

# To the British Settlements in America upon Slave-keeping

AN  
ADDRESS  
TO  
THE INHABITANTS  
OF THE  
British Settlements  
IN  
AMERICA,  
UPON  
SLAVE-KEEPING.

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See here one without a limb, whose only crime was an attempt to regain his Liberty,—another led to a Gallows for stealing a morsel of Bread, to which his labor gave him a better title than his master—a third famishing on a gibbet—a fourth, in a flame of Fire! his shrieks pierce the very heavens.—O! God! where is thy Vengeance!—O! Humanity—Justice—Liberty—Religion!—Where,—where are ye fled.—

This is no exaggerated Picture. It is taken from real Life.—Before I conclude I shall take the liberty of addressing several Classes of my countrymen in behalf of our Brethren (for by that name may we now call them) who are in a state of Slavery amongst us.

In the first place let Magistrates both supreme and inferior, exert the authority they are invested with, in suppressing this evil. Let them discountenance it by their example, and show a readiness to concur in every measure proposed to remedy it.

Let Legislators, reflect upon the trust reposed in them. Let their laws be made after the Spirit of Religion—Liberty—and our most excellent English Constitution. You cannot show your attachment to your King, or your love to your country better, than by suppressing an evil which endangers the

dominions of the former, and will in Time destroy the liberty of the latter.\* Population, and the accession of strangers, in which the Riches of all countries consist, can only flourish in proportion as slavery is discouraged. Extend the privileges we enjoy, to every human creature born

\* By a late Calculation, it appears that there are eight hundred and fifty thousand Negro slaves in the British colonies and islands. From the number and burden of ships which are sent from England to Africa for slaves, we can with a good deal of certainty, conclude, that there are not less than one hundred thousand of them imported into America every year. By particular enquiry it was found, that one hundred and four thousand were imported in the year 1768.

“In moderate governments, it is a point of the highest importance, that there should not be a great number of slaves. The political liberty of those states adds to the value of civil liberty; and he who is deprived of the latter, is also deprived of the former. He sees the happiness of a society, of which he is not so much as a member; he sees the Security of Others fenced by laws, himself without so much as protection. He sees his master has a Soul, that can enlarge itself; while his own is constrained to submit to almost continual depression. Nothing more assimilates a Man to a Beast, than living among Freemen, himself a Slave. Such people as these are the natural enemies of a society, and their number must be dangerous.”

Spirit of Laws, Book xv. Chapt. 12amongst us, and let not the Journals of our Assemblies be disgraced with the records of laws, which allow exclusive privileges to men of one color in preference to another.¶

Ye men of Sense and Virtue—Ye Advocates for American Liberty, rouse up and espouse the cause of Humanity and general Liberty. Bear a testimony against a vice which degrades human nature, and dissolves that universal tie of benevolence which should connect all the children of men together in one great Family.—The plant of liberty is of so tender a Nature, that it cannot thrive long in the neighbourhood of slavery. Remember the eyes of all Europe are fixed upon you, to preserve an asylum for freedom in this country, after the last pillars of it are fallen in every other quarter of the Globe.

But chiefly—ye Ministers of the Gospel, whose dominion over the principles and actions of men is so universally acknowledged and

¶ The alterations in the laws in favour of Negroes, should be gradual,—’till the evil Habits they have acquired by Slavery, are eradicated. There are several privileges, however, which might be extended to them immediately, without the least risk to Society, in particular that inestimable one of Tryal by Juries.felt,—Ye who estimate the worth of your fellow creatures by their Immortality, and therefore must look upon all mankind as equal,—let your zeal keep pace with your opportunities to put a stop to slavery. While you enforce the duties of “tithe and cummin,” neglect not the weightier laws of justice and humanity. Slavery is an Hydra sin, and includes in it every violation of the precepts of the Law and the Gospel. In vain will you command your flocks to offer up the incense of Faith and Charity, while they continue to mingle the Sweat and blood of Negro slaves with their sacrifices.—If the Blood of Able cried aloud for vengeance;—If, under the Jewish dispensation, Cities of refuge could not screen the deliberate murderer—if even manslaughter required sacrifices to expiate it,—and if a single murder so seldom escapes with impunity in any civilized country, what may you not say against that trade, or those

manufactures—or Laws,§ which destroy

§ “If any Negro or other Slave under punishment by his master, or his order for running away, or any other crimes or misdemeanors towards his said master, unfortunately shall suffer in life or member, no person whatever shall be liable to any fine; But if any man shall ofthe lives of so many thousands of our fellow creatures every year?—If in the Old Testament “God swears by his holiness, and by the excellency of Jacob, that the Earth shall tremble and every one mourn that dwelleth therein for the iniquity of those who oppress the poor and crush the needy, who buy the poor with silver, and the needy with a pair of shoes,”¶ what judgments may you not denounce upon those who continue to perpetrate these crimes, after the more full discovery which God has made of the law of Equity in the New-Testament. Put them in mind of the Rod which was held over them a few years ago in the Stamp, and Revenue Acts. Remember that national crimes require national punishments, and without declaring what punishment awaits this evil, you may venture to assure them, that it cannot pass with impunity, unless God shall cease to be just or merciful.

wantonness, or only of bloody mindedness, or cruel intention, wilfully kill a Negro, or other slave of his own, he shall deliver into the public treasury fifteen pounds sterling, and not be liable to any other punishment, or forfeiture for the same.”

Laws of Barbadoes, Act 319.

¶ Amos iv. 1, 2.—viii. 6. 7.