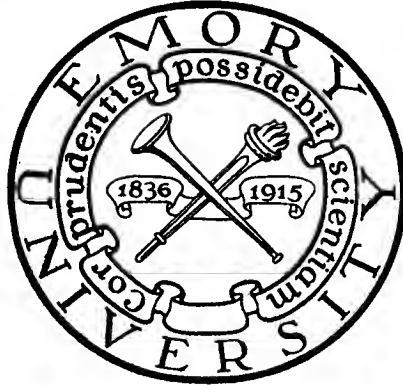


ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MISSIONARY TO THE NEGROES
IN
LIBERTY COUNTY, GEORGIA

Nov. 1833

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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MISSIONARY TO THE NEGROES;

IN

LIBERTY COUNTY, (Ga.)

PRESENTED TO THE ASSOCIATION;

NOVEMBER, 1833.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE ASSOCIATION.

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Missionary.

Rev. CHARLES C. JONES.

ANNUAL REPORT.

TIME.

IN presenting to this Association, for the religious instruction of the Coloured Population of this County, a Report of my labours as their Missionary for the past year, I would first of all call your attention to the *time* in which I have been *directly* employed in the discharge of my duties.

I arrived in the County, November, 1832; but from particular circumstances, did not commence my labours until the second of December; since which time, your Agent has been regularly employed in promoting the great and good object which you have in view, in various ways hereafter to be named, with the exception of one month, which was consumed in attending a meeting of Presbytery, and in business connected with that meeting. So that the whole time of employment in the County would be *ten months*; the year ending the second of December, will be eleven.

THE FIELD OF LABOUR.

Suffer me, in the next place, to call your attention to the *field of labour which this County affords*.

The County contains a population of 1544 whites and 5729 blacks, which gives a proportion of 3 2-3 black to one white, according to the census of 1830.

The County is divided into the 15th, 16th and 17th Company Districts. There are only 28 slaves in the 16th District—in the 17th, 275—and in the 15th, 4577. The total of taxable slaves in the County, is 4880. You will perceive from this statement, that the 15th District, in the number of its coloured population, exceeds the 16th by 4549, and the 17th by 4302, and both together by 4274.

Your Agent has directed his efforts exclusively to the 15th District, the most populous; and in so doing, believes that he meets the approbation of the Association. He has never

visited the 16th and 17th, having always as much and more than he could do in the 15th.

STATIONS.

This District has been divided into *neighbourhoods*, and a *station for Sabbath preaching appointed in each*.

The stations are six in number—Sunbury, Pleasant Grove, Newport, Midway, Fraser's Plantation, and the Sand Hills, or Walthourville, the summer retreat.

These stations are advantageously chosen. Each one accommodates a large number of negroes. And it is proper to remark in this place, *that there should always be a station in every neighbourhood that can furnish a respectable congregation*; and for the plain reason, that the shorter the distance which the negroes have to walk, the better; and in this way, not only the attendance of a larger number of adults is secured, but also the attendance of a larger number of *children*, which we consider an object of the first importance.

I have uniformly discouraged the negroes from attending stations *without* their neighbourhoods, if the distance was considerable, for obvious reasons; and in the mean time advised them to attend the nearest house of public worship. The Missionary can, in a general way, manage a congregation of moderate size, better than he can a large one, and also make the services more profitable.

LABOUR PERFORMED.

The labours of your Agent, may be divided into those of *the Sabbath*, and those of *the week*.

Of the Sabbath.—I have preached in the County *forty Sabbaths*, to the negroes exclusively. But once, and then but one sermon to the negroes in Sunbury; and my reason for not visiting that station oftener was, that it lay remote from me, and I knew that the Baptist brethren located there, were in the habit of holding meetings for them. The services at the other stations have been held as nearly in rotation as they possibly could be, without interfering with the white congregations on their regular Sabbaths, with the exception of Walthourville, which never has been occupied as a Sabbath station, nor can it ever well be.

Of the Week.—I have held, when the season permitted it, sixteen or seventeen *plantation meetings*. The number of these meetings, is not as large as it should be, owing to the fact, that your Agent was not in a situation to attend more; but hopes, during the present winter, God willing, to enlarge these

labours. Near fifty plantations have been returned by members of the Association, as open for religious instruction; which shews how extensive is the field, and it may be further enlarged. We deem plantation meetings *highly important*, and, in some respects, more efficacious than those held on the Sabbath. The plantation meetings have been suspended during the summer and fall months, from motives of prudence in regard to health; it being the advice of physicians and the injunction of friends, which could not be resisted, however much your Agent may have had a desire to continue them.

During the summer and fall months, a regular Lecture has been maintained on the Sand Hills, on Thursday evening, for servants in the families that resort there for health, and also for the negroes on the plantations in the immediate vicinity.

In addition to the public preaching of the Gospel on the Sabbath and during the week, some effort has been made, as opportunity offered, of holding *personal conversation* with the negroes on the subject of Religion. Many of these conversations have been by the way, and in the house, and have led me to a better acquaintance with the moral and religious condition of this people, than I could otherwise have obtained. I scarcely need say to the Association, that ignorance is prevalent to a lamentable degree. Some of these conversations have been pleasant and profitable; and your Agent has, at times, been agreeably disappointed in receiving instruction, when he hoped to have the privilege of imparting it.

Correspondence has been conducted with persons in different parts of our country, on the subject of the religious instruction of the negroes, and a little effort made through the press to awaken public attention to it. I think it necessary to make this statement for the satisfaction of the Association, as some may suppose, that *preaching* constitutes all necessary labour.

MANNER IN WHICH THE MEETINGS ARE CONDUCTED.

It may not be improper for me to state to the Association, the manner in which I have generally conducted the meetings at the Sabbath stations, and on plantations.

Plantation Meetings.—Notice is sent to the planter, that on such an evening the Missionary will visit his plantation for the purpose of preaching to his people, if it suits his convenience. The planter takes into his own hands the arrangement of the meeting, confining it, or not, as he pleases, to the people on his own place. The Missionary has nothing to do with making arrangements for plantation meetings, nor does he give any notice whatever to the negroes on other plantations, or on

the Sabbath, that meetings will be held during the week on such and such plantations. The negroes assemble in some convenient room prepared by the planter, and the exercises are precisely those of a common Lecture, with this difference, that the audience is *catechised* on the subject of discourse. In this, however, the Missionary is governed by the nature of the subject and the degree of attention.

The Lectures on Thursday evening, at Walthourville, have been conducted in the same manner, with a diminution of the catechetical exercise, and with the addition of teaching hymns and spiritual songs and tunes adapted; to which should be added, portions of scripture.

Meetings on the Sabbath.—On the Sabbath I have two regular services, morning and afternoon, more or less catechetical. Also, teaching hymns, spiritual songs, and portions of scripture.

After dismissal in the afternoon, a meeting of inquiry is held, and all professedly under concern of mind, are personally conversed and prayed with. These inquiry meetings are indispensable, and of great utility.

CLASSES OF INSTRUCTION.

A class of instruction for professors of Religion of all denominations, was formed, the last winter, at Newport, embracing male and female, over 400 members. The afternoon of the Sabbath was appropriated to this class. The men and women occupied different seats. I gave them familiar lectures on the doctrines and duties of Christianity. Such classes, well conducted, will be productive of great good; and I hope to form, at some future time, a regular course of instruction for them. The station at Newport, I resigned to Rev. S. S. Law, in the spring. His meetings have been very nearly every fortnight, well attended and interesting.

I have established a class of instruction for children and youth at the station on Fraser's Plantation. It is deeply interesting, and varies in number from 25 to 50. I meet this class between morning and afternoon services, and my hope is to establish such a class at all the stations. Without pausing to lay before the Association my reasons, I will say, that such classes are, above all others, to be desired, and upon the rising generation of negroes, our hope of success mainly depends.

The children and youth have been, to all appearance, much interested. I instruct them from a Catechism which I am attempting to prepare for them. I also instruct them from

Scripture cards. The parents of these children, take deep interest in their instruction, and express gratitude for it.

With children and youth lies our main hope of the moral reformation of the negroes.

SUCCESS.

The Association may properly inquire, *What success has attended the labours of the Missionary?*

Our success may be viewed in two points of light.

1. In relation to *the people whom you hope by Divine blessing to benefit.*

The *attendance* on meetings at the different stations in the commencement of the year, as it may be well known to many who hear me, was full, if not large. It was my own impression, as well as that of others, that the *novelty* of the benevolent work, drew out many, who would, after a little while, decline, and finally discontinue their attendance, and the meetings suffer diminution in numbers. But with the exception of a few meetings, the attendance has every where been as full as at the beginning, and no decrease of numbers has appeared, but in some stations an increase. The few meetings which have been thinly attended, were such as arose from the inclemency of the weather; or from the shortness of the notice.

I perceive no defect of *interest* in the congregations. They have been apparently animated by their progress in knowledge, and agree in saying, that they never have had so much before. They seem now to understand more fully the design which you have in view, in sending them a Missionary, and the nature of his work. They are gradually acquiring a knowledge of the plan of Redemption, and what constitutes true conversion and Christian character. They are to some extent, I hope, giving over their more prominent superstitions.

I have endeavoured, with all plainness, to communicate to them the truths of Christianity; and the effect in several instances has been singular and gratifying. I have used no efforts to produce excitement, that I know of. I have resorted to no means but the common means of Grace, as seen in our Churches from Sabbath to Sabbath.

The children who have been taken under a course of instruction, are, thus far, as much interested and as apt in receiving knowledge, as children of any colour under similar circumstances, and of the same age. No doubt rests on my mind, that if God spares our lives to continue our labours, we

shall see a moral elevation in the character of servants, which we have never yet witnessed either in this County, or in any other part of the Southern country.

The number of actual conversions your Agent has no means of giving you. He receives those who profess conversion in no particular Church; nor is it his custom to inquire where they received their first serious impressions. He preaches—inquiry meetings are held—instruction is given—the individuals are examined on the evidences of conversion, and then directed to make application to the white Churches, which ever they wish to join, whether Presbyterian, Baptist, or Methodist.

The conversion of souls is the great, the all-important object which we aim at; and we have reason, I trust, to believe that, in this respect our labours have not been in vain, though they have not been attended with any remarkable blessing.

I cannot describe the peculiar and joyful feelings that have possessed my mind, when I have seen penitents from this long neglected and degraded people, inquiring what they must do to be saved. It is not building upon another man's foundation. You are in the high-ways and hedges. You gather the first fruits yourself, and the undivided joy takes full possession of the soul. God grant to this Association numberless seals to their Christian efforts; and may the blessing of many a poor African rest upon it!

2. In relation to *owners* of servants. We think that there is an increase of interest in the religious instruction of the negroes. It is becoming in the minds of many a *duty*, that we cannot slight without incurring guilt. We may say, in the minds of some Christians amongst us, a *conscience* has been formed; and we hope the day may speedily arrive, when one of the standing evidences of our conversion to God will be, our attention to the spiritual wants of our servants, as it certainly should be.

Those planters who have been kind enough to attend one or more of our Sabbath exercises, have testified to the pleasantness of the meetings, and the interest which they felt in them. Your Missionary deeply regrets, that he has not been supported as frequently as he could wish, in this way. It is not expedient, generally, to have in attendance a large number of white persons; but the presence of two, three or four, is always agreeable and profitable to the Missionary and the people.

We may mention one other effect on masters in the way of success. It is this; an elevation in their regards of the char-

acter of the African. More kindly feelings are going out towards him, and a greater disposition is manifested for his improvement, morally and physically. I speak now of those planters who have really given consideration to the work which you have undertaken; and thus you perceive that your work has an intimate bearing upon all the interests of the negro. The effect of this kindly feeling on the part of the master towards his servants, will be, to increase both his respect and obedience.

The period of our labours is too short to look for any *general effect throughout the County*, on the moral character of the negroes. Every one knows that their moral character is deplorable enough. Some even despair of its improvement. But we are sanguine that they are as capable of moral improvement as any other people. All they need is the same persevering care and attention, the same privileges of the Gospel. As a proof of this, I venture nothing when I declare, that the most faithful servants, and those who are exerting the most happy influence in this County, are those who in sober judgment, are *decidedly pious men*. We speak not of those who are Christians by *profession* only. There are many such we know, and their number is not to be wondered at, considering their opportunities of instruction. If by faithful, judicious instruction, the number of *pious* servants is increased, we shall directly perceive and acknowledge the great benefit of Religion amongst them. It will be an anomaly in the moral history of man, if the Gospel will not produce a happy effect upon them. Indeed, it is too late to originate any doubts or controversies on this subject, as there is not wanting abundant evidence of the success of efforts both to civilize and evangelize the African.

I repeat again, that the period of our labours in this County, and the limited nature of them—there being but one Missionary to nearly five thousand—forbid the expectation of any *general, salutary effect*,

We characterize the year as one of *experiment* and of *discovery*. Of experiment, both in relation to the negroes, and the Agent. Whether on the one hand, the negroes, after so long a period of neglect, would cordially embrace and sustain by their interest and attendance, the preaching of the Gospel; and on the other, whether the Agent was qualified for the peculiar labour.

It has been a year of discovery, as to the stations to be formed, the number of plantations to be visited, the best plan of conducting the religious instruction of the negroes, and the amount of interest which is taken in the work.

To present to the Association in one sentence, the convictions of my own mind in relation to the labours of the past year, I sincerely say, that our success has equalled our expectations. No man engaged in preaching the Gospel to ignorant and degraded minds, under many peculiar and great disadvantages, could have been more encouraged, in the main, than has been your Missionary. I make this declaration with diffidence ; and I should wish, with gratitude, and would not have done so, if it was not deemed necessary, in some measure, for your encouragement.

SUGGESTIONS.

Without detaining you longer, I would respectfully lay before the Association a *few suggestions* on the religious instruction of the negroes.

1. And in the first place, I would suggest *the building of two or three houses for the accommodation of the negroes on the Sabbath.*

Your Missionary attempted in the beginning of the last winter, to preach in the open air, and at the stands in the woods, but with less comfort to himself and benefit to the people, than when they were collected in the white Churches, which we have been permitted to use. But the negroes do not feel perfectly at home in the white Churches, and especially when there may be fifteen or twenty white persons present. A separate place of worship, exclusively their own, would place them more at their ease, and enable the Missionary to conduct his exercises as he please.

In the construction of these houses, you may combine simplicity and economy. A large shed, with the ends enclosed, and with the posts set in sills, will be sufficient. The size may vary according to the number of attendants, 40 feet by 20, 50 by 30, or 60 by 40. The seats, I am inclined to think, may be furnished by the people themselves. A committee from the Association, might arrange this business with despatch, both as to the method of proceeding in erecting the houses, and the proper sites for them.

2, I would suggest also to the Association, the propriety of having on your own plantations, either *a small house erected for plantation meetings*, or a room prepared, that may be conveniently used for that purpose.

To take the people into the dwelling-house of the white family is not pleasant ; to take them into a cotton-house is not safe, nor always convenient, while there are but few of their own houses that can accommodate any number of persons.

Such a house as is here recommended, may be put up at a trifling expense, and may be advantageously used for other purposes, particularly as a house for the accommodation of a day or Sabbath school for the children.

3. It is suggested again, that plantation meetings *be held exclusively for residents on the plantation*; and that negroes on surrounding plantations be discouraged from attending.

4. Also, that the members of the Association would *commence some regular system of instruction for the negro children.*

The great hope of benefitting permanently the morals of servants, lies in commencing early with them: It is folly to expect any good from those who are left to the mercy of unhallowed passions and influences during the early years of life; nor will there be any comfort or peace in the management of those thus abandoned. They must be trained as moral and accountable beings from their infancy; and as their fathers and mothers are both without leisure or qualifications for the task, it devolves under Providence, upon the master.

We know that there is a great want of suitable *books* for their instruction. There are none in existence, so far as my knowledge extends. But they must be composed and put into circulation to meet the demand for them. Begin on your respective plantations, and the books will be forthcoming, and not only instruct the children, but also the adults, and take the oversight of all religious meetings held on your places.

5. I would also suggest the propriety of *spending occasionally a Sabbath at home with your own people*, assembling both old and young for instruction; and also holding private conversation with them on the subject of Religion.

It is strange that this is never done. When the Sabbath comes, to Church, as a matter of course, the Christian master goes, and gives himself little trouble for the fate of his servants on that day. He never thinks for a moment that he should deny himself some privileges, to impart blessings to his servants. He possesses no spirit of self-denial for their good.

6. I would suggest again, that *the discipline of plantations be strictly continued and perfected.*

Some there are who relax discipline as soon as they begin to give religious instruction. Others suppose, that the fact of giving religious instruction, *obliges* a relaxation of discipline; and knowing that all success in planting would consequently be destroyed, discard such instruction altogether. We believe both to be in the wrong. You do not relax the proper discipline of your families, because you train them up religiously.

No more, then, should you relax the proper discipline of your servants.

By discipline we do not intend *severity*. Severity is not discipline, though there is no good discipline without some severity. The great principle to be infixed is *subordination*. That infixed, and in general discipline is easy: that is, as easy as it can be with people in their condition.

7. In connection with proper discipline on plantations, the *police of the County*, for the helping of your efforts, should be strict. The patrol should be *real*, not *nominal*, conducted so as not to harass and vex the people, but to maintain them in fear and order. During the last summer, there were twelve or fifteen runaways in the County for months together, committing depredations on plantations, stock, &c. Some were owned in the County, and some were from abroad. Such offenders against the peace and good order of the County, should be permitted to go at large, no longer than a continued pursuit on the part of the citizens could secure them. There ought to be public spirit in the County sufficient to maintain its police. The evil now adverted to, gains strength by being let alone; and it ought to be enough for us to know, that some of the most serious disturbances which have taken place in slave countries, *have originated from this very evil*. Masters remained indifferent to its growth, until necessity impelled them to activity. One thing which greatly contributes to the encouragement of insubordination and running away, besides this relaxation of County police, is, the *leaving plantations from month to month, and from year to year, without any resident white person*. The visit of the owner or manager, during the day, answers some good purpose, but can never take the place of a *resident*. It is at night that plantations require the presence of white persons. Is there no remedy to *this* evil? I submit it to the consideration of the Association, and of all our citizens.

The *trade*, also, which is carried on with the negroes, should be under some supervision. We have reason to rejoice, that the trade in *ardent spirit* is now generally discontinued, and that the effect has been highly beneficial.

8. I scarcely need suggest the necessity of paying *special attention to the comfort of the negroes in their houses, food, clothing, etc.*

Unless we attend to the improvement of their *physical* condition, our efforts to improve their *moral* condition, will be very nearly abortive; for we shall practically deny what we preach. In order to this, we must moderate our desires for

the accumulation of property, which is the sin of us all, and a sin, the indulgence of which carries no small discomfort to those through whose labour we obtain what we desire. They should have a share in the enjoyments of life as well as we.

I close with a remark or two on the *light in which your labours should be viewed*, and the *spirit with which they should be conducted*.

The religious instruction of servants, is as much a duty as that of children. You are labouring therefore, to discharge *a duty*; and are to account for the manner in which you discharge it, at the bar of **God**.

It is a matter of no consequence, therefore, what objections are advanced against your work, nor in what poor consideration it may be held; it is a matter of no consequence what difficulties present themselves, nor what discouragements—*You are doing your duty*. Let it be done intelligently, judiciously, and for the glory of **God**, and your success is certain. If we do not impart the Gospel to the negroes, others will, and shall then bear the reward away from us. It must be done sooner or later, for it is the decree of the Almighty, that the Gospel shall be preached to every creature.

We cannot reasonably expect every man to feel this duty, nor every one who feels it, faithfully to perform it; nor all men to be cordial towards it. It is a work of benevolence; it has its rough road to travel, and requires wisdom, moderation, faith and perseverance in its friends; and then He who has the hearts of all men in his hands, will grant success.

Your *spirit* should be that of *faith and power*. Your great object is to *save the soul*. Converting grace is the gift of **God**; therefore, let the labour of love, and the prayer of faith, accompany each other. Think much of the eternal destinies of five thousand souls around you. What you do for their salvation, do it not feebly, but energetically. Unless you are believing and active, the work will not advance; neither will the hearts of friends be encouraged, nor their numbers be increased.

Your efforts are known and read of by many in this and our sister States, and very many eyes are looking to you for direction and encouragement. May it be your privilege to exert a favourable influence far and near in your great and good work; and may you enjoy the unspeakable privilege of turning many from sin to holiness, through the grace of our Lord and Saviour, **Jesus Christ**.

