





NEGRO SLAVERY.

OBSERVATIONS,

IN ANSWER TO AN

“ ADDRESS

TO THE

CLERGY OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH,

AND TO

CHRISTIAN MINISTERS OF EVERY DENOMINATION.”

“ Blame not before thou hast examined the truth: understand first,
and then rebuke.”—*Ecclesiasticus*, xi. 7.

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“ In times of real security, we should not inflame the minds of the populace with affected apprehensions ; before we complain of grievances, we should be sure they exist : we should never violate, knowingly, the laws of truth and justice. We should be restrained by a sense of honour from calumniating the innocent.”

Defence of the Duke of Bedford, in Reply to Junius.

OBSERVATIONS,

ETC. ETC.

AN "Address to the Clergy of the Established Church, and to Christian Ministers of every Denomination," has lately been extensively circulated, and, as it is understood, sent to *every* clergyman and dissenting minister throughout the empire. The great object of this Address is to induce them to employ the PULPIT for the purpose of "diffusing a knowledge of the evils of colonial bondage throughout the land, and of exciting increased efforts for speedily putting a period to the state of slavery itself throughout the British dominions."

In carrying these objects into effect, various subsidiary means are to be employed, and the Christian minister is invited to "unite in petitioning Parliament to emancipate the slaves from their cruel bondage;" and "to abstain as much as possible from the use of those articles which are the produce of the tortures and agonies of his fellow-creatures."

Whatever effect this Address may have had upon some denominations of Dissenters, we feel confident that the Clergy of the Establishment know too well the duty which they owe both to religion and their own sacred character—both to God and man, to attend to such an invitation.

We are not going to enter into any defence of slavery in the abstract:—far otherwise; but we shall protest against all such appeals as the present, which, instead of approaching the momentous subject of emancipation with the caution and sobriety *due to its importance*, addresses itself solely to the *passions* of men, and can only serve to excite irritation, without effectually accomplishing any praiseworthy or useful purpose. The English Clergy well know, that from the earliest ages of the world, and in almost every part of it, slavery has existed;—they know that even in this country a species of bondage continued until a period later than the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and that its abolition in

the West India colonies, with *safety*, whether as regards the welfare of the master, or that of the slave himself, must be the work of *time*. Mr Stephen says, "Slavery is not to be ploughed up by revolution, or to be mown down by the scythe of a legislative abolition; but to be plucked up, stalk by stalk, by the progressive hand of private and voluntary enfranchisement."—"It is to be accomplished by the same happy means which formerly put an end to it in England, namely, by a benign though *insensible* revolution in opinions and manners; by the encouragement of particular manumissions, and the progressive melioration of the condition of the slaves—till it shall slide *insensibly* into general freedom."*—(Report of the African Institution, 1815, pp. 41, 8.)

In the Address we are noticing, the Clergy are expressly invited to come forward, because, as it is alleged, negro slavery is repugnant to the truths and duties of Christianity, and a heavy

* "Will the *happiness* of the slaves be promoted by their sudden, and, as we think, indiscreet emancipation? Will not the slave who has been compulsorily induced to work suddenly lapse into indolence of body and of mind?—All sudden changes are attended with considerable inconveniences; because, to use Dr Paley's pregnant apothegm, 'man is a bundle of habits.' These habits are contracted by the great law of association of ideas; and no permanent change of character or condition can take place, until, by time and careful education, a new train of associations is superinduced, whereby new habits will necessarily be contracted.—Until the condition of slaves is gradually ameliorated—until their minds are instructed, and they are taught the arts of life,—their emancipation would be a greater act of cruelty to themselves than the loss of their services to their masters. They are intellectually as children; and what is comprehended under the word liberty, is no more understood by them than the occupations of men are understood, and capable of practice, by a child.—Let the slave be instructed, and trained, by gradual approaches, for freedom. Such has been, and ever will be, the course of Divine Providence with respect to mankind; because it is suitable to the constitution of our nature. Our very religion is conveyed to our understanding by the analogies of freedom and slavery."—"House of Bondage;" by the Rev. B. Bailey, M.A. Curate of Burton-upon-Trent," pp. 38, 32.)

responsibility is said to press upon every minister of the Gospel who shall shrink from “denouncing and reprobating its enormous and accumulated evils.”—Now, it is well known that our Saviour lived and preached in the midst of a slave population, “without doing one act, or uttering one word, that could in any manner set that population at variance with their masters;* and both from the conduct of our Saviour, and of St Paul, we may draw that inference which fell from more than one noble lord in the course of a late debate,† that Slavery and Christianity are not incompatible. Lord Bathurst observed, “I have seen, with deep regret, uncalled-for declarations, which have been made elsewhere, that a state of slavery is forbid by the Bible, and is utterly repugnant to the principles of the Christian religion. My lords, I am not prepared to admit that slavery is forbid by the Bible. It is not against the powers that are, but it is against the uncharitable use of the authority of those powers, that the injunctions of the Gospel are especially directed.”—“The divine Founder of Christianity, who knew what was in man, foresaw the effects which the Gospel would work upon the habits and manners of the world. He therefore left the question of personal slavery to be decided by the course of Providence, overruling the events of men’s actions. Such an enlightened man as St Paul, independent of his inspiration, might, by his characteristic perspicacity, have foreseen that the condition of all classes of persons, but especially of servants or slaves, would be considerably amended by the general diffusion of Christianity:—yet, so far from preaching the right of freedom to those who were in bondage, we find that he gives directions to servants, whether *bond or free*, how to conduct themselves towards their respective masters.”— (“House of Bondage,” p. 43.)

Following these high examples, the Christian minister will

* Blackwood’s Magazine, Dec. 1824, p. 685. The admirable papers on the West Indian Controversy, which appeared in this work in 1823 and 1824, are doubtless well known to our readers.

† Debate, House of Lords, 7th March 1826.

feel it his duty, so far from exciting *disunion* between master and slave, and promoting discord in a state of society where the materials are so peculiar, and the parts so disproportionate, to employ religion to its noblest purposes, and to use it as the *cement* which can alone bind together this frame of society. "Christianity (as it has been well observed) is the only bond sufficiently comprehensive to effect this; it embraces equally the freeman and the slave: and while it permits and sanctions the inequality of their stations, it acknowledges them both as equal objects of its regard. It tells them that they are all the children of one common Father, and the heirs of one common promise,—partakers of the same heavenly grace, and candidates for the same heavenly reward. As brothers in the eyes of God, it bids them meet together in the same house of prayer, and join in the same service of praise and thanksgiving; while abroad and at home it still equally impresses upon them their relative obligations, and inculcates equally the duty of kindness and compassion in the master, of good-will and obedience in the slave."—(Bishop of Exeter's Sermon, preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in 1824, p. 18.)

The Address has grossly misrepresented the present condition of the negro population. Every epithet has been employed which could convey the idea of existing cruelty and oppression on the part of the master, and of wretchedness and misery on that of the slave.

It further calls upon the public, and especially the clergy, to "resort to decisive and effectual measures," to "strain every nerve," and "to concentrate their forces in the strenuous use of every means by which the country may be soonest purged of this deep pollution" of negro slavery.

To accomplish the abolition of negro slavery in the West India colonies gradually and safely, the efforts of the British Parliament have of late been unceasingly directed. In 1823, resolutions were unanimously passed by the House of Commons, and which have since been adopted by the House of Lords, for effecting that ob-

ject, by imparting to the slaves a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects, and by a determined and persevering, but *judicious* and *temperate*, enforcement of such measures as should effect a progressive improvement in the character of the slave population, so as to prepare them for that participation in those rights.—To those who are “straining every nerve” to terminate slavery, measures of this sober character will not be palatable; but the moderate and discreet philanthropist will rest satisfied with them, and he will rejoice to find, that while much remains to be done, *much has been done* for the amelioration of the condition of the slaves in the West Indies. It has been shown again and again, that their condition, both as regards their temporal comforts and their moral culture, has, within the last few years, undergone a *manifest improvement*; and if their masters be only permitted for a short period to *pursue in peace* the plans which they have in contemplation, the abolition of slavery will be accomplished by its sliding (as Mr Stephen has stated) insensibly into general freedom.*

It may be distinctly asserted, that slavery in the West Indies is *not* what it is represented in this Address, it is *not* a “frightful complication of misery and crime;” nor is it, as *now* constituted, that “horrid and barbarous system which tyrannizes over unhappy victims.” Let us first refer to the testimony of an individual perfectly unconnected with the colonies, and who has very recently given us his voluntary testimony as to the present state of the negroes.—Mr Coleridge, an English gentleman, who visited twelve of the West India Islands in 1825, in the suite of the Bishop of Barbadoes, for the recovery of health, and from motives of curiosity, tells us: “I have been in twelve of the British colonies; I have gone round and across many of them, and have resided some months in the most populous one of its size in the whole world. I have observed with diligence, I have inquired of all sorts of people, and have mixed constantly with the co-

* Within a period of three years (from 1820 to 1823), 4000 voluntary manumissions have taken place in Jamaica alone.

loured inhabitants of all hues and of every condition. I am sure *I have seen things as they are*, and I am not aware of any other bias on my mind, except that which may be caused by a native hatred of injustice, and a contempt and disdain of cant and hypocrisy." Now, having had these fair opportunities of judging of the state of the population of the West India colonies *as they are*, he bears this important testimony to the owners of slaves:—

"From the general and prominent charge of *cruelty*, active or permissive, towards the slaves, *I for one acquit the planters.*" He tells us further, that the "slaves receive no wages, because no money is paid to them upon that score, but they possess advantages, which the ordinary wages of labour in England *doubled* could not purchase. The slaves are so well aware of the comforts which they enjoy under a master's purveyance, that they not unfrequently forego freedom rather than be deprived of them. A slave beyond the prime of life will hesitate to accept manumission. Many negroes in Barbadoes, Granada, and Antigua, have refused freedom when offered to them." And he also makes the following important observations:—"I hope and believe," says the author, "that the time is almost come when the cause of religion and real philanthropy, as it respects the West Indies, will be placed on its true footing; and it is highly worthy of the counsels of England to see that this cause be speedily disencumbered of the trammels which prejudice, ignorance, and hypocrisy, have respectively heaped upon it. In setting about the conversion of more than 800,000 black slaves into free citizens, we must act *sensibly* and *discreetly*; especially we must begin with the beginning, for it is not a matter of decree, edict, or act of parliament; there is no hocus pocus in the thing, there are no presto movements. *It is a mighty work*, yet, mighty as it is, it must be effected, if at all, in the order and by the rules which *reason* and *experience* have proved to be alone effectual. If we attempt to reverse the order, or to alter the mode, we shall not only fail ourselves, but make it impossible that any should succeed."—

(Six Months in the West Indies, in 1825.)

Mr M·Domell. in his "Considerations on Negro Slavery," has shown that "the negroes are not that degraded, miserable set of beings they are so generally supposed to be."—"The first sensation," he observes, "which a stranger experiences on visiting an estate, is that of unqualified surprise. In place of beholding that scene of chains and cruelty which had been associated with his idea of slavery, he finds everything indicative of cheerfulness and content; an active, animating picture of industry lies before him; every now and then is heard a loud and general laugh, evidently that of persons free from care: in his walks about the grounds, he is saluted with courtesy; and he sees the proprietor received really with affection. After the work of the day is over, if he proceed to the negro houses, he will be still more gratified: he there beholds apartments well fitted up, and comfortable; the little children before the doors gamboling about in sportive innocence; and the whole presenting such an appearance of satisfaction and happiness, that he is at once prompted to exclaim, What is it Mr Wilberforce would have?"—(Considerations, p. 213.)

If the reader would wish to have details of the management of a West India estate, and of the general treatment of the negroes upon it—the regulations adopted for divine service and for the education of the children—their privileges—the attention shown to them when sick—their allowance of food—a description of their houses,* and the indulgences granted to them,—we would refer him to a Report in the Proceedings of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, for the year 1823. This Report was furnished by the exemplary Chaplain to the negroes on the Codrington Plantations, the Rev. J. H. Pinder; and it proves, amongst other gratifying facts, that the existence of slavery is not (as it has been frequently asserted) incompatible with an increase of population—

* "Around the houses is a patch of land, under neat cultivation. This little property the negroes have permission to leave at their decease to any relative or friend, being a slave on the estate."—(Report, &c. p. 212.)

" within the short period of eight years, nearly one-sixth having been added to the number on the establishment."—(Report, p. 206.)

Whilst the Clergy are thus stimulated to wage war against slavery, the difficulties and dangers that surround this great question are *entirely overlooked*. " If there be a question, at which it is impossible for any person, the most careless, to look with indifference, but which any man, who approaches it as a subject of legislation, must view with the *deepest awe*,—it is the question now before us. To speak of the difficulties which encompass it, as compared with almost any other question which has ever occupied the attention of Parliament, would be to draw but a faint and feeble picture of those difficulties; they are, indeed, apparent to the most casual observation; but he who has to probe and prove them, for the purpose of applying a remedy, finds them thickening around him at every step, and leaving him frequently nothing but a choice of evils."—(Mr Canning's Speech in 1824, p. 3.)

Emancipation, that *real emancipation*, which would prove to the slave a blessing, and not a curse, must, we repeat, necessarily be the work of time. This was *formerly* the opinion of the most sanguine and zealous abolitionists themselves. In 1807, they were " unanimous that emancipation could not profitably take place, until the slaves had been prepared for its reception by an improvement of their character, growing out of an amelioration of their condition, and involving necessarily a change of treatment, which would approximate them to the state of free persons."—(The West India Question practically considered, p. 24.)

Mr Wilberforce himself, at this period, spoke of " those dangers which might justly be apprehended from the sudden emancipation of men, most of whom must be destitute of those habits which are necessary for enabling them to act with propriety as freemen."—(Ibid. p. 26.)

Mr Canning observed (in the same admirable speech which we have already quoted) —" I would proceed *gradually* because

I would proceed *safely*. I know that the impulse of enthusiasm would carry us much faster than I am prepared to go; I know it is objected that all this preparation will take *time*. Take time! to be sure it will; to be sure it should; to be sure it must!—Time!—why, what is it we have to deal with? Is it with an evil of yesterday's origin?—with a thing which has grown up in our time;—of which we have watched the growth—measured the extent, and which we have ascertained the means of correcting or controlling? No; we have to deal with an evil which is the growth of centuries, and of tens of centuries; which is almost coeval with the Deluge; which has existed, under different modifications, since man was man. Do gentlemen, in their passion for legislation, think that, after only thirty years' discussion, they can now at once manage as they will the most unmanageable, perhaps, of all subjects? or do we forget that, in fact, not more than thirty years have elapsed since we first presumed to approach even the outworks of this great question? Do we, in the ardour of our nascent reformation, forget that, during the ages for which this system has existed, no preceding generation of legislatures has ventured to touch it with a reforming hand? and have we the vanity to flatter ourselves, that we can annihilate it at a blow? No, no;—we must be contented to proceed, as I have already said, gradually and cautiously.”—(Speech, p. 22.)

From the manner in which this subject is usually treated at the present day, and from the various accusations which are brought against the proprietors of slaves, it would seem as if the object were to charge upon *them* all the evils which may have emanated from this frame of society. But “it is both absurd and unjust,” as the Lord Chancellor justly observed,* “to lay the whole blame of the existence of slavery on the West India planter: it ought to be recollected, that the traffic in slaves was fostered, encouraged, and almost instituted by the British Constitution,—that when some of the islands, on more than one occasion, proposed to limit the number of slaves to be brought into them, this country would not allow of any such limitation.”

* Debate. 7th March 1826.

The West India planter, therefore, whether entitled to his slaves by descent, devise, or purchase, is the owner of property which the laws of Great Britain have *sanctioned* and *confirmed* as *completely* and as *solemnly* as an estate in land, or tithes, or in any other species of property possessed by the subjects of this realm. This is a point which ought never to be forgotten, and with every conscientious man it will have its due weight—bringing to his recollection the golden rule of dealing the same measure to his neighbour and his neighbour's goods as he would wish to have dealt to himself and to what belongs to him.

Not only against the address, which is the particular subject of these observations, but against all others of a similar character, emanating from the Anti-slavery Society, which attempt “to wrest from the hands of the Government this great national experiment, by inflaming the public mind against slavery as a system, (the truth of which, in the abstract, no person can be found to deny,) and by engendering those feelings of horror and indignation which such appeals are calculated to produce, *too strong a protest cannot be entered*; nor can too much caution be recommended to those candidates at the next general election, whom it may be attempted to involve in pledges and promises upon this subject, *from which their better judgment will revolt*, when they are called to fulfil them.”—(The West India Question practically considered, p. 105.)

To those individuals who liberally scatter these appeals throughout the country, as well to those who earnestly wish for the abolition of slavery in the West India Colonies from motives of humanity, as to those who seek only to plunge them into anarchy and confusion, we would address ourselves in the emphatic language of the Lord Chancellor; and, as the advice comes from one whose opinion is, and ever will be, regarded with the profoundest veneration, it is earnestly hoped that it will not, in this instance alone, be disregarded:—“I cannot help saying (observed his lordship*) that while I feel most anxious, in common with your lordships, for the amelioration of the condition of the slaves in

* Debate, 7th March 1826.

the West Indies, and for the entire abolition of slavery, whenever that abolition can be accomplished, at the earliest period that shall be compatible with *the well-being of the slaves themselves*, with the *safety of the colonies*, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interest of *private property*—yet, my lords, my fixed opinion is, that *these great and desirable objects have been more retarded by the intemperate zeal of those who have been the advocates of such measures, than it had or could be by any direct opposition on the part of those who have opposed them.*”

We cannot conclude without offering a few remarks on the *religious instruction* of the slaves, the most important branch of this momentous subject. The establishment of an Episcopacy in the West Indies gave pleasure to every man interested in the *real* welfare of the slave, and in the promotion of genuine Christianity; to all such, at least, as conceived that the task of imparting religious instruction to the negro “could not be confided so safely or so advantageously as to the hands of a regular church establishment, whose duty and interest it would be to assist the local government, to calm the fear and allay the ferment of the times, to reconcile the planter to the propriety of granting, and, in due time, to fit and prepare the negro for receiving, that liberty which, with religion and the love of order, will be really a blessing to him, but, without them, will infallibly prove a curse.” —(Bishop of Exeter’s Sermon, p. 25.) Yet, strange to say, those who are, and ever have been, most clamorous for negro emancipation, have allowed this church establishment to pass unnoticed by any commendation, and some of that party have not scrupled to undervalue the exertions of those who belong to it. The same observation applies to the exertions which within the last few years have been made by the “Incorporated Society for the Conversion and Religious Instruction and Education of the Negro Slaves in the British West India Islands,” of which the Bishop of London is president, although it gives the most encouraging accounts from the clergy engaged in its service of the success of

their labours. We are told in the *Address*, that in the colonies “ the Gospel cannot have free course ;” that “ even zealous ministers administer the Gospel *partially* ;” that it is “ difficult, and even perilous, to exhibit in those colonies any other than an *imperfect* and *mutilated picture* of Christianity.” Mr Stephen has the hardihood to tell us, in his last pamphlet, that “ the slaves are kept in *pagan darkness* by the compulsion of the planters,” and that the latter are consequently enemies to the propagation of Christianity. These and various other assertions plainly prove, that to the exertions of the *Established Clergy*, there is, in certain quarters, a rooted dislike, and that the insinuation of the African Institution is still maintained, “ that the Church of England does *not* afford to the slaves the means of attaining religious instruction and worship.”—If the object of these individuals be to drive out the Church of England from the colonies, and to plant sectarianism in its room, we feel confident that a measure tending to produce a revolution so extensive and so dangerous, needs only to be pointed out to secure the steady resistance of all those who are attached to the civil and religious institutions of their country. Happily, however, all alarms upon this subject are, we trust, groundless.

In proof of the cordial and strongly-rooted attachment of the colonies to the Established Church, Lord Bathurst very recently made the following statement in the House of Lords,—a statement that will give genuine satisfaction to every philanthropist who surveys the exertions of the Church of England free from the uncharitableness of party feeling.

“ I must observe, in justice to the Legislative Assembly of Jamaica, that it has far surpassed any expectation which I had previously formed, and that, from its conduct in that instance, I cherish the strongest hopes of further improvement. Your lordships are aware that a bishop was sent to that island, for the purpose of more effectually forwarding the religious instruction of all classes of the inhabitants, and especially with the view of bettering the condition of the slave population. The Assembly has invested

the bishop with every power requisite for the due exercise of his authority ; it has added considerably to the stipends of the rectors, and made the receipt of them independent of the vestry. Your lordships will be aware of the great improvement which this last measure must eventually introduce, when I inform you, that as the law formerly stood, these stipends could not be received without the production of a certificate from the vestry. That certificate now emanates from the bishop, who is sole judge of the manner in which the duties have been performed. Parishes have also been enabled to raise funds for building or enlarging churches, and also for the erection of schools—powers which I have every reason to believe will not be abused. I know that many respectable individuals, both in Jamaica and in this country, have subscribed considerable sums in aid of these benevolent objects, and I doubt not that their exertions will ultimately meet with appropriate and gratifying rewards in the improvement of every class of the population. Having stated these things to your lordships respecting Jamaica, I should be guilty of great injustice towards the inhabitants of the Leeward Islands, if I failed to state, that their proceedings, relative to the religious instruction of the slaves, have been characterised by the same zeal, and the same Christian spirit, which have been manifested in Jamaica. As soon as the bishop of Barbadoes arrived, he visited all the different islands within his diocese, and had the satisfaction to receive from all the assemblies, and from all the leading people connected with them, every encouragement, and every offer of assistance which he could desire, in aid of his attempts to instruct the slave population. A report has recently been received from Barbadoes relative to the state of religious instruction in that island, which, I am confident, will afford the greatest satisfaction to your lordships.* After this gratifying statement, it may be needless to say more ; but the following testimony is too important to be omitted. The bishop of Barbadoes, “ so far from returning to Eng

* Debate, 7th March 1826.

land, discouraged by unexpected impediments, feels that, great as are the real difficulties, and distant as must be the full harvest of his labours, the prospect before him is *full of encouragement*: in every class of people he has found that spirit of respect for his person, office, and object—that zeal, liberality, and concession to his desires, which justify the liveliest, if not impatient hopes—and in no instance has he experienced that kind of prejudice, or that degree of opposition, which should make him despair of ultimate success.”*

In bringing these observations to a close, we would solemnly appeal to the people of Great Britain, and more especially to the Clergy, and ask whether the *Address*, which has been the subject of animadversion, is calculated to do *good*?—Whilst Christianity (the best and surest foundation on which morals, civilization, and fitness for extended rights, can be built) is, as we have shown, in *successful progress* throughout the West Indian colonies, with what consistency are *Christian ministers* now solicited to use their influence in urging a precipitate emancipation of the slaves, and in endeavouring to interest the British public in measures which most surely must diminish the comforts of that class, by impoverishing their masters? Will not the Ministers of the Gospel of peace act more wisely in confiding the further progress of the great work of emancipation to the deliberate counsels of his Majesty’s Government, and in disregarding the suggestions of men, who, like the Puritans of old, under the influence of

“Hot, ardent zeal, would set whole realms on fire?”—SHAKESPEARE.

* Quarterly Review, No. 64, p. 541.

THE END.



