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SLAVERY INCONSISTENT WITH CHRISTIANITY

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*Slavery inconsistent with the Spirit of
Christianity.*

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

C A M B R I D G E,

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By ROBERT ROBINSON.

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Luke 10:18.

**The Lord Hath Sent Me—
To Preach Deliverance to the Captives.**

*Jehovah hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives.*¹ It is not necessary to be a captive to discover the worth of such a declaration as this: it is sufficient to be a spectator of captivity.

The Jews suffered by the fate of war several captivities; and in that which is called the Babylonian² a foreign victor reduced between twenty and thirty thousand free citizens to a condition of slavery.³ The king, only in the nineteenth year of his age when faults deserve pity more than blame, was stripped of all the ensigns of his dignity, and put in chains. His mother in the decline of life, and his wives in the bloom of it, all unadorned, distinguished only by depression of spirits, and dejection of countenance, shared his cruel reverse of fortune. His officers civil and military, his craftsmen and artificers followed in train, and all at the will of the conqueror went into the hopeless condition of slaves, some to prison, some to unproductive servitude, and some to death. No humane spectator of such a complicated calamity can help feeling a just indignation at the tyrant mixing with compassion for the slaves: for what had the king of Babylon to do with the sins of the Jews?

A proclamation of liberty to captives, then, meets with the wishes of both sufferers and spectators, and grates only on the ears of a tyrant who makes slaves, and masters who hold them in servitude. Such is the declaration of the text, and only one circumstance obscures the glory of it. When a Cyrus publishes his resolution to liberate captives, the world instantly gives him credit for sincerity, and applause for his generosity: but the text is the language of Jesus, a poor man. This, however, in the present case, is no objection; because if a poor man can discover a method by which the just maxims of a monarch, which are only local and temporary, may be rendered universal and perpetual, his birth and station are of no consequence, his wisdom is all in all, and his language is reputed, as it ought to be, the voice of nature, the reason of all mankind. The fact is: Jesus was a man, and the friend of man, and the proposal in the text was not the inefficient wish of an ordinary citizen, but the sober plan of one, who knew how to carry his design into effect. He did not, indeed, enlist armies,

¹Isai. lxi. I.

²2 Kings xxiv. 10.

³Jer. lii.

appoint generals, or even acquaint monarchs with his intention: he did not immediately remonstrate against the injustice of slaveholders, nor did he rouse the passions of their slaves: but he informed a few disinterested lovers of mankind of a few facts, which he foresaw would make their way, and slowly but certainly subvert the whole system of slavery; facts which, whenever the slaveholder should come to know them, would compel him by his own convictions to release his slave; and facts, which as soon as the slave should comprehend, would prepare him to bear an advance from the servile condition of a beast into the dignity of a man.

Let us select from the gospel of Jesus three doctrines, and let us address the first to a slave apart: the second to a slaveholder apart: and the third to both masters and slaves: and, although, it be in this stage of the business mere theory, yet let us examine what practice, if there be no unforeseen obstacles, the theory must naturally produce.

The Lord Jesus taught the dignity of man as an intelligent and immortal being: a true fact, but till then wholly unknown to slaves, and very imperfectly, if at all, to their masters. He addressed men as capable of knowing and enjoying intellectual pleasures, and he reported facts naturally adapted to excite and exercise the latent powers of the mind. He shewed that man must live in a future state to reap the reward of his virtues, or to suffer the punishment of his crimes. He spoke of him as a creature of worth, and according to his estimate a single soul is of more value than a whole world of unintelligent matter. It is natural to suppose that a slave informed of dignity of his nature must rise in value in his own account, become in his own eyes a man of natural consequence equal with his lord, and feel himself inspired with that noble pride of nature which distinguishes and dignifies the free. From under the depression of slavery, having heretofore known no more of himself than of his master's camel, that he had sensual appetites, the slave should seem to struggle into new existence, aspire to the distinctions of a man, the pleasures of an intelligent being, the joy of knowing God, the practice of virtue, and the prospect of immortality. In absolute servitude a man hath every thing to fear and nothing to hope, and his spirits sink, till, having no prospect, and no use for hope, his sensual appetites at the same time continuing to employ him, he forgets his dignity, and ceases to reason like a man: but by admitting the fact taught by Jesus Christ, the soul of this sunken slave takes a contrary direction, rises ennobled into its proper state, and enters first on the felicity of speculating moral excellence, then proceeds to the pleasure of doing good, and next advances to the delight of prospect, where no bounds are set to the eye, and where bliss extends beyond all he can ask, or think.

Jesus taught the true character of God: That there was a God: that there was but one: that he was a Father and the universe his family: that

his care extended over all his works, the most inconsiderable creatures not excepted: that he compassionated the most wretched, and was ready to forgive the most wicked: that a return to duty was a return to mercy: and the eternal glory was the reward of as many as copied his wise and just administration, for he was a Father in heaven, who made his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sent his rain on the just and on the unjust: that in a future state he would call all men to account and admit of no distinctions except those of just and unjust: that justice he would eternally protect, and injustice for ever punish. The system of a slaveholder is a contrast to all this: his government is not founded in justice: his maxims of obtaining and employing, rewarding and punishing his fellow creatures, far from tending to equalize, introduce, and support the most horrible of all distinctions, and of three equal men make one an absolute slave, a second an inhuman task master, and the third a lawless tyrant above controul. Bring this stately slaveholder acquainted with the Supreme Being, more master of him than he of his slave: enlighten his mind with the knowledge of God, and it should seem the moment he approves of the divine perfections he must abhor his own depravity, blush at his dissimilitude to the original beauty, and cast about in his mind how to restore his slaves to their just and natural rights.

Jesus taught the nature and the indispensable necessity of holiness. In his gospel holiness is in general conformity to God, to God and not to rites and ceremonies; be ye the children, the resemblances of your Father: and in particular it is the possession of such dispositions as constitute order, and are necessarily productive of happiness. Happy are the rich, the powerful: No: Happy are the pure in heart; happy are the humble; happy are the mild; happy are the merciful, for those shall see God, and these shall obtain mercy. The doctrine of Jesus is: that such a similarity to God is absolutely necessary to hope of pleasing and enjoying him: that it is impossible to substitute any thing in its stead: that without this conformity all pretensions to the character of Christian are delusive and vain, frauds which may be a while concealed, but which impartial justice must in the end expose to the eternal glory of the rectitude of God, and to the everlasting disgrace of wicked men. Such doctrine, addressed to a company of slaves and slaveholders, it should seem, must convince the master that the connection between shewing mercy and obtaining mercy is just and natural, that if he shewed no mercy he ought not to hope for any; and the slave that to be good is the noblest end of being free.

Theory says: tidings such as these, committed by Jesus to his disciples to be published to every creature in all nations, ought, assuredly, to produce

effects when they reach the ears of slaves⁴. They actually did so, and slaves became members of the first Christian churches.

Let us follow this doctrine into a land of slavery in order to discover the operation of it in the minds and manners of the inhabitants. In Attica alone, it is said, there were only twenty or thirty thousand freemen, and they held in servitude four hundred thousand slaves. Every Christian teacher went to proclaim liberty to these captives: but this is such a country was a most difficult and delicate enterprize. It originated in justice, and was replete with mercy: but where human depravity hath arrived at a certain pitch, to introduce justice and mercy is the most hard and hopeless of all undertakings. Slaves are the wealth of their masters, and to emancipate them is to transfer their property. Slaves keep up the rank of their masters, and to elevate the one is to degrade the other class. The execution, therefore, of the Saviour's plan, required the prudent application of wise and well judged measures so as not to injure private property, not to disturb civil order, not to expose Christianity to the scandal of sedition, not to obscure the glory of a kingdom not of this world, and yet so as to procure effectual deliverance to captives, ample indemnity to their masters, and superior advantages to states. If a given number of slaves be an equal number of enemies, the state gains by the emancipation of them; and if the conscious rectitude of the action be an ample indemnity to him who makes restitution of unjust gain, the master is indemnified when he makes the slave free.

It is granted, the case was difficult, but it is affirmed, the apostles were equal to the task, and the primitive Christians under their prudent direction conducted the business so as to adorn the doctrine of their Saviour, and to demonstrate the excellence of the Christian religion. Three positions seem to contain the system of the primitive churches in regard to slaves.

First. The primitive Christian slaveholders did not force their slaves to profess the Christian religion. That same primitive Christians were slaveholders is clear from this passage: Let as many servants as are under the yoke (these were slaves) count their own masters worthy of all honour. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit⁵. Philemon of Colosse was a master of this kind. He had a slave named Onesimus. This man defrauded his master, quitted his service, and fled to Rome. There by some means he became acquainted with Paul, who instructed him, and either baptized him, or caused him to be baptized into the profession of a Christian. Then he

⁴Mark xvi. 15.

Mat. xxviii. 19.

⁵1 Tim. vi. I, 2.

returned him to his master with a letter, of which these words are a part: I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds⁶. The power of Philemon over his slave had always been absolute, but it was Paul, not Philemon, who initiated Onesimus, for conversion was then considered an effect of argument, and not of dominion. On this account the apostle called Onesimus his son, for by baptism he had brought him into the Christian world.

Even Pagan masters did not force their slaves to profess Paganism: on the contrary, they thought their presence polluted the worship. It was for very different reasons that Pagans and Christians did not force slaves to profess religion, and when the apostles exhorted Christian slaves to count their Pagan masters worthy of all honour, perhaps this might be one reason, they left their slaves to their own reflections in matters of religion, and they might be proselytes of Moses, or disciples of Christ without incurring the displeasure of their owners. Primitive Christians entertained just notions of religion, and they wisely avoided to adorn it with vain glory of popularity by forcing slaves to profess what they did not understand. To say the truth, the forcing of conscience was alike unknown in those times to Pagans and Christians, and it was an invention of later ages: whether an honourable one I shall not now inquire, but leave to the consideration of such as admire it.

Secondly. A profession of Christianity was not a title to freedom in the first churches. A slave might hear, examine and believe the Christian doctrine; he might be baptized, receive the Lord's supper, and enjoy the benefit of all Christian institutes; but he might not claim manumission on this ground. An apostle speaks decidedly on the subject. Let every man abide in the fame calling wherein he was called⁷. Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it. Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God⁸. This explains the language of the same apostle to Philemon concerning Onesimus. Perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him for ever⁹: an expression taken from the Jewish law of servitude. If the servant say, I will not go out free, then his master shall bore his ear, and he shall serve him for ever¹⁰, that is for life. The primitive Christians then did not affix manumission to profession of Christianity, and they acted wisely, for it would have degraded religion from its dignity, temporal reward being only a more pleasing kind of force. In these pure churches there were neither punishments nor bribes.

⁶Phil. x.

⁷1 Time. vi. I, 2.

⁸1 cor. vii. 20, & c.

⁹Phil. xv.

¹⁰Exod. xxi. 5,6.

Yet, thirdly, Christianity is, as an apostle calls it, a perfect law of liberty¹¹, and its natural and genuine produce is universal justice, or, which is the same thing, universal freedom. In proof of this let us step into those primitive assemblies, and hear what the apostles said to their converts.

Paul exhorted slaves to become free, if they could. Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free use it rather¹². A hint was all that prudence could allow on a subject so delicate, and it was equal to saying, Set a just value upon freedom, and obtain it as soon as by any lawful means you can.

To such slaves as were under rigorous masters, and had no prospect of manumission, Peter gave this advice: Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God¹³. These were slaves subject to buffeting, or corporal punishment: but this is not an approbation of slavery, for the apostle complains of wrong, and his advice to the slave to be patient is applicable to this only as to one of many cases of affliction and oppression. Hence we reason, that the apostles disapproved of slavery, and that their advice to Christian slaves amounted to this: Get free if you can; but if you cannot, reflect on the wisdom of providence and bear the oppression of your tyrants with patience.

Let us imagine a primitive assembly of Christian slaveholders and slaves, not now, in this instance, as slaves, but above slaves, brethren beloved in the Lord¹⁴, all sitting at the same table, eating the same bread, drinking the same cup, in remembrance of their common benefactor, who had said, The Lord sent me to preach deliverance to captives. Let us hear Paul commending charity, or universal benevolence. He describes it literally, and prizes it above the faith of miracles, above the gift of tongues, above the distribution of alms, above the glory of martyrdom. Earnestly covet the best gifts: and yet I shew unto you a more excellent way. The greatest of all gifts is charity¹⁵. He describes it figuratively: the same subject in colours. All the members of Christ are one body. By one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether we be bond or free. God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him, but the head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you; for if one member suffer all the

¹¹James i. 25.

¹²I Cor. vii. 21.

¹³I Pet. ii. 18, & c.

¹⁴Phil. xvi.

¹⁵I Cor. xiii. I, &c.

members suffer with it, or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Could the bond, or could the free, hear, believe, and feel such discourses delivered by Paul, and not regulate their actions by them? How must a slaveholder feel, when in the assembly a charitable deacon proclaimed: Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them¹⁶? The doctrines and the ceremonies of Christianity attack injustice and cruelty in their strong holds, depraved passions, and consequently if a slave trade be the effect of such passions our religion goes to subvert the whole system of slavery. Feel its influence, and the work is done.

Let us go a step further. After the decease of the apostles, Christians understood that the liberating of slaves was a part of Christianity, not indeed expressed in the direct words of a statute, but naturally and necessarily contained in the doctrines and precepts of it: in the precepts which equalized all, and in the first principle of all doctrines, the equal love of God to all mankind. In the centuries before the establishment of a profession of Christianity, the Christians who denominated themselves Catholicks, and who afterwards coalesced with the state, were the least enlightened, and the most depraved of all the disciples of Jesus, and the Africans were the lowest order of these Catholicks: yet even the Africans thought it a Christian duty to liberate slaves. There is a letter of Cyprian of Carthage yet extant on this subject. Some Numidian bishops wrote him an account of the captivity of some Christians. The letter fetched tears from his eyes. He represented the case to the church, and he collected a considerable sum of money for the redemption of the slaves. Along with the sum he sent the letter just mentioned, containing several Christian reasons for redeeming captives, of which this is one: If Jesus at the last day will reward some, saying, I was sick and ye visited me, surely he will more abundantly reward others, to whom he may justly say, I was captive, and you set me free.

Perhaps I may be allowed to hazard a conjecture, for this is not the place for critical investigation. It seems to me, that the Africans, who first invented infant-baptism, intended by it only to save children from sacrifice or slavery. Before the time of Cyprian, that is, before the middle of the third century, if there were any debate concerning the baptism of infants, it was the baptism of infants in law, minor, not natural infants. Primitive Christians made conscience of closely copying the life of Christ. He was baptized when he began to be about thirty years of age, and it was a question of great consequence to the credit of Christianity, whether a youth ought to be suffered to enter by baptism into a Christian church, and to lay himself under obligations for life, before he arrived at years of

¹⁶Heb. xiii. 2.

legal discretion, or was allowed by law to dispose of himself: but in Africa, in the time of Cyprian, the baptism of an infant meant the baptism of a new-born babe. Every body knows that the Carthaginians were a colony from Tyre: that the Moloch of Tyre was the Saturn of Carthage: that the barbarous worshippers of this demon sacrificed children to him in flames of fire: that they purchased infants as the Jews did turtle doves for sacrifice: that to supply the markets with sacrifices and slaves parents sold their children, thieves stole them, and fighting parties subdued and carried off whole families; and that it was not in the power of the Roman emperors themselves for several centuries, if at all, to put an end to this horrible practice of sacrificing human beings.

Among such monsters one Fidus taught what little he knew of Christianity, and it is highly probable, for reasons not admissible here, that he hit on the method of saving the lives and liberties of the lambs of his flock, by prevailing on their parents to let him dedicate them to the one living and true God by baptism, as the Jews had dedicated their's by circumcision, and by putting them under the protection of some reputable sponsors. The Africans did not then believe original sin, and Cyprian and his colleagues in council approved of the baptism of infants by Fidus, because they thought the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them. The Africans then, and long after, called baptism *salus*, and they baptized children *pro salute*, to which words no Pagan Roman or Roman provincial had ever affixed the Christian idea of salvation. If this were the case: if Fidus, pitying the smiling tawny or jetty babes at their mother's breasts, baptized them for the safety of their lives and liberties, lest their ill-informed parents, long accustomed to do evil, should sell them: Fidus ought to be honoured as a benefactor to mankind, and the blame of diverting a Christian institute from its original design goes over from him to others, who in other countries imitated his conduct without any imaginable worthy motive for doing so. The earliest council in Spain discovered a somewhat similar humanity to slaves by enjoining a penance of seven years for killing a slave by design, and five for causing the death of one by accident. The most depraved Christians, therefore, in the primitive ages, were not so depraved as to imagine that barbarity and slavery, inseparable twins, could be consistent with the spirit of Christianity.

To proceed. In later times, in those which are called the middle ages, it is clear, the emancipation of slaves was considered as the natural effect of Christian principles. This is a voluminous subject full of various information, all tending to prove to the honour of Christianity that it contributed more than any thing else in the world to emancipate slaves, to improve society, and to refine the manners of mankind: but a hint must suffice here.

We have heard much of the decline of the Roman empire, and we have been told Christianity was the principal cause of the disaster. We respect the Roman empire. It was a fabrick of magnificence, one of the noblest efforts of the human mind. The Romans would be masters, but they were the best absolute masters in the world: however, let not splendour strike reason blind; the genius of Rome was love of dominion, the means often of obtaining it were factions in the senate, standing armies in the field, the depopulation of one province, the captivity of another, the reduction of millions to an unconditional dependence on the will of one. True it is, barbarous nations, as they are called, rushed into the empire, broke up the mighty mass of ancient despotism, and crumbled one into many independent states: but who will pretend to deny that, on the whole, order proceeded out of this confusion, and the western world in general became more, and more rationally free. This was the declaration of several at the time, and it is very credible for many reasons both of theory and experiment. The revolution was a loss to Rome, but a gain to the world, a diminution of imperial dignity, but an increase of human liberty. However it were, this is certain: the new states allowed a liberty of conscience to freemen, which too many Christian emperors had denied, and one of their first kings, for Christian reasons, paid large sums for the redemption of captives. The Vandals in Africa, the Wisigoths, or Western Goths, in Spain, the Ostrogoths in Italy, the Franks in Gaul, and other nations of the same stock had just notions of civil and religious liberty, and kept men in bondage only till it became safe to set them free, always holding it consistent with the spirit of Christianity to emancipate slaves. Even after their coalition with papal Rome, monarchs graced the birth of prince with a manumission of slaves. Monks purchased children to educate, and by associating them in their order made them free. The church freed many by ordaining them to office. Founders transferred their slaves with their lands to ecclesiastical bodies, which improved their condition, although it did not absolutely set them free. Dying persons ordered by will the emancipation of their slaves: and all charters and deeds of manumission, though mixed with superstitious notions, assigned Christian reasons, and every body understood that the liberating of a slave was a good work, in the true spirit of Christianity, and highly acceptable to Almighty God.

Let us come home to our own country. Our first known ancestors, the Britons, were wild and free, but dupes to the barbarous usages of Druidical superstition. They fought, they made captives, they burnt them in baskets to the honour of their gods. The Romans, the Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans by various revolutions reduced many to slavery, and none of them attempted to distribute universal freedom. Slavery in a state is a deep-rooted obstinate evil, and love of dominion is a disposition that

thrives too well in the hearts of depraved men. Conquerors will be masters, captives must be slaves. So lately as the first year of Edward VI. a statute degraded vagabonds into slaves. The act says, "If any person shall bring to two justices of peace any run-nagate servant, or any other which liveth idly and loiteringly by the space of three days, the said justices shall cause the said idle and loitering fervent or vagabond to be marked with an hot iron on the breast with the mark V. and adjudge him to be slave to the same person that brought or presented him, to have to him, his executors or assigns, for two years after, who shall take the said slave, and give him bread, water, or small drink, and reffuse meat, and cause him to work by beating, chaining, or otherwise, in such work and labour as he shall put him unto, be it never so vile: and if such slave absent himself from his said master, within the said term of two years, by the space of fourteen days, then he shall be adjudged by two justices of peace to be marked on the forehead, or the ball of the cheek, with an hot iron, with the sign of an S. and further shall be adjudged to be slave to his said master for ever: and if the said slave shall run away the second time, he shall be adjudged a felon. It shall be lawful to every person to whom any shall be adjudged a slave, to put a ring of iron about his neck, arm or leg." This act was repealed two years afterwards, but there was slavery in England before and after this period. In our publick records, there is a charter of Henry VIII¹⁷. enfranchising two slaves belonging to one of his manors; and there is a commission from Queen Elizabeth with respect to the manumission of certain bondmen belonging to her. There is in France a general law for the manumission of slaves, and though there is no such law in our statute book, yet the genius of our constitution was ever abhorrent of slavery, and now pure and proper slavery is so effectually done away that a slave or Negro, the instant he lands in England, becomes a freeman, and the law will protect him in the enjoyment of his person and property. Baptism is not necessary: to breathe British air is sufficient. Perhaps the vulgar error of liberating a slave by baptizing him came from Africa along with other African doctrines into the western world.

Happy should I be, if I could add, there is no slavery in our plantations, but, although it is unpleasant to blame one's nation, yet we must say, and we say it with sincere sorrow, while we boast of freedom at home, and zealously oppose every attempt to diminish it, we annually reduce a people, who never injured us, to a servitude unmerited, unjust, and to an enormous degree barbarous, as well as disgraceful to our country. We give the world lessons of cruelty, and, as we are called Christians, innocent Christianity, guiltless of oppression and blood, bears the scandal. The sins of individuals

¹⁷Rymer.

are not punished here, for this to them is only a state of trial: but collective bodies subsist here in a state of rewards and punishments, and if there be such a thing as national sin, that is it, assuredly, which the legislature makes its own. I fear, I fear, the African slave trade is of this kind.

Many plausible arguments have been used to defend this traffick, but, to say the truth, they are all reducible to one, that is the gain of it. What then becomes of justice, justice the base of the throne of God¹⁸, if ideas of gain and loss be allowed to supply the place of notions of right and wrong? Gain is the reason of every wretch alive for every crime that he can commit. Why does the avaricious render himself deaf to the cries of all the afflicted? He saves by it. Why does he rob the fatherless, and oppress the widow? He gains by doing so. Whence the false weight, and the deceitful balance, the perpetual frauds of some, and the violent dealings of others? They are productive of money. The base assassin, why doth he plunge his execrable dagger into the heart of his benefactor? He hopes to profit by it. Let us never quit the ground of eternal, immutable justice, never imagine any thing right that allows the propriety of something unjust and wrong.

I recollect an incident in the life of David. In the hearing of three of his military officers, he one day wished for a little water of a certain spring. The Philistine troops were then in garrison defending the fortification where the spring was. The officers of David broke through the host of the Philistines, probably by killing some of the soldiers, and certainly at the hazard of their own valuable lives, took water of the spring, and returned with it to David. What did he? He took the water, but recollecting what they had hazarded to procure it, and very likely observing they had stained themselves with human blood, the water had lost its chrystal in his eye, it seemed blood in the cup, he could not drink it, he poured it out with horror, exclaiming as he looked up to the Parent of life, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men, that have put their lives in jeopardy!

I apply this to the present case. If more than four hundred thousand men be held in perpetual slavery in the plantations: if near one hundred thousand innocent persons be annually reduced to servitude to supply the waste: if corporal punishment, little less than staying alive, be necessary to their degradation: if raw salting be necessary to their preservation: if disgusting diet, if iron collars and brands in the flesh, if hanging, beheading, strangling, burning alive, setting heads and limbs on poles along the highway, if only a thousandth part of the horrors attributed to this trade be necessary to it, who doth not see that commodities coming through such hands are soaked in tears and stained with blood? Who doth not say

¹⁸Psal. xcvi. 2.

with an apostle, who is offended and I burn not¹⁹? or with David, My God forbid that I should drink blood!

Let us leave our Negro brethren to the care of their heavenly Father, who will, without all doubt, some day make inquisition for their blood: let us speak of ourselves. The slave-merchant protests he abhors injustice, and cruelty hath no place in his soul. Be it so. He is a Briton, we give him credit. A fact it is, intended or unintended, cruelty comes to pass of course in this traffick, and it is impossible to conduct a slave trade without it. As far as some of you, my hearers, born free, and refined to perfection by rank, education, and commerce with the world, as far as you are superior to Negroes, so much better are you prepared to meet and sustain with prudence an unavoidable ill. Suppose a foreign banditti of sable ruffians in the night should attack your house, handcuff your servants, plunder your property, seize your person, strip your wife and children, and attempt to put you all in chains: Would you make no resistance? But if you resist, behold a plea for violence, wounds and death. If you should fall a victim to superior force, and find yourself and family on board a ship, beneath the hatches, deprived of liberty and light, food friend and hope, are you sure you should have firmness enough to resist the temptation of laying violent hands on your children, your wife, and yourself? If you could surmount this, and if you should hereafter meet with a favourable opportunity to destroy your oppressor, could you help cleaving the barbarian asunder, although your doing so would make you appear a savage to yourself? Would you avoid this, and try to regain your liberty by exciting mutiny in hope of bringing the hard heart of the tyrant to relent; could you prevent the effect of his desperate rage, if he should set fire to the powder on board and involve his world and all its inhabitants in one common destruction? Even a beast resists, when you would tame him to your hand, and will man resign his mastery over himself without a struggle? But if he struggle, conflict commences which never ends without transgressing the bounds of humanity and justice.

Sorry, very sorry, I am to be obliged to say: human nature hath been affronted with the most brutal indignities in the persons of Negro slaves. They have been won and lost by their wanton masters at games of chance. When they have escaped, rewards have been offered for their heads, though he, who offers a price for blood, is guilty of felony. "I will give," says an advertising planter, "a reward of twenty pounds currency to whoever will apprehend the said negro. I will give the same reward for his head²⁰." I blush to tell, that even in London, so lately as the year seventy

¹⁹2 Cor. xi. 29.

²⁰*Law of Retribution.* By GRANVILLE SHARP, Esq; London, 1776, page 238. Carolina Gazette by Robert Wells, Dec. 30, 1774.

two, an advertisement appeared in the *Gazetteer* of the first of June for apprehending “An East India black boy about fourteen years of age, named” (I blush to relate this) “Pompey, having round his neck a brass collar with a direction to a certain house²¹.” Such well-attested facts (and they are nothing compared with what remain to be told) preclude the necessity of reflections in form; and I finish by addressing a few words to an assembly that hath not lost the use of its reason.

Let us put our entire love of liberty out of all doubt to ourselves by immediately entering into that freedom, which reason and revelation unite to recommend. Let our understandings put off prejudice, and lay themselves open to rational conviction. Let our passions discard those officious pretended friends, which if admitted will be masters, pride, avarice, envy, revenge, love of ease, and passion for power. Let us assort our companions, and if we have no vices of our own, let us refuse to be enslaved by the vices of our acquaintance. Let our actions be just, open, manly, conformable to our own convictions, such as become free, intelligent and immortal men. Let us reduce our wants within the limits of our own efforts. Above all, let us copy the life of Jesus, and If the Son make us free, we shall be free indeed.

Have we children? Let us call them to our knee, and early inspire them with the love of virtuous freedom. Let us teach them the natural connection between civil and religious liberty, and the indispensable obligation of fostering both. Let us shew them where encroachments on natural rights begin, and whither they tend. Let us set before their eyes the sad but instructive histories of consciences oppressed, property plundered, families divided, and flourishing states ruined by exercises of arbitrary power. Let us thoroughly tincture them with the doctrine of Jesus, that God sent his Son not to destroy men’s lives but to save them.

Let us, if we have domesticks, banish rigour, administer an economy of wisdom and goodness, and always remember we have a master, a master not a tyrant, in heaven, a guide to us, and a guardian to our servants.

Finally. In all civil and political debates let us be always on the side of liberty, not of licentiousness under the name, but of just, equal, and universal freedom. May we and our posterity enjoy it under the sanction of law! May other nations quickly recover or obtain it! May slaves receive it as soon as possible from their masters, lest the world should applaud them in future for taking it by force! May all the earth become in due time, as from what hath been done we hope and believe it will, a temple of God, and

²¹Mr. SHARP, in his *Limitation of Slavery*, London, 1776, page 35, says, This “remarkable instance of tyranny came within my own knowledge.—I inquired after the author, and found that he was a merchant—who shall be nameless.” The advertisement says, the boy “was named [Bob or] Pompey.”

all the inhabitants his wise and unconstrained worshippers! May we pass, when we die, into that state where the slave is free from his master, where there is no sin, no sorrow, no pain, not death, where God is all in all, and where glory honour and immortality will be to all, who after the example of their divine master have had both the power and the will to comfort those that mourn, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and to open the prison to them that are bound.

Appendix.

THIS discourse, which attempts to shew that slavery is inconsistent with the genius of the Christian religion, was composed less for the purpose of exposing the iniquity of the African slave trade, than for that of vindicating the character of the primitive Christians, or rather the credit of Christianity itself, which is grossly misrepresented when it is described as compatible with slavery. Slavery in every form is unjust and inhuman: but a Christian religion in coalition with slavery is a mere creature of fancy. In vain apologists quote the institutes of Moses, and the practice of new testament churches, for it is not credible that a slave trade is founded either on respect for Judaism, or faith in Christ, or that reasons for enslaving mankind are recommended by a book in praise of redemption. The most glorious part of the history of the Jews is that of their asserting their liberty against the tyranny of Pharaoh; and the uniform spirit of the new testament is, *Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men.*

War is the parent of slavery, and captivity is as ancient as Nimrod. This hero built a city, and called it Babel, which is a contraction of *Bab-bath-al*, or *Bab-al-ain*, the apple of God's eye. *Bab*, all over the east, literally means the court of a prince, and it was perfectly consistent with the genius of the easterns to assimilate such a court to the *ain* or pupil of a beautiful eye. To this they affixed *al*, the name of God, which signified no more than that it was the most excellent of its kind. It was a divine pupil, *the beauty of the excellency of the Chaldees*. In this name the inhabitants and their kings boasted. The same Nimrod built other cities, and one at least with turrets on the walls, probably for the confinement of captives. This was named *Ballel*, which literally signifies a confusion, and figuratively a confusion of *fight*, owing to what is called a blood shot, or a *blemish in the eye*, and this apt figure was intended to express what the early inhabitants of the east thought of restraint and captivity. From that day to this successive Nimrods have held all the east in bondage, and their tyranny is a deformity that hath ever tarnished the beauty of oriental nature, and marred the elegance of Asiatick art.

The Greeks boasted of liberty: but what was Spartan liberty more than aristocratical licentiousness? It becomes a Briton to think, that the celebrated Spartan government was a discipline founded on injustice, supported by cruelty, inimical to population and national wealth, incompatible with commerce, arts and sciences, utterly destructive of freedom and virtue, and productive of the very worst of all forms of despotism, an obstinate aristocracy. Spartan freemen were all idle gentlemen, who were forbidden to till the ground, or practise any mechanical employment, and who spent all their time in hunting, dancing, festivals, amusements or war. They con-

quered a people called Helots, and converted them all into slaves. They made an equal partition of lands among themselves, and compelled the Helots to farm them for the owners. They called themselves *the state*, and they obliged the degraded Helots to perform the whole manual labour of the republick, and with unparadonable ingratitude and cruelty they assassinated them at their pleasure. They compelled them to intoxicate themselves, and play mad pranks, in order to teach their young masters by contrast sobriety and genteel behaviour, and this brutal practice is quoted without any marks of indignation of some moralists. The barbarous practice of putting weakly children to death prevailed among themselves. Their system of education was a string of absurdities, and the whole tended to sink the man in the soldier, and to annihilate domestick virtue under pretence of publick good. In return for all the advantages, which the pretended state derived from the services of the Helots, the army guarded the miserable beings from foreign invaders, and protected them in the enjoyment of the blessings of absolute slavery.

In some parts of Greece slaves were to masters as ten to one, and in others as twenty to one. By an account taken at Athens at one time, it appeared that there were ten thousand strangers, twenty thousand citizens, and four hundred thousand slaves, and it was a similar disproportion that obliged masters every where to render the condition of slaves most deplorable. They were bought, sold, tamed, employed, beaten, mutilated, or destroyed exactly as beasts were: and worse than beasts they were put to torture, and deprived of the means of defence left they should endeavor to make themselves free. The Greek slaveholders reduced the whole system into one short proverb, which passed from them to the Romans, *Tot hostes, quot servi*, and their history exemplified the adage, for slaves often mutinied, and the slaughter of a million hath been called the salvation of a state.

The Romans maintained the same absolute dominion over their slaves, and for the same reason. Hence it was that, when it was proposed in the senate to distinguish slaves from freemen by a certain dress, a senator opposed the motion, because he thought slaves, always too much inclined to destroy their masters, would discover their own superiority of number, and be tempted by it to resist their lords, and subvert the state. The wisest of Pagans never imagined universal freedom, and the most just were so far from modern manners that they would be reputed barbarians now. When the slaves of the celebrated Cato had spent their lives in his service, and became through age unable to work, Cato, that exact pattern of punctual Pagan justice, would not be at the charge of supporting them, but either turned them off to shift for themselves, or suffered them to starve to death in his own family. Yet Cato was not liable to be called to account by

government; on the contrary, government protected him, and every other slaveholder, in the glorious right of starving an old slave, or stabbing a young one.

Into this disordered world, at a proper period, *God sent forth his Son to proclaim liberty to captives*: the TOTAL but not the immediate ABOLITION of the slave trade. Here two questions rise to view: a question of right, and a question of fact. The question of right is affirmed in the foregoing sermon, and an attempt is made to prove that the enfranchisement of slaves is one act of justice naturally proceeding out of evangelical doctrine. The question of fact, Whether the Christian slaveholders mentioned in the new testament did actually emancipate their slaves is rather supposed than proved. There are, however, some substantial evidences that the first Christians did not traffick in slaves, and that they emancipated such as they had at their conversion as soon as the condition of their affairs would permit. When slaves were so numerous, that one master had four hundred, another five thousand, a third twenty thousand, a fourth a multitude innumerable resembling an army, it became wealthy Christians, who probably were not of very high rank, and had not any considerable number of slaves, to act with all possible caution, and to unite prudence with benevolence. Had they annexed manumission to baptism, undoubtedly, slaves would have accepted the condition, and two great evils would have followed: the church would have been a crowd of unprincipled men, who would have disgraced the holy profession by ignorance and profligacy; and the state would have been justly alarmed, lest Christians should arm slaves, subvert government, and set up a secular kingdom. It is a character to the gospel that it was embraced by freemen, that in the history of its progress slaves seldom appear; that when they do it is without compulsion; that on embracing Christianity they were admitted to full religious liberty; and that the manumission of them was left to the discretion of the master to be effected as soon as possible without damage to religion, or giving umbrage to the state. No other state of the case accords with all the circumstances of it.

Let any man examine the Greek and Roman maxims of managing slaves, and which, brutal as they are, are absolutely necessary to render servitude safe. Then let him inquire whether a primitive disciple of Jesus could observe these maxims. Could the mild and merciful Christian assume the haughty air necessary to a slaveholder to keep his slave at proper distance, lest he should once suspect himself of a species equal to his lord? Could a Christian, who had been taught not to be angry with his brother without cause, not to resist evil, to let his communication be yea, yea, nay, nay²²: could he rate, revile, beat and torture his slave? yet slaves could not

²²Matt. v.

be managed to profit without all this. Could he, who was bound on peril of his destruction to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to harbour strangers, to visit the sick and imprisoned²³, could he consult his own worldly interest so as to neglect all these? yet on condition of performing all these kind offices slaves were not worth keeping. How then was it possible for primitive Christians to buy slaves, or to hold them in hand?

To these general observations, one in particular may be added in proof that Christian masters actually got rid of slavery as fast as by any prudent means they could. The first disciples of Jesus, drinking of the pure water of life at the spring-head, took no oaths, bore no arms, shed no human blood. A disapprobation of war includes a detestation of captivity, the first fruit of war. They thought, wars and fightings originated in depraved passions. Their wisdom was pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy²⁴, in perfect agreement with the second great commandment, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

The truth is, there were almost from the beginning two sorts of Christians: the first, genuine disciples of Jesus, aimed only to form a *church*; the other meant to form a *state*. Unhappily for the credit of religion the last succeeded, and introduced all the maxims of secular empires, rank and subordination, licentious inactivity and horrible slavery, oaths and arms, and the shedding of human blood, and so forced monachism upon reluctant nations under the name and in the place of Christianity. Even these mistaken Christians have acknowledged that it is a part of Christianity to liberate slaves: but the other class, though they fell into disgrace, and were distinguished in different countries by many odious names agreeing only in this, that they were non-catholicks, retained the primitive faith and manners, and while they practically asserted their own freedom, taught the rights of all mankind.

These two do not always go together, and, to omit other countries, France affords an example of the most pointed abhorrence of personal slavery at home, along with a code of colonial law establishing on barbarous principles absolute and perpetual slavery in her plantations. It was in the year 1315 that Lewis X. issued an ordinance, which declared: That all mankind were by nature free-born: that many of the common people were held in servitude for the faults of their ancestors: that the kingdom was called the kingdom of Franks: that the king, by the advice of his grand council, determined the fact should accord with the name: and that therefore all slaves should be enfranchised upon just and reasonable conditions. The French lawyers do consider this ordinance as putting a final period

²³ xxv.

²⁴ James iv. I, &c.

to slavery in France, but they do not allow that freedom originated in it: on the contrary, they affirm on the testimony of ancient and authentick writers that, although they know not the source of the privilege, which effaced the idea of pure slavery in France, yet they have full proof that the Franks were originally free: that they were none of them slaves: and that if any foreign slave entered the country crying *France and liberty*, the state protected him in the enjoyment of freedom, so that his master could neither recover his original cost, nor his future service without his own consent. They, therefore, regarded this ordinance as the restitution of an ancient allowed right, which later customs had violated. In 1571 a merchant of Normandy offered to sale at Bourdeaux several Moors, but the parliament of Guienne by a solemn decree set them all at Liberty, because France, the parent of liberty, did not allow any slavery in the kingdom. In the reign of Henry III. a Spanish man of war ran ashore by distress of weather near Calais. The governour understanding there were aboard two or three hundred Turks, Moors, and Barbarians, whom Spain had enslaved by the fate of war, seized the slaves, and sent them to the king at Chartres. There, as they had been instructed, they placed themselves kneeling, and naked as they had been aboard, on the steps of the church to which the king was going to hear mass. On his majesty's arrival, in a tone which only distress can utter, they cried *misericorde, misericorde*. The king observed them, and after dinner assembled his council to deliberate; and neither the credit of the duke of Guise, who used all his interest, nor the memorial of the Spanish ambassador, who claimed the slaves for his court, and who urged the good understanding then subsisting between the two crowns, and further, that accident, not design, had brought them to Calais, nor any other reasons could prevail against the doctrine that no slavery could be endured for a moment in France, and the slaves were declared free. Soon after, they were shipped at Marseilles for Constantinople, and every man was complimented with a crown-piece.

The black code, as it is called, or the royal edict for the government of negro slaves in the plantations, is dated Versailles, 1685. It consists of sixty articles, of a few of which this is the substance. No negro slave shall marry without the consent of their masters: the children of slaves belong to their masters: no slave shall be suffered to carry any walking sticks or offensive arms, nor shall slaves of different masters gather together in companies, night or day, under any pretence whatever, on pain of corporal punishment, in some cases of imprisonment, in others of death: whatever a slave acquires by his own industry, or by the liberality of others, or by any other means, shall belong wholly to his master; and no person, slave or freeman, child or relation, shall be allowed to claim any share, all promises and obligations of slaves being null and void, they having not power to dispose of any thing:

no slave shall be suffered to execute business, except for his master: he shall not be allowed to give evidence in any cause civil or criminal, and in case he be heard in evidence his deposition shall not afford any presumption, conjecture, or shadow of proof, but shall be used only to direct the judges where evidence may be elsewhere found: no slave shall be a party in any civil or criminal process for the reparation of outrages and excess committed against slaves: if a slave shall strike his master, or his master's wife, his mistress, or their children, so as to fetch blood, or on the face, he shall be punished with death; and all offences against freemen shall be severely punished, in some cases with death: a fugitive slave shall, for the first time, have his ears cut off, and shall be marked on the shoulder with a flower de luce, for the second he shall be hamstrung, and marked with a flower de luce on the other shoulder, and for the third he shall be put to death: masters shall not be allowed to torture or mutilate their slaves, but they may chain them, or beat them with rods or cords whenever they think their slaves deserve correction: in general, slaves shall be accounted moveables, and shall be subject to the same laws as all other chattels of their masters. The lawyers of France observe that this is a code of slavery in form, and that the servitude of negroes in their colonies is nearly equal to that of Roman slaves.

Pains have been taken by many gentlemen to prove that there is no necessary connection between slavery and cruelty, and this may be true of a few domestick slaves: but whence, except from the necessity of the case, have all the laws and maxims of ancient and modern slave-government proceeded? Whence this uniform barbarity? The nerveless orientals, too idle to kill any thing else, behead and butcher slaves. The Greeks, though never famed for sincerity, were always reputed liberal and polite, yet the Greeks tortured slaves. The high spirited republicans at Rome, who stabbed a Caesar for attempting to make himself their master, were themselves the most despotical of mankind to their slaves. The French, who were never reputed cruel, while they paid an enthusiastical homage to liberty at home, governed their plantations with a rod of iron. Even Britain, just in her laws, and gentle in her manners, equal in her zeal for liberty, and more successful in obtaining it than France, hath been alike inhuman in her colonial government of slaves. Whence then could cruelty proceed but from a conviction that many slaves could not possibly be kept in order without it? It was extorted, as it always must be, by necessity. What except corporal punishment can be inflicted on a slave? Would you imprison him? He is in confinement. Would you banish him? He is banished. Would you fine him? He hath no property, his rages are not his own. Would you separate him from his wife and children? They are his master's, not his. What remains? Only one thing: corporal punishment, which must be increased in

proportion to his offences: cut off his ears for the first; cut the tendons of his hams and lame him in both legs for the second; for the third kill him, and, if there be a God and a future state, let him complain to him, and get redress if he can: but perhaps there will be no future state, perhaps a negro hath no soul, perhaps, too, there is no God.

The African slave-trade hath long been a distress to individuals; and now, if a judgment may be formed by the numerous petitions which have been presented to parliament, the general voice is for the TOTAL ABOLITION of it.

There is not difficulty in determining the nature of this trade: it is confessed unjust; and the danger to the state from the quantum of slavery in a plantation is not hard to guess. There is in Jamaica a tax or fine laid upon such as keep fewer than three white to one hundred black servants, and it is said there are in the island about thirty thousand, perhaps, more whites, and one hundred and seventy thousand negroes. Hence follows the necessity of severity. In Barbadoes the disproportion is less, if, as it is said, the whites be twenty-two thousand and the Negroes only seventy-two thousand. At St. Kitt's, the inhabitants are about forty thousand, of whom thirty thousand are blacks; and at Nevis the whites are reputed about two or three thousand, and the negroes six thousand.

Nor is there any difficulty in answering the argument taken from the supposed natural inferiority of the negroes. Perhaps this may not be true: and if it be, the clear conclusion is, that the wise ought to protect and not oppress the weak.

It hath been affirmed, that the condition of the Africans on the slave coast is so wretched, that it is an act of mercy to transport them to the European plantations. Do the negroes think so? And have the planters any Omiah to fend back with this good news to their countrymen?

The real difficulty lies in the immediate dependence of the plantations on the slave-trade, for those sultry climates the clearing of woods, the cultivation of sugar, rice, and tobacco, require labours which, the planters affirm, none but negroes can perform. For this purpose an annual cargo of Africans is necessary, and in the year 1771 forty-seven thousand, one hundred and forty-six were exported, and of these the Liverpool merchants carried more than twenty-nine thousand. The direct produce of these, on a moderate computation, amounts to one million and a half sterling, and the indirect advantages which Britain derives from their labours in the plantations are beyond computation.

Gradually to emancipate the present slaves and to convert them into a yeomanry, and to supply future labourers without violence, are two desirables of infinite consequence; but the difficulty of effecting these ends is far beyond the comprehension of those who have only private and partial

information: however, it may be believed they are both within the reach of legislature, with ample indemnity to the planters, and without diminution to the state; but by what means must be left, as it ought to be, to parliamentary wisdom. Mean time several considerations encourage people to hope that this great evil will in due course be removed.

The total abolition of proper and absolute slavery hath been effected in feudal states, as England and France, without any inconvenience, and with innumerable advantages. Why should not the same effects proceed from the same cause in the plantations? Would not free negroes properly treated propagate their species in the plantations as well as on the coast of Guinea? A growth of negroes would render importation unnecessary.

The Spaniards have made trial of a gradual enfranchisement of their slaves, and no ill consequences have followed. At the Havannah the purchaser of a slave is obliged by law to enter the name and the price of the slave in a publick register, to allow him one day in every week to work for himself, beside Sundays. The earnings of this day, if he choose to work, are secured to him by law, and as soon as he is able to purchase another day the master is obliged to sell it to him at the price of one fifth of his original cost, and so likewise the remaining four days at the same rate as soon as the slave is able to redeem them, after which he is absolutely free.

Some gentlemen have made trials similar to this in the main in the British plantations with great success, and the Americans are daily experiencing the good effects of their efforts to the same purpose. What should hinder others from imitating examples good in themselves, and successful in the issue?

Some of the best informed commercial writers in Europe affirm that the slave trade obstructs another trade better than itself: That Africa is the best situated for commerce of any other quarter of the world: that from Port-Sallee to the cape of Good Hope is an extent about three thousand leagues of coast: that its rivers are of the first magnitude, as the Nile and Nubia on the north shore, which fall into the Mediterranean, the Niger which empties itself into the Atlantick on the west, the Congo, the Zairi, and the Loango, south of the line, which fall into the Ethiopick ocean on the west side, beyond the gold coast, the Natal, the Prio St. Esprit, the Melinda and the Mozambo, which empty themselves into the Indian ocean on the east side of Africa: that the country is populous beyond credibility, and that if proper measures were pursued a greater quantity of European produce and manufactures might be exported thither than to any other country in the whole world: that there are rich mines of gold and silver, and the finest copper in the world: that many parts, and particularly the banks of the rivers near the gold coast and the slave coast are capable of the best cultivation, a temperate, fertile, healthy and manageable soil: that

cinnamon, tea, coffee, spices, ginger, cotton, rice, pepper, fustic and indigo have some of them thriven to admiration, and all might do so by proper management: that wheat and barley are in plenty and perfection: that the woods abound with valuable timber, rich fruits, and precious gums: that there are camels, horses, elephants, and almost all sorts of beasts: that ivory, hides, wax, ebony, feathers, sulphur, civet, salt petre, emeralds, aloes, and a thousand other articles of traffick abound in the immense kingdoms of Africa: and that at the entrance of the rivers into the sea there are excellent harbours, deep, safe, calm, covered from the wind, and capable of being made secure by fortifications. These are not reveries of landlopers, but true facts reported by seamen and merchants from actual observation of the coast, and the African islands, Madagascar, St. Helens, Cape Verd, the Canary and the rest: and they add, that the numerous emoluments of African commerce are capable of amazing augmentation: that such augmentation is very practicable: that the treasures of Africa are inexhaustible: that nothing which could be cultivated there could possibly interfere with the produce of Britain: that the amount of African trade must be esteemed so much clear profit to the nation: and that nothing but the SLAVE-TRADE obstructs all this.

The Dutch have humanized the savages of the spice islands, who were as barbarous as the African negroes, and it was a maxim with them to attach the natives to themselves by proffered advantages of traffick more than by force of arms, which they never used but to preserve the dominion they had acquired by commerce. The mighty power of the Dutch in the East Indies originally sprang from a very small beginning. Nine merchants of Amsterdam subscribed 70,000 guilders, fitted out four ships, which sailed from the Texel 1595, and founded the Dutch East India company, whose extent of territory and immense riches are known only to themselves. It is the slave trade that prevents the Europeans from forming similar settlements in Africa, for it is impossible to conciliate the Africans while we stir up wars among the negro princes for the sake of making captives of each other for sale.

The history of the South Sea Company, and the Assiento exhibit a contrast to the Dutch prosperity in the East. The Spaniards, having in a manner destroyed the natives of Spanish America, and having no settlements on the coast of Africa, are obliged to contract with foreigners for an annual supply of negro slaves to work their gold and silver mines. The contract hath passed through several hands. The Genoese first engaged in it, but they made nothing of it. Then the English South Sea Company obtained the contract, and undertook to furnish 4,800 negroes a year, for thirty years: but the company, like the former Assientists, gained no advantages, worse than former contractors they could not fulfil their engage-

ments, and the contract hastened their ruin. That freemen may be engaged to work in mines; that free negroes may be induced to labour under the line; and that Europeans, if not wrought too hard, may be prevailed on to work in the plantations, are positions incontestible with many: and if they be granted, it follows that the slave trade is a gratification of the ambition and avarice of a few at the expence of the general prosperity of commercial kingdoms, and the natural rights of millions of the human species. Do the millions of negroes in bondage ever kneel down, clasp their hands, and with dripping eyes look upward? Great being! with what eyes dost thou behold them!