THE

WORKS

OF

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THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN NEWPORT, R.I.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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occasion. — Ought not this prospect to animate us earnestly to pray for such a happy event, and to exert ourselves to the utmost to promote it. Can we be indifferent and negligent in this matter, without slighting and disobeying the command of Christ, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? And will not such an attempt to send the gospel to Africa, being willing to spare no expense or labor thus to spread the knowledge of the Saviour among the nations there, be a proper expression of our love and regard to this benevolent, important injunction?"

Nor was the preacher satisfied with this appeal; but he appended to his discourse the ensuing statement, which he spread over the length and breadth of New England.

"The proposal of assisting the blacks among us to go and make a settlement in Africa, which has been mentioned in the preceding discourse, I have thought to be of such importance, as to require a more particular explanation to be laid before the public, with the reasons for it, for their consideration; hoping that, if it be generally approved, it will excite those united, generous exertions which are necessary, in order to effect it.

"There are a considerable number of free blacks in New England, and in other parts of the United States, some of whom are industrious, and of a good moral character; and some of them appear to be truly pious, who are desirous to remove to Africa, and settle there. They who are religious would be glad to unite as Christian brethren, and move to Africa, having one instructor, or more, and cultivate the land which they may obtain there, and maintain the practice of Christianity in the sight of their now heathen brethren; and endeavor to instruct and civilize them, and spread the knowledge of the gospel among them.

"In order to effect this in the best manner, a vessel must be procured, and proper sailors provided, to go to Africa, with a number of persons, both white and black, perhaps, who shall be thought equal to the business, to search that country, and find a place where a settlement may be made with the consent of the inhabitants there; the land being given by them, or purchased of them, and so as best to answer the ends proposed. If such a place can be found, as no doubt it may, they must return, and the blacks must be collected who are willing to go and settle there, and form themselves into a civil society, by agreeing in a constitution and a code of laws, by which they will be regulated.

"And they must be furnished with everything necessary and proper to transport and settle them there, in a safe and comfortable manner; with shipping and provisions, till they can procure them in Africa, by their own labor, and with instruments and utensils necessary to cultivate the land, build houses, &c.; and have all the protection and assistance they will need, while settling, and when settled there. And, if necessary, a number of white people must go with them; one or more, to superintend their affairs, and others to survey and lay out their lands, build mills and houses, &c. But these must not think of settling there for life; and the blacks are to be left to themselves, when they shall be able to conduct their own affairs, and need no further assistance; and be left a free, independent people.

"This appears to be the best and only plan to put the blacks among us in the most agreeable situation for themselves, and to render them most useful to their brethren in Africa, by civilizing them, and teaching them how to cultivate their lands, and spreading the knowledge of the Christian religion among them. The whites are so habituated, by education and custom, to look upon and treat the blacks as an inferior class of beings, and they are sunk so low by their situation, and the treatment they receive from us, that they never can be raised to an equality with the whites, and enjoy all the liberty and rights to which they have a just claim; or have all the encourage-"
ments and motives to make improvements of every kind, which are desirable. But, if they were removed to Africa, this evil would cease, and they would enjoy all desirable equality and liberty, and live in a climate which is peculiarly suited to their constitution. And they would be under advantages to set an example of industry, and the best manner of cultivating the land, of civil life, of morality and religion, which would tend to gain the attention of the inhabitants of that country, and persuade them to receive instruction, and embrace the gospel.

"These United States are able to be at the expense of prosecuting such a plan, of which these hints are some of the outlines. And is not this the best way that can be taken to compensate the blacks, both in America and Africa, for the injuries they have received by the slave trade and slavery, and that which righteousness and benevolence must dictate? And even selfishness will be pleased with such a plan as this, and excite to exertions to carry it into effect, when the advantages of it to the public and to individuals are well considered and realized. This will gradually draw off all the blacks in New England, and even in the Middle and Southern States, as fast as they can be set free, by which this nation will be delivered from that which, in the view of every discerning man, is a great calamity, and inconsistent with the good of society; and is now really a great injury to most of the white inhabitants, especially in the Southern States.

"And by the increase and flourishing of such a plantation of free people in Africa, where all the tropical fruits and productions, and the articles which we fetch from the West Indies, may be raised in great abundance, by proper cultivation, and many other useful things procured, a commerce may take place, and be maintained, between those settlements and the United States of America, which will be of very great and increasing advantage to both.

"And this will have the greatest tendency wholly to abolish the abominable trade in human flesh, and will certainly effect it, if all other attempts prove unsuccessful.

"That such a plan is practicable, is evident from the experiment which has lately been made in forming a settlement of blacks at Sierra Leone. Above a thousand blacks were transported from Nova Scotia to that place last year; who, by the assistance of a small number of whites, and supplies from England, have formed a town and plantation, which, by the latest accounts, is now in a flourishing condition; the inhabitants living in peace and amity with the neighboring nations, and with a promising prospect of being a great advantage to them, by teaching them to cultivate their lands, and civilizing them, and showing them the advantages of peace and of industry, and trade in the productions of their country, and spreading the knowledge of Christianity among them. This will gradually put an end to the slave trade, and to slavery, in that part of the continent. And from this settlement, there is a rational prospect of a commerce, in the productions of that climate, with Britain, which will be so profitable as more than to compensate the latter for all the expense of forming and carrying it on, and will be greatly advantageous to both nations.

"There is reason to believe that a settlement may be made by the blacks now in the United States, in some part of Africa, either on the river Sierra Leone or in some other place, which will be as advantageous to those who shall settle there, and to the adjacent nations, as this which has been mentioned, and with much less expense; and which will be a greater benefit to this nation, than that may be to Britain.

"Are there not, then, motives sufficient to induce the Legislature of this nation to enter upon and prosecute this design? to form a plan, and execute it, as wisdom shall direct? And is there not reason to think that it would meet with general approbation? But if this cannot be, may not this be effected by the societies in these States, who [which] are formed with a design to promote the best good of the Africans? Would not this be answering the
end of their institution, in the best way that can be devised, and in imitation of that which has been formed in Great Britain for the same purpose?

"Is there not reason to believe, that, if such a plan was well digested, and properly laid before the public, and urged, with the reasons which offer, and a company or committee formed to conduct the affair, there might be a sum collected sufficient to carry it into effect?"

"The General Court in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts did, some time ago, make a resolve to the following purpose: That when a place can be found in Africa, where the blacks in that State may settle to their advantage, they would furnish them with shipping and provisions sufficient to transport them there, and with arms sufficient to defend them, and farming utensils sufficient to cultivate their lands. If all the States in the Union, or most of them, would take the same measure, such a design might be soon and easily carried into execution. Nothing appears to be wanting but a proper, most reasonable zeal, in so good a cause."

The preceding document suggests the following, among other comments:

First. It is obvious that the colony which Hopkins proposed, was not to have an exclusively missionary character. It was to be a free and independent nation, cultivating the arts of life, and conducting a foreign commerce.

Secondly. It is equally evident, that our reformer did not intend to make the piety of the Africans an indispensable qualification for their joining his colony, at its commencement even. He would even then admit all who were "industrious and of a good moral character."

Thirdly. His scheme was self-consistent and comprehensive. To some it may appear, that his plan of sending to Africa such blacks only as would exert there a good moral influence, cannot be reconciled with his scheme of sending "all the blacks" in the United States to their father-land. There is, however, an entire congruity between the two proposals. He intended to transport, first, such colonists only as bore a good character, and such as would lay the foundations of a Christian government. When a colony had been firmly established, on religious principles, it would, in his view, exert a salutary moral influence upon our whole colored population, if they should "gradually" emigrate to it. Then, their emigration would be desirable, as it would be an emigration for Christian purposes, and with a prospect of maintaining Christian institutions.

Fourthly. Our philanthropist cannot be accused of any want of sympathy with his colored brethren, in his proposing their removal to their father-land. He had no desire to force them from our shores, for our own comfort or convenience. He did not favor their removal against their will. It was their good which prompted his efforts. He had a profound conviction, that they never would be so happy among us, as they could be in an independent nation by themselves; that their physical condition would be improved by returning to the climate of their ancestors; that their mental, and, above all,