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THE

WORKS

OF

SAMUEL HOPKINS, D.D.,

FIRST PASTOR OF

THE CHURCH IN GREAT BARRINGTON, MASS.,

AFTERWARDS PASTOR OF

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN NEWPORT, R.I.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

BOSTON:

DOCTRINAL TRACT AND BOOK SOCIETY.

1852.
though they have no means of transporting any to the settlement; and, therefore, if any people are sent from America, it will be right to make some little reserve of goods, or dollars, to purchase a few lean breeding cattle on the African coast, for their live stock, as they will very soon increase, because there is plenty of grass, and cattle thrive exceedingly well in most parts of the African coast, where any attention is paid to them. I am, with sincere esteem and respect, reverend sir," &c., &c.

How many other letters our Newport divine wrote, on this theme, to persons of wealth and influence, it is impossible to determine. Two houses, in which were probably many communications from his pen, were consumed by fire, with all their contents, several years after his death. It is certain, however, that he had a lengthened correspondence on the subject with Dr. John Erskine, of Edinburgh, the friend of President Edwards. One letter from Hopkins to Erskine is here published for the first time.

"January 14, 1789. Dear Sir: I feel myself delinquent, when I find I have not written you since January 1, 1788. This has been owing chiefly to my not having any thing of importance to communicate or transmit to you. I have, since that, received two letters with packets from you. The first was dated October 29, 1787, which did not come till May 11, 1788. The last, April 3, 1788, which came to hand the eleventh of August last, for which I am much indebted to you. There have been no publications here of late, which have come within my reach, which are worthy of your particular notice. There has not been any revival of religion that I have heard of in the year past, except what has taken place at Dartmouth College, and in some towns west of that in Vermont, which, I have been informed, has been considerable, but do not know particulars. Infidelity, Universalism, irreligion, and worldliness generally prevail. Dr. Bellamy yet lives in much the same state of body and mind in which he has been above two years; utterly helpless, and in a considerable degree insane, especially at times. Last September, Dr. Stiles transmitted to me a letter which he had received from you, respecting the blacks, by whom it has been proposed to propagate Christian knowledge in Africa; in which you propose, if we think proper, that Drs. Stiles, Wales, Edwards and I should jointly address the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, on that head, representing the state and circumstances of that affair, and the prospects there were of answering some important good by encouraging and prosecuting it; and that it was likely, that society would advance something considerable in order to promote such a design. The matter has been considered, and it does not appear best to apply to the society at present. There is a number of Christian blacks who stand ready to unite in a church state, and have a pastor set over them, (and there is one at least who is thought fit for that office,) and go to Africa and settle there among their brethren, and maintain the profession and practice of Christianity, and propagate Christian knowledge in that heathen land, as they shall have opportunity. But no way has yet opened to send some persons to Africa to find out and procure the most convenient place for such a settlement. If this were done, the way would be open to prosecute the design, and it would, doubtless, meet with encouragement in America, and the assistance of your society would answer important ends.

"A settlement of blacks has, within these two years, been made from England, at Sierra Leone, in Africa, and it is said that a purchase of land twenty miles square has been made for them. We hope to know soon on what conditions this land may be settled, and whether the blacks which would go from America may have any of this tract to settle upon. If it should be found that they may, the way would be opened to prosecute our plan, and then we
should, doubtless, apply to your society for assistance, not doubting of their readiness to grant it. I am your obliged, affectionate friend.

Samuel Hopkins."

The ensuing letter to Dr. Hart unfolds the union, which existed in the mind of Hopkins, between the manumission of our bondmen and the Christian colonization of Africa. At the time of writing this letter, the Connecticut Society for emancipating the slave was about to revise and enlarge its constitution, and Dr. Hart was deeply engaged in the project:

"August 30, 1791. I approve of your proposal of writing to the society in Scotland. But one difficulty attends it. They will probably expect that I should nominate some gentlemen for commissioners. But I know not who would best answer the end, or where a sufficient number can be found of such, who live in a vicinity, so as to be able to meet together as often as would be necessary to answer the end of their appointment. I should mention you for one; but where could others be found? I believe I shall defer writ- ing till I hear from you again, and know what your society will do at their next meeting, and who you think of as commissioners, &c.

"I wish, if you apply for a charter, the affair of making a settlement of blacks in Africa, to civilize the nations there, and propagate Christianity among them, and the proposal to fit persons for missionaries, schoolmasters, husbandry, mechanic trades, &c., might be mentioned and included, if the members would agree in such a plan."

A still more decisive exhibition of the mode in which Hopkins united his plan for terminating slavery with his plan for sending reputable colonies to Africa, is presented in the following extract from a sermon, which he delivered before the Providence Society for Abolishing the Slave Trade, etc.* That sermon gives proof of the energy which its author was able to summon at the age of seventy-two. He says:

"We may hope, that all this dark and dreadful scene will not only have an end, but is designed by the Most High to be the mean of introducing the gos- pel among the nations in Africa; that those who have embraced the gospel, while among us, with all who have been or may be, in some good measure, civilized and instructed, will, by our assistance, return to Africa, and spread the light of the gospel in that now dark part of the world, and propagate those arts and that science which shall recover them from that ignorance and bar- barity which now prevail, to be a civilized, Christian, and happy people; mak- ing as great improvement in all useful knowledge, and in the practice of righteousness, benevolence, and piety, as has yet been done by any people on earth, and much greater. Thus all this past and present evil, which the Afri- canes have suffered by the slave trade and the slavery to which so many of them have been reduced, may be the occasion of an overbalancing good; and it may hereafter appear, as it has in the case of Joseph being sold a slave into Egypt, and the oppression and slavery of the Israelites by the Egyptians, that though the slave traders have really meant and done that which is evil, yet God has designed it all for good, the good of which all this evil shall be the

* The title of the sermon is as follows: "A Discourse upon the Slave Trade, and the Slavery of the Africans; delivered in the Baptist Meeting-house at Providence, before the Providence Society for Abolishing the Slave Trade, &c., at their Annual Meeting, on May 17, 1795. By Samuel Hopkins, D. D., Pastor of the First Congrega- tional Church in Newport, and Member of said Society. Printed at Providence, by J. Carter, 1795."