

THE
DUTY OF MASTERS
TO
THEIR SERVANTS:
IN A
SERMON,

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BY THE LATE REVEREND, PIOUS, AND LEARNED,  
SAMUEL DAVIES,  
OF HANOVER COUNTY, VIRGINIA.  
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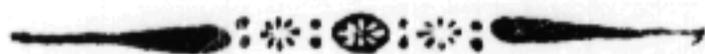
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1809.

TO THE READER.



FOR many years I have greatly lamented the shameful and sinful neglect of the great and important duty of Masters to their Servants. Having conversed largely with many serious and well-disposed persons on this subject, who wish to receive instruction in this respect, and meeting with a Sermon by the late pious and learned Mr. Davies, calculated to afford the instruction required, I have had a number of copies printed, and do most earnestly recommend them to all masters and heads of families, hoping that the blessing of God may attend the same, to the mutual benefit of Masters and Servants in time and eternity. Read with attention and prayer, and with a disposition to *do* your duty, when you *know* it, and you shall be blessed in your deed ; so that peace shall be found in your dwelling.

Thy Soul's friend and well-wisher,

WILLIAM SPENCER:

Cumberland, County, }
Nov. 30, 1809.

SERMON.

GENESIS XVIII. 19.

For I know him, that he will command his Children and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the LORD, to do Justice and Judgment.

A CREATURE formed for *immortality*, and that must be happy or miserable through an *everlasting* duration, is certainly a being of vast importance, however mean and insignificant he may be in other respects. His immortality gives him a kind of *infinite* value. Let him be white or black, bond or free, a native or a foreigner, it is of no moment in this view: he is to live *forever!* to be forever *happy*, or forever *miserable!* happy or miserable in the *highest degree!* This places him upon a kind of equality with Kings and Princes; nay, with Angels and Arch-angels: for it is this that adds importance and dignity to the most exalted parts of the human, and even of the angelic nature.

In this view, the crowds of neglected Negro Slaves among us, have often appeared to me as creatures of the utmost importance. The *same* immortality is entailed upon them, as upon us. They are candidates for the *same* eternal State with us, and bound for the *same* Heaven or Hell. How awful and important a trust, then, is *the care of a Soul!* the Soul even of a poor *Negro Slave!* To be entrusted with the care

of forming and educating an *immortal* for his everlasting State! to be instrumental in preparing him for eternal joys, or eternal torments! to be accountable for our management in this trust, to the Supreme Judge of the Universe, with whom there is no respect of persons! to be rewarded for our faithfulness; or punished for our negligence, as having promoted the happiness or been accessory to the ruin of an immortal Soul!—Pause, and think of these things, and they will certainly appear very solemn and weighty.

This solemn and important trust, I must tell you, brethren, is committed, not only to parents, with regard to their Children, those dear other selves, but to *Masters*, with regard to their Servants and Slaves, of whatever country or colour they are. And as this duty is most scandalously neglected in this Christian country; and the neglect is likely to be followed with the most dangerous and ruinous consequences to thousands both Masters and Slaves; permit me to address you upon this head, with the utmost plainness and solemnity. You are my witnesses, that I have looked upon the poor Negroes as a part of my ministerial charge; and used various endeavors to bring them to the faith and practice of Christianity, not without promising appearances of success, in sundry instances. It affords me no small pleasure to reflect, and I mention it with gratitude to God and Man, that my endeavors of this kind have, of late, met with no opposition from the Masters, of whatever denomination, in any one instance that I can recollect. And it affords me a still greater pleasure to reflect, that sundry of you not only consent that your Negroes should receive instructions from me, but also zealously concur with me, and make conscience of your own duty to them, in this respect. But alas! are there not some among you, and are there not thousands in our country, who must be conscious of their wilful negligence; nay, who, perhaps, are rather instrumental in hardening their Slaves in sin, and confirming their prejudices against our holy religion,

than in promoting their conversion to God? Were your Negroes but so many *Brutes*, you might treat them as you do your Horses, fodder them, and make them work for you, without once endeavouring to make them sharers with you in the glorious privileges of religion, the distinguishing prerogative of human nature. But I hope you have divinity and philosophy enough to know, this is not the case. Let me therefore plainly lay your duty before you, with regard to them, in order to engage you to the practice of it. For sure, you are not hardy enough to neglect the practice, in spite of conviction. Sure, you dare not sin on still, and continue your career to ruin with your eyes open.

Abraham is often proposed as a pattern to believers in general; and I may particularly recommend his example to your imitation, in your conduct towards your domestics. Here you have his character drawn by the all-knowing God himself. "I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord." He not only instructed, advised, persuaded, entreated; but he used his *authority*; he COMMANDED not only his Children, but his Household; which included his Servants, *Slaves*, and all his Domestics of every order. *Abraham's* family was like the generality of ours, in this, that he had hereditary *Slaves* in it, who were his property during life. We repeatedly read of his "Servants *born in his House*, and *bought with money* of strangers:"* both which were probably *Slaves*. And he had so numerous a family of them, that, when he went upon an expedition to rescue *Lot* from captivity. we are told, "he armed his trained Servants, *born in his own House*, three hundred and eighteen."† Where, by the by, it is remarkable, and the remark is very pertinent to the present state of our country, that by instilling good principles into them, and by humane treatment, this nu-

* *Gen. xvii. 12, 13, 23, 27.*

† *Chap. xiv. 14.*

merous crowd of Slaves were become so faithful to their Master, that he could safely confide in them, without fear of their deserting him in the engagement, and going over to the enemy, in hopes to recover their liberty. All these, as well as *Ishmael*, and his favorite *Isaac*, he had instructed in the true religion. He had laid his *commands* upon them to serve the Lord, not only during his life, but “*after him,*” i. e. after his decease. Though he was mortal, he endeavoured to make religion immortal to his family. He was solicitous to leave the world with the joyful hope, that his Domestic^s would retain and observe his pious instructions, when he should be no more their head.

It is sufficient to recommend this example to our imitation, that it is the example of *faithful Abraham*. But it is still more strongly enforced by the express approbation of God himself. “The Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham the things that I do?” No, I may trust him even with my secrets: “For I know him;” I approve of him; I have full proof of him, and therefore may safely trust him; “*because he will command his Children and Household, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord:*” being once entered in the Way of the Lord by his instructions, they will keep it. “Train up a Child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old, he will *not depart* from it.”*

It is not my present design to consider the general duty of family-religion and good education, though my text is a very proper foundation for it. But I intend only to inculcate *the particular duty of instructing Slaves* in the true religion, and using all proper means to enter them in the way of the Lord. To give you directions how to perform it, before you are convinced it is your duty, would be useless and preposterous. And therefore,

My first and principal business shall be, *to convince*

* *Prov. xxii. 6.*

you, that this is really your duty, and that it is a duty of the utmost importance and necessity.

Here, I take it for granted, you are, at least, professed *Christians* yourselves ; *i. e.* you profess to believe that the Christian Religion is divine, and to embrace it as *your* religion. Otherwise, instead of persuading you to endeavor to christianize your Negroes, I would persuade you to become Christians yourselves. I would then deal with you, as with your Heathen Negroes, and labour to convince you of the truth and divinity of the religion of Jesus, from those numerous topics of argument, by which so clear and important a truth may be demonstrated.— But you are fond of wearing the Christian name ; you present your Children to be initiated into the Christian Church by Baptism ; you acknowledge the truth of the scriptures, by complying with the usual ceremony of kissing the Bible in taking an oath ; you attend upon the forms of worship in the Christian Church, and externally conform to them. These things you do ; and these things are certainly a strong profession, that you are Christians. And none of you, I presume, will dare to renounce it, rather than admit the conviction that I would now force upon your minds from this consideration.

Therefore, taking this for granted, I need no other principle to convince you of the duty I am now recommending. And I shall reason from the nature and design of Christianity—from the example of Christ and his Apostles—from the worth and importance of the Souls of your poor Slaves—from the happy influence Christianity would have upon them, even for your own interest—from the zeal and generosity of others in this affair—and from your relation to them as their Masters.

1. If you consider the *nature* and *design* of Christianity, you cannot but be convinced of this duty.

Christianity, in its own nature, is calculated to be a *catholic*, or *universal* religion, and is equally the concern of *all* the sons of men. It proposes *one* God,

as the object of *universal* adoration to white and black, bond and free: *one* Lord Jesus Christ, as a *common* Saviour for Britons, Africans, and Americans: *one* Holy Spirit, by whom alone Sinners of *all* nations, colours and characters, can be sanctified: *one* faith to be embraced, *one* rule of morality to be observed, by Masters and Servants, rich and poor: *one* Heaven and *one* Hell, as the last mansions of *all* the millions of mankind; to which they shall be adjudged according to their moral character, and, if they have heard the Gospel, according to their acceptance or non-acceptance of it; and not according to the trifling distinctions of country, colour, liberty or slavery.—Christianity is a *Religion for Sinners*; for Sinners of *all* kindreds, and nations, and languages. They *all* need those instructions, which its heavenly light sheds upon a benighted world. They *all* need that pardon, which it offers; that grace, which it communicates; and that salvation, which it ensures. In short, *all* its doctrines intimately concern them: *all* its precepts are binding upon them: *all* its blessings are needed by them: *all* its promises and threatenings shall be accomplished upon them, according to their characters. And must it not then be the grand concern of *all*? Yes; as there is but one air for Whites and Blacks, Masters and Servants to breathe in; one earth for them to walk upon; so there is but *one common* Christian Religion for them *all*, by which they can please God, and obtain Salvation. To be a sinful creature of the race of man, under the Gospel, is sufficient alone to render it his greatest concern, and a matter of absolute necessity, to be a Christian. And to be entrusted with the care of such a creature, is alone a sufficient foundation for the duty I am recommending; and strongly binds it upon every one of us, to whom that trust is committed.

And as Christianity is, in its own nature, the common concern of all, and calculated to be the universal religion of mankind; so it is *designed* by its great

author to be propagated among all. No corner of our world was left out in the commission, which the gracious founder of our religion gave to the teachers of it. "Go ye into *all* the world, says he, and preach the Gospel to *every* creature ; *i. e.* to every creature of the human race. (*Mark* xvi. 15.) The great God "now commandeth *all* men *every* where to repent." (*Acts* xvii. 30.) And when the Apostles went out to discharge their extensive commission, the Holy Spirit concurred with them, and rendered their labors successful in Asia, Europe and Africa, without distinction. He put no difference between Jews and Gentiles, but purified the hearts of both by the same faith !* The doors of the Church were thrown wide open, for the admission of all, that would come in upon the terms of the Gospel. The Roman Centurion, the Æthiopian Eunuch, Onesimus, a run-away Slave, were as welcome, as the Jews of Jerusalem.-- "All were one in Christ Jesus ; in whom there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free." (*Colos.* iii. 11.) A black skin, African birth or extract, or state of slavery, does not disqualify a man for the blessings of the Gospel ; does not exclude him from its invitations, nor cast him out of the charge of its ministers. If history may be credited, the Gospel did once flourish in Africa, and penetrated far into those inhospitable desarts, which are now the regions of Mahometism, or Heathen idolatry. And we have all the certainty which the *sure word of prophecy* can afford, that it will yet visit that miserable country. Yes, brethren, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (*Isai.* xi. 9.) "The kingdoms of the world shall yet become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." (*Rev.* xi. 15.) And "from the rising of the Sun unto the going down of the same, his name shall be great among the Gentiles ; and in *every* place incense shall be offered to

* *Acts* xv. 9.

his name." (*Mal. i. 2.*) "Æthiopia," Guinea and Negro-land "shall yet stretch out their hands unto God." (*Psal. lxxviii. 31.*) Negroes and Slaves are included in that "*Fulness of the Gentiles,*" which, St. Paul tells us, "shall come in." (*Rom. xi. 25.*) And may the happy few, who in this land of their bondage, have been made partakers of "the glorious liberty of the Sons of God," be the first fruits of this blessed harvest to Christ in Africa!

And now, brethren, do you not begin to feel this argument conclude? Is Christianity adapted and intended to be the *universal* religion of mankind? And must it not then be the duty of Christians, to do their utmost to spread it through the world? Is it the design of Heaven, that it shall be propagated among all nations? And is not the duty of Christians, especially of masters, who have a command over others, to concur in this gracious design, and do all in their power to hasten that blessed period, which has been so long the eager wish and hope of believers? The man that can be inactive and indifferent in such an affair as this, must have a temper directly contrary to that religion which he professes; must be entirely careless about the glory of God and the Redeemer, and the happiness of his fellow-creatures, and disaffected to the gracious designs of providence towards them. Has he imbibed the spirit of the Christian Religion, who can keep, perhaps, half a score of Heathens under his roof, and oblige them to drudge and toil for him all their lives; and yet never labor to gain them to the faith of Christ? Alas! how can he keep his conscience easy in such a course? But,

2. The example of Christ and his Apostles obliges you to this duty.

The example of Christ must certainly be a law to his followers; and in vain do they pretend to that character, unless they conform themselves to it.—And what did Christ do in this case? Why, he felt all the glories of his native Heaven; he assumed human nature with all its common infirmities, and, in

circumstances of uncommon abasement, he spent three and thirty tedious and painful years in this wretched world, and passed through an uninterrupted series of poverty, fatigue, ill-treatment and persecution; he at length died in ignominy and torture upon a cross. And what was all this for? It was for *Africans*, as well as Britons: it was for the contemptible *Negroes*, as well as Whites: it was for poor *Slaves*, as well as for their Masters. Yes, for poor *Negroes* and *Slaves*, he thought it worth his while to shed the blood of his heart. As "God would have *all* men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth," so Christ "gave himself a ransom for *all*."*

I am sure, such of you as are lovers of Christ, begin already to feel the force of this argument. Did he live and die, to save poor *Negroes*? And shall not we use all the means in our power, to make them partakers of this salvation? Did he pour out the blood of his heart for them? And shall we begrudge a little labor and pains to instruct them? We are not called to agonize and die upon a cross for them: but Jesus was; and he did not refuse. And shall we refuse those easier endeavors for their salvation, which are required on our part? If we are capable of such a conduct, it is high time for us to renounce all pretensions of regard to him, and his example.

The example of the Apostles also, and the primitive ministers of the Gospel, binds us to the same duty. When they received their extensive commission, the love of Christ carried them through the world, to discharge it, among Jews and Gentiles, among Masters and Servants. Wherever they found a Sinner, they preached to him "repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ," without regard to the cutaneous distinction of colour, the humble state of a Servant, or a Slave. "The *poor* had the Gospel preached unto them;" and among such it was

* 1 *Tim.* ii. 4, 6.

most successful. "Not many mighty, not many noble after the flesh, were called: but God chose the weak, the foolish, the base and despised things of the world—that no flesh should glory in his presence." (1 Cor. i. 26—29.) St. Paul, in particular, the Chief of the Apostles, and who was eminently the Apostle of the *Gentiles*, shunned no fatigues or dangers, to carry this joyful news to the remotest and most barbarous parts of the world. For this end, he became a wandering pilgrim from country to country: he braved the dangers of sea and land, and all the terrors of persecution; and at last gloriously died in the attempt. Servants and Slaves were not beneath his care. Many parts of his writings are addressed to them; from whence we learn, that many of them had embraced the Gospel, which he had published in their ears. He thought it an object worthy of his apostolic office, to give them directions for their behaviour, and to exhort them to be cheerfully contented with their mortifying condition in life. "Let every man, says he, abide "in that calling, wherein he was called." Christianity makes no alterations in matters of property, in civil distinctions or employments. "Art thou called, being a *Servant*? Care not for it—for he that is called, being a *Servant*, is the Lord's free-man."* The Servants he here speaks to, were probably not indented Servants or Hirelings, but what we call *Slaves*. And in those times it was a much more common practice, than it is now among the civilized nations of Europe, to make *Slaves* of the prisoners taken in war. But even to these, St. Paul says, "If thou art called, being a *Servant*, or a *Slave*, care not for it:" a Christian may be happy, even in a state of slavery. Liberty, the sweetest and most valuable of all blessings, is not essential to his happiness: for if he is destitute of civil liberty, he enjoys a liberty still more noble and divine: "He is the Lord's free man." The Son of God made him free

* 1 Cor. vii. 20, 21, 22.

from the tyranny of Sin and Satan ; and therefore he is free indeed. What a striking instance is this, both of apostolic zeal for the poor Slaves, and of the invaluable advantages of being a Christian, which can render the lowest and most laborious station in life so insignificant, that a man need *not care* for it, but continue in it with a generous indifferency !—I shall only add one instance more, and that is the case of Onesimus, Philemon's Servant. He had been once unprofitable to his Master, and run away from him, as some of your Negroes do now. But in his ramblings, he happened to come in St. Paul's way, while a prisoner in Rome. The Apostle did not despise the unhappy *Runagade*, but esteemed his conversion to Christianity a prize worth laboring for. He therefore communicated the Gospel to him ; and it pleased God to open his heart to receive it, and he became a sincere convert. Upon this, the Apostle wrote a letter to his Master in his favor, which is still preserved, among his immortal Epistles, for the benefit of the Church in all ages. He shews all the affection and concern of a Father for him, and does not disdain to call him *his Son*, dear to him as *his own bowels*. "I beseech thee," says he to his Master, "for *my Son Onesimus*, whom I have begotten in my bonds : who in time past was unprofitable, but now is profitable to thee, and me : whom I have sent again : thou therefore receive him that is *mine own bowels*—for perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him forever ; not now as a Servant, but above a Servant, a *brother beloved*, especially to me ; but how much more to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord ? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him *as myself*. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I Paul have written it with my own hand, I will repay it. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord : refresh my bowels in the Lord, by thy compliance."*—What father-

* See the *Epistle to Philemon*.

ly affection and solicitude, what ardent zeal is here, for a poor run-away Slave ! How different is this from the prevailing spirit of the Christians of our age ? Had the Apostles and their fellow-labourers been as careless about propagating the Gospel among Heathens, as the generality among us are, Christianity would have soon died in that corner of the world, where it had its birth ; and we and the rest of mankind would now have been as much Heathens, as the African Negroes ?

But do these examples lay no obligation upon us to follow them ? Did the Apostles discover such an ardent zeal for the salvation even of Servants and Slaves ; and shall we be quite negligent and careless about it ? Did they take so much pains, pass through such severe sufferings, risk their lives, and even lose them, in the generous attempt ? And shall not we take the easier measures required of us for their conversion ? Alas ! Is the Spirit of primitive Christianity entirely lost upon earth ? Or is Christianity declined with age, and become an insignificant thing, unworthy of zealous propagation ? Or have the Souls of Slaves lost their value, so that it is no matter what becomes of them ? How can you pretend to learn your religion from the Apostles ; and yet have crowds of Negroes in your Houses or Quarters, as ignorant Heathens, as when they left the Wilds of Africa, without using any means for their conversion ? Will ye not endeavour to be followers of the Apostles in this respect, as they also were of Christ ? If their example has no weight, methinks the conduct of Jews, Heathens, and Mahometans may shame you. They are all zealous to gain proselytes to their religion, though antiquated, or false. And will not you labor to proselyte your Domestic to the divine religion of Jesus ? Certainly, if you do not, even Jews, Heathens and Mahometans may rise up in judgment against you. But,

3. Your duty in this respect will appear, from the worth and importance of the Souls of your poor

Slaves. This I have hinted at already ; but it deserves a more full illustration.

The appointments of Providence, and the order of the world, not only admit, but require, that there should be civil distinctions among mankind ; that some should rule, and some be subject ; that some should be Masters, and some Servants. And Christianity does not blend or destroy these distinctions, but establishes and regulates them, and enjoins every man to conduct himself according to them. In this respect, there are many distinctions in the world.— But these distinctions are confined to this world, and do not reach beyond the grave. As to the affairs of religion and eternity, all men stand upon the same footing. The meanest Slave is as immortal as his Master ; as capable of happiness or misery, in the highest degree, and of eternal duration ; as much a candidate for Heaven or Hell. Now it is this that gives importance to a being. An angel, or the most exalted creature, if the being of a day, or a thousand years, would be but a trifle, a shadow. When his day, or his thousand years are past, he is as much nothing, as if he had never been. It is little matter what becomes of him ; let him stand, or fall ; let him be happy, or miserable ; it is all one in a little time. But immortality is so important an attribute, that it adds a kind of infinite value to every being to which it belongs, however mean and insignificant in other respects. An IMMORTAL ! a being that shall never cease to be ! a being whose existence runs on forever in parallel lines, with that of the eternal Father of Spirits ! a being whose powers of action, and whose capacities for pleasure or pain, shall never become decrepit or contracted, but ripen, improve and enlarge, through the revolutions of eternal ages ! a being, that shall perpetually ascend, in an endless gradation, from glory to glory, from perfection to perfection, in the scale of blessedness ; or that shall sink forever from deep to deep, from gulph to gulph, in Hell!—What an awful important being is this ! a

sharer with Angels, in their highest prerogative and dignity! a black skin, or a state of slavery for sixty or seventy years, is of no consideration at all, in our estimate of such a being.* To be entrusted with the care of such a being, in its state of trial, to form it for its everlasting state!—How vast, how awful the trust! To be instrumental to render such a being happy, through its immortal duration! to “SAVE A SOUL FROM DEATH!” to save that precious immortal thing, the *Soul*! to save it from *Death*! from that dreadful kind of death, which a *Soul* can die!†—How benevolent an act, how noble an exploit, how glorious a salvation is this! more benevolent, more noble, more glorious, than to deliver nations from

* “Immortal! ages past, yet nothing gone!
 Morn without eve! a race without a goal!
 Unshortened by progression infinite!
 Futurity forever future! Life
 Beginning still, where computation ends!
 ’Tis the description of a Deity!
 ’Tis the description of the meanest Slave!
 The meanest Slave, dares then Lorenzo scorn?
 The meanest Slave thy sovereign glory shares—
 Man’s lawful pride includes humility;
 Stoops to the lowest; is too great to find
 Inferiors; all immortal! brothers all!
 Proprietors eternal of thy love.”

Night Thoughts, No. 6.

† This paraphrase seems to me to point out the striking emphasis of the Apostle’s short expression. (James v. 19, 20.) “Brethren, if any of you are from the truth, and one convert him; let him know” this for his encouragement, and he neither needs, nor can have a stronger, “that he which converteth the Sinner from the error of his way, shall save a Soul from Death.” An illustrious self-rewarding exploit! a glorious salvation indeed!

slavery or famine, or the severest *temporal* distress. But to be accessory by negligence, or more *direct* means, to the ruin, the eternal ruin, of such a being ! to render its immortality its curse, a meer capacity of immortal pain !—how horrid the crime ! how deep the guilt ! how shocking the thought ! To be accessory to the murder of the body, to lay countries waste, and turn cities into ruinous heaps, were nothing, in comparison of this : for what are mortal bodies, perishable countries, and cities, when compared to an immortal Soul ? Well, *such* a Soul, such a *precious immortal* Soul, has the meanest *Slave*.—Yes, those stupid despised black creatures, that many treat as if they were brutes, are, in this important respect, upon an equality with their haughty masters. And can you think it is no concern of yours, to endeavor to bring these immortals into the way of salvation, and save them from an endless duration of exquisite misery ? God has communicated to you the *grand secret* of obtaining his favor, and eternal life ; I mean the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which you have in your Bibles : “ a mystery, which was hid from ages and generations.” And he has communicated it to *you*, that you may communicate it to *others*, particularly to your *Domestics*, who are your immediate care. And will you still reserve it to yourselves, when immortal Souls under your roof, are perishing for want of the knowledge of it ? Is it nothing to you, that their blood should be upon your heads ; or that the supreme Judge should condemn you, as accessory to their eternal destruction ? What do you think of being shut up with them, in the same infernal prison, without any distinction or superiority ; unless it be *distinguished* and *superior* misery, as having sinned in spite of clearer conviction, and stronger obligations ? Are you proof against the terrors of such a thought ? Or are you insensible to the generous pleasure, of being instrumental in rendering those happy forever, in the world to come, who have done you so much service in this ; and in peopleing

the Heavenly regions with inhabitants transplanted from the barbarous Wilds of Africa? I beseech you, have pity upon these miserable immortals. For God's sake, for their sakes, and for your own, do not let them sink into Hell from between your hands, for want of a little pains to instruct them. I hope you would by no means exercise barbarities upon their bodies; and will you be so barbarous, as to suffer their precious never-dying Souls to perish forever; when, through the divine blessing, you might be the means of saving them? Sure you are not capable of such inhuman cruelty.

4. The duty I am urging will appear, if you consider the happy influence your religious instructions might have upon your Negroes, even for your *own interest*.

Your own interest inclines you to wish, they would become good Servants; faithful, honest, diligent and laborious. Now there is no expedient in the world, that can so effectually render them such, as to make them *real Christians*. You cannot but own, that the *precepts* of Christianity, are a complete directory for the behaviour of Servants, and enjoin upon them every duty, that a Master can reasonably require of them: and that the *temper* and *spirit* of Christianity, is the most excellent and amiable, that can adorn human nature, in any station of life. There never was a good Christian yet, who was a bad Servant. To be a Christian, as it refers to man, is to be obedient to superiors, kind and benevolent to all, faithful in every trust, diligent in every calling.— And is not this the very character you wish your Servants to deserve? Well, endeavour to make them true Christians; and if God bless your endeavors, such they will be. Indeed, they may be baptized, and be Christians in *name*, and yet be as bad Servants, and as bad men, as if they were Heathens. But this is not the thing I am urging. Endeavour to make them Christians *indeed*; and then you will find, they will deserve the character I have described. This

will make them better Servants, than the terror of the lash, and all the servile and mercenary measures you can use with them. Then they will be governed by a *principle of conscience* towards God : a principle, which will make them as honest and diligent in your absence, as while under your eye. Then, according to St. Paul's injunctions, they will " be obedient to their Masters in all *lawful* things ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God ;" whose eye, they will be sensible, is always upon them. Then, " whatsoever they do, they will do it *heartily*, as to the Lord, and not to men : knowing, that of the Lord they shall receive the reward" of their fidelity ; " for they serve the Lord Christ," even in serving their earthly Masters ; and he will reward the service, as done to himself.*— You see, therefore, that your *own interest* would be promoted by this means : In other cases, you are not insensible of the powerful influence of interest.— And shall it not prevail upon you, to use proper endeavors for the conversion of your poor Negroes ? Did some spend that time in the use of such endeavors, which they spend in tying them up, and whipping them, they would probably receive more advantage from it. Resolve, at least, to make trial of this expedient ; and pray for a divine blessing upon it : and you will probably see the happy effects of it.

5. The zeal and generosity of others may stir you up to the discharge of this duty.

Sundry good people in *England*, at the distance of near four thousand miles, who have no connection with your Slaves, but what they have with human nature in general, are much more zealous and active for their conversion, than, alas ! thousands of their Masters among us. As reading is one important mean of acquiring religious knowledge, they are very solicitous the Negroes should learn to read ; and that such of them as have learned, should be furnished

1 *Colos.* iii. 22, 24.

with good books. For this purpose, they have been at the expense of two hundred pounds sterling in books, which they have, at different times, sent over to be distributed among them. A most seasonable, pious and disinterested charity ! And may the God of all grace crown it with success ! I solicit your prayers with my own, for this blessing ; that our generous benefactors, though they should not receive the intelligence sooner, may meet in Heaven with many from Virginia, both whites and blacks, who were brought thither by means of this charity. And I cannot but hope, and even believe, that this, in some instances, will be the happy consequence. Such assistance from so remote a quarter is a new spring to my endeavors among you ; and gives me some encouragement, that God has remarkably gracious designs towards this guilty land. It sometimes seems to me, as if the strongholds of Sin and Satan among us were attacked from all quarters ; and therefore, that it is determined in Heaven, they shall fall. Oh ! let your prayers contribute to the accomplishment of my *hope*.

Now, my brethren, I may leave yourselves to judge, whether the religious instruction of your Negroes, be not a duty incumbent upon *you*. Is this the concern of Christians on the other side of the vast ocean ? And is it not much more yours, for whom these poor creatures labour and toil all their lives, and who receive the benefit of their labours ? No creatures in the British dominions stand in greater need of such a charity from our British friends, than the poor Negroes among us. But yet, I must say, this necessity proceeds rather from the want of pious zeal and generosity in their Masters, than from the want of ability. Certainly, he that can lay out forty or fifty pounds to purchase a Slave, is able to spare a few shillings to furnish him with a few books for his instruction.— This is undoubtedly the case in general, though there are some exceptions. And who so strongly obliged to furnish your Slaves with these, as yourselves, who

reap the benefit of their labours? Methinks you might blush to receive assistance in this case. But waving this point at present, what I would inculcate upon you is, that you would at *least*, concur with the endeavors of the noble-spirited benefactors, to christinize your own domestics. Let their example fire you with emulation, and engage you in this apostolic work. Some of you, I doubt not, will honestly make the attempt. But alas! I am afraid, others will continue negligent, even after these helps are put into their hands. If so, I warn you beforehand, that you must give an account to the great God for your criminal omission; and it is time for you to bethink yourselves, what defence or excuse you shall be able to make. To enforce this argument the more, let me add,

6. The relation you bear to your Negroes as their *Masters*, obliges you to instruct them in the Christian Religion.

Indeed, this duty is not yours *alone*: it is the duty of *every* Christian, according to his station, to do all in his power for the conversion of others: and there is no person so insignificant, but he may contribute something, through divine grace, to this benevolent design. The meanest member in a family may drop a word, or at least lead a life, that may tend to give favorable impressions of Christianity to those around him. The instruction of Negroes is particularly the duty of *Overseers*, who have the immediate care of them; and they will find it impossible to excuse themselves, by flinging the fault upon the Owners; especially if they are removed beyond the reach of the owner's inspection. Their Souls will be required of the Overseer's hand. And I tremble to think, what a terrible account many of them must give. But after all, the care originally and principally lies upon the masters and proprietors. It is as much their duty to feed their minds with sacred knowledge, as to feed and clothe their bodies. All the numerous and strong arguments for family-religion in general, are

equally conclusive in favour of this particular branch of it. But I cannot now take time to mention them. Will the example of *Abraham* in my text, have no weight with you? Are not you under the same obligations with *Joshua*, to resolve, that, let others do what they please, "as for you and your *House*, you will serve the Lord?"* It is mentioned to the honor of the Roman Centurion, that he feared God *with all his House*; and some of his *household Servants* or *Slaves*, and the soldiers under him, were devout men.† And why should not you endeavor to render your *Slaves* such? But I need not enlarge upon so plain a point. I will venture to leave it to your own consciences, to determine, whether God would place immortal Souls under your care, without obliging you to endeavour to educate them for a happy eternity? Shall they work and drudge for you all their lives? And are not you bound, in justice and gratitude, to retaliate them, by endeavoring to make them partakers of the rich blessings of the Gospel? Will you not labor to make this land of slavery, a land of spiritual liberty to them; and to bring them to share in the heavenly inheritance, in exchange for their liberty, and as a reward for the fruits of their labors, which you enjoy?

And now, upon a review of all these arguments together, I would have you come to some conclusion what you intend to do with regard to this duty, of which, I presume, you are now convinced. Brethren, what do you determine to do? I am sure, if you have any regard to the religion you profess, or the divine author of it; if you have any regard to the salvation of an immortal Soul, or to the laws of justice and gratitude; if you have the least spark of sincere piety towards God, or true benevolence to men you will honestly begin the attempt, and will not dare to live one week more, in the neglect of so plain and important a duty. But I know, those that are disaffect-

* *Jos.* xxiv. 15.

† *Acts* x. 1, 7.

ed to the duty, will try to ward off the conviction, by various pleas and excuses. And were you now to speak your minds, I should probably hear you start a thousand objections.

Some of you, perhaps, would object, "That your Negroes are such sullen perverse creatures, or stupid dunces, that it is impossible to teach them any thing that is good." This is undoubtedly the true character of some; and it must afford a great deal of grief to such of you, as are really concerned for their everlasting happiness. All you can do, in such a discouraging case, is to continue your endeavors; and earnestly pray for a blessing upon them, from that God, who alone can render them efficacious. And who knows what may be the issue? Do you wait patiently; and you may yet reap the fruits of your pious labors. Sullen, and perverse, and stupid as they are, divine grace can render them gentle, pliable, and teachable, as a little child. But should your endeavors always continue unsuccessful, as you may expect they will with regard to sundry; yet you have this solid consolation left you, that you are clear of their blood, and have delivered your own Soul, and your reward is with the Lord. He will accept and reward even *unsuccessful* fidelity. But I am apprehensive this objection, in many cases, is but an idle pretence. Your Negroes may be ignorant and stupid as to divine things, not for want of capacity, but for want of instruction; not through their perverseness, but through your negligence. From the many trials I have made, I have reason to conclude, that making allowance for their low and barbarous education, their imperfect acquaintance with our language, their having no opportunity for intellectual improvements, and the like, they are generally as capable of instruction, as the white people. Besides, Christianity, as far as it is essential to Salvation, is not a difficult science; and if they do not learn it, the fault lies in the heart, rather than in the head. Some of them shew, that they have sense enough to love

God, and hate Sin, though they are very ignorant in other respects. But to be short--be sure you make a thorough trial, before you start this objection. Take all proper means to teach them, before you conclude they are unteachable. And bear upon your minds a deep sense of the vanity of all human endeavors, without the concurrence of the Holy Spirit; for which, pray without ceasing.

Some of you, perhaps, will object, "That you can find no time to instruct your Negroes; nor can you allow them time to attend to instruction." I grant, that Religion should by no means be made a pretence for idleness in Masters or Servants; and that moderate industry in your lawful callings, is as much your duty, in its place, as the religious instruction to your Domestics. But granting this, there is no plausible ground for the objection after all. For are not the affairs of eternity of infinitely greater importance to you, than those of time? Should you not be much more solicitous how you and yours shall subsist thro' eternal ages, than how you shall subsist for a few years in this vanishing world? If a proper care of the one, be inconsistent with the other, to which should you give the preference? If you have not time enough to lay out upon both, which, do you think, should be neglected? Time or Eternity? Earth or Heaven? your perishing bodies, or your immortal Spirits? Can you hesitate a moment in so plain a case? Whatever become of yourselves or your families in this world, by no means neglect to provide for your and their happiness in the eternal world, which is just before you. Whatever be undone, let not the work of Salvation be undone. Rather be poor, yea, rather perish through hunger and nakedness in this world, than let your souls and bodies, and those of your Slaves, perish forever in the world to come. This is a sufficient answer to your objection, upon the worst supposition you can possibly make, viz. that the religious instruction of your Negroes is inconsistent with your temporal interest, and would rend

them useless, or a burden to you. But this supposition is wholly groundless: for the discharge of your duty to them, would not take up so much time, as that the loss would be perceivable at a year's end. Let this duty take up your Sunday evenings, and other leisure hours, which both you and your Slaves now spend in trifling or sinning. And if you should set apart two or three stated hours in the week for this purpose, where would be the mighty loss? Will you begrudge this short space of time for the Salvation of those poor creatures, who spend their whole lives in your service? Besides, you may easily drop a word of instruction, while you are looking after them in the field. Their ears are open, and their thoughts may be employed about divine things, with an Axe or a Hoe in their hands. In short, you will find, that this duty may be so managed, as to be no hindrance at all to your business: and in the issue, it may be a great advantage to it. For if God should bless your pious diligence, it will render them much better Servants to you, as well as to him. Therefore, no longer think to excuse yourself with this frivolous pretence; but immediately attempt what is unquestionably your duty.

Will any of you farther object, "That christianizing the Negroes makes them proud and saucy, and tempts them to imagine themselves upon an equality with the white people?" But is this the *native tendency* of real genuine Christianity? Is the true Christian spirit haughty and insolent? Do the doctrines or precepts of Christianity tend to cherish pride and disobedience? If you think so, why do you not renounce it yourselves? Will you profess a religion, which has a native tendency to make men worse, and cherishes and confirms their wicked dispositions? Will you initiate your Children into such a diabolical Religion? If you have such notions of Christianity, you are as rank Heathens at heart, as the rudest African Negro: and your Christian profession is, a most glaring absurdity. But you cannot but know in your

consciences, that *true* Christianity is quite another thing ; that it tends to inspire its subjects with modesty, humility, meekness, faithfulness, and every grace and virtue ; and that a *good Christian* will always be a *good Servant*. Recollect what I have said on this head already, and it will entirely remove your objection. I grant indeed, that there is nothing so excellent, but the depraved heart of man may be capable of abusing it to the vilest purposes. But this is no objection against the *thing*, but against the unnatural *abuse* of it. A man may be proud of his good sense, learning, estate, or any real or imaginary excellency. But will you hence infer, that you should keep yourselves or your children ignorant, illiterate, poor, and destitute of every good quality, in order to keep you humble and pliable, and to guard against pride and insolence ? Upon this principle, you would leave human nature naked of every excellency, and, to prevent pride, make it a mere mass of deformity. In like manner, the holy Religion of Jesus may be abused as an occasion of vanity and self-conceit, by those that usurp the name and external badges of it, without imbibing its spirit. A Negro may desire to be baptized, merely that he may be in the fashion ; and even from this base principle he may be prompted to make such a profession of his faith and repentance, as the Ministers of the Gospel, who cannot inspect the heart, may judge sufficient for his admission to the privileges of the visible church, though his profession was but gross hypocrisy in the sight of God, and may afterwards appear such to them. Baptism and the Christian, name may indeed render such a wretched creature worse. But that is not because he *is* a Christian, but because he *is not* a Christian, that is, a Christian *indeed*, while he vainly *imagines* himself such. Nothing can be inferred from hence, but that great care should be taken in the admission of Catechumens to Baptism : And it is your duty to give all the information to Ministers on this point, which may help to direct them in so difficult and important

an affair. I am sensible that the ordinance of Baptism, learning the Creed, Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, a confused desire to be admitted to Church privileges, and such superficial qualifications, are far from rendering them *true* Christians; and if they are admitted upon no better evidence, they, as it were, receive a deadly blow from the hand that baptizes them; & the Christian name will be of no service to *them*; & they are likely to be a scandal to *it*. Let them first see their sins; let their hearts be broken with penitential sorrows for them; let them long and cry after Jesus as the only Saviour; and receive him with all their hearts; let them, in short, give some hopeful evidences, that they are Christians indeed; and then let them wear the Christian name, and share in all the privileges of the Children of God. Some such, blessed be God, are to be found among us; and to their lives I may refer you for the most effectual confutation of your objection. Are not the Savages transformed into Lambs and Doves? Are they not humble and meek, dutiful, faithful, diligent, and the reverse of what they once were? Such would all the Negroes be, were they all sincere christians: and what can be a more striking evidence of the happy tendency and powerful efficacy of our holy Religion, to make men of all nations, & in all stations, truly good?

But you will perhaps say, "Some, who once made a great profession of Religion, and were baptized, have apostatized, & become as bad as ever." This, alas! is too true as to some: and the Lord have mercy on the miserable backsliders, whose last state is worse than their first! But you know, this is not the case of all, nor, I hope, of the generality: and to find even a few chosen, among the many that are called, is an unspeakable pleasure; and a sufficient encouragement to the duty I am recommending.— But were the ground of this complaint more general than it is, what would you infer from it? that it is not the duty of Christians to propagate their Religion, and particularly of Christian masters to propagate it

among their *Domestics*? This would be an extravagant inference indeed; and upon this principle, you would banish all Religion out of the world. Are there no apostates among white people, among Britons and Virginians? Would to God there were not! but the melancholy fact is too notorious to be denied. And shall all religious instructions be given up on this account; and the immortal Religion of Jesus suffered to die with the present generation, without any farther endeavours to preserve and spread it, lest some that have pretended to embrace it, should afterwards renounce it in practice or profession? The truth offences must come; apostasies must happen, in the present state of things. There have been apostates from all the Religions that ever were in the world, whether true or false: Apostates from Judaism, Mahometism, Heathenism, (if I may call them apostates) as well as from Christianity. And if we must give over our attempts to propagate it on this account, it is to consent to put an end to all Religion, whether natural or revealed, whether true or false. The best remedy against this, is what I prescribe, in answer to the last objection, viz: to take all possible care, that none be admitted to Baptism, and into the Christian Church, but such as give hopeful evidences of a thorough conversion. After all, it must, alas! be expected, that while Ministers can judge only by *external* appearances, and some even of the unpolished Negroes are artful enough to deceive, many will unavoidably be admitted, who, like the crowds of Christians among us of a fairer colour, are but hypocrites: and, notwithstanding all their privileges, will be condemned at last as workers of iniquity; or may, perhaps, even in this life, throw off the mask, and render it necessary to exclude them from the communion of Christians.

The dullest of mankind have generally a very ready invention to find out objections against a duty that is disagreeable to them: And it may be impossible for me to particularize them all. But I dare say, your

judgment is already convinced; and, however unwilling you may be to own it, your conscience is on my side. You may pretend this and that as the reason of your omission. But shall I tell you the plain truth?—The true reason is, your stupid carelessness about Religion, and about your own Souls, as well as those of your Slaves. Could this objection, not of your *reason*, but of a *wicked heart*, be once removed, we should hear no more of the rest. For this is a certain truth, that he that loves Religion himself, will endeavour to bring others to love it; he that is concerned about his own salvation, will be also concerned about that of others; and he, and only he, who is careless what becomes of his own Soul, can be careless about the Souls committed to his charge. And are you fit for Heaven, or likely to be admitted thither, while this temper is predominant in you? Are you prepared for the Region of Holiness, while you are thus disaffected to it? Alas! no; in your present condition, you are *fitted for destruction*, and nothing else. And is it not time for you to awake to the care of your *own* immortal Souls? When once you begin to take care of them, you will soon extend your care to the Souls, of your poor Negroes.

And now, Sirs, may I not hope, you are determined to live in the wilful neglect of this duty no longer? If not, will you not be self-condemned? Will you not carry an uneasy monitor in your own breasts, that will be perpetually urging you to your duty, and remonstrating against your omissions of it? And oh! what account will you give to the great God at last? Oh! that you may think of it in time: for I can assure you, it deserves your most serious thoughts.

What now remains is, to give you some directions for the right performance of this duty. And these shall refer both to the *qualifications* required in you, as the instructors of your Slaves, and the best *manner* of instructing them. I shall not enlarge upon either: for, I know, if you are zealously set upon the dis-

charge of the duty, a few short hints as to the manner, will be sufficient.

The directions with regard to *yourselves* are such as these.

Endeavour to furnish your own minds with religious knowledge ; otherwise, it is impossible you should communicate religious knowledge to your domestics. For this purpose, read, hear, pray, meditate, and diligently attend upon all means of instruction. In this way, you may hope to remove an objection, which, alas ! has as much truth in it, as any of those I have answered, viz : “ That you are so ignorant yourselves, that you are not capable of teaching others.” How scandalous and criminal is this, to be ignorant of the Religion you profess ! to be ignorant of it, with Bibles in your hands, and means of instruction all around you ! How dangerous a state is this ! Can you expect to *blunder* into Heaven at random, without knowing the way that leads to it ? Alas ! you may be destroyed for *lack of knowledge*,* as well as by the grossest vice. Therefore labour to furnish your minds with useful knowledge. Again ;

Endeavour to maintain a deep sense of eternal things upon your spirits. Or, labour to get your hearts deeply impressed with the things you know.— This will at once excite you to use proper means for the conversion of those under your care, and make you serious and solemn in the use of them.

Let your example enforce your instructions, and exhibit to them a living pattern of practical Religion. The dullest Negro has sense enough to see the absurdity of a mere profession of Religion, without a correspondent practice. But if they see that your religion make you good men, and consequently good masters, it will be a strong presumption to them in its favour.

In a word, endeavour to be true Christians yourselves, in knowledge, in temper, and in practice ;

* *Hos. iv. 6.*

and then you are qualified to instruct your families. But without these qualifications, you will not either make the attempt ; or are not likely to succeed in it.

Let me now add a few directions as to the *manner and ways* of instruction.

Encourage your Negroes to learn to read, and give them all the assistance in your power. Encourage your Children to teach them : or let one of themselves be taught either at home, or at school ; and let him teach the rest.* There may be some of them so old, so stupid, or so ignorant of our language, that it may be almost impossible to teach them. But as to the young, especially those that are born in your houses ; and as to those that are desirous to learn, though advanced in age, I have found by experience, this direction is very practicable. Let us zealously make the attempt with the present generation ; and then they will be able to teach their Children themselves ; and thus this useful branch of learning will be conveyed down to their posterity, with little trouble or expense to their owners.

Frequently speak seriously to them upon the great concerns of Religion.

Maintain the daily worship of God in your families. And endeavour to time it so, that your Slaves may have opportunity of attending. What can more familiarly teach them their wants and mercies, their duties and sins, than to hear you solemnly mention them every day in your prayers to God ?

* *As I would earnestly recommend reading the Scriptures and singing the praises of God as parts of family-religion ; so I would recommend it, as an easy and very useful expedient to improve the Negroes in reading, that, when they begin to read, they be ordered to bring their Bibles and Psalm-Books with them, when they attend upon family-worship, and to look over the Chapter or Psalm, as it is read by the master of the house. This I have found by experience to be a very good expedient.*

Restrain them from rambling about on the Lord's day, the most proper time for them to get knowledge; and do not connive at their working upon it for themselves; much less oblige them to it, in order to furnish themselves with those necessaries, which it is your duty to provide for them. *Command* and oblige them to spend those sacred hours in public and private attendance upon divine worship; and endeavour to make them sensible of the ends and designs of it.

Maintain a proper authority over them, and do not make yourselves contemptible to them, by excessive familiarity and indulgence. But, on the other hand, do not treat them with barbarity, as if they were dogs, and had no share in the same human nature with yourselves.

Finally; be always sensible, that the success of all your endeavours depends upon the concurrence of divine grace; and earnestly pray to God for the blessed spirit to make them effectual.

These short directions are easy to be understood by those that are disposed to practice them. And certainly, they are not impracticable, through the grace of God, to a Christian. The objections against them must arise not from reason or inability, but from a slothful disaffected heart. The omission will involve you in very dreadful guilt, and it is likely to occasion the eternal ruin of thousands of immortal Souls. The observance of them, through the divine blessing, might contribute to your satisfaction and interest in time and eternity, and advance a very miserable part of human nature to all the glory and happiness of the heavenly world. If any of you are proof against the energy of such considerations as these, I have none more weighty or affecting to propose to you. But some of you, I doubt not, have already felt their force, and others will, I hope, submit to it for the future. Which may God grant for Jesus' sake. *Amen.*