

**THE APPEAL OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY
OF FRIENDS IN PENNSYLVANIA, NEW
JERSEY,
DELAWARE, ETC., TO THEIR FELLOW-
CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES ON
BEHALF OF THE COLOURED RACES**

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WILLIAM EVANS

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At a Yearly Meeting of Friends of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, &c., held in Philadelphia by adjournments from the 19th to the 22d of the Fourth month, inclusive, 1858 —

An Appeal to the citizens of the United States on behalf of the Coloured Races having been prepared by the Meeting for Sufferings, it was read and united with, and directed to be signed by the Clerk on behalf of the Yearly Meeting, and an edition to be published sufficiently large for extensive distribution.

Extracted from the Minutes.

WILLIAM EVANS,
Clerk to the Meeting this year

(2)

[Handwritten note:]
[= ... meeting of ...]

THE APPEAL
OF THE
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,
TO THEIR FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES,
ON BEHALF OF
THE COLOURED RACES.

In contemplating the present condition and future prospects of our beloved country, the conviction has been forcibly brought before us, that, whatever elements of outward prosperity and greatness a nation may possess, it is only by an observance of the obligations of morality and religion that its real interests and highest welfare can be promoted, and established upon a secure basis.

The sovereign Ruler of the Universe is a Being of perfect justice and beneficence, as well as of unlimited power. He controls the destiny of governments and of individuals, and can set up or pull down at his pleasure; and all the policy and strength of man is utterly incapable of resisting the course of his Almighty Providence.

It is one of the fixed laws of his moral government, attested by experience and by Holy Scripture, that wickedness and oppression are, sooner or later, followed by his just judgments. The annals of those that have preceded us furnish abundant evidence that national sins have ever incurred national calamities; and that a course of iniquity and violence, however prosperous for a time, has eventually terminated in disgrace and ruin. History abounds with instances of governments which have risen to a height of power and influence that seemed almost

irresistible; and arrogantly presuming on the strength of their position, and trusting to their skill and management, have sought to aggrandize themselves by encroaching upon the rights of others, until at length, in the righteous retribution of Him who has declared, "Vengeance is mine — I will repay" — the measure they have meted to others has been returned upon themselves, unlooked-for calamities have befallen, they have sunk into moral and political degradation, and their very existence has been blotted out from the earth.

The account of the Jews, as related in the Bible and confirmed by profane writers, shows that their happiness and prosperity, as well as their security from the aggressions of hostile nations, were in proportion to their obedience to the Divine law; continued violations of which brought upon them fearful calamities, and ended in the destruction of their government, and their dispersion, as a fallen people, among other nations.

If we turn to the history of Rome, Greece, or Babylon, as well as other kingdoms, ancient and modern, the same just retribution is written in characters too plain to be mistaken or controverted.

These fearful manifestations of Divine justice are designed as beacons to succeeding generations. The Most High changes not. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His attributes are neither altered nor suspended to suit the varying schemes, or the fluctuating opinions of men or governments, but are ever acting, with perfect harmony and certainty, to bring about his purposes. Though he is forbearing and compassionate, and may wait long with the disobedient, ere he causes them to reap the reward of their doings, yet the Holy Scriptures assure us, that He will by no means clear the guilty, nor suffer the impenitently wicked to go unpunished. However improbable, in the day of outward prosperity, a reverse may appear; however it may seem to us, for a

time, that God regardeth not the iniquity of the oppressor, nor listeneth to the groaning of the down-trodden, it is unalterably certain that the day of recompense will sooner or later arrive.

Of his infinite mercy he allows to nations, as well as to individuals, a period in which they may repent of their iniquity — may cease to do evil and learn to do well, and thereby avert the awful consequences of their sins. But this day of mercy does not last forever. It is possible to disregard and outlive it; and of such a condition it is divinely declared, “Because I have called and ye refused — I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as a desolation and your destruction as a whirlwind” — and distress and anguish overtake. Such has been the course of the moral government of the Almighty in past ages, and both reason and revelation confirm the conclusion that such it will be for all time to come.

With these views deeply impressed on our minds, our attention has been directed to the course pursued by the people and government of these United States toward the coloured races. — It is not our purpose to speak particularly of the wrongs and cruelties practised upon the aboriginal inhabitants of our country. It will hardly be denied by any one acquainted with the subject, that a vast amount of injustice and other wickedness has been perpetrated in the intercourse of the whites with the Indians, for which a heavy load of responsibility rests upon the nation. These feeble and defenceless remnants of the tribes who once possessed the soil upon which we have grown rich, have strong claims on our sympathy and Christian liberality; and every principle of religion and humanity dictates, that in their weakness and destitution they should be treated with kindness and generosity.

Our present business is more especially with the condition of the descendants of Africa. We wish to approach the subject with that charity and forbearance which the gospel enjoins between man and his brother man. We disclaim all sectional views, — all party or political motives, and any undue interference with supposed rights of property and local regulations. It is, as we believe, under the constraining influence of that love which seeks the welfare of both masters and slaves, and desires the happiness and prosperity of our beloved country, that we make our earnest and solemn appeal on this momentous subject. That there are conscientious men, who treat their slaves with humanity, and see in part, and perhaps deplore, the evils of the system in which they are involved, we do not doubt, and we sympathize with them in their trials and difficulties respecting it. But it is equally certain that there are others whose course is the reverse of this. Our business, however, is not with individuals or with particular cases; it is with slavery as a legalized institution in some of the United States.

We are aware that difference of education, of position in life, and of associations, produces a powerful effect in moulding the sentiments of men, and that interest, in a greater or less degree, influences all, and modifies in their view the force even of the strongest arguments.

But there are certain great principles of moral right, revealed by the Holy Spirit in the heart, and laid down in the scriptures of Truth for the government of all, which no exercise of charity can suspend, no prejudice of education annul, nor can any combination of circumstances absolve us from the obligation to observe them. To these principles, in connexion with the subject before us, we wish calmly and kindly to invite the dispassionate attention of our readers.

At an early period, the Religious Society of Friends was constrained by a sense of Christian duty to clear itself of

the traffic in mankind. Under the enlightening influences of the Spirit of Truth they saw that it was totally irreconcilable with the precepts of Christ and his apostles; that the subjects of it were the victims of wars, fomented in Africa by the manstealer, for the love of gain; and that the sufferings they endured on the passage to America were repugnant to humanity.

Being faithful in this particular, they were soon led to consider the origin and nature of the servitude to which the stolen Africans and their descendants were reduced after being landed on our shores; and, testing it by the simple precepts of the gospel, they found it wholly at variance with them. Undeterred by pecuniary loss or other inconveniences, and patiently labouring in love to convince the judgments of those members who did not at once accord with these views, they eventually liberated all their negroes; so that for a long period there has not been a slave held as such by an acknowledged member of the Society. Having thus cleared themselves of these evils, and tasted the reward of doing justly, they were drawn in Christian love to plead with their fellow-citizens who yet held slaves, and to labour in a meek and gentle spirit, to bring others to that sense of mercy and of justice, to which the Lord in his goodness had brought them. Hence, they have often felt it their duty to open their mouths for the dumb, and to plead the cause of those who have few or none to help them.

The people of these United States profess to be Christians—to believe in the gospel of Christ, and to acknowledge and receive the Holy Scriptures as a law given from heaven. In this precious volume we are taught that God is the Creator of all men—that He made of one blood all the families of the earth; and that He is the gracious and beneficent Father of them all. That all are partakers of the same fallen nature; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; all have need of the