

EN364 Literature and Empire:
Britain and the Caribbean to c. 1900

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The Preacher: William Marshall Harte

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The Journal of Ecclesiastical History

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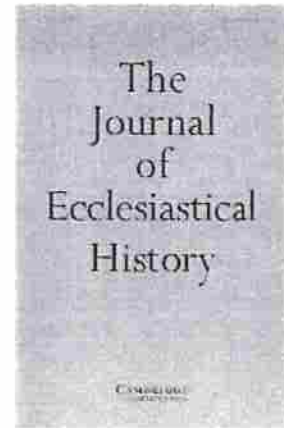
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The Journal of Ecclesiastical History / Volume 30 / Issue 04 / October 1979, pp 461 - 474
DOI: 10.1017/S0022046900029201, Published online: 25 March 2011

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0022046900029201

How to cite this article:

J. T. Gilmore (1979). The Rev. William Harte and Attitudes to Slavery in Early Nineteenth-Century Barbados. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 30, pp 461-474 doi:10.1017/S0022046900029201

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The Rev. William Harte and Attitudes to Slavery in Early Nineteenth-Century Barbados¹

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In St Mary's Church, Barbados, there is a monument to a curate who died in 1851, and 'whose labours as a clergyman of the Church of England for fifty years were distinguished by talent, energy & faithfulness. His efforts were unceasing to make known the truths of the Gospel to all classes in this island. At an early period in his ministry he led the way in rescuing the then slave population from spiritual bondage and darkness. In this work of Christian love he was ever resolute, singleminded, & uncompromising'.² Mr Harte's claim to our interest is further increased when we learn that he was once prosecuted by the vestry of his parish for, among other things, teaching slaves 'doctrines of equality inconsistent with their obedience to their masters' and for comparing the white inhabitants of his parish to those of Sodom and Gomorrah, somewhat to the advantage of the latter.

William Marshall Harte was born in Barbados 25 November 1776 and baptised the following June in St Michael's Parish Church, where his parents had been married in 1768.³ He appears to have been the youngest of three children, and was 'educated under the Revd Mr Allinson solely with a view to the clerical profession, at the Free School in Bridge Town'.⁴ Allinson was in charge of Harte's education for twelve years and was of the opinion that 'never was a youth more assiduous to his learning, made a better use of his time, or was more deserving of general commen-

¹ I would like to acknowledge the courtesy and helpfulness of the staff at the University Library, Cambridge; the Lambeth Palace Library; and the Barbados Department of Archives. I am especially grateful to Mr M. J. Chandler, the former Director, and Miss Christine Matthews, the present Director, of the last-named institution.

² There is a photograph of the monument in S. S. Goodridge, *St Mary's, Barbados, 1827-1977*, Barbados 1977.

³ B.D.A. RL1/5, p. 117 and B.D.A. RL1/4, p. 381. (Parish registers and other MS records in the keeping of the Barbados Department of Archives are hereafter referred to as B.D.A. followed by the call number used by the Department.)

⁴ W. Bishop to bishop of London, 22 June 1800, Fulham Papers (American) preserved in the Lambeth Palace Library (hereafter Fulham Papers), xxviii, fo. 86r.

dation', and confirms his longstanding vocation for the priesthood. As well as testifying that 'amidst the encreased seducements and temptations to youth with which the present times abound, he has kept himself unspoil'd by the world', Allinson enlarges upon the breadth of Harte's reading and remarks that 'his classical pursuits have been carried to a greater length than youth in general have either patience or perseverance to reach, and his attainments I trust will be found only inferior to those whose finances have fortunately allowed them the advantage of a collegiate education'.⁵ Harte never took a degree, although even in his earlier years most of the island's clergy possessed one. Harte kept a school at Bridgetown from about 1796 until 1800,⁶ when, as there was yet no bishop in the West Indies, he went to England to offer himself to the bishop of London as a candidate for orders. The glowing testimonials he brought with him produced the desired effect, and he was ordained deacon on Sunday, 23 November 1800 and a priest a week later.⁷

Before the bishop of London would ordain anyone for the colonies, it was necessary for him to have a 'title', or official promise of clerical employment. In Harte's case, this was provided by the Rev. William Garnett, rector of St Michael's, which was the parish which included the island's capital, Bridgetown. Garnett stated that he now needed a curate—and intended to employ Harte in that capacity—due to 'the great increase . . . of parochial duty, within the last year or two . . . This increase of duty is in part owing to the increased size of the town; but principally to the number of coloured people, of different descriptions, who are almost daily baptized'.⁸ If, as would appear possible, Harte's first cure involved considerable work among the coloured population, this would make less strange the circumstances in which he abandoned it. In 1801 he took up an appointment as assistant to the Rev. Mark Nicholson, principal of Codrington College,⁹ which he appears to have held until 1807,¹⁰ a position which would, for purely geographical reasons, have prevented his continuing to hold a cure at St Michael's. His functions were described as those of 'Usher and Catechist',¹¹ that is, schoolmaster to the white pupils of the college and religious instructor to the slaves on the estates which maintained the college. Codrington was at this time almost certainly the only plantation in Barbados to make any such provision for the spiritual well-being of its slaves, and even this has been stigmatised as

⁵ Thos Allinson to bishop of London, 25 June 1800, Fulham Papers, xxviii, fos. 94-5. Allinson was rector of St Philip's, Barbados.

⁶ Letter of W. Bishop (above note 4).

⁷ Note on the verso of one of Harte's ordination papers, Fulham Papers, xxviii, fo. 89v.

⁸ W. Garnett to bishop of London, 23 June 1800, Fulham Papers, xxviii, fo. 90.

⁹ On this institution, see F. J. Klingberg, *Codrington Chronicle: An Experiment in Anglican Altruism on a Barbados Plantation, 1710-1834*, Berkeley 1949, and J. H. Bennett, Jr, *Bondsmen and Bishops: Slavery and Apprenticeship on the Codrington Plantations of Barbados, 1710-1838*, Berkeley 1958.

¹⁰ Klingberg, *op. cit.*, 118.

¹¹ Bishop Coleridge, *Charges*, London 1835, General Appendix, p. 7.

erratic and ineffective until the appointment of the Rev. John Hothersall Pinder as catechist in 1819.¹² We have no comment on Harte's performance of his duties at Codrington.¹³

In November 1804 Harte became rector of St Joseph, the parish adjoining that in which Codrington was situated.¹⁴ In 1809 he married Harriet Young, the seventeen-year-old daughter of a St James planter. This 'amiable female' was, until her death in 1838, a 'beloved and excellent wife', by whom Harte had seven children, three of whom died in infancy.¹⁵ At the end of 1815, Harte left St Joseph to become rector of St Lucy,¹⁶ a change of parishes within the island not being in any way unusual.

The year 1825 was distinguished in Barbados by the arrival of William Hart Coleridge as first bishop of the newly-established diocese. The rector of St Lucy appears to have soon become a friend of his new superior and in 1826 christened one of his short-lived sons Coleridge. At some time before 1827 he was appointed one of the bishop's chaplains,¹⁷ and we learn of a further mark of episcopal favour in 1836, from the report of a charity exhibition in Bridgetown, which included 'a full-length portrait of that persuasive and impressive preacher, the Reverend Mr HARTE . . . This portrait we understand, was taken at the express desire of the Lord Bishop, and was sent from Bishop's Court by his permission to aid the objects of the Exhibition'.¹⁸

By this date Harte had left St Lucy four years and had been appointed by the bishop as curate of St Mary's.¹⁹ Although recently built and technically only a chapel-of-ease to St Michael's this was a substantial urban parish with a large congregation drawn mainly from the free

¹² Bennett, *op. cit.*, 110-11.

¹³ Harte's name is not to be found in Bennett, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ For Harte's tenure of St Joseph, see the register of that parish, B.D.A. RL1/30, 84 and 103. Canon Goodridge (above note 2), 12-13, erroneously states that he was rector of St James.

¹⁵ See her obituary, *The Barbadian*, 26 May 1838 and various parish register entries. (All newspapers referred to were consulted in the Barbados Department of Archives.)

¹⁶ See Harte's Defence, a letter of his to Bishop Coleridge and other accompanying documents, published in *The Barbadian*, 24 July 1827. (This is one of the most important sources for Harte's career, as other possible sources, such as vestry minutes, are no longer extant. I refer to it from now on simply as 'Defence' and any unattributed quotations are derived from it.)

¹⁷ He is referred to as such in the account of the consecration of St Mary's Chapel given in *The Barbadian*, 27 July 1827.

¹⁸ *The Barbadian*, 21 December 1836. This implies that the portrait was then in the possession of Bishop Coleridge, but it must have been given to the sitter, perhaps on the bishop's retirement to England in 1841, as Harte was able to leave it in his will to his elder son (B.D.A. RB4/73, 325).

¹⁹ *The Barbadian*, 7 July 1832, as cited in the *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, iii (1935), 205.

coloured population of Bridgetown, and any decline from Harte's previous status as rector was only nominal. One of his obituary notices tells us that 'His ministrations at the Chapel which he held at the time of his death, and for twenty years previous, were most acceptable to all classes of his hearers. The Gospel in all its simplicity was taught. He never assailed any body of Christians, or set up his own system to the exclusion of others . . . His discourses were remarkable for the mental force which they displayed. He possessed a powerful and original mind, and it was always in exercise.' At the funeral the bishop (Thomas Parry, the successor of Coleridge) 'paid a just and proper tribute to the deceased, whose memory will live in the hearts of many, and whose worth will long be remembered by those who knew it'.²⁰

Whilst the foregoing sketch may be of some value as illustrating the life of a West Indian clergyman of the period, interest in Harte's life must necessarily be centred on his connection with the religious education of slaves and the once celebrated court case this produced. In 1808, that is, shortly after he ceased to have any official connection with Codrington, Harte as rector of St Joseph commenced 'the laudable undertaking of instructing the negroes of his parish in the duties and principles of Christianity'.²¹ Writing twenty years later, the editor of *The Barbadian* newspaper alluded to the 'most violent prejudices' which were aroused by this action of the rector's, which was 'in direct opposition to his own temporal interests'.²² However, we have no details, and we do not know how long Harte persisted or what success he achieved. It is of interest that after his transfer to St Lucy, he made no similar attempt for four years. Nevertheless, in June 1819, at a service in St Lucy's church attended by Lord Combermere, the philanthropic governor of Barbados, Harte tells us that he 'took the opportunity of recommending to my congregation the religious instruction of their slaves, and announced my intention of establishing a weekly lecture for that purpose . . . I began on Wednesday evening the 21st of July; and, having secured the support of a very few respectable proprietors, and of one Overseer in my neighbourhood, I was attended by slaves to the number of between 150 and 200'. However, although on the following Wednesday the congregation had increased to more than 300, the occasion was disturbed by the drunken insults of a white man. Harte received an apology the next day, and 'consented to forgive him on condition of his asking pardon, in the Church, of the whole congregation—slaves as well as whites', but was persuaded by a

²⁰ *The West Indian*, Barbados, 13 January 1851. A shorter obituary appears in *The Liberal*, another Barbadian newspaper, for 18 January 1851.

²¹ Sir Robert H. Schomburgk, *The History of Barbados*, London 1848, 94.

²² Editorial, *The Barbadian*, 17 August 1827. The editorial 28 August, following an attack in another local paper, asserts that 'we alluded to his *early* exertions, before he had the *happiness* to be connected with the parish of St Lucy. We did not mention that parish at all, although it would be no difficult matter to prove the existence of violent prejudice, and the fact of opposition, there too'.

local M.P. to drop this demand on the ground that it 'had roused all the prejudices of many of my parishioners'.²³ After this incident, the vestry demanded that he hold his lectures somewhere other than the parish church, and, although it was disputed whether they were quite as peremptory as the rector subsequently claimed, according to their own version,²⁴ they sent the sexton to Harte, 'to inform him, that as the parish had been at considerable expense for the repairs of the Church, and as they were apprehensive that the attendance of the coloured people to receive lectures there on Wednesday evenings, if continued for a length of time, may prove injurious to the Church or render it uncomfortable for the reception of the white inhabitants, they would be much obliged to him if he would use the temporary Church'. Harte pointed out 'that the temporary church, as it has been called (in consequence of its having been used as such after the hurricane of 1780), is a small and old building, completely dismantled as a place of worship', so that the vestry's request amounted to a prohibition. He protested that the slaves were 'with scarcely an exception clean and well-dressed, and behave in the most orderly manner', and that 'they who are expressing their fears that the Church should be uncomfortable to the white inhabitants, are the very persons who never attend it, while the few families who do regularly attend, are supporters of the religious instruction of the slaves, and that in the very Church which these poor creatures are expected to render so incongenient and uncomfortable'.²⁵ The matter was closed when: 'In consequence of my fears of personal violence, I was induced without loss of time to go to His Excellency Lord Combermere, and claim his Lordship's protection, which he readily granted. From this period, I experienced but little opposition, though it was plain from various circumstances that the objection to my proceeding was very general.'²⁶ The rector continued to lecture to slaves in the parish church, and the vestry ceased to make him the customary annual present of £100, which normally increased his salary by a third.

The lectures were interrupted in 1820, when Harte was obliged to take his wife to England for the benefit of her health, but after his return he resumed them in September 1821, having previously preached a sermon to his white parishioners in which he entreated their cooperation.²⁷ He

²³ Letter of Harte's published in *The Barbados Mercury and Bridgetown Gazette*, 21 September 1819.

²⁴ Published as an advertisement in the *Mercury*, 14 September 1819.

²⁵ *Mercury*, 21 September 1819.

²⁶ 'Defence.' The *Mercury* letter of 1819 explains that a friend of Harte's had been threatened by a member of the vestry, who was also the father of the man who had caused the original trouble.

²⁷ This is printed in W. M. Harte, *Lectures on the Gospel of St Matthew*, London 1824, ii, 475-500. Printed for the Society for the Conversion and Religious Instruction and Education of the Negro Slaves in the British West India Islands, these lectures were delivered to Harte's slave congregation. I refer to them hereafter as *Lectures*, and page

says that he 'met with no opposition, but at the same time with no encouragement', except from the proprietor of a neighbouring plantation and one other slave-holder. 'The Lectures were delivered on Sunday afternoons, Service commencing at 5 o'clock. The congregation of Negroes was small, rarely amounting to 50, but most commonly not more than 20, and sometimes far below that number. However, I persevered, though the service has been performed to two only.' He finished his stated purpose of lecturing on the Gospel of St Matthew and the Ten Commandments, which, to judge from the number of sermons printed, would have taken until July or August 1822, but then appears to have given up, perhaps depressed by the small attendance of slaves, which was clearly a result of the attitude of their masters.

'In June 1823, conceiving that the public mind was better disposed towards the religious instruction of the slaves,'²⁸ Harte 'commenced a second time a course of Wednesday evening Lectures, which were at first very well attended by the Negroes, but in a short time I was compelled in consequence of certain irregularities (not attributable to the slaves) which occurred during the evening services, to have the Lectures at an earlier hour; namely 5 o'clock. But as this hour interfered with the required labour of the slaves, very few were able to attend; and I was soon compelled to discontinue the Service altogether'.

The arrival of Bishop Coleridge is universally agreed to have brought about considerable improvement in a church which one West Indian cleric, writing in 1898, was to describe as having been 'little other than a parody for two centuries', and there was no exception in the matter of taking religion to the slaves. Slave children were, with the permission of the owners, admitted to the schools which the bishop founded for the benefit of the coloured population, and a small and previously apathetic body of clergy was enlarged by the bishop and encouraged to visit slaves on the plantation (once again with the permission of the owners, which was not always given) and to bring them to share in the life of the Church.²⁹ Harte was the only minister in Barbados to perform a marriage between slaves before 1825, but slave marriages were now gradually encouraged, though the first was not performed on the Codrington estates before May 1827.³⁰ A system of catechetical instruction was promulgated and, according to Harte, adopted in St Lucy on 'many plantations . . . which were occasionally visited by me. However, I did not

references are to the copy in the University Library, Cambridge; it should be noted that the pagination of a second edition, of which there is a copy in the Institute of Jamaica, appears to be entirely different. See J. S. Handler, *A Guide to Source Materials for the Study of Barbados History, 1627-1834*, Carbondale, Ill. 1971, 75 and 80.

²⁸ A society had just been formed in Barbados to encourage the spread of Christianity among the slaves, and various planters, including Sir Reynold Alleyne, later one of Harte's opponents, were among the founder members.

²⁹ A. Caldecott, *The Church in the West Indies*, London 1898, 97-8.

³⁰ Bennett, (above note 9), 116 and 122.

discover any great increase in the congregations at Church'. In May 1825, with the bishop's support, he again started weekly afternoon lectures, 'but in a few months I gave it up, in consequence of the Negroes' ceasing to attend, which I have good reason to believe arose from the planters not feeling themselves able to afford so much time from the labour of their plantations. I think it right to observe . . . that on this occasion, as well as on every other, I have never pressed the attendance of the slaves on publish worship in opposition to their masters' wishes, nor in any way interfered with the authority which the Master has by law over his slave'.³¹ However, the bishop subsequently held a confirmation in St Lucy, and, evidence of some degree of success on the rector's part, about 130 slaves were confirmed. As a result of this event 'a considerable incitement was given to the Negroe mind on the subject of religion' and Harte 'was enabled to employ as a Sunday Schoolmaster for the slaves a competent young person who was receiving his education at the parochial school for whites, which, with the Divine blessing, I had happily succeeded in establishing in May 1825 . . . The anxiety to obtain the *National Society's* cards was very great, both in the young and adult Negroes, and many were purchased by them. Everything now began to wear a most promising appearance. The attendance of the Negroes on the Sunday mornings, which they seemed now to prefer to the Sunday afternoons, had very greatly increased and appeared to be increasing'.

However, on returning from a tour of the southern islands of the diocese, with the bishop, Harte, 'found the attendance of the younger Negroes more especially greatly decreased; and on enquiring of the elder ones into the cause, I was told that it proceeded from the Sunday dances, which, as it was now the height of crop time, were constantly taking place, and beginning at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. On a Sunday or two afterwards, we were disturbed in the Church, by the drumming and noise of a dance at a short distance from it'. As the rector was almost obsessed by the proper observance of the Sabbath, he tried to stop the dances by appealing to a virtually obsolete law of the island, but gave up the attempt when plantation managers informed him that they would not stop the dances, and that if he chose to prosecute, the slaves would be made to pay the fines themselves.

Shortly after this incident, on Easter Sunday 1827 (falling that year on 15 April), the rector preached a sermon which his white parishioners considered highly offensive, and this seems to have exhausted their patience; on 21 April they held a public meeting and passed six resolutions, subsequently published in the local press. These stated that although they were 'fully impressed with the importance of imparting religious knowledge to their Slaves, and are ready to afford them all safe facilities for obtaining this kind of instruction', they considered that 'in all

³¹ This would have been in entire conformity with the opinions of Bishop Coleridge. See Caldecott, *op. cit.*, 96.

communities distinctions of rank are necessary to the safety and well-being of society, and more especially in such a one as ours, where the hand of nature has drawn a mark of distinction between the proprietor of the soil and his dependants', and that 'any attempts proceeding from the Ministers of Religion to destroy these distinctions, to amalgamate and level the two classes of our country, must tend to endanger the safety and property of the white inhabitants, and cannot be otherwise than injurious to the civil condition and religious improvement of the black population, by exciting in their minds discontent and views inconsistent with their situation; and in the proprietors a just jealousy against the motives of those who are appointed to the office of the religious instruction of their slaves'. Accordingly, 'with deep concern' they stigmatised Harte's actions as 'the frequent attempts made by the Rector of the parish to destroy the distinctions which they deem so necessary to their safety; more especially evinced by his offensive Sermon on Easter Sunday, and his disgraceful conduct whilst administering the most Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, thereby endeavouring to alienate their slaves from a sense of their duty by inculcating doctrines of equality inconsistent with their obedience to their masters and the policy of this island'. Acting on this, the whites, or rather the 135 of them who signed the resolutions, determined 'to refuse the Reverend Wm. M. HARTE admission to their Estates, and to prevent, as much as possible, all intercourse between him and their slaves', and to send copies of the resolutions to the governor and the bishop, saying 'that the Inhabitants of this parish venture to hope that his Lordship' (that is, the bishop, not the governor) 'will restore the peace and tranquillity of the parish by adopting such measures as may be expedient to relieve them of those insults and injuries of which they so justly complain—a termination of which, can only be effected by the removal of Mr HARTE, the present incumbent, who has deservedly lost the confidence, respect and regard of every white inhabitant in this parish'.

Harte's 'disgraceful conduct' in administering the Communion is described by himself in his defence to the bishop: 'At the last table, which was not filled with the whites, I took care that the vacant space should be occupied by the coloured people; but the consecrated elements were administered in no instance to the coloured before the whites. I passed with the bread from the white communicants to the coloured, and the Rev. Mr HAMILTON, who assisted me in the administration, did the same with the cup,' The bishop commented that 'with respect to the mode of administering the Holy Communion, as detailed by yourself and confirmed by the testimony of your Curate, I feel myself called upon to state that the same mode has been pursued under my own eye at the Cathedral, as most suitable to the nature and dignity of the Sacrament, and to the spirit of that Gospel, which knows no distinction in matters of

grace'.³² It does not seem to have occurred to either Harte or Bishop Coleridge that obliging the coloured communicants to follow the whites might be making such a distinction. At least the bishop had on his arrival 'remonstrated strongly against the continuance of the custom of leaving an interval between the retirement of the Whites from the Altar and the approach of the Blacks'.³³

The passage complained of in the sermon read as follows: 'If He finds you ignorant of his doctrine, yea and ignorant even of his commandments, and living lives of practical infidelity and irreligion, can you wonder if the awful denunciation of Scripture should be realized in your case, and it be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you.' It was later falsely claimed that Harte had omitted this in the copy of the sermon which he had laid before the bishop in his justification, presumably because the parishioners could not believe that his Lordship would not find it as obnoxious as they had done. However, Bishop Coleridge did see the whole sermon and described it as 'a plain and powerful denunciation against sin, but contains nothing in my opinion in matter or in language, that can be called offensive, save to an offending conscience'. The bishop also examined Harte's printed sermons, and asked the archdeacon to read his more recent ones, without any fault being found.

As they had received no satisfaction from the bishop and rejected Harte's attempts at reconciliation, the churchwarden and vestry of St Lucy took the matter to the civil courts, and on 5 July a warrant was issued against the rector 'For uttering certain words, and using such language to and in the presence and hearing of certain slaves of the parish of St Lucy, on certain days and times between the 1st day of January 1826, and the 1st day of July 1827, as tended directly or indirectly, in their nature and import, to excite a spirit of insubordination and tumult amongst the said slaves.' Harte's statement of his intention to put down Sunday dances 'at every risque'—meaning of course risk to himself—was construed as 'illegally endeavouring to intimidate Slave owners to a surrender of part of their lawful rights, from the apprehension that the arm of insurrection might deprive them of the whole'. Another alleged statement by the rector, which he denied ever having made, was taken to show that 'the said William M. Harte, by his own words and conduct, evinces a knowledge that the Slaves of the said Parish . . . either lately meditated or now meditate a revolt against their Owners and the Government of this Island . . . yet he, the said William M. Harte, has not taken steps to prevent so lamentable an event occurring, by giving information thereof to the proper authorities of this Island, but on the

³² Bishop of Barbados to Rev. W. M. Harte, 19 July 1827, printed with Harte's 'Defence'.

³³ Caldecott, *op. cit.*, 106.

contrary he . . . by his conduct, seems to encourage it . . .'³⁴ The similarity between this and the charges brought against Missionary Smith, sentenced to death in Demerara only four years previously, will be noted.³⁵ The Easter sermon was now described, not merely as offensive; but as 'calculated to lessen the White Inhabitants of the said Parish . . . in the estimation of the Slave population . . . and to produce contempt and hatred, instead of attachment and obedience, from Slaves to their Owners'. Harte was accused of neglecting his duties (mainly on the strength of the fact that when he was in England six years before, his curate had abandoned his charge), of being 'equally regardless of the preservation of the buildings belonging to his Rectory', of having unsuitable candidates confirmed, and of baptising slaves with 'an eye to the funeral fees', to which he retorted that 'I have never demanded, nor expected, a fee . . . for any of the services of the Church performed for the benefit of the slave population of my parish'.

Not unnaturally, the case created a considerable stir in the local press for several months and was even extensively reported in the *Trinidad Guardian*.³⁶ *The Barbadian*, owned and edited by Harte's friend Abel Clinckett, gave the fullest coverage to the rector's side of the matter, though editorial comment was restrained: *The Barbados Mercury* does not survive for this year, but appears from allusions in the *Barbadian* to have been virulently opposed to Harte; and the *Barbados Globe*, edited by Michael Ryan, printer to the House of Assembly, gave comparatively brief coverage, from a point of view hostile to Harte. Even favourable publicity did not always have the desired effect, as Ryan pointed out: 'There is one observation, however, connected with the Reverend gentleman's situation, which we cannot forbear making, and that is his misfortune in having selected such a man as the Editor of the *Barbadian* for his champion; for it is worthy of remark that in no one instance, whenever he has attempted to defend the Rev. gentleman, has he failed to draw forth fresh charges or accumulated invective against him from that parish over which he presides as Rector.'³⁷ Harte was accused of fabricating evidence in his favour, which he was able to deny, and in turn it was asserted that a number of the names on the resolutions against him had been set down without the knowledge or consent of their owners, and that others had been obtained by coercion.

In the circumstances, it is not surprising that the magistrates hearing the case failed to agree, and it seemed that it would have to be abandoned. However, after some proceedings, which Harte at least thought of dubious legality, he was tried again by the Court of Grand

³⁴ The charges were printed, together with Harte's detailed refutation of them, in *The Barbadian*, 7 August 1827.

³⁵ See Cecil Northcott, *Slavery's Martyr: John Smith of Demerara and the Emancipation Movement, 1817-1824*, London 1976.

³⁶ See *The Barbadian*, 4 September 1827.

³⁷ *The Barbados Globe and Demerara Advocate*, 27 September 1827.

Sessions in December.³⁸ 'The charges were fully proved to the satisfaction of the Jury, who returned a verdict accordingly; but in consequence of a strong appeal to the Court by the prosecution, he was fined ONE SHILLING and discharged with a severe reprimand from His Honor [sic] the Chief Judge.'³⁹ In view of the seriousness of the charges and the previous intransigence of the vestry, it is surprising that they now asked for no more than a nominal penalty.

Nor was this the end of the matter. On the 11 February following, to quote the *Globe*: 'Considerable commotion was excited . . . by the sudden beat of a drum throughout the town, for ever since *religious equality* has diffused itself so widely amongst our negro population, we never hear the sound of it, that we are not immediately reminded of an insurrection; and what heightened our alarm was, every now and then, at the conclusion of each tattoo, we heard two official characters, with stentorian lungs, sing out "WILLIAM MARSHALL HARTE!" On enquiry, however, we learnt that it was a proclamation of that gentleman's innocence by His Majesty long before an account of his trial could have reached England . . . Taking the proclamation to be genuine, notwithstanding the pious ejaculations of the *Barbadian*, it must be highly amusing to our neighbours to discover such an alarm throughout the island, and such a hubbub raised—and all about a paltry BIT-AND-A-HALF!' ⁴⁰ The royal pardon had been obtained by Bishop Coleridge and Ryan's comment about its timing was unfortunately true; the House of Assembly soon joined the *Globe* in complaining about the interference with justice. The case was raised once more in England, and had to be declared closed by the Secretary for the Colonies. Harte, nothing daunted, was two years later preaching a sermon to the clergy of the diocese, recommending not only the religious instruction of slaves, but even that they should be taught to read.⁴¹ The Emancipation Act prevented further conflict on this point, and Harte appears to have spent the rest of his life at St Mary's in the undisturbed exercise of his ordinary parochial duties.

We are fortunate in that more than 1,300 pages of Harte's sermons survive in print, including the lectures delivered to his slave congregation between 1819 and 1822.⁴² It is possible to find traces of megalomania, as when he says 'Multitudes followed our Saviour, followed him till they were faint and weary. Why will not the slaves of this parish follow him through me?' and there is a curious usage of I Corinthians vi, 7, without any indication of its being a quotation, which is perhaps suggestive of

³⁸ A good summary of the purely judicial aspects of the case may be found in Schomburgk, (above note 21), 427–8.

³⁹ *The Barbados Globe*, 17 December 1827.

⁴⁰ *The Barbados Globe*, 14 February 1828.

⁴¹ W. M. Harte, *Pastoral Duties, taken in connection with the state of the West India Islands*, Barbados 1830.

⁴² In addition to the *Lectures* (for which see above note 27) and the sermon mentioned in the previous note, Harte also published a volume of *Practical Sermons*, London 1839, which contains nothing of specifically West Indian interest.

self-conferred apostolic status.⁴³ However, his motives are clear. As he told his white parishioners, he saw around him thousands leading a depraved and heathen life, and the Bible commanded him to preach the Gospel to those who were ignorant of it.⁴⁴ He informed the slaves: 'As I know that nobody can be saved, who does not believe in Jesus Christ, I cannot bear to let you go on without doing my best to teach you to know him. It will give me a great deal of trouble, and I shall get no profit by it.' However, the slightest success would be its own reward: 'Oh! could I but draw only one of you from that bottomless pit, into which every wicked soul must fall: could I persuade but one of you to turn from the error of his ways, and to live like one redeemed by the Lord, I should not think any trouble or pains too much.'⁴⁵

The lectures are in most respects extremely conventional; Harte preaches against 'the acknowledged vices of the Negroe character', which he assured the whites it was 'the acknowledged tendency of Christianity to correct',⁴⁶ chiefly sexual promiscuity, laziness, swearing, stealing and Sabbath-breaking. Two minor but noticeable themes are the vanity of the obeah cult and the terrible punishment that God has visited upon the Jews for refusing Christ. Only once is there any sign that the rector was dissatisfied with things as they were, when he says: 'If the world were a world of Christians, if all persons, whites as well as blacks, would behave as their Saviour orders them, what a different world would it be from what it now is.' In contrast, he frequently urges the slaves to be content with their lot: 'God has been pleased to place you in an inferior situation in life, and it is your duty to behave as becomes persons in that situation. All impudent, insolent and even unmannerly behaviour towards your superiors or betters is contrary to your duty as Christians.' Even the hardness of their lot is a blessing in disguise: 'However fatiguing it may sometimes be to your bodies, take my word for it that you have reason to thank your Heavenly Father for giving you so much employment and work, that you have no time for listening to the temptations of the devil.' Mere eye-service was condemned, since 'there is no fault more generally found with slaves than that they require the eye of a white person to be constantly over them'.⁴⁷ Considering Harte's views on the Sabbath, it is interesting to find him telling the slaves that he regretted that they had to spend part of Sunday growing or marketing their own food, but that there was no remedy for it: 'Your owners could not possibly afford to give you one day in the week for your own uses.' Harte emphasised that 'The idea of living without being subject to law and authority is the most foolish and mad one, that has ever entered into the heads of vile and wicked men', and rebellion was warned against: 'If it were possible, that

⁴³ *Lectures*, i, 243, 287.

⁴⁴ See the sermon printed in *ibid.*, ii, 475-500.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, i, 6, 246.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, 489.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, i, 71, 46-7, 138-9, 156.

this happy country were ever to be disturbed by insurrections, and the white inhabitants driven from it, what would become of the industrious, the well-behaved, orderly and quiet negro. He, and all that belongs to him would be at the mercy of the lazy, the wicked, the bloody-minded and the strong . . . It would be all havoc and confusion . . . From such a state of things, so horrid and so destructive, may the God of peace, of order and of love, for ever preserve both us and you!’⁴⁸ Finally, and perhaps most important from the planters’ point of view, Harte explicitly stated that Christianity and slavery were perfectly compatible: ‘Most of you are slaves. And your Saviour had never said that slaves must be made free . . . It would be a strange mistake indeed, if any slave supposed that when he was made a Christian, he was no longer a slave.’⁴⁹ The Christian religion does not trouble itself with these things. All it aims at is to make us happy in the next world, and members of Christ’s kingdom in heaven . . . When our Saviour lived on earth, a great many people were just what you are now, slaves to their owners. And when his Gospel was preached in many countries, it found many people slaves. And yet it never commanded owners to set their slaves at liberty.’ Indeed this would have been a mistake: ‘I assure you from this sacred place, that in the present state of your minds, and your little knowledge of religion, freedom would be a curse to you and not a blessing. For where a slave has a good and humane master, and behaves so as to deserve good treatment, he is much happier than many thousands in other parts of the world.’⁵⁰

One is left wondering what the whites found so objectionable, and indeed Sir Reynold Alleyne, later one of Harte’s opponents, had at first only praise for the rector’s scheme.⁵¹ The planters considered religion a valuable means of social control, and Harte promised to observe ‘that marked distinction which should exist and which . . . ought to exist in a state of society so constituted as our’s is’, and to ‘set apart certain pews, not used by the whites, for the accommodation of the slaves’.⁵² But in spite of his assurance to the whites that he was willing ‘as far as I can consistently do so, to yield even to your fair and allowable prejudices’,⁵³ it is clear that the rector was lacking in tact, especially in the matter of the Sunday dances, and that by his conduct in bringing the slaves into the church, rather than taking religion to the plantations, and by his words to both planters and slaves, he was indeed ‘inculcating doctrines of equality’. The planters felt themselves threatened, and so revealed their self-proclaimed concern for the religious improvement of their slaves to

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, ii, 161, 292–3, 192.

⁴⁹ This was long disputed in Barbados and used as an excuse for refusing religious instruction to slaves. For a famous example, see Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, London 2nd edn, 1673, 50.

⁵⁰ *Lectures*, ii, 293–6.

⁵¹ See his letters, printed as appendices to Harte’s ‘Defence’.

⁵² *Lectures*, ii, 498.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, ii, 479.

be a sham; they realised, while Harte did not, that Christianity and slavery were indeed incompatible.

The rector entreated the co-operation of the planters in his attempts to evangelise 'these poor beings, who have sensibilities the same in kind with yourselves',⁵⁴ and told the slaves that 'God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him, can be made a Christian. The colour of the skin makes no difference in his sight. Slavery does not make any one contemptible before him. The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him'.⁵⁵ He proclaimed Christianity as 'particularly a religion for the poor'.⁵⁶ and promised them that: 'The poorest slave, who loves and fears his God, who believes and has been baptized in Christ, and studies to do as Christ says, and who walks his humble round of duty without murmuring and complaining, is in the road to salvation, to honour and glory with his Saviour, though he digs with his hoe all the day long and lies down at night on his humble bed and under his lowly roof. If his life shew forth the fruits of the Holy Ghost, if his heart be made clean and his thoughts are full of religious and good things, he will be owned by his Saviour, and angels will welcome him into paradise.'⁵⁷

If Bishop Coleridge and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel could see nothing wrong with slavery and did nothing to hasten its abolition, we cannot expect Harte, a Barbadian born and bred, to have thought otherwise. However, he showed an unusual zeal for the evangelisation of slaves before this became fashionable and before Bishop Coleridge exerted his influence in its favour, and no other Barbadian clergyman, of any denomination, maintained this cause with such perseverance in the face of planter opposition.

Though he had a very low opinion of the morals and capacities of the negroes, he firmly believed that these could be improved by instruction, and that at least where matters of grace were concerned, the black slave could truly be made the equal of his white master. It is difficult not to believe that with this idea, William Harte was making a change in Barbadian society as great as that brought about by the Emancipation Act.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, 491.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ii, 207-8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, i, 272.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, i, 362-3.

LECTURES
ON THE
GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW:
AMONG WHICH
ARE INTRODUCED ELEVEN LECTURES
ON THE EARLY PARTS OF THE
BIBLE,
AND ON
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS:
AS NECESSARY
FOR THE ELUCIDATION OF THE PARABLE
CONTAINED IN THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER OF
THAT GOSPEL.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM MARSHALL HARTE,
RECTOR OF ST. LUCY, IN THE ISLAND OF BARRADOES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY FOR THE CONVERSION AND
RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION AND EDUCATION OF
THE NEGRO SLAVES IN THE BRITISH
WEST INDIA ISLANDS;

AND SOLD BY C. AND J. RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, AND WATERLOO-PLACE, PALL-MALL.

1824.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE discourses contained in these volumes were originally preached to a congregation of Negroes in the Island of Barbadoes. With the exception of the introductory discourse, and those which are explanatory of the early part of the Bible and Ten Commandments, they form a series of Lectures on the Gospel of St. Matthew, and in some measure answer the purpose of a commentary on that portion of Scripture, which, on account of its simplicity, and the variety of moral instruction intermixed with the narrative, is usually employed in the instruction of new converts.

The object proposed was to make the Gospel History and the principal truths of Christianity intelligible and

interesting to hearers, who had neither intellectual culture, nor previous acquaintance with religion, and to impress on their minds the necessity of receiving the faith of Christ, and living in obedience to his commandments.

In this view it was necessary to write with a plainness both of words and construction, which, to those who are accustomed even to the plainest discourses in this country, will perhaps appear excessive; yet without degrading the majesty of religion, by improper familiarity of language. The effect on his humble congregation was so consonant to the hopes of the preacher, that, with the encouragement of persons at that time in high authority in the island, he was induced to submit the discourses to competent judges in England, and finally placed them at the disposal of

the Society for the Conversion of the Negro Slaves in the British West-India Islands. By this Society they are now printed, and recommended to their missionaries, as models of that simple and earnest instruction, which, in the mouth of the preacher or catechist, finds its way to the hearts of the ignorant, and as being in all respects so free from exception, that they may be placed without scruple in the hands of the convert for his private reading. The subject matter indeed is of such vital importance, and the manner of treating it so clear and lively, that the volume, though adapted by the plainness of its language to the humblest capacity, may be read with edification and interest by Christians the most advanced in knowledge.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

ACTS xvii. 30.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

THESE words are taken from the Bible, with which, if you will come and hear me, I hope to make you better acquainted. When Jesus Christ came down from heaven and lived on earth, which was about eighteen hundred years ago, he found the world very wicked. All men were living in a very bad way, and if it had not been for him, would have lived and died in wickedness and sin, and at their deaths would have certainly gone to the place of everlasting punishment. However, it pleased Almighty God, who is good to us all when

B

2 INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

we do not deserve it, to send his Son into the world, to teach men that they were to give over their wickedness, to repent, to be sorry for all that they had done amiss, to resolve to do so no more, to hear what Jesus said to them, and taught them, to trust to him, and then to live good lives. If they should do this, God promised that he would forgive them, for the sake of Jesus, all that was past, would help them in being better people afterwards, and when they died, that he would for the sake of the same Jesus (who is the Saviour of mankind) receive them into heaven, where they would never die, but be as happy as angels, and not only live for ever, but become happier and happier every day. God, you know, can do this, because God is able to do everything. Though some people did believe Jesus, did hear what he had to say, and did become good, yet a great many did not: a great many were very wicked, and because they hated him, they put him to death. He knew this

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE. 3

would be the case, and before his death, he told the twelve men who were always with him, that he should be killed and that after three days he would rise again. It turned out as he said; he was crucified, that is killed, by being fixed up on a cross, and after three days he rose again. He was seen by his friends and companions very often after he rose out of the grave: they handled him, and found that it was he himself: he eat with them and drank with them, and made them sure that he was the same Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Saviour. He stopped on earth for forty days, and then, before his companions, who were called his disciples or scholars, he went up into heaven, where he will stay till he comes again to judge the world, and to send the wicked into everlasting fire, and to take the good into heaven with him. Before he left the earth, he ordered his companions or disciples to go into all the world, and preach concerning him to every body, every where, and to tell them, that

B 2

4 INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

if they believed in him, were baptized or christened in his name, and obeyed him, they should be saved, and if they did not, they would be damned. Among the men who went about preaching Jesus Christ, was one named Paul. He was a good and a great man. In one of his sermons, he tells those who heard him, that the times of their ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth men every where to repent. It was as if he had said to them: before Jesus Christ came into the world, men were very wicked, but notwithstanding, God did not yet openly reprove them by his Prophets, though they were sufficiently condemned by the witness which God had of himself in their hearts and in all the world: but after Jesus Christ was come into the world, the case was changed; God would have every body know more clearly what they ought to do, and therefore commanded them all to repent of all that they had done amiss, to be sorry in their hearts that they had ever

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE. 5

offended so good and so merciful a God, and to turn from their sins to Jesus Christ, and he would save them.

Since then Jesus Christ has been preached in this island; since every Sunday we tell people in Church all that they must do and all that they must believe, and since you all live in a Christian country, where churches are built, and the ministers of God's word preach every Sunday, trying all we can to make people live like Christians, that so, when they die, Jesus Christ may receive their souls: you are without excuse, if you do not know more than you do, and become Christians yourselves. Remember, God now commands all men every where to repent.

You would not wish to be overlooked and neglected by him. But how can you know, unless you are taught? And you see, you ought to know. I have therefore determined, with the help and blessing of

B 3

6 INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

God, to preach to you every Wednesday evening. I have a great deal to tell you. You must, therefore, come constantly, if you can; you must be very attentive to me, and you must pray to God to open your hearts, that you may attend to all that I say. It gives me pain to see you all living without knowing any thing of your bibles, any thing of Jesus Christ: and as I know, that nobody can be saved, who does not believe in Jesus Christ, I cannot bear to let you go on without doing my best to teach you to know him. It will give me a good deal of trouble, and I shall get no profit by it. You cannot then but know, that I would not take so much trouble, if it was not to do good to you. Your souls are precious in the eyes of God. What is more precious than the soul? The soul lives when the body dies and goes to dust, and it must live either with God and his angels in heaven, or with the devil and wicked spirits in hell. For your soul's sake then, come to hear me. You see

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE. 7

you cannot live always on earth. You must die and you know not how soon. You must therefore come and be taught how you are to live with God, when you die. Besides, you often see your friends, your relations, and your children die, and when you lose them, you cannot help feeling the loss, and shedding many a bitter tear. How will it comfort you, when I tell you, that they who die in Christ, that is, who die Christians, will go to Christ: and that when it comes to your turn to die, you also will go to Christ, and be with your friends, your relations, and your children, in a world better far than this; a world, where sin and sorrow are never seen; a world, where good Christians die no more, but, as Jesus Christ tells us, are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

In time I hope to see you all made Christians, that is christened, and then living

8 INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

like Christians. But before that can be done, you have a great deal to learn, and a great deal to do : and therefore you must lose no opportunity of coming here every Wednesday evening. If you can do so, and are willing, come also on Sundays, either in the morning or in the afternoon : for the church is open at both times : or both in the morning and in the afternoon.

And now, my friends and hearers, no good is ever done by us, in us, or for us, without God's help and assistance ; and therefore I beg you to fall on your knees, and join me in your heart, while I pray to God to hear and bless us for Jesus Christ's sake.

LECTURE I.

ST. MATTHEW iii. 1, 2.

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

WHEN you were here last I told you, that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, was sent from heaven into this world, about eighteen hundred years ago, that he taught men all that they were to do, and all that they were to believe, that he died to save us, and that he rose from the grave and went up to heaven, to shew us, that if we believe in him, we too should rise from our graves and live with him for ever in heaven. All this you must believe: if you do not believe

it, you will not be Christians: if you do not believe it, he, our great Lord and Master, will not own you for his servants, he will not take care, that you obey his commands in this life, nor will he raise you to a state of happiness with him after your deaths. I told you too, that after God sent this his own blessed Son, Jesus Christ into the world, he commanded all men every where to repent, to be sorry for the past, and to come to Jesus Christ, to trust in him and to obey him. All this you must remember: you must think about this whenever you have time, for this is almost the first thing you have to learn. You see, then, that God desires us to repent, calls upon us to do so, because he knows that we cannot be saved, unless we repent, and resolve to lead new lives, because he knows, that when we are sorry for all we have done wrong, we shall immediately flee to Christ, through whom alone, and for whose sake God has promised to forgive us.

Before Jesus Christ descended from heaven, and was seen as a man in the world, (having been born of a pure virgin through the power of the Almighty) there appeared in the land of Judea, where our Saviour lived, and taught, a most holy, righteous, and excellent man, called John. He was named the Baptist, because he baptized, or as we call it, christened people to prepare them to become Christians. He was a few months older than our Lord himself. It was said of this man, John, by an angel from heaven, that many should rejoice at his birth, that he should be great in the sight of the Lord, (what a character of a mortal man, my hearers) that he should turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; in short, and here was his great business, his most anxious employment, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord, to prepare them to hear and obey the blessed Saviour of the world, and to become Christians. And how

did he do this? By crying out, by telling them plainly and so as to be understood, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Shake off all your sins, bid farewell to every wicked thought, word, and action: resolve to walk no more in the ways of sin, and in the paths of wickedness, and come to Christ, the beloved of the Father, believe in him and obey him, and he will wash you from your sins, he will plead with his Father for your pardon, he will give up himself to death to save you, and he will raise you up into heaven.

Such was the saying of John, the forerunner of our Lord, to the people, who flocked to hear him, who came to him, as we read in the Bible, to be baptized by him, and to be prepared for that kingdom, which he said, was at hand. Repent ye, he told them, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It is as if he had said, Jesus Christ has come into the world to make a new kingdom, not such as you hear of on

this earth, where kings can do no more than govern and protect you in this life: he comes to form a kingdom, which shall last for ever, a kingdom, into which those only can come, who repent them truly of all their sins—a kingdom of joy and peace, where all, who obey the Lord Jesus Christ, whether blacks or whites, slaves or free, shall be happy, happy as far as God can make them for ever and for ever.

Into this kingdom I now invite you all, for this kingdom, I now, in the name of Jesus Christ, would most earnestly entreat you to prepare yourselves. I would say to you, as John did to *his* hearers, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, for the time is come, when *ye* shall call on the name of Christ, who never heard of him before, when *ye* shall be made Christians, who once lived in ignorance and darkness, when salvation is to be preached to *you*, who before did not know that a Saviour had ever appeared on earth.

Come to Jesus Christ, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and he will give you rest. Take his yoke upon you, and learn of him, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. He will wash you from your sins, he will present you before the throne of your God. But you cannot come to him unless you repent of your sins, and are sorry for your wickedness. Oh! then I most earnestly entreat you, I beseech you, in the name of Jesus, to shake off all your past sins. Let the drunkard resolve to shake off the vile habit of drunkenness: the liar, shake off the vile habit of lying; let the swearer say, I will swear no more; let him that stole, steal no more: let him who hates another, resolve to love him, as Christ loved you: bid adieu to every wrong thing. Some of you, perhaps, have been guilty of many bad things: all are sinners in the sight of God. Some things I can scarcely name from this sacred place: I must leave it to your own hearts to tell you what I mean, but whatever your heart tells you

has been wrong, oh! my friends, do it not again. When you feel yourselves tempted to sin, instantly pray to God, and say, oh! God deliver me from this sin! and if you strive yourself, he will give you strength to conquer it. But never forget to pray to God, and to pray to him for Jesus Christ's sake. Breaking out into passions, using bad and wicked names, gaming, idling, quarrelling and fighting, returning evil for evil, doing ill-natured and spiteful things, to those of your own colour, as well as to others, are all wrong, though some may not think so. Of all these things you must repent, if you wish to become Christians, and if you are not Christians, you cannot be with Christ in heaven, when you die. After repenting, in order to become Christians you must believe in Christ. This I shall tell you more of the next time we meet.

But let me beseech you as your friend and well-wisher, to lay to heart what I

have told you this evening. Which of us can tell, whether we shall live to see another day? To-morrow's sun will rise; but it may not rise on some of us: some of us may be cold and stiff before his bright beams appear. Let us then resolve this night, before we quit this place, to repent of all the past, and say, with God's help and assistance, which I pray for, I will sin no more, I will take Christ for my Lord and King, I will follow his holy laws, and I will live as one, who has been pardoned and forgiven by my God.

My friends, may God give you his grace so to act, may he guide you with his Spirit here, and, at your deaths, receive you into heaven.

And now to God, &c.

CONCLUDING DISCOURSE.

ACTS i. 9. and ii. 1—4.

And when he (that is Jesus) had spoken these things, while they beheld he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

I PROMISED you, in my last Lecture, to give you an account of two very grand and important points of our Lord's life and of

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our religion. I mean his ascension, and the coming down of the Holy Ghost on the apostles. I have, in the course of these Lectures, informed you, that our Lord Jesus Christ had been from the beginning of time with God, and was God—that somewhat more than eighteen hundred years ago he came on earth, suffering himself to be born as other men of a woman, but born after a wonderful manner of a virgin. I have also acquainted you with a great many things that he said and did, as they are related to us by St. Matthew in his Gospel. I have given you an account of his crucifixion, his death, his burial, and his rising from the dead on the third day after his death. I now proceed to inform you, in the first place, of his ascension or going up into heaven,

We read that he was seen for forty days by his disciples, after he was risen from the dead. During that time, he taught them a great many things, which they

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knew not before. He convinced them, by many proofs, in which they could not be deceived, that he was truly alive. He ate and drank with them. At his first meeting with them, one of them, named Thomas, was absent. And when he had heard from the rest, that they had seen Jesus after his resurrection, he refused to give credit to them, declaring that he would not believe, unless he saw the print of the nails on the hands of Jesus, and the mark of the spear, with which the soldiers had pierced his dead body. Soon after, Jesus came to the disciples, when Thomas was with them, and he was so indulgent and good as to give Thomas the proof he wanted. For he said, "Behold the print of the nails, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas was now convinced of the truth, and cried out, "My Lord, and my God!" Having thus by various ways convinced his disciples of the truth of his resurrection, and having given them much instruction,

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he led them on the fortieth day out to a mountain. He first of all desired them to wait at Jerusalem, till they received the Holy Ghost from heaven, which he calls the promise of the Father. And then, in the act of blessing them, he was separated from them, and went up slowly into heaven. They continued gazing on him, till a cloud deprived them of the sight of him. But even this could not draw away their eyes from the wonderful sight. They kept gazing on the place, where they lost sight of him, till two angels thus addressed them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven. This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." And in the heaven, the highest heaven, the heaven of heavens he now is, possessing all power and authority, ruling over all things, protecting, defending and blessing his true servants, interceding for them with the Father, God Almighty, and hearing their prayers, and presenting those prayers at the throne of mercy. And

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from heaven he will come again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead, to send the wicked into everlasting fire, and to take the holy and the believing into heaven with Him. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. But the fearful, that is, they who are afraid to do their duty, lest it should cost them trouble and give them pain, the unbelieving and the abominable, and murderers and idolaters, and all liars, that is, all wicked people, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. One of our Lord's disciples saw in a vision, that is, saw this judgment represented before him just as it will take place. He gives us this account of it. "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it (which was Jesus Christ) from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened,

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which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and the grave delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged, every man according to his works."

Think of this frequently. It will be sure to check you, when you are about to do a wicked thing.

Our Lord, having gone up into heaven, obtained the gift of the Holy Ghost for his disciples. This divine being came down from heaven on the tenth day after our Lord went up into heaven. And he came in a very wonderful manner. It seems that the twelve apostles were all together in one place—some room perhaps in their great temple or church, when they heard a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, like the breath of God. They then

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saw various tongues like as of fire, and these tongues seemed to rest upon every one of them. And then it was, that they began to speak a great many languages. — At that time, as at the present day, the different nations of the earth spake different languages. There are many countries, into which if you were to go, the people of those countries would not understand what you say, nor would you understand what they say. Just so it was in the days of the apostles. And therefore, the first benefit which the Holy Ghost conferred on them, was to enable them to speak in a great variety of languages. You may remember that our Lord commanded them to go and preach his religion throughout the earth. How were they to do so, unless they could speak in the language of the people, whom they were attempting to teach. The Holy Ghost did other services to them. He enabled them to heal the sick, and to raise the dead. He taught them more fully the true nature of our

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blessed Saviour, and of his religion. He made them remember better all that their Lord had said and done. And He guided or directed those among them, who wrote accounts of all these things. He prevented them from making mistakes: he would not let them leave out any thing, which might be of use to Christians till the end of the world. This divine being, the Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost, still helps all true Christians: he makes us holy, if we try to be so: he dwells in us and makes us like the temples of God, elect and precious.

The apostles did, as their master ordered. They went every where teaching and baptizing. Multitudes in all parts of the world believed. After the apostles died, other good and holy men, appointed by the apostles, succeeded to them in teaching and instructing the people of the earth. At length, the Gospel reached the good land of England, where it has been

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taught for many hundreds of years. And from England, the people who first settled in these islands brought it with them. The Bible has been in this country from that time. Churches have been built, and preachers, ordained to be so by proper authority, have always declared the Gospel to the people of this country. That Gospel I now preach to you: and if you hear it and believe it, and if you live according to your belief, you will be saved at the last day, when Christ comes to judge the world.

Be ye therefore, my dear friends and fellow Christians, "stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye now know" and are taught, that the labour of none, whether bond or free, who thus labour to serve and obey God through Jesus Christ, the adorable Saviour, "shall ever be in vain in the Lord."

And now to God, &c.

A
SERMON,
ON THE
RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION
OF
THE SLAVES.

PREACHED AT ST. LUCY'S CHURCH,

BY THE

REV. W. M. HARTE,

RECTOR OF THE PARISH.

INSTRUCTION OF SLAVES.

ROMANS, x. 14.

How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

ST. PAUL WAS, in a peculiar manner, the apostle of the Gentiles. He says, in his Epistle to the Galatians, that the Gospel of the uncircumcision, i. e. the office of preaching the Gospel to the heathen nations, was committed to him; as the Gospel of the circumcision, i. e. the office of preaching the Gospel to the Jews, was committed to Peter. And again, in his Epistle to the Romans, "I speak to you, Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles." In the course of argument, which he is pursuing in his celebrated Epistle to the Romans, from which

the text is selected, the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, naturally came under his consideration. The doctrine which he was endeavouring to establish, of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, without the works of the Jewish law, on which doctrine Christianity was founded, and against which Jewish prejudice was exceedingly apt to stumble, naturally led him to the discussion of these topics. Accordingly, we find him dwelling, in the context, on the exclusive superiority of faith above the legal ordinances of Moses, and asserting, that in thus enlarging the terms of salvation, and comprehending under them both Jews and Gentiles, the impartial Creator of all mankind felt no difference of tenderness towards his sinful and offending offspring. "There is no difference," he asserts, "between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." His mercies extend to every believer in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile. For whosoever

shall call "on the name of the Lord shall be saved"—that is, every Christian is made, by being so, capable of salvation. He then subjoins: "How shall they call on him," &c. &c. A very beautiful and emphatic climax, signifying to us, that all persons of every nation whatsoever, who bear the name of Christ and call on him as their Lord, are thereby placed in a condition to be saved by him—that salvation depends on their thus calling on him—that their thus calling on him depends on their believing in him—that their believing in him depends on their hearing of him—and their hearing of him depends on their being taught. So that of all their advantages and of all their privileges, instruction is the origin and the source,—the only solid and practicable and availing foundation.

Having just announced to you, that I shall recommence the religious instruction of the slaves, I think it right to offer

some remarks on the subject to your consideration; and I trust that you will weigh them seriously, and believe we, when I assert, that, in thus enforcing them, and in thus acting on them, I am influenced only by what appears to me an imperious and solemn duty. No consideration but a regard to conscience actuates me on this occasion. I cannot acquit myself, in my own opinion, of my obligations as a minister of the Gospel, if I do not endeavour to promote, though perhaps very feebly, the final salvation of this large portion of my fellow-creatures: nor should I be otherwise than deficient in my duty to you, as your minister in particular, if I did not profess my readiness to engage in this work in the way least calculated to excite opposition or dislike, if I were not willing, as I assure you that I am, to listen to all your reasonable objections, to attend to all your scruples and to all your fears, and, as far as I can consistently do so, to yield

even to your fair and allowable prejudices.

When our blessed Saviour was about to ascend into heaven, his last charge to the Apostles was this, "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Our Lord not only gave this charge and assigned this commission, but in no long time after his ascension, enabled the Apostles to execute it. By conferring on them the gift of tongues, he put it at once into their power to spread the knowledge of him throughout the then known world. The only object of this supernatural endowment was most unquestionably to enable the first preachers of Christianity to speak to all people in those languages, wherein they were born. Nor did the gift lie dormant,

nor was the commission neglected. We find from a direct and circumstantial narrative, namely, the Acts of the Apostles, and from indirect but various allusions in the Epistles written during the transaction, that through the personal labours of the Apostles, and through the labours of those whom they associated with themselves in the ministry, the Christian religion was soon spread through all the various provinces of the Roman empire. This fact is not only conveyed to us by the sacred writers, but is attested by heathen historians. It is not a matter universally agreed upon by ecclesiastical historians, at what precise period miraculous powers ceased to be conferred on the preachers of Christianity. In all probability, the same century, which witnessed the gift, witnessed also the withdrawing of it. After the foundation was laid, the superstructure was committed to the ordinary means of communication and transmission. The Almighty never works in vain: nor does he

violate or suspend the established laws of creation unnecessarily and to no purpose. Without miraculous powers at first, Christianity could not have been propagated. To call upon nations to forsake the religion in which their fathers had lived and died, and to embrace a new religion, sometimes at the risk of their lives, and always in defiance of prejudice, of education and authority, required the strongest evidence which truth could bring forward in its favour. But after a while, the necessity ceased. Testimony supplied at first the want of personal experience: and afterwards the committing of the whole history of our religion to written records, on which the oral instruction was founded, became the established method of communicating the knowledge of it to the world. But whatever may have been the mode adopted, the event is ascertained beyond all doubt. The religion spread: the parting injunction of its founder was obeyed: and every effort in their power,

and even beyond their power, was made by the propagators of this religion to make in all nations disciples. In no period of Christianity, in no age, however tinged with ignorance and superstition, was the propagation of it forgotten or abandoned. The barbarian conquerors of the Roman empire were christianized by the people whom they conquered : and in after ages, we find some teacher or the other conveying the glad tidings to the remotest countries, and announcing them in the palaces of kings, in the castles of nobles, in the lowly mansions of the vassal and the slave. As soon as the dark night of ignorance ended, and the dawn of knowledge and of letters broke on the world at the period of the Reformation, the various nations of Europe still persisted in the same glorious career : and wherever commerce, conquest or navigation opened to them a communication with countries hitherto unknown, they carried with them the knowledge of the Christian religion. In

our parent country, as well as in others, societies were formed for this express purpose; missions founded; missionaries employed: every effort used, which talent could devise and opulence execute, to preach the Gospel to every creature. The first settlers in these colonies brought the religion with them: introduced into these lands the knowledge of the Saviour, made his praise to be heard, where it was unknown before, and by the very respectable ecclesiastical establishment at that time founded by them, secured, as far as lay in their power, the propagation in this country of that system of faith and morals, to which man owes his present peace, and his final salvation. And do you suppose, my brethren, that the pious work, thus begun and thus carried on, in various ages and countries, at sundry times and in divers manners, is in these times to stop? Can you for a moment think, that it accords with the Divine will, that the religion, on which the Divine Being, with all reve-

rence be it spoken, has bestowed such pains, should be withholden from any class of people whatsoever? Shall the mighty and majestic river flow to us in its copious and gladdening streams, and then be arrested in its course, banked up, resisted, overcome? Shall the Gospel of the adorable Redeemer diffuse its means of grace and its hopes of glory, its privileges, its expectations, its joys and its comforts, up to a certain point, and proceed no further? Shall the command of our Saviour to preach the Gospel to every creature be disobeyed with respect to one class only of his creatures? Shall the efforts made uniformly by those, who were in possession of the gift, to make others sharers in it as well as themselves, shall these efforts, which in no age of Christianity have been suspended, be discontinued all at once, and at our doors? Shall instruction, which has thus accompanied our religion invariably in its progress, cease thus abruptly, and desert the religion thus suddenly?

Or shall we now expect what the Apostle Paul infers to be an impossibility, shall we now expect any people to be saved, who have not called on the name of the Lord, or to call when they believe not, or to believe in one of whom they have never heard, or to hear without a preacher to instruct them?

Again. The want of universality in our religion has been sometimes objected to it by unbelievers—that is, it has been contended, that if religion be so true and so beneficial as we represent it to be, it would have been made known to all the world. Now, I think that the answers, which have been given to this objection, are very pertinent and just, and must remove all its force in the judgment of all unbiassed and enlightened minds. And I also think, that the observation, which has been made, is well-founded, namely, that numerous advantages may be derived to the human species, if not to other orders of beings,

from Christianity, though we had never, in this life, been made acquainted with it. Certainly, one advantage resulting from it is universal, whether it be universally revealed or not; and that is, the resurrection of the dead, the restoration to life of the whole human race. This is evident from Scripture. But, notwithstanding this, I must maintain, that the duty of propagating the religion and making it known, wherever we can, must in the nature of the thing be a reasonable and important duty. The single fact, that our Lord commanded it thus to be spread, is, one would suppose, sufficient for every Christian, who professes to regulate his conduct according to his Saviour's injunctions. We cannot suppose, that the propagation of his religion is not a duty, when we reflect on the mode adopted by the founder of it to make it known, when we reflect on his own injunctions, on the directions of his first Apostles, on the labours of the first promulgers of it, on the example set by the

wise and good in all ages. Whether they who have never heard of Christianity, will be saved or not, is a question, which I do not think that we are required to answer. At any rate, we must acknowledge, that the sanctions, the motives, and the precepts of Christianity are best calculated to create that moral and religious character, on which eternal happiness depends, and that, without this advantage, such a character cannot reasonably, or at least generally, be expected. The consolations and the hopes of the Gospel too are such, that every human being, who feels them and entertains them as he ought, must be the happier and the better for them in this and every other stage of his existence. But however this question may be disposed of, the argument still remains good—our duty to make the religion known must be acknowledged. We know not, it may be said, what will become of those hereafter who have not been taught the religion here : but we know, that they, who are in

ignorance of it, have no remedy for their ignorance but instruction, and that instruction depends on others, not on themselves. We know from the injunctions of the founder, and from the example of his immediate followers, that the religion ought to be propagated : and therefore, we know that it must be *our* duty to do so. The future disposal of the heathen is not our concern : it is one of the secret things of the Almighty : but the present instruction of the heathen is the concern of every Christian, and I really know not how a Christian, who has a proper sense of Christianity, and the common feelings of benevolence, can, without outraging both, neglect any opportunity in his power of making the Gospel known to the ignorant, and to them who sit in the darkness of superstition, and wander in the mazes of error. No proprietor of slaves has ever returned from that bourn, whence no traveller comes, to tell us, whether he has not had to account for taking no pains to commu-

nicate that religious instruction, on which perhaps the future salvation of his slaves may have been suspended, but certainly, on which the improvement of their characters in the present life, and the consequent destination of their future being, must at all events have depended.

The last stand I shall take for that cause, of which I am the willing, though feeble advocate, shall be in the acknowledged vices of the Negroe character, and in the acknowledged tendency of Christianity to correct those vices. You all know, for I fear you all have reason to deplore, the various faults, vices and crimes which too often deform the character of this part of our species, contribute so materially to your own discomfort, injury, and loss, tend so invariably to the present misery of those who commit them, and must, without repentance, end in their final perdition. And will you neglect to teach

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them that religion, which prescribes repentance as its preliminary and indispensable obligation, which charges its followers to cast off the works of darkness, which bids him that stole to steal no more, which instructs the self-willed, the perverse, and the *eye-server*, to be humble, quiet, obedient, and above all things to please the Lord, not with eye-service as men pleasers, but with singleness of heart to please the Lord? You know, or ought to know, that no human being can be saved without repentance. And will you suffer multitudes to perish around you, without their knowing that they have need of repentance, and without calling on them to repent? You find, that coercion, restraint, correction, are frequently incapable of reforming and amending. Will you not therefore substitute in the room of these things the strongest principle of conduct, the fear of God? You see thousands around you walking in those paths, which

you know and they do not, will lead to everlasting destruction; and will you not stretch out a friendly hand to snatch them, if you can, from the precipice, which yawns before them? You know what it is to mourn over the graves of those you love; and you know or ought to know, what power the Christian religion has to soothe the mourner. And will you not enable these poor beings, who have sensibilities the same in kind with yourselves, to comfort themselves under their bereavements with the knowledge, that them who sleep in Jesus will "God bring with him?" You know how painful it is sometimes for human nature to endure continued toil, frequent privation, occasional hardships: and will you not instruct your labouring fellow-creatures in that religion, which gives cheerfulness to toil, and contentment to poverty, which carries the earthly sojourner through all his sorrows and through all his cares to that rest and in-

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heritance "which remaineth for the people of God?" Will you not quiet the upbraidings of conscience with the pardoning promises of the Gospel? Will you not support the wavering virtue with the assistance of God's Holy Spirit? Will you not strengthen the tottering fortitude with the hopes of that "eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised?" I call not on you, to subscribe your money to societies for propagating the Gospel amongst the heathen; I call not on you to contribute your personal exertions for the duties of any particular mission: I call on you merely to encourage your slaves to resort to this place of public worship: I call on you to encourage them, by your approbation and consent, to become Christians in name, in order that they may become, through Divine grace, Christians in deed. They minister to you in temporal things: do ye minister to them in spiritual things. Remember, that to you a trust is commit-

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ted, an opportunity of performing the last injunction of your Lord is vouchsafed: and tremble to think, if you should not have made any use of the opportunity, if the trust should have been committed to you in vain. The talent lent to you, will have been hidden in the earth: it will have received no increase. The unprofitable servant's sentence may be your's.

I know, that to the religious instruction of the slaves some objections have been made. It has been feared, that by enlightening their minds with the truths of revelation, consequences dangerous to the existing society of the country may be apprehended. Now, I conceive, that this objection is ill-founded, and proceeds from an inadequate or mistaken view of the subject. I grant, that to fill the minds of the labouring classes, if it were possible to do so, with knowledge unsuitable to their rank in society, and unprofitable to them in

the discharge of their several duties, may be a hazardous, and must be a needless experiment. But religious knowledge is not of this sort. All that our slaves will learn from Christianity will have a totally opposite tendency. It will instruct them, it is true, in *their origin and in their end*: but that origin will teach them humility, and that end contentment. It will instruct them, it is true, in their privileges and their duties: but those privileges will carry their ambition to distinctions in another world, and those duties will make them better citizens of this. To be seditious, disobedient or unruly, will appear to their improved minds in a different light from what it did before; not as exposing them, if detected or if unsuccessful, to the scourge or the gallows, but as subjecting them, whether successful or not, to hell fire. One great advantage derived from Christianity, and certainly a strong presumption of its truth is, that without inter-

fering with civil establishments, it is alike friendly and beneficial to them all. It inculcates those feelings and prescribes that conduct, which, under all governments and in all societies tend to promote peace and order, and which bind in happy and contented union all the interfering policies and all the jarring interests of earthly communities. What harm can your slaves derive from hearing the word of God read, from joining in the prayers of the church, from being taught what their Saviour commands them to believe and to do? Even the enemies to the education of the poor in the parent country have never formed a single objection to that part which respects their religious education. They have objected, whether with or without reason, to other branches of instruction, but have, I believe, been always satisfied, whenever a progress in religious knowledge accompanied an advancement in any other attainments. They know too well the

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amazing difference between a religious and moral peasantry, and an irreligious and immoral one : they have seen the difference very near to their own doors, and are too well convinced, that the great source of crime and misery, of confusion and discontent, is to be found in the irreligious and demoralizing principles of the lower classes, when they have had no instruction in the sacred truths of Christianity.

Another objection, and that a feeble one, to the religious instruction of the slaves is, that it will be productive of no good to them. A certain degree of civilization is, I confess, necessary to conversion. A savage could never be taken out of the hands of nature, and made at once, and without any preparation, a convert to Christianity. But happily for themselves, and happily for us, our slaves are not in this state. They have gradually and imperceptibly acquired, with no numerous

exceptions, the habits and the feelings of a state of society far removed from the savage state. They are not polished, it is true: but they are not, I maintain it, uncivilized. They are fully competent to understand the plain doctrines, and to relish the plainer precepts of the Gospel. Christianity, in its pure and acknowledged elements, is a very plain, a very simple and a very practical thing. The doctrine of redemption, I know they can be made to understand by a simple illustration, and a plain comment will give them very just notions of faith and its privileges. But to the question, if it should be repeated to me, What good will it do them? I can only answer, and with the profoundest reverence, that this is God's concern and not mine. We do our duty: the event is in his hands. We know the beneficial tendency of Christianity, and we labour to teach it. If we fail of success, we are satisfied with the assurance of Scripture, "every one shall

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receive his own reward according to his own labour."

An objection has also been made to the place of communicating religious instruction. It has, I apprehend, been suspected that by the habit of sitting in pews, feelings may arise at variance with that marked distinction, which should exist, and which, I do not attempt to deny, ought to exist in a state of society so constituted as our's is. I shall therefore use every effort to preserve a distinction, and shall therefore set apart certain pews, not used by the whites, for the accommodation of the slaves. In this instance, at any rate, I shall be very ready to yield my judgment to that of others, and should be quite indifferent with respect to the selection of places for their reception, provided all things be done decently and in order.

I know not, whether any other objec-

tions are made; nor indeed would my limits allow me to notice them, if I did. I am willing to hear in private any thing that can be advanced either by the friends or by the enemies of the measure, and to interchange opinions with all calmness and moderation. I am willing to listen to advice: I am ready to attend to every fair suggestion: I am most anxious to carry on the plan with the good-will and concurrence of all parties. I pray you, therefore, to form your opinions and to govern your conduct by no other principles but those which you derive from the Gospel. Act in this instance, as in every other, with a single eye to the glory of our common Saviour, and the good of our fellow-creatures: And may the Holy Spirit of God grant you to have a right judgment in "all things:" and when the Judge of us all shall call you to account for all your opportunities of kindness and of usefulness, may you all, and every one of you hear

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from him, as addressed to yourselves, his own gracious words—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Well done good and faithful servants, ye have been faithful over a few things: enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

THE END.

Printed by R. Gilbert, St. John's Square, London.

