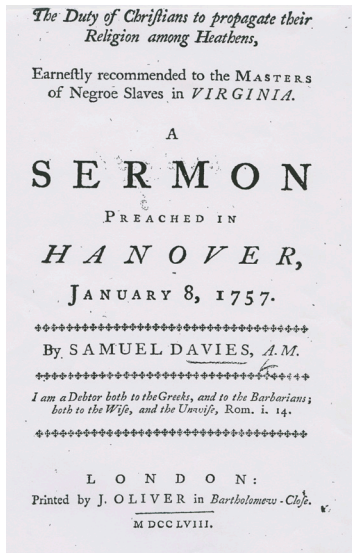
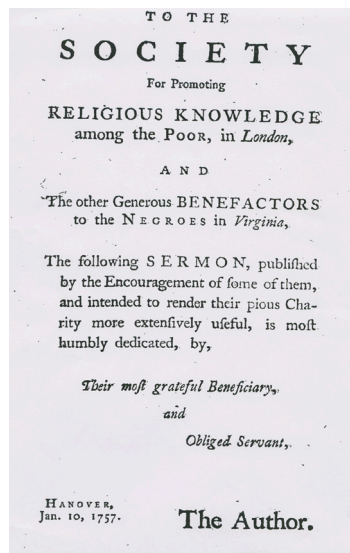


The Duty of Christians to propagate their Religion among Heathens,

Earnestly recommended to the Masters of Negro Slaves in VIRGINIA.



Title Page of Rev. Samuel Davies' Sermon, January 8, 1757.



Dedication of Rev. Samuel Davies' Sermon, January 10, 1757.

Introduction:

Samuel Davies (1723-61) was an American Presbyterian Minister of the Gospel and College President. He was born in New Castle County, Delaware, and was licensed to preach in 1746 after graduating from the Christian school of Samuel Blair at Fagg's Manor, Pennsylvania. Ordained an Evangelist in 1747, Reverend Davies won fame as a preacher, conducting revivals in Virginia, which started the movement called "the Great Awakening," ushering in the American Revolution. He went to the British Isles in 1753 to raise funds for the *College of New Jersey* (now Princeton), founded the first presbytery in Virginia in 1755, and became president of the *College of New Jersey* (1759-61).

The Duty of Christians to propagate their Religion among Heathens.

GENESIS XVIII. 19

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the LORD, to do Justice and Judgment.

A creature formed for immortality, and that must be happy or miserable through an *everlasting* duration, is certainly a Being of vast importance, however mean and insignificant he may be in other respects. His immortality gives him a kind of *infinite* value. Let him be white or black, bond or free, a native or foreigner, it is of no moment in this view: he is to live *forever!* to be forever *happy,* or forever *miserable!* Happy or miserable in the *highest degree!* This places him upon a kind of equality with **Kings and Princes;** nay, with **Angels and Archangels:** for it is this that adds importance and dignity to the most exalted parts of the human, and even of the angelic nature.

In this view, the crowds of neglected Negro Slaves among us, have often appeared to me as creatures of the utmost importance. The *same* Immortality is entailed upon them, as upon us. They are candidates for the *same* eternal state with us, and bound for the *same* Heaven or Hell. How awful and important a Trust, then, is *the care of a soul!* The soul even of a poor Negro Slave! To be entrusted with the care of forming and educating an *Immortal* for his everlasting state! To be instrumental in preparing him for eternal Joys, or eternal Torments! To be accountable for our management in this trust, to the supreme Judge of the Universe, with whom there is no respect of persons! To be rewarded for our faithfulness; or punished for our negligence, as having promoted the happiness or been accessory to the ruin of an immortal soul! – Pause, and think of these things, and they will certainly appear very solemn and weighty.

This solemn and important trust, I must tell you, brethren, is committed, not only to parents, with regard to their children, those dear other selves; but to *Masters,* with regard to their Servants and Slaves, of whatever country or colour they are. And as this duty is most scandalously neglected in this Christian country; and the neglect is likely to be followed with the most dangerous and ruinous consequences to thousands, both Masters and Slaves; permit me to address you upon this Head, with the utmost plainness and solemnity. You are my witnesses, that I have looked upon the poor Negroes as a part of my ministerial charge; and used various endeavours to bring them to the faith and practice of Christianity, not without promising appearances of success, in sundry instances. It affords me no small pleasure to reflect, and I mention it with gratitude to God and man, that my endeavours of this kind have, of late, met with no opposition from the Masters, of whatever denomination, in any one instance that I can recollect. And it affords me a still greater pleasure to reflect, that sundry of you not only consent that your Negroes should receive instructions from me, but also zealously concur with me, and make conscience of your own duty to them, in this respect. But alas! Are there not some among you, and are there not thousands in our country, who must be conscious of their willful negligence; nay, who, perhaps, are rather instrumental in hardening their Slaves in sin, and confirming their prejudices against our holy Religion, than in promoting their conversion to God? Were your Negroes but so many *Brutes,* you might treat them as you do your horses, fodder them, and make them work for you, without once endeavouring to make them sharers with you in the glorious privileges of Religion, the distinguishing prerogative of Human Nature. But I hope you have Divinity and Philosophy enough to know, this is not the case, Let me therefore plainly lay your duty before you, with regard to them, in order to engage you to the practice of it. For sure, you are not hardy enough to neglect the practice, in spite of conviction. Sure, you dare not sin on still, and continue your career to ruin with your eyes open.

Abraham is often proposed as a pattern to Believers in general; and I may particularly recommend his example to your imitation, in your conduct towards your domestics. Here you have his character drawn by the All-knowing God Himself: "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord." He not only instructed, advised, persuaded, entreated; but he used his *Authority;* he COMMANDED – not only his children, but his household; which included his Servants, *Slaves,* and all his Domestics of every order. *Abraham's* family was like the generality of ours, in this, that he had hereditary *Slaves* in it, who were his property during life. We repeatedly read of his "Servants *born in his house,* and *bought with money* of strangers:" (Genesis xvii. 12, 13, 23, 27) both which were probably *Slaves.*

1. **If you consider the nature and design of Christianity, you cannot but be convinced of this duty.**

And he had so numerous a family of them, that, when he went upon an expedition to rescue *Lot* from captivity, we are told, “he armed his trained Servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen.” (Genesis xiv. 14). Where, by the by, it is remarkable, and the remark is very pertinent to the present State of our Country, that by instilling good principles into them, and by humane treatment, this numerous crowd of *Slaves* were become so faithful to their Master, that he could safely confide in them, without fear of their deserting him in the engagement, and going over to the enemy, in hopes to recover their Liberty. All these, as well as *Ishmael*, and his favourite *Isaac*, he had instructed in the true Religion. He had laid his Commands upon them to serve the Lord, not only during his life, but “after him,” i.e. after his decease. Though he was mortal, he endeavoured to make Religion immortal in his family. He was solicitous to leave the world with the joyful hope, that his Domestic would retain and observe his pious instructions, when he should be no more their Head.

It is sufficient to recommend this example to our imitation, that it is the example of *faithful Abraham*. But it is still more strongly enforced by the express approbation of God Himself. “The Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?” No, I may trust him even with my secrets: “For I know him;” I approve of him; I have full proof of him, and therefore may safely trust him; “because (the original Hebrew may be rendered *forasmuch as*. And thus it points out the ground of the Divine approbation and confidence in Abraham, and the way in which he showed himself worthy of it, viz. his faithful care to propagate the Knowledge and Service of God among his Domestic) he will command his children and household, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord.” being once entered in the Way of the Lord by his instructions, they will keep it. “Train up a child in the Way in which he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs xxii. 6).

It is not my present design to consider the general duty of Family-Religion and good Education, though my text is a very proper foundation for it. But I intend only to inculcate *the particular duty of instructing Slaves in the true Religion*, and using all proper means to enter them in the Way of the Lord. To give you directions how to perform it, before you are convinced it is your duty, would be useless and preposterous. And therefore,

My first and principal business shall be, To convince you, that this is really your duty, and that it is a duty of the utmost importance and necessity.

Here, I take it for granted, you are, at least, professed *Christians* yourselves; i.e. you profess to believe that the Christian Religion is divine, and to embrace it as *your* Religion. Otherwise, instead of persuading you to endeavor to Christianize your Negroes, I would first persuade you to become Christians yourselves. I would then deal with you, as with your Heathen Negroes, and labour to convince you of **the Truth and Divinity of the Religion of Jesus**, from whose numerous topics of argument, by which so clear and important a truth may be demonstrated. But you are fond of wearing the Christian name; you present your children to be initiated into the Christian Church by Baptism; you acknowledge the truth of the Scriptures, by complying with the usual ceremony of kissing the Bible in taking an oath; you attend upon the forms of worship in the Christian church, and externally conform to them. These things you do; and these things are certainly a strong profession, that you are Christians. And none of you, I presume, will dare to renounce it, rather than admit the conviction that I would now force upon your minds from this consideration.

Therefore, taking this for granted, I need no other principle to convince you of the duty I am now recommending. And I shall reason from the nature and design of Christianity – from the worth and importance of the souls of your poor Slaves – from the happy influence Christianity would have upon them, even for your own interest – from the seal and generosity of others in this affair – and from your relation to them as their Masters.

Christianity, in its own nature, is calculated to be a *universal Religion*, and is equally the concern of *all* the sons of men. It proposes *one* God, as the object of *universal* adoration to White and Black, Bond and Free: *one* Lord Jesus Christ, as a *common* Saviour for Britons, Africans, and Americans: *one* Holy Spirit, by whom alone sinners of *all* nations, colours, and characters, can be sanctified: *one* faith to be embraced, *one* Rule of Morality to be observed, by Masters and Servants, rich and poor: *one* Heaven and *one* Hell, as the last mansions of *all* the millions of mankind; to which they shall be adjudged according to their moral character, and, if they have heard the Gospel, according to their acceptance or non-acceptance of it; and not according to the trifling distinctions of country, colour, liberty or slavery. **Christianity is a Religion for sinners**; for sinners of *all* kindreds, and nations, and languages. They *all* need those instructions, which its heavenly light sheds upon a benighted world. They all need that pardon, which it offers; that Grace, which it communicates; and that Salvation, which it ensures. In short, *all* its doctrines intimately concern them: *all* its precepts are binding upon them: *all* its blessings are needed by them: *all* its promises and threatenings shall be accomplished upon them, according to their characters. And must it not then be the grand concern of *all*? Yes; as there is but one air for Whites and Blacks, Masters and Servants to breathe in; one earth for them to walk upon; so there is but *one common* Christian Religion for them *all*, by which they can please God, and obtain Salvation. To be a sinful creature of the race of Man, under the Gospel, is sufficient alone to render it his greatest concern, and a matter of absolute necessity, to be a Christian. And to be entrusted with the care of such a creature, is alone a sufficient foundation for the duty I am recommending; and strongly binds it upon every one of us, to whom that trust is committed.

And as Christianity is, in its own nature, the common concern of all, and calculated to be the universal Religion of mankind; so it is *designed* by its great Author to be propagated among all. No corner of our world was left out in the Commission, which the gracious Founder of our Religion gave to the teachers of it. “Go ye into *all* the world, says He, and preach the Gospel to *every* creature; i.e. to every creature of the human race.” (Mark xvi.15.) The great God “now commandeth *all* men *everywhere* to repent.” (Acts xvii.30.) And when the Apostles went out to discharge their extensive Commission, the Holy Spirit concurred with them, and rendered their labours successful in Asia, Europe and Africa, without distinction. He put no difference between Jews and Gentiles, but purified the hearts of both by the same faith! (Acts xv.9.) The doors of the Church were thrown wide open, for the admission of all, that would come in upon the terms of the Gospel. **The Roman Centurion, the Ethiopian Eunuch, Onesimus, a run-away Slave**, were as welcome, as **the Jews in Jerusalem**. “All were one in Christ Jesus; in whom there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, Bond or Free.” (Colossians iii. 11.) A black skin, African birth or extract, or a state of Slavery, does not disqualify a man for the blessings of the Gospel; does not exclude him from its invitations, nor cast him out of the charge of its ministers. If history may be credited, the Gospel did once flourish in Africa, and penetrated far into those inhospitable deserts, which are now the regions of Mahometism, or Heathen idolatry.

And we have all the certainty which the *sure Word of Prophecy* can afford, that it will yet visit that miserable country. Yes, brethren, “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah xi. 9.) The Kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ.” (Revelation xi. 15.) And “from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, his Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in *every* place incense shall be offered to his Name. (Malachi i. 11.) “Ethiopia,” Guinea and Negro-land “shall yet stretch out their hands unto God.” (Psalm 68. 31.) Negroes and Slaves are included in that “**Fullness of the Gentiles**,” which, Paul tells us, “shall come in.” (Romans xi. 25.) And may the happy few, who in this land of their bondage, have been made partakers of “the glorious liberty of the sons of God,” be the first-fruits of this blessed harvest to Christ in Africa!

And now, brethren, do you not begin to feel this argument conclude? Is Christianity adapted and intended to be the *universal* Religion of mankind? And must it not then be the duty of Christians, to do their utmost to spread it through the world? Is it the design of Heaven, that it shall be propagated among all nations? And is it not the duty of Christians, especially of Masters, who have a command over others, to concur in this gracious design, and do all in their power to hasten that blessed period, which has been so long the eager wish and hope of Believers? The man that can be inactive and indifferent in such an affair as this, must have a temper directly contrary to that Religion which he professes; must be entirely careless about the glory of God and the Redeemer, and the happiness of his fellow-creatures, and disaffected to the gracious designs of Providence towards them. Has he imbibed the spirit of the Christian Religion, who can keep, perhaps, half a score of Heathens under his roof, and oblige them to drudge and toil for him all their lives; and yet never labours to gain them to the faith of Christ? Alas! How can he keep his conscience easy in such a course? But,

2. The example of Christ and his Apostles obliges you to this duty.

The example of Christ must certainly be a Law to his followers; and in vain do they pretend to that character, unless they conform themselves to it. And what did Christ do in this case? Why, he left all the glories of his native Heaven; He assumed human nature with all its common infirmities, and, in circumstances of uncommon abasement, he spent three and thirty tedious and painful years in this wretched world, and passed through an uninterrupted series of poverty, fatigue, ill-treatment and persecution; He at length died in ignominy and torture upon a Cross. And what was all this for? It was for *Africans*, as well as Britons: it was for the *Negroes*, as well as Whites: it was for poor Slaves, as well as for their Masters. Yes, for poor Negroes and Slaves, he thought it worth his while to shed the Blood of his Heart. As "God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth," so Christ "gave himself a ransom for all;" (I Timothy ii. 4, 6.) i.e. for some of *all ranks* and *all nations*. In this extent, at least, the words must be taken. This we may learn also from the songs of Heaven, which run in this strain, "Thou art worthy – for Thou was slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy Blood, out of *every* kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Revelation v. 9.) You see, brethren, some of *every* kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, share in the benefits of this redemption, and therefore join in the Song of Praise. Africans and Americans, as well as Europeans and Asiatics, bear their part in this celestial concert. And Oh! That the poor Negroes among us, who have so peculiar an ear for music and psalmody, may join in it, with still superior ecstasy and harmony!

I am sure, such of you as are lovers of Christ, begin already to feel the force of this argument. Did he live and die, to save poor Negroes? And shall not we use all the means in our power, to make them partakers of this Salvation? Did he pour out the Blood of his Heart for them? And shall we begrudge a little labour and pains to instruct them? **We are not called to agonize and die upon a cross for them: but Jesus was; and He did not refuse.** And shall we refuse those easier endeavours for their Salvation, which are required on our part? If we are capable of such a conduct, it is high time for us to renounce all pretensions of regard to Him, and His example.

The example of the **Apostles** also, and the primitive ministers of the Gospel, binds us to the same duty. When they received their extensive Commission, the love of Christ carried them through the world, to discharge it, among Jews and Gentiles, among Masters and Servants. Wherever they found a sinner, they preached to him "Repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ," without regard to the cutaneous distinction of colour, or the humble state of a Servant, or a Slave. The *poor* had the Gospel preached unto them;" and among such it was most successful. "Not many mighty, not many noble after the flesh, were called: but God chose the weak, the foolish, the base and despised things of the world – that no flesh should glory in his Presence." (I Corinthians i. 26-29.)

Paul, in particular, the **Chief of the Apostles**, and who was eminently the **Apostle of the Gentiles**, shunned no fatigues or dangers, to carry this joyful news to the remotest and most barbarous parts of the world. For this end, he became a wandering Pilgrim from country to country: he braved the dangers of sea and land, and all the terrors of persecution; and at last gloriously died in the attempt. Servants and Slaves were not beneath his care. Many parts of his writings are addressed to them; from whence we learn, that many of them had embraced the Gospel, which he had published in their ears. He thought it an object worthy of his apostolic office, to give them directions for their behavior, and to exhort them to be cheerfully contented with their mortifying condition in life. "Let every man, says he, abide in that calling, wherein he was called."

Christianity makes no alterations in matters of property, in civil distinctions or employments. "Art thou called, being a *Servant*? Care not for it – for he that is called, being a Servant is the Lord's Free-man." (I Corinthians vii. 20, 21, 22.) The Servants he here speaks to, were probably not indentured Servants or Hirelings, but what we call *Slaves*. And in those times it was a much more common practice, than it is now among the civilized nations of Europe, to make *Slaves* of the prisoners taken in war. But even to these, Paul says, "If thou art called, being a Servant, or a Slave, *care not* for it." A Christian may be happy, even in a state of Slavery. Liberty, the sweetest and most valuable of all blessings, is not essential to his happiness: for if he is destitute of civil Liberty, he enjoys a Liberty still more noble and divine: "He is the Lord's free man." The Son hath made him free from the tyranny of sin and Satan; and therefore he is free indeed. What a striking instance is this, both of apostolic zeal for poor Slaves, and of the invaluable advantages of being a Christian, which can render the lowest and most laborious station in life so insignificant, that a man need not care for it, but continue in it with a generous indifference! –

I shall only add one instance more, and that is the case of **Onesimus, Philemon's Servant**. He had been once unprofitable to his Master, and run away from him, as some of your Negroes do now. But in his ramblings, he happened to come in Paul's way, while a prisoner in Rome. The Apostle did not despise the unhappy renegade, but esteemed his conversion to Christianity a prize worth labouring for. He therefore communicated the Gospel to him; and it pleased God to open his heart to receive it, and he became a sincere convert. Upon this, the Apostle wrote a letter to his Master in his favour, which is still preserved among his immortal Epistles, for the benefit of the Church in all ages. He shows all the affection and concern of a father for him, and does not disdain to call him *his son*, dear to him as his own bowels. "I beseech thee," says he to his Master, "for *my son Onesimus*, whom I have begotten in my bonds: who in time past was unprofitable, but now is profitable to thee, and me: whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him that is *mine own bowels* – for perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him forever; not now as a Servant, but above a Servant, a *brother beloved*, especially to me; but how much more to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him *as myself*. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I Paul have written it with my own hand, I will repay it. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord, by thy compliance." (**Epistle to Philemon.**) What fatherly affection and solicitude, what ardent zeal is here, for a poor run-away Slave! How different is this from the prevailing spirit of the Christians of our age? Had the Apostles and their Fellow-labourers been as careless about propagating the Gospel among Heathens, as the generality among us are, Christianity would have soon died in that corner of the world, where it had its birth; and we and the rest of mankind would now have been as much Heathens, as the African Negroes?

But do these examples lay no obligation upon us to follow them? Did the **Apostles** discover such an ardent zeal for the Salvation even of Servants and Slaves; and shall we be quite negligent and careless about it? Did they take so much pains, pass through such severe sufferings, risk their lives, and even lose them, in the generous attempt? And shall not we take the easier measures required us for their conversion? Alas! Is the spirit of primitive Christianity

entirely lost upon earth? Or is Christianity declined with age, and become an insignificant thing, unworthy of zealous propagation? Or have the souls of Slaves lost their value, so that it is no matter what becomes of them? How can you pretend to learn your Religion from the **Apostles**; and yet have crowds of Negroes in your houses or quarters, as ignorant Heathens, as when they left the wilds of Africa, without using any means for their conversion? Will ye not endeavor to be followers of the Apostles in this respect, as they also were of Christ? If their example has no weight, methinks the conduct of Jews, Heathens, and Mahometans may shame you. They are all zealous to gain proselytes to their Religion, though antiquated, or false. And will not you labour to proselytize your Domestic to **the divine Religion of Jesus?...**

American Founding Fathers' Anti-Slavery Addresses and Legislation

Thomas Jefferson on Slavery

“...*The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies, where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state. But previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves we have, it is necessary to exclude all further importations from Africa; yet our repeated attempts to effect this by prohibitions, and by imposing duties which might amount of a prohibition, have been hitherto defeated by his majesty’s negative: Thus preferring the immediate advantages of a few African corfairs (slaves) to the lasting interests of the American states and to the rights of human nature deeply wounded by this infamous practice...*” (1774 *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* – set forth in some Resolutions intended for the inspection of the present Delegates of the people of Virginia, now in Convention.)

“He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating the carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the approbrium of INFIDEL powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN King of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce. And that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived

them, by murdering the people on whom he also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the LIBERTIES of one people with crimes which he urges them to commit against the LIVES of another.” (*Jefferson’s 28th Clause of the Declaration of Independence* – struck out by Congress prior to its signing, due to the fact that some southern states would have dropped out of the 13 original states needed to pass the Declaration.)

“The bill on the subject of slaves was a mere digest of the existing laws respecting them, without any intimation of the plan for a future and general emancipation. It was thought better that this should be kept back, and attempted only by way of an amendment, however the bill should be brought on. The principles of the amendment however were agreed on, that is to say, the freedom of all born after a certain day, and deportation at a proper age. But it was found that the public mind would not yet bear the proposition, nor will it bear it even at this day. Yet the day is not distant when it must bear and adopt it, or worse will follow...If on the contrary it is left to force itself on, human nature must shudder at the prospect held up...commerce between master and slave is despotism.” (*Autobiography*. Library of Congress Rare Manuscript Division.)

George Mason on Slavery

“This infernal traffic originated in the avarice of British merchants. The British government constantly checked the attempts of Virginia to put a stop to it. The present question concerns not the importing States alone, but the whole Union...Slavery discourages arts and manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They prevent the emigration of whites, who really enrich and strengthen a country. They produce the most pernicious effect on manners. Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of Heaven on a country. As nations cannot be rewarded or punished in the next world, they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence punishes national sins by national calamities.” He (George Mason) lamented that some of our eastern brethren had, from a lust of gain, embarked in this nefarious traffic...He held it essential in every point of view, that the General Government should have power to prevent the increase of slavery. (James Madison’s Report on *George Mason’s speech to the 1787 Constitutional Convention* – giving his reason for declining to sign the Constitution, due to the *anti-Slavery Clause* being struck out by Congress.)