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The following communication touches a subject of great delicacy and difficulty—a subject which is forcing itself on the attention of the country, and demands most mature deliberation and the wisest counsels. We do not think proper to flinch from it. In fact, the time approaches, when we must think of it; when we cannot put it from us. For ourselves, we disapprove of that timidity which is so conspicuous in some, and of the noisy declamation of others. The evil was originally none of our own seeking, but was forced on us. We are not, then, under the impulse of a vague feeling of benevolence, to rush into measures equally ruinous to ourselves and our bond-men; nor ought we, through dread of consequences, to abstain from temperate discussions of our duty. In one point we differ from the worthy author, and that respects the capacity of organizing insurrection already evinced. The few schemes of that sort, have been too crude and ill digested to deserve notice, except so far as they shew, that the apprehensions which have been frequently expressed are excessive. Attachment to masters, and the jealousies subsisting among slaves, are assurances of detection, and detection insures defeat.

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THOUGHTS ON SLAVERY.

It seems to be generally admitted that slavery is the greatest political evil which has ever entered the United States.—It has now become a serious question, how this evil is to be disposed of; whether its consequences are to be mitigated merely; or whether it will admit of a radical, though of a gradual cure?

This question, in my opinion, becomes more important, from the circumstances of the times in which we live. We live in an age remarkable for great and unexpected changes. Perhaps no age, since the beginning of time, has witnessed

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more important revolutions, than those which have fallen under our observation. All these revolutions (and some of them have shaken and almost annihilated the proudest empires on earth) have taken their rise from popular opinions and feelings. When popular feeling is excited to a great extent; when it takes its direction to a given object; and especially when it combines with it that enthusiastic zeal, which accompanies all the great movements of the public mind, it forms a current which no human power can resist. Before such a current, we have seen thrones, and ancient constitutions, and long established systems of jurisprudence, uprooted and swept away with as much ease as the mountain torrent drives away the rubbish which obstructed its channel. Some are of the opinion, that our late political commotions have completely terminated; that the whirlwind has passed over the world and left us very nearly where it found us; but this opinion is hardly correct. It seems to be inconsistent with the general plans of Providence, to permit such a waste of human blood and treasure for no purpose. Besides, the sovereigns of the old world have received important lessons; and in whatever proportion they have been taught to respect or fear the power of the people, in the same proportion has that power been increased. And it appears evident to me, that great national measures in most parts of the world, have assumed a more popular character, and are more under the direction of popular influence than they were in former times. What events are yet to occur; what reformations to be effected; and whether the remaining rubbish is to be cleared off by more violent or more gentle means, is not for human wisdom to determine. But I wish it to be distinctly considered, that although the feelings of a mob may be suppressed, yet that the feelings of the real public, when properly excited, and in good earnest brought into operation, are not to be obstructed in their course.

Among the late movements of the public mind, which are yet in progress, and tending to the reformation of the world, I think we evidently perceive the rise of one which bears upon the subject of African slavery. It is not many years since the slave trade was first opposed in Europe. The opposition then appeared to be almost hopeless. And the slave trade now is an object of general detestation, and the most enlightened and powerful nations in the world, impelled by public sentiment, have pledged themselves for its entire abolition. Perhaps the history of mankind does not present an instance of a greater revolution in public opinion. In the train of this revolution have followed the establishment of the Sierra Leone

Colony, and the Colonization Society of America; both of them instances strongly indicating the feelings of the civilized world. I suppose we shall hardly be told, (and if we are told we shall not be satisfied) that all this was effected by the talents and perseverance of Mr. Wilberforce and his associates. Much as I respect the talents and character of Wilberforce, and much as I honor his instrumentality in this particular case, I cannot ascribe to him the efficient agency in a measure, evidently effected by the hand of Providence.— But it is proper to observe that the spirit of reformation has gone further than yet stated, and it is probable that the odium which so justly attaches to the slave trade, is about to be transferred to the present slave holders. It certainly appears hard that men who never approved the slave trade, who many years ago gave their suffrage for its abolition, and who have always considered slavery itself as an evil which they would wish to extirpate as soon as practicable, should be made to participate in the odium or guilt of this detestable traffic; or that they should be subjected to reproach from their brethren in other parts of the Union, because our common ancestors have entailed upon them an evil for which no remedy has yet been discovered. But it is useless to spend our time in complaining, where complaints are of no avail. The progress of public sentiment will force important changes on the world, which we have no power to prevent, even if we wished to prevent them; and timely deliberation, combined with a prompt performance of our duty, affords the only prospect of safety. The experience of mankind will support this maxim; that where great reformations are called for, if those who have the power of reforming discharge their duty in time, matters may be conducted to a desirable issue; but if duty be long delayed, scenes of confusion and misery are often the result. I believe it seldom happens that a people sincerely desirous of performing their duty, are subjected to great general calamities. Let us, then, seriously inquire what is our duty at present in relation to African slavery.

It seems to be the opinion of every man well acquainted with the subject, that an immediate emancipation is out of the question, and perhaps domestic emancipation will always be impracticable. The brightest beam of hope which has ever arisen on this dark subject, has, in my opinion, been afforded by the Colonization Society. Let us, therefore, patronize this society and facilitate its operations as much as possible; and in the mean time, let us give the slaves such instruction as may qualify them for forming a prosperous colony. These two precepts, I apprehend, comprehend our

duty and our safety in the present case. The first of these precepts, the patronizing of the Colonization Society, seems to meet with general approbation; but I am sorry to find that many of our people are unwilling to educate the slaves, and give them religious instruction. I understand that some legal characters of respectable standing in our country, have objected that the education of the slaves is inconsistent with the spirit of our laws. And in the second place, that it would be a matter of dangerous and bad policy. I consider both these objections as unfounded, and I conceive that acting upon them would be productive of the most pernicious consequences; I shall therefore give them an attentive consideration.

In the first place then, it is said to be contrary to the spirit of our laws to teach the slaves to read. The only thing in the way of argument to support this objection, which I have ever heard, is that in binding free children of colour, the law exonerates their masters from the obligation of educating them. This, however, is an insufficient argument to support the principle they would build upon it. The exoneration from this obligation might have been conceded, because it was always difficult and sometimes impossible to discharge the obligation. But I will further observe, that if this particular law did support the objection under consideration, the law itself would be wrong; for the objection is inconsistent with the very first principles of legislation. All political writers tell us that publication is essential to the very existence of a just law. To govern a community by secret laws would be more tyrannical than to govern them by retrospective laws. For secret laws are liable to the same objections with retrospective laws, and liable to them in a much higher degree. In conformity with these principles, the laws of Virginia require that they should be published in the English language, that all who are bound to obey them, may become acquainted with them. But if after all this a law should appear, forbidding to teach the reading of English to a certain class of the community, this law would be at war with the fundamental maxims of the whole code.

But the second objection is, that it would be bad policy to teach the slaves to read; that if taught to read the New Testament, they could read the Bill of Rights, and the history of our revolution, and would think of imitating them. This objection appears to me to set out with a confession of guilt, which destroys itself and every thing it was meant to support. They would read our Bill of Rights, and the history of our revolution! But our Bill of Rights and our revolution are

good things? The meaning of the objection plainly is, that the wrong is on the side of the master, and truth and justice on the side of the slave. Now if these objectors had for a moment recollected the old maxim that "truth is great and will prevail," I presume we should have heard nothing from them on this subject. But if the objection be correct and the doctrine on which it is predicated generally received, it would be out of our power to punish those who teach the slaves, what has been generally termed sedition. In fact nothing could be more seditious than the objection itself. That the wrong is on the side of the master; that the slave is supported by truth and justice; and that we must keep our secrets, to ensure our safety. In a large community, the more anxiety about keeping a secret, the more publicity you give it; and what could be published of a more seditious or dangerous tendency than the doctrine of this objection. If in conformity with this doctrine, our courts should attempt to punish the spreading of sedition among the slaves, what kind of a spectacle would they exhibit? The judge and the criminal would be found holding the same principles. The doctrine of the criminal would be—slavery is wrong and let us get clear of it. The judge would reply, no; slavery is wrong, but we must perpetuate and increase the evil, and I will punish you for opposing it. I leave every candid man to determine, how long a system of jurisprudence would be supported on such principles in a free country.

But the objection contemplates a scheme which I believe to be altogether impracticable. It intends to build the safety of the community on the ignorance of the slave. To accomplish this purpose the slave must sink deep into ignorance indeed. His mind must be so degraded that he will not know what slavery is, or that he will be insensible to the hand of oppression. Experience testifies that when the lower classes of people are in difficult circumstances, the more ignorant they are, the more likely to take up wild and dangerous notions of liberty, and the more impossible it is to keep them within the bounds of reason. Our own history shews that however ignorant the slaves may have been heretofore, that ignorance is no security to us. They have shewn themselves able to organize insurrection to such an extent, and to lay their plans with such a degree of skill, as threatened the most extensive and serious mischief. Indeed I feel confident that the danger to be apprehended from them would not be increased by Sunday schools, or by any instruction which it is intended to give them. Admitting, that teaching them to read, might facilitate their learning to write, even this

acquisition would not alter the case. Insurrections are more secretly, and therefore more efficiently, formed by oral communication, than by any other means. The employment of writing with such dexterity as they could use it, or indeed with any degree of dexterity, would only expose their schemes to more certain detection. Besides it is worthy of remark, and I wonder the remark has not been more generally made than it seems to have been, that in all attempts at slave insurrection our safety has arisen from one uniform source: not from ignorance or want of capacity in those who projected the insurrections, but from particular instances of attachment on the part of slaves towards their masters. On this fact I wish to fix general attention, as it certainly affords us the most important knowledge for the management of this delicate and serious evil. The fact proves that our interest and our duty are not incompatible. It proves that Sunday schools, moral and religious instruction, treating slaves like human beings, and manifesting a proper regard for their welfare, constitute the course we ought to pursue; as they constitute the course which would multiply those instances of attachment which have hitherto insured our safety—However society may be modified, the ties of affection furnish the best means of holding it together; when those invested with power overlook these means, they produce much misery, and expose themselves and their country to the greatest danger.

But it may be proper, in treating this subject, to express some opinion as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of slavery itself. Without correct ideas on this point, we shall hardly know what course to take or how to manage the evil with which we are concerned. The only theory I could ever form on this subject which appeared consistent both with reason and divine revelation is, that slavery is lawful so long as necessity requires the continuance of it, and no longer. As a community, we should be culpable in holding a class of people in slavery, who were capable of making a good use of liberty; and we might be criminal also, if their incapacity for liberty should arise from our neglect. But it is certain that reason does not require us to emancipate a people, whose emancipation would bring ruin on themselves and upon the whole society with which they were connected. And as to divine revelation, in the 6th chap. 1st Tim. and 1st verse, Paul gives this injunction, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed?" From this passage alone, without adverting to many similar ones which might be cited, we must infer, that the inspired penman would

not have enjoined it on men and christians, to honor a relation which he considered as unlawful. From a reference to the text it will also be found, that the apostle proceeds to animadvert in terms of great severity on imprudent and seditious intermeddlers with slavery. So far, the evidence appears conclusive in favor of our position: but one difficulty remains; the general spirit and benevolent maxims of the gospel, evidently favor liberty and every species of human happiness. On this I will observe, that the maxims of christianity respecting slavery may be reconciled with all its other maxims in this way. The rules laid down for this subject, must be taken with a special reference to the state of the society for which they were intended. It was not the design of divine inspiration to abolish slavery in a premature manner, by the operation of positive unyielding precepts. Such precepts might have done harm as often as good. In some states of things, the restraints of slavery are necessary and therefore must be tolerated;—when they become unnecessary, christian duty requires their abolition. From this concise exposition of the subject, I think the following important inferences may be drawn.

In the first place, it is the duty of every good man to discountenance and counteract to the utmost of his ability and influence, the practice of instilling seditious sentiments into the minds of the slaves. To teach the slave that his condition is unlawful, that his master has no right to his services, and is only exercising over him the privileges of a licensed robbery; is a practice which must be restrained by the power of law if it cannot be restrained otherwise. The infusion of such sentiments destroys beyond recovery the moral principles of the slave; it makes him more unfit for emancipation than before; it destroys the peace and contentment of a virtuous life, and in every way does to him as well as to the community a serious injury. It is true these teachers may tell us, that they inculcate also the moral duties of the slave. But if slavery be such an unlawful relation, the master is entitled to no duties; the man held in durance by the hand of robbery will think of no duty, but of making his escape and redressing his wrongs. Such was not the grounds on which St. Paul inculcated the mutual duties of the master and the slave.

In the second place I would infer the safety, and even the necessity of giving slaves religious instruction and all the benefit of Sunday schools. Religious instruction disposes the mind to sobriety and order. If the present existence of slavery be necessary and therefore just, the more intelligent the slave, the more likely it becomes, that he should perceive that

fact. I am persuaded, that many of the better informed slaves are now convinced that they have no chance of effecting a revolution; and even if they had, that the revolution would ruin them as well as their masters; and of course by increasing their opportunities of instruction, you will spread this conviction more generally among them. And when in addition to all this, it is recollected, as stated before, that systems of instruction will increase their attachment to their masters, and that attachments of this kind have heretofore defeated all the insurrections which slaves have attempted to form, I think no doubt ought to remain on this subject.

The great question which the feelings of humanity, as well as the circumstances of the times, forces upon us in relation to this subject, is, whether our slaves can at any future time be emancipated. This emancipation will no doubt be a work of great magnitude. The slave population at present amounts to a million and a half, and increases with a greater rapidity than even the white population of the United States; that is, with a rapidity greater than was ever known in any other instance; and yet I do not hesitate to say that their emancipation will be effected: the benign influence of the christian religion, advancing hand in hand with civilization, will accomplish this great object. This opinion will not appear chimerical, after reviewing the progress of things in christendom for some ages past. A few centuries ago, all the nations of the earth were covered with slavery. Owing principally to the influence of the christian religion, that slavery has been abolished in many parts of Europe. These effects, religion has produced as much by elevating and improving the characters of the slaves, as by humanizing the hearts of their masters. The christian religion is called emphatically the religion of the poor; and has had great influence on that class of men, wherever it has been received. But as soon as the poor are so improved as to become capable of freedom, it is for the interest of the whole society that they should be free. Slavery in general is not profitable to masters, if labour can be had on reasonable terms in any other way. The labor of a slave is not so valuable as that of a freeman, whilst his wear and tear is much greater. In all old societies, the price of labour is just sufficient to keep up, from age to age, a due proportion of labour. From this statement it is plain, that wealthy men could have their lands better and more cheaply cultivated by freemen than by slaves. It is the want of free laborers in new countries which introduces slavery at first; but when these slaves are so improved as to be capable of freedom; when qualified to take their stand in society as

faithful laborers and good tenants, the common interest is then clearly on the side of their emancipation. In this way has slavery been abolished in many parts of the old world; much to the advantage of the wealthier classes; and the same results may be expected in every other place where the light of christianity is suffered to operate. These consequences, I think are evidently appearing in our own country. The character of our slaves seems to be improving. Perhaps much of that increased humanity in their treatment, so lately and so generally talked of, originates from the improvement; as the master now finds it practicable to obtain reasonable services without resorting to rigor: and if this improvement progresses until our slaves become, what the labouring classes of Europe now are, they will fill their places with much more profit to the wealthy, as freemen, than they now do as slaves.

We have one difficulty however to encounter on this subject which did not exist in the old world,—the distinction of color. But I have sometimes thought that this is not an insuperable difficulty, even in the way of domestic emancipation. Emancipation does not necessarily suppose that amalgamation of the two races which is so abhorrent to our feelings; the present peasantry of France and England are the descendants of the former slaves, and have intermixed but very little with the orders of society above them. However the best prospect has been afforded on this subject by the colonization society, and we shall take the matter a little into consideration.

It is hoped the colonization society will be zealously patronized by the federal government. Some years ago the state of Virginia ceded to that government all the lands in the north western territory, and it seems proper that a proportion of the money arising from the sale of those lands, should be applied for curing the evils of slavery, which bear so heavily on the southern states. Under the auspices of our government, a prosperous colony may be formed on the African coast, which extending towards the interior of the continent, uniting with the natives in its course, and carrying with it the arts, the religion and the civilization of this country, may, under the blessings of providence, form an important empire. This must be the land of liberty and of equal rights for the blacks; for although we may emancipate them in the United States when prepared for it; and may even allow them a few years residence to earn something for their accommodation when they go to the land of their fathers, yet we never can give them here the rights of citizenship. It appears to me that if matters were brought into this train; if after due

preparation for freedom, proper inducements were held out to fix the attention and affection of our slaves on Africa, the great evil of slavery might be removed. To enlist the feelings of the slaves in this cause would be the important object; as they would then become efficient co-operators in the work; and might furnish themselves, to a considerable degree; with the means of their transportation and future settlement. The case of Ireland may illustrate the point. The affections of the poorer classes in that country are so much turned towards the United States, that the British government by a very small expense in proportion to the object, might, if they choose, transfer a large proportion of that population to this continent. But if these objects were effected, so many laborers would be drawn from us that a large chasm would be left in our population. This chasm might be filled by emigration, without inconvenience to any party, if liberal arrangements were made with some of the principal governments of Europe. And surely, by the time we have prepared our slaves for the measures under consideration, the powers of Europe will have seen the impolicy of restraining emigration, and of confining a superabundant and discontented population within their own territories. The period also is not distant, when emigrants will come to this country with views different from those by which they have heretofore been actuated. They formerly came with the expectation of acquiring land. This expectation will soon fail them, or indeed has already failed them unless they travel far to the westward. But they have still, and will long continue to have sufficient inducement to come as labours and tenants. And when emigrants come on the calculation of remaining tenants for life, of taking land on long leases and giving it the improvement of which it is capable, our land holders will be much better accommodated than they are at present.

I have been induced to make these observations from a conviction that something must be done in relation to this subject: that the progress of public opinion will force changes upon us, for which we ought to be prepared; and also that by proper management, the evil under consideration might pass off, without those destructive consequences which are sometimes apprehended. The outlines of my plans are simply these; to establish a prosperous colony of blacks on the African shore; to prepare the slaves for emancipation, and fix their affections on the new colony. When this is done, the important work of emancipating our slaves and transporting them to a distant country will be accomplished. Every thing else will fall in with that natural march of human affairs,

which planted the United States in a wilderness, raised them into a powerful empire, and excited that tendency to emigration in Europe, which their governments find it almost impossible to repress. C.

ESSAYS ON DIVINITY. No. VII.

Evidences of Christianity.

THE united testimony of twelve such witnesses as the apostles were, must certainly be sufficient to establish the truth of the gospel. If, however, a more numerous testimony would afford additional satisfaction to any of our readers, the list may readily be increased to thousands and tens of thousands.

It was not exclusively to his apostles, his chosen witnesses, that our Lord appeared after his resurrection from the dead. His ascension was, we are well assured, witnessed by above five hundred highly favoured disciples. A few days after this most illustrious event, three thousand were added to the church. Nor was it long before two thousand more attached themselves to the sacred community. Nay, it was not long—not many years, before myriads seem to have been numbered among his disciples, even in Jerusalem, where he had been most ignominiously put to death: while in Samaria, at Cesarea, at Joppa, and at Lydda, respectable societies were instituted in his name.

But it is chiefly to the Gentiles, that we must look for the encrease of the church. In a short time after the gospel embassy was sent to them, it was embraced by great numbers at Antioch, at Ephesus, at Corinth, at Thessalonica, at Berea, at Iconium, and at Rome. In a word, so rapid was the progress of the gospel among the nations of the earth, in the apostolic age, that before its termination, large and flourishing churches seem to have been established in almost every province of the vast Roman empire.

Now, “every convert to the christian faith in these days, gives one additional testimony to the truth of the gospel history. Is he a Gentile? The sincerity of his testimony is approved by the persecutions, the sufferings, the danger, and often the certainty of martyrdom, which the profession of christianity incurred. Is he a Jew? The sincerity of his tes-