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THE

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

OF

THE NEGROES.

A SERMON,

DELIVERED BEFORE ASSOCIATIONS OF PLANTERS IN LIBERTY AND
M'INTOSH COUNTIES, GEORGIA,

BY THE REV. CHARLES COLCOCK JONES,
of Savannah.

FOURTH EDITION.

PRINCETON, N. J.

PRINTED BY D'HART & CONNOLLY.

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1832.

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THIS excellent Address was twice delivered, as will be seen by Mr. Jones' notice, before Associations of Southern Planters, and committed for publication at their request. A FOURTH EDITION is now issued gratuitously, for the purpose of extending its circulation, and of bringing before the community, in an unexceptionable form, a safe, practicable and efficient plan for promoting the Religious Instruction of their Negroes. The subject recommends itself at once, not only to the Christian, but to every one who believes that the success of the Gospel is identified with the good morals and temporal prosperity of the community.

Every Planter, who may receive a copy of this Address, is earnestly requested to give it a perusal. It was written by a Southern gentleman, who hopes to spend his life among Southern Planters in carrying into execution, as far as may be, the plan proposed. Several Counties, in Georgia, have already adopted it, with success. Why may it not be adopted in Virginia, North Carolina, and other States? Every thing connected with the subject depends, of course, entirely upon the wishes of the Planters themselves. It is very desirable, therefore, that they should give it a fair examination.

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The following Address has been delivered, within a few weeks, before two Societies formed for the Religious Instruction of the Negroes—one in McIntosh, and the other in Liberty County—and by both Societies it was requested for publication. It is my earnest desire that it may awaken the attention of the public to a subject, long neglected, but of vital importance to us, as citizens of the South, whether we consider it in a civil or in a moral point of view. The Address appears as it was delivered, and refers exclusively to PLANTATION Negroes.

CHARLES C. JONES.

SAVANNAH, Georgia, May 30th, 1831.

ADDRESS,

ſ.c.

“And he said unto them, *Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.*”—MARK 16: 15.

MEN AND BRETHREN:

THE Lord Jesus Christ was standing on the Mount of Olives surrounded by his disciples. Beneath them lay Jerusalem with its walls, and palaces, and towers, and holy temple, lighted up by the risen sun; and around, as far as the eye could reach, the cities of Palestine, peering above the foilage of the forests, or standing exposed on the plains; the hills and vallies covered with fields of grain, and vineyards and habitations of men. The work which his Father had given him to do was now finished. He was about to ascend to the right hand of God. The bright cloud which was to receive him out of their sight, was fast floating along in the clear blue sky, to overshadow the place where he stood. And what now should be his *last* commands to his disciples? He seemed with them from the Mount, to survey the world. He had taught them that He was the Redeemer of the world. He had taught them that the field in which this truth should be sown was the world. Then directing their eyes

abroad on the scene before them, and spreading forth his hands over it, he cries out: *Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.* To procure the power and privilege of giving this command, Christ died and rose again.

The disciples were the representatives of his church on earth. The command is to his church, and is of perpetual obligation. It is obligatory not only upon ministers of the church, to whom the office of preaching the Gospel is specially committed; but also upon all members of the church, to whom God has given the ability to support the preaching of the Gospel, or talents that qualify them to become teachers of the unlearned. The command implies that all men in the world, no matter of what nation or complexion or condition, are the moral and accountable creatures of God. That they are *lost*, and need the Gospel of Salvation. Whenever, therefore, any people come within the range of our influence, we, who are acting under this command, have two questions, and but two to settle. *Do they need the Gospel?* and, *Has God put it in our power to give them the Gospel?* The Negroes of our country come fairly within the range of our influence. We believe that they are men—the creatures of God, and like ourselves are moving onward to the retributions of eternity; and as philanthropists and Christians, we are bound to propose to ourselves and to answer these questions in regard to them.

I. *Do they need the Gospel?*

We can return but one answer to this question, and it is an affirmative one. The description which the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, gives of the Heathen world, will apply, with very little abatement, to our Negroes. They lie, steal, blaspheme; are slothful, envious, malicious, inventors of evil things, deceivers,

covenant breakers, implacable, unmerciful. They are greatly wanting in natural affection, improvident, without understanding and grossly immoral. Chastity is an exceeding rare virtue. Polygamy is common, and there is little sacredness attached to the marriage contract. It is entered into for the most part without established forms, and is dissolved at the will of the parties. Nor is there any sacredness attached to the Sabbath. It is a day of idleness and sleep, of sinful amusements, of visiting, or of labor. They are generally temperate through necessity; when ardent spirit can be obtained, they will freely drink it. Numbers of them do not go to church, and cannot tell us who Jesus Christ is, nor have they ever heard so much as the Ten Commandments read and explained. Of the professors of religion among them, there are many of questionable piety who occasion the different churches great trouble in discipline, for they are extremely ignorant, and frequently are guilty of the grossest vices. We cannot go more fully into the moral condition of these people at present. Indeed, it is unnecessary. Generally speaking, they appear to us to be without Hope and without God in the world. A nation of Heathen in our very midst. And if we will believe the testimony of our own eyes and ears, and the testimony of those who know these people most intimately, we must conclude that they need the Gospel, and need it as much as any people in the world.*

II. *Has God put it into our power to give them the Gospel?*

We think that he has. The civil law does not forbid us to give them the Gospel *orally*. We can therefore employ or permit men to visit our plantations for the purpose of instructing them; or we can undertake to

* See note A.

instruct them ourselves. And having our plantations, the time and persons of our servants wholly under our control, we can arrange the manner and frequency of our instructions, as we please, and the period of these instructions with as much punctuality, and with as little interruption, as we can arrange the morning and evening devotions of our own fire-side. Our very children might become, to some extent, teachers, by reading to them plain portions of the Bible, or plain Tracts and things of such sort. And who can condemn us for doing what we conceive to be duty? Or who can hinder us? We infringe no law, neither do we violate any man's property or liberty. These two questions, then, being answered in the affirmative, it follows that we are in duty bound to give our Negroes the Gospel.

We are bound to give them the Gospel—*by Humanity*. Were we to see a sheep fallen into a ditch, we would lift it out. Were our ox famishing in the stall, we would loose it and lead it away to watering. Much more, then, should we lift up our servants from the pit of moral pollution and death, into which they have fallen. Much more should we strive to loose them from the bonds of sin and Satan, and lead away their famishing souls to the water of life. How much better is a man than a sheep or an ox? When their bodies are diseased we physic and nurse them. And how can we neglect their diseased soul? Are not their souls more precious than their bodies?

We are bound to give them the Gospel—*by Consistency*. We are actually contributing of our substance—or giving our prayers and best wishes to the various benevolent operations of the present day. We pray that Christ's Kingdom may come, and that his Gospel may be preached to every nation and people under the whole heaven. In consistency with this prayer we

have assisted in sending missionaries to the Heathen, thousands of miles from us, and to destitute settlements in our country. We have assisted in printing Bibles and Tracts, and in sending them into every family in our land and in foreign lands. We have assisted in preaching the Gospel in our public prisons—in the harbors of our sea-port cities, to those who do business on the great waters. We have assisted in gathering the children of all parents into Sabbath Schools; and we have assisted in staying the swellings of the fiery waves of intemperance. But what have we done for our poor Negroes? With shame must we confess that we have done *nothing!* An enemy, nay, a friend, might well say to us, how can you contribute to all these benevolent works and pray for their success? How can you pray for Christ's Kingdom to come; how can you pray that God would enable you to do something to hasten its coming, while you are neglecting a people perishing for lack of vision around your very doors? And what answer could we return in justification of our conduct? None. We could do no more than honestly confess our inconsistency.

We cannot cry out against the Papists for withholding the Scriptures from the common people, and keeping them in ignorance of the way of life, for we withhold the Bible from our Servants, and keep them in ignorance of it, while we *will* not use the means to have it read and explained to them. We have been shocked at the death of forty thousand men annually, by intemperance; and our community has been thrown into commotion by it. But it is probable that as many die annually among the Negroes in slave-holding States, whose death is equally as hopeless as that of the drunkard, and yet we have not thought of this, neither have we felt it. We have been horror-struck at the cruelties of the Heathen, who cast their aged and infirm, and their tender infants

into the rivers to be devoured by crockodiles. But we have manifested no emotions of horror at abandoning the souls of our Servants to the adversary, the roaring lion that walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Our inconsistency in withholding the Gospel from our Servants, both as Philanthropists and Christians, is most glaring, nor can we deny it.

We are bound to give them the Gospel—*by the spirit of the Religion which we possess*. Religion is comprehended in one word—*LOVE*. Love to God, and love to man. This love, as manifested to man, consists in a tender regard for his interests and an earnest desire for his happiness, not so much, however, in reference to this world as to that to come. Hence it is that the Christian feels such an interest in the conversion and salvation of men, that he is willing to make any sacrifice to obtain this object. Indeed, the very design of God in converting men is to promote his glory, by using them as instruments in the conversion of others. It is therefore an indication of radical defect of Christian character; or most lamentable, may we not say criminal, ignorance of duty, when the Christian is insensible to the condition of those who are perishing around him, and makes no effort for their salvation. The desire of the Christian to give men the Gospel, should be in proportion to the difficulty to be surmounted, and the need in which they stand of it.

The great, the golden rule of conduct, which Christ prescribes to his followers, is this: "*All things whatsoever ye would men would do unto you, do ye even so to them.*" Admitting, then, that we were in the condition of the Negro, and he in our condition, able to read and appreciate the Gospel; experimentally acquainted with it; a partaker of its privileges and of its eternal hopes; would we not think it his duty to make known to us the

Gospel, which is every thing to perishing sinners, and which alone could yield us happiness in our humble lot? We surely should. And what would we think of him if he denied it to us? *Could* we believe that he possessed the spirit of his religion? *Could* we believe that he sincerely believed and felt all the amazing and soul stirring truths which it contains; No—we could not. Shall we not, then, by passing over the spiritual wants of our Servants, be deficient in the very spirit of our religion? We feel that we shall; and we tremble to think that should we continue to neglect them, our neglect might not only shut their souls out of heaven, but our own.

And once more—we are bound to give them the Gospel—*by the express command of God*. We are commanded by Christ to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, as we have seen. But more particularly is it said to us, as owners of slaves, “Masters give unto your Servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven.” Col. iv. 1.—i. e. Treat your Servants with justice and in an equitable manner, for you have a Master in heaven to whom you are accountable for your treatment of them. Now, we cannot come up to the spirit and letter of these commands, unless we give them the Gospel.

Yes, our Servants are men—They need the Gospel. God has put it into our power to give them the Gospel; and we are bound to do it, by *Humanity*—by *Consistency*—by the *Spirit of the Religion we profess*—and by the *Express command of God*. This obligation has been resting upon us for years. May we not say that its age gives it weight? Yea, an awful weight! We have heretofore neglected our duty. If we continue to neglect it, we shall be as heretofore, *without excuse*.

We cannot excuse ourselves, by saying—*that the Negroes have the Gospel already.* Their opportunities of hearing the Gospel *are limited.* For although, generally speaking, all are permitted to go to church on Sabbath, yet *only a part* on the plantations can go on each Sabbath, as it is not permitted, nor can we say that it is desirable, that all should leave the plantations at a time.) And even of this minority, (and an exceeding small minority it is, when we reckon children and youth,) *only a part* attend church. So that the majority do not hear the Gospel for weeks and months together. And, as it is among the whites, so it is among them, many never go to church at all.

But whenever the Negroes hear the preaching of the Gospel, they hear it at a very great disadvantage. The sermons are almost wholly delivered to their masters, and are not only, for the greater part, inapplicable to them, but entirely above their comprehension, both as to language and thought. The Gospel is preached to them in an unknown tongue. Occasionally they are particularly addressed, while worshipping with their masters; and perhaps as often, a regular discourse is delivered at their place of meeting.* We have colored Ministers and exhorters, but their numbers are wholly inadequate to the supply of the Negroes; and while their ministrations are unfrequent, and conducted in great weakness, there are some of them whose moral character is justly suspected, and who may be considered blind leaders of the blind.†

Nor have the Negroes, at any other time than the Sabbath, any system of stated religious instruction, if we except a few plantations on which they are gathered together and instructed in the evenings. So that on the

* See note B.

† See note C.

whole, considering the fewness of the numbers that attend church, the disadvantage under which they hear the Gospel, and the little attention which is paid to their private instructions on the plantations, we must say to our condemnation, that our Servants do not enjoy the privileges of the Gospel. Hence their ignorance of the nature of true religion, and of its fundamental doctrines.

Nor can we excuse ourselves by saying—*that they are incapable of receiving Religious Instruction.* It is customary amongst us to entertain very low opinions of the intellectual capacity of the Negroes. Whether this be right or wrong, we leave every man to judge for himself, and to judge likewise whether their mental weakness is to be attributed to the circumstances of their condition, or to any difference as made by the Author of their existence between them and other men. But to suppose them too ignorant to comprehend the plainer and more essential doctrines of Christianity, is certainly to disregard the testimony of God's word, as well as the testimony of facts.

It is said that "God is no respecter of persons; but, in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." And again, that "He hath made of one blood all nations of men that dwell on all the face of the earth." (Acts, 10, 34—35, 17, 25—26.) What then can be plainer than that all men have one common origin, and that all are capable of exercising proper affections towards God; and this necessarily implies a *capability* of understanding the Divine Law, no matter under what dispensation of law they live, whether natural or revealed. If it be allowed that the Negroes are men, then these things are true in regard to them, and thus by the word of God does it appear that they are capable of understanding the

Gospel. And this is further evident from fact: Are there not colored communicants in our churches who understand, and in their lives adorn, the doctrine of Jesus Christ? We must believe that their general ignorance on Divine subjects is wholly owing to their want of proper instruction, and not at all to any natural defect of mental constitution.

Nor can we excuse ourselves—*because the Gospel meets with so little success amongst them.* The great wonder with us should be, not that the Gospel meets with *so little success*, but that it meets with *any success at all*; for we have seen that it is not preached to them in its fullness and connexion—nor is it preached to them generally, nor intelligibly. And we have also seen that the Negroes are extremely ignorant and vicious; and, like other men, they naturally hate the light. It should, therefore, be very far from a matter of discouragement to us, that the Gospel, as they have heretofore been accustomed to receive it, has met with so little success. On the contrary, it should be a matter of *encouragement*. For if it has met with *any success at all*, under a feeble and inadequate dispensation of it, what success may we not hope for under a more energetic and adequate dispensation of it?

The world and the glory of it, are outweighed in value by the soul. If, therefore, only *one* soul is saved from amongst them, the Gospel meets with great success; and were it now revealed to us, that the most extensive system of instruction we could devise, requiring a vast amount of labor and protracted through ages, would result in the salvation of the soul of only *one poor African*, we should feel ourselves warranted in cheerfully entering upon the work, for our reward would exceed our toil and care above the computation of any finite mind. But further, if the Gospel meet with no

success at all, it would be no reason why we should not undertake the religious instruction of the Negroes; for if we certainly determine that it is our *duty* to give them instruction, we should do it. The *success* of that instruction *belongs to God*. This is the view which every Christian should take of the subject. God has evidently been speaking to us in favor of our Servants. He has called many of them into his kingdom, and made them rich in faith, as we do know. We have not, as yet, listened to his voice. It is time that we should. He tells us that he is willing to bless the preaching of the Gospel to their salvation. Shall we neglect them? Shall we despise God's voice?

Nor can we render as an excuse for not giving religious instruction to our servants—that *there are before us, peculiar and great difficulties hard to be overcome*. For in every enterprise of benevolence, there are difficulties; and if we wait, in our efforts to do good, until all difficulties are removed, we shall never commence. Times have suddenly and strangely altered in this world, if Christians can do good without encountering much that will try the purity and the firmness of their purposes. Against new enterprises, there are always men in readiness to magnify difficulties and to multiply objections. But when we enter upon them, and have a mind to the work, and the work be of God, difficulties and objections gradually vanish away. One thing is certain:—whatever difficulties now exist with regard to the religious instruction of our Servants, will continue to exist; for there are no causes now in operation adequate to their removal, nor is there the slightest possibility that there will be any. It is, therefore, the dictate of wisdom to commence our work at once. And again, if we are called of God to this work, we must, in the best way we can, attempt it, leaving it to *Him* to remove all obstacles

to our progress in it. And it will be a proof of the ardor of our feelings and of our sincerity in the work, if we can cheerfully and manfully grapple with difficulty.

No, we have no excuse for our neglect of our Servants. Before God we must plead guilty, both we and our fathers, and render thanks unto God that his mercy and forbearance have preserved us from merited punishment. From the first introduction of these people into our country, they have been neglected. They have lived and died without the consolations of religion. They have worn out their lives to furnish us with the necessaries and luxuries of life. They have supported us in ease and fulness; and yet after they have thus communicated to us of temporal things, we have ungratefully failed to make them partakers of our spiritual things. Are they debtors to us? or are we debtors to them? Let the conscience of every man answer.

The religious instruction of the Negroes properly devolves on us, their legal owners; for they are wholly at our disposal. None are better acquainted with our laws, our local prejudices, the condition and character of the Negroes, than we; and consequently none are better able to devise and carry into effect unexceptionable systems of instruction.

Now, there are a number of our fellow-citizens, who feel deeply for the spiritual welfare of their Servants, but have been greatly at a loss to know *what* to do. No system of instruction has been proposed for their adoption, and they have felt a delicacy in coming before the public with any thing of their own. But it is time to adopt some plan of instruction. Our duty is plain, our Servants must have the Gospel. On this point there can be but one opinion.

But what shall our plan of instruction be?

Before we proceed to answer this question, we should

take into consideration the character of the people, and the sort of instruction which they need. They are an ignorant and wicked people, from the oldest to the youngest. Hence, instruction should be committed to them *all*, and communicated *intelligibly*. And that it may be impressed upon their memories, and good order promoted amongst them, it should be communicated *frequently and at stated intervals of time*.

We would wish then to communicate religious instruction to *all* our servants, *intelligibly, frequently, and statedly*.

What plan is there then that will secure all these necessary ends?

1. *Shall we employ Missionaries to devote their whole time to the Negroes?* While we allow that the employment of Missionaries for this purpose would be attended with very great advantages, and where it can be done, it ought to be done; yet, there are objections to this plan, as falling short of the attainment of the ends which we have in view.

The first is, we could not procure Missionaries. It must be remembered that we want *Southern Men*. Can our churches furnish them? Where are they? Again, if we could procure Missionaries, the question of their support must be decided. Will our churches, or will communities pledge themselves for the necessary funds?

And again, suppose the Missionaries and funds for their support obtained, they would, in a majority of cases, be set over extensive territories, and would be compelled to visit the plantations in rotation, so that several weeks would intervene before these visits could be repeated. Their labor would necessarily be stinted. And remembering that the Negroes for the most part must be instructed at night, we may ask, where are

the men of such iron constitution as would live in such service in the low country? The difficulty on the score of health would not exist in the up-country.

2. *Shall we establish stations contiguous to a number of plantations, and give instruction on the Sabbath?* We admit that this is an excellent plan as far as it goes. But it does not meet the wants of the Negroes. There is a radical defect in it. Only a part of every plantation is allowed to be away at any one time, and admitting that this part attended at the stations for instruction on the Sabbath, *a very small part* only of the whole population would enjoy the privileges of the Gospel. But of those who are permitted to leave the plantations on the Sabbath, all would not attend at the stations for instruction, and thus this very small part would be made much smaller.

3. The most efficient plan—the plan which seems to secure all the important ends which we desire, in conveying the Gospel to the Negroes, is that which your Society has adopted, and which is followed by the society in Liberty and by the citizens of Bryan county. It is a plan that embraces the two already mentioned and much more in addition: and for the information of those who are not acquainted with it, let us briefly state it. The plan is this. The Planters form themselves into a *voluntary* association, and take the religious instruction of the colored population into their own hands. And in this way:—As many of the association as feel themselves called to the work, shall become teachers. An Executive Committee is to regulate the operations of the Society, to establish regular stations, both for instruction during the week and on the Sabbath, and to appoint teachers who shall punctually attend to their respective charges, and communicate instruction altogether *orally*, and in as systematic and intelli-

gible a manner as possible, embracing all the principles of the Christian religion as understood by orthodox Protestants, and carefully avoiding all points of doctrine that separate different religious denominations.

The teachers are not to be sent to any plantation without the cordial consent of the owner. Nor shall they attend at any other time than that specified by him. His wishes and arrangements are to be consulted and complied with. They are to confine themselves to the *religious instruction* of the Negroes *wholly*; nor are they to intermeddle with the concerns of the plantation in any manner, nor repeat abroad what their ears hear, or their eyes see on them. They are also to make Reports of their labors to the Executive Committee, which Committee shall make a general report to the Society at some specified time. In addition to the instructions of the teachers, where it is practicable, a Missionary may be employed to take a general supervision of the whole, occupy Sabbath stations, preach also during the week on plantations, and assist in framing courses of instruction, etc.

The only difficulty in the execution of this plan, is the procurement of a sufficient number of efficient teachers. In certain sections of our country, no teachers can be found; the white population is so sparse and so few of them, if any, are pious. In these sections, recourse must be had to one or the other of the two plans first mentioned.

Such is the plan which you have adopted. It has thus far answered your expectations.—But we will not contend for its perfection; we will hold ourselves in readiness to receive light from any quarter; it may have its faults. Indeed there have been several *objections* urged against this plan, which as they may lodge in the minds of some to whom the plan is new, it may not be improper to consider.

1. *The plan may succeed in a small neighborhood, but not in a large one.* The success of the plan in any neighborhood depends upon the number of efficient teachers; only secure a sufficient number of teachers, and the neighborhood may be increased to any size. And admitting that there are not a sufficient number of teachers in a neighborhood, yet much good may be done by a few. If we can cultivate only a part of our field, let us do it. It is better to cultivate a part, than let the whole run to waste. Let us not despise the day of small things. Let us trust in God, who may at some future time enable us to cultivate the whole.

X 2. *This plan of instruction will be the means of introducing amongst us men and principles, hostile to our present system of things, and will lead us into trouble.* But in what way? Is not the plan our own. Do we not carry it into effect ourselves? Are we not interested persons? Will we commission men to go on our plantations to sow discontent and revolt! Are not the Executive Committee charged with the oversight of the teachers? Have they not power to check or depose from office those who give improper instruction? Our society professes to have nothing to do with the civil instruction of the Negroes, nor do we desire it. We are concerned with them only as moral and accountable beings. Such a thing as stated in the objection cannot take place, unless we ourselves bring it to pass. It is presumed no one will suspect us of it. Every intelligent man ought to know that there is no more effectual method to prevent what is suggested by the objector, than to instruct our Servants in the principles of Christianity, to be present ourselves in all their assemblies for religious purposes, and to know who are their teachers. Our plan carries our security in it.

U 3. *This plan interferes with the Planter's arrange-*

ments, and will probably expose him to the slanders of the Teachers. The plan cannot interfere with the Planter's arrangements. If he pleases to permit teachers to come on his place, they will come at whatever time he shall appoint, and continue the meetings no longer than may be agreeable to him. The Planter is to please himself. He is not to conform to the arrangements of the Society, but the Society is to conform to his; for the Society very well knows that it has no more right to interfere in his plantation arrangements, than they have to interfere in those of his family. That the Planter will suffer from the slanderous reports of the teachers, we hope may never be the fact. When the teacher comes on a plantation, he comes as it were into a private family. It would almost be unpardonable in a man to come with professions of friendship to do us the kindness and service of religiously instructing our Servants, and then discovering something which he may deem improper in our treatment of our Servants or in their conduct towards us, to go away and make it a matter of public notoriety. He betrays the confidence reposed in him. He is unfaithful to his trust. We hope the Society may never hold in its bosom such a man. We hope it may never shake the hand of fellowship with him. In order to avoid every thing of this nature, it should be the duty of the Executive Committee to appoint as teachers men of judgment and discretion, and to inculcate in their private conference with them, the Christian duty of abstaining from any conversation whatever, upon what they see or hear while engaged in the discharge of their important duties.

4. *This plan will take up much of the Teacher's time, and subject him to great inconvenience. What good and good work is there that requires no sacrifice of time and convenience? And is the sacrifice of time*

and convenience in the present work so great as to deter us from it? Let us see if it is.

As to time, the teacher will devote perhaps, at most, but one evening to the instruction of the Negroes, and surely he can so arrange his business as not to suffer other engagements to interfere with this. And now what is it for us to devote one evening in the week to our Servants when their whole time is devoted to us? Especially too, when we seek to promote the salvation of their immortal souls? It is a shame for any man to talk of the sacrifice of time.

As to inconvenience, the teacher will not ride at the extent, more than a few miles. He may sometimes have his zeal and resolution tested by a dark or rainy evening. But what is the inconvenience of a short ride, and sometimes on a stormy night, for the benefit of those who are employed in labor for us, through all the changes of weather during the year: and who have *no other time* in the week to attend religious meetings? It is a shame for any man to talk of the sacrifice of convenience.

The trouble of preparation for his meetings should be something to the teacher. He is engaged in most important and momentous labors; they reach into eternity, and he should discharge them to the best of his abilities. He should bring forth out of his treasures things new and old, so as always to interest and instruct his charge. But considering how many excellent helps we now have in interpreting and illustrating Scripture, he may make his trouble comparatively light. And what is the trouble of preparation to a man who feels the value of the soul—to a man engaged in the work of converting men unto God? The trouble is not then thought of. Do then, teachers who are interested in their work, complain of the trouble of preparation? No.

They know by experience that the Scripture is true which saith, *He that watereth, shall himself be watered.* They are watered in having their skirts clear of the blood of souls; in obtaining a more intimate acquaintance with the word of God; and in enjoying the happiness consequent upon sincere labors in the cause of Christ. We feel that if we can see our Servants attentive to our instructions, improving in morality—above all, heartily embracing religion, we shall feel amply compensated for any sacrifice of time and convenience to which we shall be subjected. And by the blessing of God, may we not hope for this?

5. *This plan of instructing the Negroes will do no good; it will only make them worse hypocrites and worse men. It has been tried before.* We confess that we are unable to feel the force of this objection. Our object will be to teach as God shall enable us, *the Gospel* to the Negroes. Will any man say that the *tendency* of the Gospel is to make men worse than they are? If any man says this, we earnestly hope that he will put himself to the trouble of examining the Gospel itself, and its legitimate effects upon mankind. We think that he will be convinced of his error. Wherever *the Gospel* is statedly and faithfully preached, the result is favorable to the piety and morality of the people. We can see no reason whatever, why it should produce an effect on our Negroes, contrary to that which it is designed by infinite wisdom and benevolence to produce, and which it actually produces on all other men, and on some whose condition is worse than that of our Negroes. And from what people did *we*, with all our piety and morality, and knowledge, spring? From a people once as degraded as Negroes. And what has lifted us so far above our progenitors? *The Gospel*, and nothing else. Is there not then a redeeming power in the Gos-

pel for the Africans? We firmly believe that there is. Without this belief, we would not make an effort to give it to them. The unintelligible or corrupt preaching of the Gospel may make men worse, but never the preaching of the pure Gospel.

We are quite sure that no plan of instruction like the present, has ever been in operation in this country. The efforts heretofore made, have been quite partial and for the most part irregular. And it would not be proper for us, considering God's general course in providence and in grace, to expect much decided good from such efforts. And even admitting that the Negroes have hardened themselves, and grown worse under former advantages, this should not discourage us from attempting something more in their behalf. It should operate as an additional and a very powerful reason why we should attempt something more in their behalf. But may we not go further? Admitting we were assured before hand, that our labors would be contemned, and result only in great indifference to religion and in increased hardness of heart, even this assurance ought not to deter us from duty. God, sometimes in the accomplishment of his purposes, and of his great mercy, commands advantages to be multiplied to those who will certainly abuse them. The Jews, in the days of Christ, were a remarkable instance of this. (Matt. 23: 33, 39.)

But it may be questioned if this objection is supported by a solitary fact. On the contrary, we believe, that in the judgment of sober, unprejudiced men, whenever the Negroes have enjoyed for any reasonable time the privileges of the Gospel, they will, in point of order and morality, be found in advance of those who have not enjoyed them.

These are some of the objections which have been

urged against our plan of conveying religious instruction to our Servants, and after duly considering them, we do not think that they are of sufficient weight to deter us from our purpose. It is a matter of astonishment, that there should be any objection at all; for the duty of giving religious instruction to our Negroes, and the benefits flowing from it, should be obvious to all. The *benefits*, we conceive to be incalculably great, and some of them are the following :

1. *There will be a better understanding of the mutual relations of Master and Servant.* We doubt not that there are many of our fellow citizens, and we would implicate ourselves in the charge, who have never given themselves the trouble to inquire into the number and nature of those duties which they owe to their Servants, and are in reason and in conscience, bound to perform. Nor do we think that our Servants generally, understand their duties towards us, and from what motives they should be performed. In many instances, they learn them after failure to perform them, through punishment, which might have been saved by a little timely instruction. And although the relative duties of Master and Servant are so important, and are so often insisted upon and defined in the Scriptures, we do not recollect ever to have heard a sermon from the pulpit concerning them.

2. *There will be greater subordination, and a decrease of crime amongst the Negroes.* It is well known that Slavery existed in the Roman Empire during the life of Christ and his Apostles, and that many Slaves became converts during their preaching. It appears that they did not interfere at all with the civil condition of the Slaves, nor pass any opinion concerning it, but preached to them the plain Gospel which is limited to every class and condition of men, and inculcated the

duty of obedience in a very high degree. The following passages will suffice as a specimen: "Servants be obedient to your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service as men pleasers, but as the Servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." "Servants obey in all things your Masters according to the flesh, and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men." "Let as many Servants as are under the yoke count their Masters worthy of all honor, &c." And the Apostle Paul commands Ministers to "Exhort Servants to be obedient unto their own Masters and to please them well in all things, &c. (Eph. 6: 5, 6; Col. 3: 22; 1 Tim. 6: 1; Titus 2: 9,) and other passages of like import which any one may see for himself by consulting the New Testament; particularly the Epistle to Philemon, where it appears that the Apostle Paul sends back Onesimus, a runaway slave to his Master.

It will be noticed that obedience is inculcated as a *Christian duty*, binding on the Servants, and thus the authority of Masters is supported by considerations drawn from eternity. Now it would be a prime object with the Teachers to tread in the footsteps of the Apostles. Will the authority of the Masters be weakened by instructions of this sort? No, it will be strengthened. And we believe that their authority can be strengthened and supported *in this way only*; for the duty of obedience will never be felt and performed to the extent that we desire it, *unless we can bottom it on religious principle.*

Our Patrol Laws are not efficiently executed now, and this proposed plan of operation will, to some extent, supply their place. For the simple presence of a white man at stated times amongst the Negroes, will tend greatly to the promotion of good order.

It has been said, that religious instruction tends to create insubordination, and that religious meetings of the Negroes are nurseries for every sort of irregularity, and we have been pointed for an example to the affair in Charleston of 1822. But the example adduced, refutes the very point it was intended to prove. Those meetings which were held in Charleston for the purpose of exciting the colored population, *were not religious meetings*. They were meetings held under *color* of religion; but religion, properly speaking, had nothing to do with them; nor had the Negroes composing them any connexion with any white church or congregation.*

Supposing that it was religion itself that excited those people? (which we deny with all our might,) men are religious beings. They will meet for religious purposes again. And in what way shall we prevent the recurrence of the same consequences? Only by being present in their meetings ourselves. If our plan of sending a white instructor into every assembly of Negroes for religious purposes, had been in operation in Charleston in 1822, there would never have existed any difficulty. As we said before, our plan seems to carry our security in it.

To shew the influence of true religion upon the Negroes, the case of somewhat an extensive insurrection in one of the West India Islands may be cited, wherein all the Negroes attached to the Moravian Missionary Churches, *to a man, supported the authority of their Masters against the insurgents*. Now, these Moravian Missionaries, as we understand, will have nothing whatever to do with the civil condition of the Slaves, but confine themselves entirely to the work of preaching the Gospel of Christ Jesus and him crucified. In

* See note D.

the Danish West Indies, their congregations number 10,000 Negroes who profess faith in Christ; and in the British West Indies 15,000. Again—have we not heard individual planters say, that some of their best Servants are those who profess religion and appear to have the root of the matter in them? Without doubt, *crime* will be diminished. For Teachers, in order to induce a sense of guilt, must charge upon the Negroes those particular sins to which they are so much addicted, and expose their enormity and consequent punishment in the world to come. Many of them are guilty of notorious sins and know not that they are sins at all. And they will be led to respect each other more; to pay greater regard to mutual rights; the strong will not so much oppress the weak; family relations will be less liable to rupture; in short, all the social virtues will be more honored and respected. Short as has been the existence of your Society, you can testify to the influence of your instructions in restraining crime on some plantations. The same may be said of the instructions on some plantations in Bryan county. Indeed the improvement of the Negroes in morality seems to keep pace with the religious privileges they enjoy.

The plan of instruction pursued by your Society will afford new facilities, and better opportunities of bringing them under the influence of Temperance Societies. It is a matter of astonishment that Masters who are members of Temperance Societies, or advocates of Temperance, take no steps to prevent the sale of ardent spirit to their slaves, especially too when they have it amply in their power. In this matter they seem to lose sight of their own *interest*, to say nothing of their *duty* to their Negroes.

And again, the religious instruction of the Negroes will deliver them from being made dupes and instru-

ments of sin, by those to whom God in his mercy has given greater light, and who ought to know, and do better. The guilt of those must be tremendous who take advantage of their standing, and knowledge, and power, to entice and compel to sin, their poor degraded fellow creatures.

Happy then shall we be, if we can increase the spirit of obedience in our Servants, and cherish it by considerations drawn from eternity. Happy shall we be if we can raise the standard of their moral character, and place them in some good measure above the influence of evil seducers, and deliver their Masters from the pecuniary loss and the pain of severe discipline, consequent upon their negligence and crime.*

3. *Much unpleasant discipline will be saved to the Churches.* The offences of colored communicants against Christian character and church order, are very numerous and frequently very heinous; the discipline is wearisome, difficult and unpleasant. Excommunications are of continual occurrence, and are usually in a short time followed by applications for readmission. There never will be a better state of things until the Negroes are better instructed in religion.

4. *The Church and Society at large will be benefitted.* The way to strengthen and increase holiness in the soul, is to abound in works of holiness. It is by giving our talents to the exchangers that we gain other talents. By taking in hand the religious instruction of the Negroes, a sufficient field is thrown open for the most vigorous exercise of the piety and zeal, and talents of the church. And allowing that her labor proves of no avail to the Negroes, yet for the sake of the benefit to herself, she should persevere in them.

* See note E.

Society at large will also be benefitted. Benefitted in a *pecuniary point of view*. For a faithful Servant is more profitable than an unfaithful one. He will do more and better work, be less troublesome, and less liable to disease.

And benefitted in a *moral point of view*. We are so accustomed to sin, in the Negroes, which in them appears as a matter of course, that our sensibilities become blunted; we cease to abhor it, and then fall into sin ourselves. We also associate every thing that is mean and degrading with the Negroes, and almost necessarily so, from their mean and degraded characters. The consequence is, they do not seem worthy of our regard, they lose all our respect, and it is no marvel if our conduct towards them is dictated by our opinion of them. Planters will generally confess that the management of them is not only attended with trouble and vexation, but with provocations to sin. And the demoralizing influence which they exert over children and youth, when they are permitted to associate much with them, is well known to us all. In fine, the influence of the Negroes on the morals of our white population, is exceedingly pernicious. It is like a millstone hanged about the neck of society. But when we shall see them assuming a higher standard of morals, the current of their opinion turning against vice, their appearance and deportment becoming more respectful, then shall we be favorably affected ourselves. Both classes of society will rise together, and *in this way only can they ever rise*, so great is the influence of the one over the other.

4 5. *The Souls of our Servants will be saved.* The great object for which we would communicate religious instruction to them is that their souls may be saved. To this all other objects should be subordinate. We

believe that God will bless our instructions according to our desire. Strengthened by our faith, let us be willing to sow in tears, for we shall reap in joy. Let us be willing to go forth weeping and bearing precious seed, for we shall come again with rejoicing, bringing sheaves with us. If the rest of Heaven is sweet to any human being, it is sweet to the poor African. If the cheering hopes of a blessed immortality are necessary to any human being, to animate and sustain him in his pilgrimage below, they are necessary to the poor African. The glory of God may be advanced as much in the salvation of his soul, as in the salvation of the soul of any other man whatever.

6. *We shall relieve ourselves of great responsibility.* God, in his mysterious providence has cast this people down under our feet. We rule over them. Why he has subjected them to this bondage, we know not. But one thing we do know:—They are his accountable creatures, and the manner of our treatment of them as such, cannot be a matter of indifference to us, if we have any regard whatever to his approbation or disapprobation. In the exercise of that supreme power over them, vested in us by the laws of our country, we can forbid any man's coming on our plantations for the purpose of religiously instructing them; we can forbid all meetings for religious purposes on our plantations; we can refuse to instruct them ourselves; we can forbid them the privileges of God's sanctuary on the Sabbath; we can literally bar the door of entrance into Heaven against them; nor is there any power in our government that can compel us to swerve a hair from such treatment of them. The moral destinies of these people are submitted to our disposal, and our responsibilities we may neglect, we may despise. But we cannot be delivered from them. They press upon us

with the weight of a mountain, and we can meet them only by giving them the Gospel according to the measure of Christ, "*Freely ye have received, freely give.*"

Some have thought that God has permitted the Africans to be brought to this country, that *His truth* might be made known to them. If He has, then may we exclaim: "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" He has not only caused the wrath, but the cupidity of man to praise Him. It is certain that the salvation of one soul will more than outweigh all the pain and woe of their capture and transportation, and subsequent residence amongst us. How slow have we been to second the designs of God! How astonishing is it that we have remained so long ignorant of our duty! May we not hope that at these times of ignorance God has winked; but now commands all men every where to repent? May we not hope that our repentance in this region has already begun? You, men and brethren, have reason to bless God that he has put it into your hearts to form the first Society for the Religious Instruction of the Negroes, ever formed, so far as we know, in the Southern States. From the altar which you have raised, fire may be borne to light up altars throughout our country, on which all the sons of Africa may offer sacrifices to God. *A public sentiment* on this subject has now begun its existence. It must live. It must be cherished. It must become as universal as that on Temperance, or on any other work of philanthropy and Christian benevolence. We hope that the attention of our countrymen will be turned to the moral and religious condition of the Negroes; and that after a lapse of time, it will be unusual to find a plantation deprived of the means of grace.

The work itself is great—It is difficult. There is

much in it to dampen ardour and induce discouragement. To preach the Gospel to any people however improved and however favorably situated, is discouraging; but to preach it to the most ignorant and degraded, laboring under every disadvantage, is discouraging in the extreme.

But it is the work of God. He can cause mountains to become plains, and rough places to become smooth. In Him must be our trust. In Him there is a sufficiency of power, and wisdom, and grace. And there is a glory in the work which the Apostle to the Gentiles, were he alive, would covet. In imitation of his Master, he was forward to remember the poor. He strove to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest he should build upon another man's foundation. We tread an untrodden field of enterprise, and the subjects of our regard are the poorest of the poor.

Finally, Men and Brethren—The cry of our perishing servants comes up to us from the sultry plains, as they bend at their toil. It comes up to us from their humble cottages, when they return at evening to rest their weary limbs. It comes up to us from the midst of their ignorance, and superstition and adultery, and lewdness. Shall we disregard it? The cry is passing up to God and *He* will hear it. In a little while our opportunity of doing good to our servants will be gone forever. In a little while we shall have done with the artificial distinctions of this world. We shall sleep in the ground, side by side, with them, and return to dust as soon as they. In a little while we shall meet them before Christ the Judge, the Great Master of all, with whom there is no respecter of persons. He will say to us—"These were your servants on earth. They labored for you ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years. They wore out their lives to supply you with the food, and

raiment, and conveniences, and luxuries, of your mortal life. You had them wholly at your disposal. You had my Gospel in your hands. I made you the almoners of my grace to them. Did you remember their never-dying souls?—While they communicated to you of temporal things, did you communicate to them of spiritual things? Did you urge and entreat them to come to me, who alone could give the weary and heavy laden rest? Did you allow them time to seek my face? Or did you neglect their eternal interests? Did you treat them like the beasts that perish? Were they merely the instruments of your profit or of your pleasure? Did you forget that they were your fellow creatures? Did you forget the price that I paid for their redemption? Did you leave them to perish eternally?"

Every owner of slaves has an account to render to God for his treatment of them. O, how fearful will be his account, who, knowingly and wilfully, will permit them to go down from his fields, and from his very dwelling into the bottomless pit, without making a solitary effort to save them? "He that ears to hear, let him hear!"

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NOTES.

NOTE A.

The language of Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, in his Address before the Agricultural Society of South Carolina, August 18th 1829, on the moral condition of the Negroes, is as follows:—"There needs no stronger illustration of the doctrine of human depravity, than the state of morals on plantations in general. Besides the mischievous tendency of bad example, in parents and elders, the little Negro is often taught by his natural instructors, that he may commit any vice he can conceal from his superiors; and thus falsehood and deception are, amongst the earliest they imbibe. Their advance in years is but a progression to the higher grades of iniquity. The violation of the seventh Commandment is viewed in a more venial light than in fashionable European circles. Their depredations of rice have been estimated to amount to twenty-five per cent. on the gross average of crops; and this calculation was made after fifty years experience, by one whose liberal provision for their wants left no excuse for their ingratitude.—*Address, pp. 10, 11.*

NOTE B.

The practice of some churches is to divide the service on the Sabbath between the whites and the blacks. This is an excellent and benevolent arrangement, and it were to be wished that it was more extensively entered into. The servants form as truly a part of the Minister's congregation, as the masters themselves; nor can we see how he can officially, not to say conscientiously, omit their regular instruction.

NOTE C.

“We look upon the habit of black preaching as a wide spreading evil, not because a black man cannot be a good one, but because in the first place, they are not sufficiently instructed for the sacerdotal office; secondly, not being regularly appointed by any ecclesiastical authority, there is no security for their qualifications, or principles of any kind; thirdly, because they acquire an influence independent of the owner and not subject to his control; and fourthly, when they have possessed this power, they have been known to make an improper use of it. Great efforts have been made to abolish this practice, but they have been attended with the usual effects of religious persecution, secrecy and nocturnal meetings in old fields and plantations where no white persons reside. We cannot but think it advisable to afford them an opportunity of contrasting the sense and doctrine they hear in such places from men whom they know to be only their equals, with the religious information to be derived from white teachers, whose superiority in knowledge of every kind they cannot question.”—*Pinckney's Address, Note E.*

NOTE D.

“On investigation, it appears that all concerned in that transaction, except one, had seceded from the regular Methodist Church in 1817, and formed a separate establishment in connexion with the African Methodist Society in Philadelphia, whose Bishop, a colored man named Allen, had assumed that office, being himself a seceder from the Methodist Church of Philadelphia, Penn. At this period, Mr. S. Bryan, the local Minister of the regular Methodist Church in Charleston, was so apprehensive of sinister designs, that he addressed a letter to the City Council, on file in the Council Chamber, dated 8th Nov. 1817, stating at length the reasons of his suspicion.”—*Pinckney's Address, No. B. p. 20.*

NOTE E.

“Were true religion propagated amongst this numerous and important class, a sense of duty would counteract their reluctance to labor, and diminishing the cases of feigned sickness, so harassing to the planter, would augment their numerical force and consequent production. The social relations of life being better observed, a greater proportion of domestic happiness would prevail, and render them more contented with their situation, and more anxious to promote their owner's welfare. The absence or diminution of theft, falsehood, and many other vices, would render the home of the agriculturist far more agreeable than it can be, where guilt, which escapes human detection, knows not and fears not another tribunal. The necessity of punishment would decrease; for the want of Christianity prevents their owners from practising its dictates in the forgiveness of injuries; so little good results from pardoning those who are incapable of appreciating the most that it is frequently considered sufficient cause for repeating the offence. That moral improvement would follow the introduction of religion among the blacks, may be argued from its influence upon the white population of our own State. It has been remarked by our oldest judges, that the progress of vice and crime throughout the upper country, many years since, was more sensibly arrested after the Missionaries commenced their labors, than by the previous establishment of Courts of Justice. Public Schools were not organized until a much later period.

“There are some who object to the religious instruction of their people, on the ground that it has been the cloak assumed to cover the nefarious design of insurrection. To this we reply in the first place, that it was the only cloak it could assume. Secondly, that such instruction was the best antidote to this very disease. And thirdly, that no arguments are entitled to so little weight as those which condemn the use of any practice because it has been abused. The most valuable medicines become active poisons, when improperly administered; and shall we forbid this medicine for the soul because a few discontented wretches have perverted its sacred use?”—*Pinckney's Address*, pp. 12. 13.

The following information, received from a valued friend in Charleston, of 27th April, respecting the manner of conducting the Methodist missions to the Negroes in South Carolina, and their success, will be found of interest. What a change for the better would

be effected in our colored population if similar missions were established throughout our country? The usual manner of conducting the missions, is, for the Missionary to preach at the different plantations within the bounds of his mission, on the Sabbath, and at night. During the day, while the adults are at work, the children are catechised and instructed in the first principles of Christianity. When satisfactory evidence is given that any have become truly penitent, they are received as probationers in the Church, and divided into classes; each class is placed under the charge of a leader, in whom the missionary has confidence, and after a trial of six months, if a favorable report is given by the leader and the sanction of the owners obtained, they are admitted into the fellowship of the church.

There are three Missionaries appointed by the South Carolina Conference, to labor on the plantations on Pon Pon, Combahee, Santee, and Savannah Rivers. The success has equalled the most sanguine expectations. Gentlemen owning plantations have willingly received the Missionaries and given them free access to their slaves; and in several instances application has been made by those who had not been visited, that their slaves might have the Gospel preached to them; stating as a reason for their request that they had witnessed the beneficial effects resulting to the slaves of their neighbors. The number received into the church according to the minutes of the conference are as follows:—Mission on Combahee, Pon Pon, &c. 440; do. Santee, 391; do. Savannah River, 246—making a total of 1077. From the Reports of Sunday Schools in the interior, I learn that in many instances, Blacks are taught in their schools."



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