

Dedication

to the Very Reverend Father Claudio Aquaviva, P^reposito General
of the Society of Jesus.

Classical literature tells us, Very Reverend Father, that Diogenes the Cynic, being in the city of Syracuse when it was besieged by Philip, father of the great Alexander, and seeing that all were busying themselves in playing the role of valiant soldiers and were resisting the enemy, took an earthen pot he owned and rolled it through the streets and squares. When asked why he did this, he replied that it was so that he should not be considered to have any less strange an occupation (than the soldiers). In the same way, when I saw that the truth about the affairs of this Ethiopia Minor and Province of Serra Leoa had become a battleground for various opinions, it occurred to me to write this treatise, since I considered the subject a most pleasing one, and one not without interest from the point of view of gaining knowledge about many very important points bearing on the topic of servitude and about other matters discussed in the treatise. My reasons for offering it to you, Reverend Father, are such open ones that this degree of boldness on my part deserves your pardon, as if it were that of a son, even an unworthy son. The slightness of the work has made me a coward. But equally what has given me confidence, so that I do not speak out of presumption (?), is the affection and paternal charity with which you always treat those who shelter in your shadow. Confidence that this is the first work (on the subject) and that it deals with matters as varied as they are interesting has enlarged the treatise. Now it does not fear to appear before Your Reverence in order to attain the fulfilment of its purpose, a fulfilment depending solely on the credit which you, Reverend Father, give to it and the authority with which you receive it.

Manuel Álvares.