears why the American Minister should now think it necessary or adviseable for the Crown to take the payment of its Governor upon itself unless it be with an Intention to influence him by withholding it when he declines executing arbitrary Instructions; and then in such Cases the People should be sure to compensate him. As to procuring here any Change of this Measure, I frankly own to you that I despair of it, while the Administration of American Affairs continues in the Hands of Lord Hillsborough; and while, by our Paying the Duties there is a sufficient American Fund out of which such Salaries can be satisfied. The Failure of that Fund would be the most likely Means of demolishing the Project.

The Attempt to get the Commissioners exempted from the Payment of their Taxes, by an Instruction to the Governor, is the most indiscrete Thing, surely (to say nothing of its Injustice) that any prudent Government was every guilty of. I cannot think it will be persisted in. I hope it will never be comply'd with. If the Supply-Bill is duly offered without the Clause, I am persuaded it will not long be refused. The Publick must however suffer in the mean time by the Want of the Supply; but that will be a good Foundation for an Impeachment here. Your Reasonings against the Instruction are unanswerable, and will be of use in the Discussing that Business.

I am glad that Commodore Gambier behav'd in so satisfactory a manner. His Uncle, Mr. Mead, first Commissioner of the Customs, is a particular and intimate Friend of mine, a Man of great Moderation and Prudence; I knew that he gave his Nephew, before he went hence, a great deal of good Advice with regard to his Conduct among the People of Boston, for whom he has a great Esteem and Regard, having formerly commanded a Frigate stationed there; and he is happy to find by your Letter (which I communicated to him) that his Advice was so well followed. He gave also equally good Advice to your indiscrete Commissioners when they were sent out, but they had not Sense enough to follow it, and therefore have been the Authors of infinite Mischief. I wonder at the Invention of so improbable a Lye, as that I should desire a Place among them, who am daily urging the Expediency of their Dissolution. The other Calumny you mention, contain'd in an anonymous Letter to the Speaker, is so weak, that I believe you do not think I ought to take any Notice of it. As to the Agency, whether I am re-chosen or not, and whether the General Assembly is ever permitted to pay me or not, I shall nevertheless continue to exert myself in behalf of my country as long as I see a Probability of my being able to do it any Service. I have nothing to ask or expect of Ministers. I have, Thanks to God, a Competency for the little Time I may expect to live,

and am grown too old for Ambition of any kind, but that of leaving a Good Name behind me.

Your Story of the Clergyman and Proclamation is a pleasant one. I can only match it with one I had from my Father, I know not if it was ever printed. Charles I ordered his Proclamation, authorizing Sports on a Sunday, to be read in all churches. Many Clergymen comply'd, some refus'd and other hurry'd it through as indistinctly as possible. But one, whose congregation expected no such thing from him, did nevertheless, to their great Surprize, read it distinctly. He follow'd it, however, with the Fourth Commandment, *Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day*, and then said, Bretheren, I have laid before you the Command of your King and the Commandment of your God. I leave it to your selves to judge which of the two ought rather to be observed. With great and sincere Esteem, I remain, Dear Sir, Your most obedient and most humble Servant

B FRANKLIN

Benjamin Franklin to Samuel Cooper, 13 January 1772, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 19, ed. W. B. Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 13-16.

### **Letter from Samuel Cooper to Benjamin Franklin, 15 March 1773**

Boston, N.E. 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1773

Dear Sir,

I have been confin'd to my House great Part of this Winter by my valetudinary State, and been little able to see and converse with my Friends, and less to write to them. A Line from you would have greatly refresh'd me in this confinement, as your Letters have ever been one of the greatest Entertainments of my Life: but I do not mean to complain, having been so greatly indebted to you.

Till of late there has been little remarkable in our public Affairs for more than a Year. The Appointment of Ld. Dartmouth to the American Department was receiv'd here with a general Joy, which was soon check'd by his Official Letter to the Governor of Rhode-Island, respecting the Court of Inquiry into the Burning of the Gaspee and the Directions therein given to send the accused with the Witnesses to Great Britain for Trial; as also by the Account of the Provision made by the King for the Support of the Justices of our Superior Court. These Events made a deep Impression on the Mind of People thro the Province. The latter, it is known, took Place before Lord Hillsborough's Removal; but the former was more unexpected, as the Disposition of Ld. Dartmouth to serve the Colonies, and to promote mild Measures was not doubted.

Soon after the Appointment for the Superior Justices was known, the Town of Boston had a Meeting. Their Committee drew up a State of the public Grievances; which was accompanied with a Letter to evr'y Town in the Province, desiring their Brethren to express their own Sense of these important Matters. Tho this Measure was oppos'd by a Number of the most respectable Friends to Liberty in the Town, among which were three out of four of the Representatives of Boston, from an Apprehension that many Towns, for

various Reasons might not chuse to adopt it, and in that Case, the Attempt might greatly prejudice the Interest it was design'd to promote, and tho the Governor and his Friends in ev'ry Place did not fail to avail themselves of this and ev'ry other Circumstance to frustrate it, yet it had an Effect thro the whole Province beyond the most sanguine Expectations of it's Friends: And the public Acts of a great Majority of the Towns, whatever may be thought of the Manner of Expression in some of them, clearly demonstrates that it is not a small Faction, but the Body of the People, who deem themselves in a State of Oppression, and that their most essential Rights are violated. The Pamphlet containing the Proceedings of Boston has already been sent you, and I should enclose those of some other Towns, had I a sure and easy Way of Conveying such large Papers, without Fear of Burdening when I meant to entertain you.

Upon the Convening the General Assembly, the Governor opened with a long Speech in Defence of the absolute Supremacy of Parliament over the Colonies, inviting both Houses to offer what they had to object against this Principle. His Prudence however, in this Step, and whether he will be thanked for it by Administration, is doubted. By the Replies of the two Houses, perfectly united in the main Principles, the Governor and his Friends received a Shock which they could not conceal; while the People are greatly confirm'd in their Sentiments, and encourag'd to support them. I will venture to mention in Confidence to you, that the Governor appearing uneasy after he had received the second Reply of the Council, employ'd his utmost Influence to have it reconsidered and altered. Having endeavor'd privately to prepare the Minds of some Influential Members for this, He enclos'd it in a Letter to one of the Board, requesting him to introduce the Reconsideration in Council: Presently He appears there himself, and argues strenuously in Favor of this. The Vote for the Reply, as it had been deliver'd, was however unanimous, except two, who desir'd to be excused from voting either Way. Oppos'd as he now stands to both Houses, and the Body of the People, an undisguis'd and zealous advocate for ev'ry Thing we account a Grievance, how far his Situation resembles that of his Predecessor, I leave you to judg.

The Opposition here to the hard and oppressive Measures of the British Administration, never appear'd to me founded so much in Knowledg and Principle, never so systematical, deliberate and firm as it is at present. I may be mistaken in this opinion, but it leads me most earnestly to wish, for the Sake of both Countries, for some Pacification — some Lines to be drawn — some Bill of Rights for America — some Security against the unlimited Supremacy, and unbounded Pow'r not only of our Sovereign, but also of our Fellow Subjects in Britain over us: and unless something of this [sort?] soon takes Place, there is Danger that Things will run into Confusion. Knowing your past Services to the Province, and being perswaded both of your ability and Inclination still to serve it in the best Manner that the State of Things will allow, I hope all Obstruction to your receiving the Grants made for you by the House will soon be removed.

Our congregation are now engag'd in building an House of Worship, that will cost £6000. Sterling and be finish'd by Mid-summer. The Dimensions within the Walls 80 by 65 Feet. The Building is of Brick. It is thought necessary to warm it in the Cold and damp Seasons of the Year, by some Machine, but what Kind, we are at a Loss. We have heard of Buzaglo's Inventions, but not been particularly inform'd. You will do us all a very great Favor if you would write me, what Machine you think most convenient and

decent for this Purpose, the Prince, the Manner of putting up, the Place where, and how the Smoke in convey'd away. We should be extremely glad of your Information Time etc. and[?] if it might ser[ve?] to send our Order for it, and have it put up early in the Fall. I have been told that you and some others have lately obtain'd thro much opposition a Grant of Land for a new Province. If this be true, and your Prospect agreeable, You have no Friend that takes a warmer Part in it thro your large Circle, than your obedient humble Servant

SAMUEL COOPER

Samuel Cooper to Benjamin Franklin, 13 March 1773, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 20, ed. W. B. Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 110-115.

### **Letter from Benjamin Franklin to Samuel Cooper, 25 February 1774**

London, Feb. 25, 1774

Dear Sir,

I thank you much for your respected Favours of Nov. 10. Dec. 17. and 20. and for the satisfactory Intelligence they contained.

I condole with you most sincerely on your great Loss.

I have written a pretty full Account to the Speaker of the Treatment their Petition and their Agent have received here. My Letter went in Symes, and probably you may have seen it before this can reach you, therefore, and because I have a little Disorder in my Eyes at present, I do not repeat any part of it to you, nor can I well send a Copy to him.

You can have no Conception of the Rage the ministerial People have been in with me, on Account of my Transmitting those Letters. It is quite incomprehensible! If they had been wise, they might have made a good Use of the Discovery, by agreeing to lay the Blame of our Differences on those from whom by those Letters it appear'd to have arisen; and by a Change of Measures, which would then have appear'd natural, restor'd the Harmony between the two Countries. But —

I send directed to you, a Set of the late French Edition of my Philosophical Papers. There are in it several Pieces not in the English. When you have look'd them over, please to give them to Mr. Winthrop for the College Library. I am ever, Dear Sir, Yours most affectionately

B FRANKLIN

Benjamin Franklin to Samuel Cooper, 25 February 1774, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 21, ed. W. B. Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 124.

## Letter from Samuel Cooper to Benjamin Franklin, 15 August 1774

Boston, N.E. Aug: 15. 1774

Dear Sir,

My Retirement into the Country a great part of the Spring and Summer must be my Apology for not transmitting sooner to you the inclosed Vote of Thanks for your valuable Present to the Library of H[arvard]: College. The great Age of the venerable Gentleman who transcrib'd and attests it, will excuse any Deficiency in point of Form. Your literary Works, and your public as well as private Character, must for ever be superior to the unprovok'd Malice of your Enemies; and endear your name not only to the present but future Generations.

The Act for blockading the Town has been executed with the utmost Rigor and even beyond the Rigor of this cruel Act. Our Coasters with Wood have been oblig'd to unload at Salem in their way hither; and 240 Quintals of Fish kindly sent our poor by our Brethren at Marblehead were not permitted to come to us by Water, but transported by Land Carriage round the Country thro Roxbury. The Fuel and Victuals are expressly excepted in the Act. We have now besides the Fleet in our Harbor, 4. Regiments encamp'd on the Common: one on Forthill; another at the Castle; that from N. Scotia is station'd at Salem. The People endure all with an astonishing Calmness and Resolution; supported and encourag'd with the Sympathy and good Wishes of our Brethren in the Country and thro out the Colonies. They have made our Cause a common one. They appear ardent in it. Large and generous Presents to the indigent and distress'd Inhabitants flow in from all Quarters. Our Delegates with those of N. Hampshire set out a few days ago for the congress which meets at Philadelphia 1. Sept. All Eyes are turn'd towards that important Assembly: It's Decisions will come with great Weight; and should it recommend either a Non Importation, or a Non consumption of British goods the Recommendation would be almost universally adopted. We have received the Act for vacating the Charter, and for encouraging the Soldiery to murder us. The Impression they make upon the other Colonies as well as this is deep. Genl. Gage has a difficult Task, He gives himself wholly up to the high Party among us, and acts in the Spirit of them that sent him. He finds the People less dismayed and submissive and the Colonies more united than he expected. Tho he has employ'd ev'ry argument to perswade those commission'd as Councillors to qualify, some have refus'd, and others desir'd Time to consider: Only eleven have as yet been sworn; but more it is expected will accept.

Col. Hancock is dismiss'd from his Command of the Company of Cadets, and they have resign'd their Colors to the Governor and dissolv'd. It is impossible to look into Futurity; and to write Conjectures may not at present be wise. Boston is not yet deserted, nor the American Cause desperate. We are indeed in a most critical Situation; and what the grand Event may be Heavn only knows. All Arts have been employ'd to terrify, cajol, divide, and mislead us; they have had some Effect, I wonder they have had no greater. Our Rights may perhaps yet be redeem'd, and prove a Means of saving the Liberties of Britain. I am, my dear Sir with increased Affection.

**Samuel Cooper, *A Sermon preached before His Excellency John Hancock, 25 October 1780* [excerpt]**

A SERMON  
Preached before his Excellency  
JOHN HANCOCK, Esq;  
GOVERNOUR,  
The Honourable the  
SENATE,  
And  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Of the  
COMMONWEALTH  
Of  
MASSACHUSETTS  
October 25, 1780.  
Being the day of the  
Commencement of the Constitution,  
And  
Inauguration of the new Government.

BY SAMUEL COOPER, D.D.

[ . . . ] Upon our present independence, sweet and valuable as the blessing is, we may read the inscription, *I am found of them that sought me not*. Be it to our praise or blame, we cannot deny, that when we were not searching for it, it happily found us. It certainly must have been not only innocent but laudable and manly, to have desired it even before we felt the absolute necessity of it. It was our birth right; we ought to have valued it highly, and never to have received *a mess of pottage*, a small temporary supply, as an equivalent for it. Going upon the trite metaphor of a mother country, which has so often been weakly urged against us, like a child grown to maturity, we had a right to a distinct settlement in the world; and to the fruits of our own industry; and it would have been but justice, and no great generosity, in her who so much boasted her maternal tenderness to us, had she not only readily acquiesced, but even aided us in this settlement. It is certain, however, that we did not seek an independence; and it is equally certain that Britain, though she meant to oppose it with all her power, has by a strange infatuation, taken the most direct, and perhaps the only methods that could have established it. Her oppressions, her unrelenting cruelty, have driven us out from the family of which we were once a part: This has opened our eyes to discern the inestimable blessing of a separation from her; while, like children that have been inhumanly treated and cast out by their parents, and at the same time are capable of taking care of themselves, we have found friendship and respect from the world, and have formed new, advantageous, and honorable connections.

Independence gives us a rank among the nations of the earth, which no precept of our religion forbids us to understand and feel, and which we should be ambitious to support in the most reputable manner. It opens to us a free communication with all the world, not only for the improvement of commerce, and the acquisition of wealth, but also for the cultivation of the most useful knowledge. It naturally unfetters and expands the human mind; and prepares it for the impression of the most exalted virtues, as well as the reception of the most important science. If we look into the history and character of nations, we shall find those that have been for a long time, and to any considerable degree dependent upon others, limited and cramped in their improvements; corrupted by the court, and stained with the vices of the ruling state; and debased by an air of servility and depression marking their productions and manners. Servility is not only dishonorable to human nature, but commonly accompanied with the meanest vices, such as adulation, deceit, falshood, treachery, cruelty, and the basest methods of supporting and procuring the favour of the power upon which it depends.[. . .]

Samuel Cooper, *A Sermon Preached before his Excellency John Hancock, Esq.* (Boston: T. and J. Fleet, and J. Gill, 1780), Title page, 16-18.

**Phillis [Wheatley] Peters, *An Elegy Sacred to the Memory of that great divine: the Reverend and learned Dr .Samuel Cooper, 1784***

*Phillis Wheatley was a renowned poet of this time. A free African-American, Wheatley was baptized by Cooper, and was supported by him in controversies she endured because of her race and gender.*

An ELEGY  
Sacred to the  
MEMORY  
Of that Great Divine,  
The Reverend and Learned  
DR. SAMUEL COOPER  
Who departed this life December 29, 1783,  
Aetatis 59

By PHILLIS PETERS

BOSTON: Printed and Sold by E. RUSSELL,  
In Essex-Street, near Liberty-Pole.  
1784



[ . . . ]

O Thou whose exit wraps in boundless woe,  
For Thee the tears of various Nations flow;  
For Thee the floods of virtuous sorrows rise  
From the full heart and burst from streaming eyes,  
Far from our view to Heaven's eternal height,  
The Seat of bliss divine, and glory bright;  
Far from the restless turbulence of life,  
The war of factions, and impassion'd strife  
From every ill mortality endur'd  
Safe in celestial *Salem*'s walls secur'd.

E'er yet from this terrestrial state retir'd,  
The Virtuous lov'd Thee, and the Wise admir'd  
The gay approv'd Thee, and the grave rever'd;  
And all thy words with rapt attention heard!  
The Sons of Learning on thy lessons hung,  
While soft persuasion mov'd th'illit'rate throng.  
Who, drawn by rhetoric's commanding laws,  
Comply'd obedient, nor conceiv'd the cause.  
Thy every sentence was with grace inspir'd,  
And every period with devotion fir'd;  
Bright Truth thy guide without a dark disguise,  
And penetration's all-discerning eyes.

Thy country mourns th'afflicting Hand divine  
That now forbids thy radiant lamp to shine,  
Which, like the sun, resplendent source of light  
Diffus'd its beams, and cheer'd our gloom of night.

What deep-felt sorrow in each *Kindred* breast  
With keen sensation rends the heart distress'd!  
*Fraternal* love sustains a tenderer part,  
And mourns a BROTHER with a BROTHER's heart.

Thy CHURCH laments her faithful PASTOR fled  
To the cold mansions of the silent dead.  
There hush'd forever, cease the heavenly strain,  
That wak'd the soul, but here resounds in vain.  
Still live thy merits, where thy name is known,  
As the sweet Rose, its blooming beauty gone  
Retains its fragrance with a long perfume:  
Thus COOPER! thus thy death-less name shall bloom  
Unfading, in thy *Church* and *Country*'s love,  
While Winter frowns, or spring renews the grove.  
The hapless Muse, her loss in COOPER mourns,

And as she sits, she writes, and weeps, by turns;  
A Friend sincere, whose mild indulgent grace  
Encourag'd oft, and oft approv'd her  
lays. ....

With all their charms, terrestrial objects strove,  
But vain their pleasers to attract his love.  
Such COOPER was —at Heaven's high call he flies;  
His talk well finish'd, to his native skies.  
Yet to his fate reluctant we resign,  
Tho' our's to copy conduct such as thine:  
Such was thy wish, th'observant Muse sruvey'd  
Thy latest breath, and [thy] advice convey'd.

Phillis Peters, *An Elegy, Sacred to the Memory of that Great Divine, the Reverend and Learned Dr. Samuel Cooper* (Boston: E. Russell, 1784).