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Negro.

SOME ASPECTS

21 (7)



OF

THE RACE PROBLEM  
IN THE SOUTH



A PAPER BY

REV. ROBERT F. CAMPBELL, D. D.,

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church,

ASHEVILLE, N. C.

1899



SECOND EDITION

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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On Christmas day, 1898, the writer preached a sermon in the First Presbyterian Church, Asheville, on Our Duty to the Negroes. The congregation was composed of persons representing the four quarters of the Union, many of whom have asked that the sermon be published. A condensed report appeared in the columns of *The Asheville Daily Citizen*, and this report excited considerable interest among those who had not heard the discourse.

Several of the negro pastors in the city have expressed a desire to have copies of the sermon for circulation among their people. In addition to these requests, there comes one from the Rev. D. Clay Lilly, Secretary of Colored Evangelization for the Southern Presbyterian Church, for fifteen hundred copies, to be issued by the Committee having this work in charge.

These requests coming from so many independent sources, and from so many classes of persons supposed to have divergent views on the subject treated, seem to indicate that some good might be accomplished by the publication of the substance of what was said. The sermon was preached from outline notes and could not be reproduced in the exact form in which it was delivered. It has seemed best in preparing it for publication, to alter its character somewhat, and to send it forth as a paper rather than as a sermon. The points discussed are the same, but the proportion of the parts has been changed, much more space being given in the paper to the historical and sociological setting. Use has been made of some material that has appeared since the sermon was delivered.

When the writer was a boy thirteen and fourteen years of age he taught during two scholastic years a night school for colored men. He was for several years a teacher in a Sunday school for negroes and afterwards superintendent of the school. From his boyhood he has been interested in the advancement of the negro race.

R. F. CAMPBELL.

Asheville, N. C., March 23, 1899.

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### NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

Within one month from the publication of this pamphlet the first edition was exhausted, and the demand for a second and larger edition leads the writer to hope that this humble attempt to unite men of all sections and of both races in an unbiased study of this great question will not be in vain.

Asheville, N. C., May 10, 1899.

R. F. C.

## SOME ASPECTS OF THE RACE PROBLEM IN THE SOUTH.

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Though the present generation is not responsible for the existence of the race problem, it is responsible for its solution. In the providence of God, this great problem has fallen to us as part of our inheritance, and we must settle it according to the eternal principles of truth and righteousness.

The fact that this question has been made a rallying point for sectionalism has been the greatest obstacle in the way of its peaceful solution.

It is high time that the two sections, so long and so unhappily divided by strife over the negro's status in this country, should join hands as a token of peace and a pledge of mutual helpfulness in all that concerns the solution of this question in its present phases. It should be remembered that while geographically the problem is largely a Southern one, historically both sections are responsible for its existence, and the interests of both are involved in its settlement. It is the purpose of this paper to call attention to some aspects of the race problem, with reference to the past history, the present status, and the future prospects of the negro in this country, and the white man's duty to his brother in black.

I. The responsibility for the negro's former status as a slave in this country rests equally on both sections of the Union.

The first cargo of Africans was landed in a half starving condition on the shore of Virginia by a Dutch man-of-war in 1620, and bartered to the colonists for food. The seed of African slavery, introduced into America by accident so far as any previous intention on the part of these colonists was concerned, soon took root, and the institution spread with the growth of the country.

Mr. Geo. H. Moore, librarian of the Historical Society of New York, and corresponding member of the Historical Society of Massachusetts, has shown that Massachusetts was "the first community in America to legalize the slave-trade and slavery by legislative act; the first to send out a slave-ship, and the first to secure a fugitive slave-law."\*

In 1776 slavery existed in all the thirteen colonies, and what Mr. E. B. Sanford says of Connecticut in his history of that State is true of

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\* Moore's "History of Slavery in Massachusetts," cited by Thomas Nelson Page in "The Old South," pp. 292-296.

the North generally: "The cause of the final abolition of slavery in the State was the fact that it became unprofitable."\*

Mr. Hamilton W. Mabie says: "All the Northern States abolished slavery, beginning with Vermont in 1777, and ending with New Jersey in 1804. It should be added, however, that many of the Northern slaves were not freed, but sold to the South. The agricultural and commercial conditions in the North were such as to make slave labor less and less profitable, while in the South the social order of things, agricultural conditions and the climate, were gradually making it seemingly indispensable." †

Even after the abolition of slavery in New England, "the slave-trade in New England vessels did not cease." ‡

In 1769 the Virginia legislature enacted that the further importation of negroes, to be sold into slavery, should be prohibited. §

Six years later Massachusetts followed Virginia's example. The action of both colonies was rendered null and void by the British government, which, for the sake of gain, fastened the traffic in slaves on the American colonies. ||

In the Federal convention (1787) New England voted with South Carolina and Georgia, against the sturdy opposition of Virginia, for the prolonging of the slave-trade for twenty years. \*\*

Though all the foremost statesmen and many of the planters of Virginia were from an early date opposed to the continuance of slavery, the question of emancipation assumed a much more serious phase in the South than in the North, because economic conditions had caused a natural gravitation of the negroes southward. ††

"The number of African slaves in North America in 1756 was about 292,000. Of these Virginia had 120,000, her white population amounting at the same time to 173,000." ††

By the census of 1790 there were only 40,370 negroes at the North, while the South had 657,527. "In that (the Northern) part of America," wrote Mr. Jefferson, who was a vigorous opponent of slavery, "there are

\* John Fiske, "The Critical Period of American History," p. 73. Sanford's "History of Connecticut," p. 252.

† "The Story of America," by Hamilton W. Mabie and Marshal H. Bright, p. 282.

‡ W. B. Weedon, "Economic and Social History of New England," Vol. 2, p. 835.

§ John Fiske, "The Critical Period of American History," p. 72.

|| Ibid., p. 72.

\*\* Ibid., p. 264.

†† Ibid., p. 73.

‡‡ J. E. Cooke's "Virginia," p. 367.

but few slaves, and they can easily disencumber themselves of them."

The statement of these historical facts should allay rather than exasperate sectionalism. They show that the responsibility for slavery in this country rests on both shoulders of the body politic, and therefore "the right hand cannot say to the left, I have no need of thee." One hand needs the help of the other in bearing the great burden which, as we shall see, has been shifted but not removed by emancipation.

II. The negro could not have existed in the early stages of his career in this country except as a slave, and there is reason to believe that slavery accomplished more for him than could have been accomplished under any other system of labor whatsoever.

That the negro could not have found or kept a footing in this country except as a slave is too obvious for proof. The Chinaman tried to get in, but was met at the threshold by an act of Congress to the effect that this is "a white man's country," or, at least, not a yellow man's country. The Indian, who equally with the negro has "rights which a white man is bound to respect," has been driven westward, and is "fast being removed by powder, rascality and liquor." \*

Would the black man, under the same conditions, have fared any better than his brother in yellow or red?

The Rev. Dr. H. B. Frissel of Hampton Institute, Va., says, "When Indian and negro are placed side by side in the school-room and workshop at Hampton, it is very clear that slavery was a much better training school for life alongside of the white man than was the reservation." †

And Dr. Frissel's great predecessor, Gen. Armstrong, another of those noble men of the North who came South to give practical aid in the solution of the race problem, said, "We can see that while slavery was called 'the sum of all villainies,' it became, as it was called by a clever Virginian, 'the greatest missionary enterprise of the century.'" ‡

Senator Vance was simply stating a patent historical fact when he declared, "The negro has made more progress in one hundred years as a Southern slave than in all the five thousand years intervening from his creation until his landing on these shores." §

The highest tribute ever paid to the institution of slavery was the conferring of the laurel wreath of citizenship upon its graduates by the

\* Dr. A. L. Phillips, *Presbyterian Quarterly*, Oct. 1891, p. 537.

† Proceedings of the First Capon Springs Conference for Christian Education in the South, 1898, p. 4.

‡ Ibid.

§ Dowd's *Life of Vance*, p. 253.

government of the United States. The negro came to this country a savage, but was civilized and elevated to such a degree by the training he received in the homes and on the plantations of the South that he was deemed ready, without any further preparation, for the highest civic responsibilities known on earth.

III. The hope for peaceful relations between the two races in the future lies along the line of the adjustment established between the negro and the white man through these years of slavery. If the negro is driven to the wall before the stronger race, it will be because the friendly relations of the past shall be entirely, as they have been partially, disrupted by selfish and malicious demagogues, or by well-meaning but misguided philanthropists.

The kindly feeling that existed between the two races under the institution of slavery has been written in indelible characters, and no amount of misrepresentation, whether prompted by malice or flowing from ignorance, can obliterate the record. That there were instances of cruelty and wrong connected with the relation of master and slave, no one will deny; but that the slaves of the South were as a class kindly treated by their masters is proved by their conduct during the civil war, "wherein the negro was ready to take sides with his alleged oppressor against his self-appointed champion."\*

Senator Vance in a lecture delivered in Boston before a post of the Grand Army of the Republic,—a lecture which was enthusiastically applauded by the brave and magnanimous veterans who heard it,—spoke of this remarkable fact as follows: "Here permit me to call your attention to the conduct of the Southern slaves during the war. You had been taught by press, pulpit and hustings, to believe that they were an oppressed, abused and diabolically treated race; that their groans daily and hourly appealed to heaven, whilst their shackles and their scars testified in the face of all humanity against their treatment. . . . How was this grave impeachment of a whole people sustained, when you went among them to emancipate them from the horrors of their serfdom? When the war began, naturally you expected insurrections, incendiary burnings, murder and outrage, with all the terrible conditions of servile war. There were not wanting fanatical wretches who did their utmost to excite it. Did you find it so? Here is what you found. Within hearing of the guns that were roaring to set them free, with the land stripped of its male population, and none around them except the aged,

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\*Henry Alexander White, "Robert E. Lee and The Southern Confederacy," p. 85.

the women and the children, they not only failed to embrace their opportunity of vengeance, but for the most part they failed to avail themselves of the chance of freedom itself. They remained quietly on our plantations, cultivated our fields, and cared for our mothers, wives and little ones, with a faithful love and a loyal kindness which, in the nature of things, could only be born of sincere good-will. . . . . These facts are significant. That they are complimentary in the highest degree to the black race no one doubts; do they not also say enough for the Southern whites, in regard to their rule as masters, to justify you in thinking better of them than perhaps you have been accustomed to do? According to well known moral laws this kindly loyalty of the one race could not have been begotten by the cruelty and oppression of the other."\*

Concerning the happiness of the Southern slaves Thackeray wrote, after a visit to the United States: "How they sang; how they laughed and grinned; how they scraped, bowed, and complimented you and each other, those negroes of the cities of the Southern part of the then United States! My business kept me in the towns; I was but in one negro plantation village, and there were only women and little children, the men being out a-field. But there was plenty of cheerfulness in the huts, under the great trees—I speak of what I saw—and amidst the dusky bondsmen of the cities. I witnessed a curious gayety; heard amongst the black folk endless singing, shouting and laughter; and saw on holidays black gentlemen and ladies arrayed in such splendor and comfort as freeborn workmen in our towns seldom exhibit." †

Much has been written by New England poets on the horrors of Southern slavery. Here is a picture of the relation of master and slave drawn by the poet of the negro race, Paul Laurence Dunbar:

*Dat Chrismus on de ol' Plantation. †*

It was Chrismus Eve, I mind hit fu' a mighty gloomy day—  
 Befo de weathah an' de people—not a one of us was gay:  
 Cose you'll t'ink dat's mighty funny twell I try to mek hit cleah  
 Fu' a da'ky's allus happy when de holidays is neah.

But we wasn't, fu' dat mo'nin' Mastah'd tol' us we mus' go,  
 He'd been payin' us sence freedom, but he couldn't pay no mo'.  
 He wa'n't nevah used to plannin' 'fo' he got so po' an' ol',  
 So he gwine to give up tryin' an' de homestead must be sol'.

\* Dowd's "Life of Zebulon B. Vance," pp. 449-450.

† Thackeray's "Roundabout Papers—A Mississippi Bubble."

‡ From "The Ladies' Home Journal," December, 1898, through the courtesy of the Publishers.



I kin see him stan'in' now erpon de step ez cleah ez day,  
 Wid de win' a-kin' o' fondlin' thoo his haih all thin an' gray:  
 An' I 'membah how he trimbled when he said, "It's ha'd fu' me,  
 Not to mek yo' Chrismus brightah, but I 'low it wa'n't to be."

All de women was a-cryin' an' de men, too, on de sly,  
 An' I noticed somep'n' shinin' even in ol' Mastah's eye,  
 But we all stood still to listen ez ol' Ben come f'om de crowd  
 An' spoke up a-tryin' to steady down his voice and mek it loud:

"Look hyeah, Mastah, I's been servin' you fu' lo! dese many yeahs,  
 An' now sence we's all got freedom an' you's kind o' po', hit 'pears  
 Dat you want us all to leave you 'cause you don't t'ink you can pay—  
 Ef my membry hasn't fooled me, seem dat what I hyeard you say.

Er in othah wo'ds, you wants us to fu'git dat you's been kin',  
 An' ez soon ez you is he'pless, we's to leave you hyeah behin'.  
 Well, ef dat's de way dis freedom ac's on people, white er black,  
 You kin' jes' tell Mistah Lincum fu' to tek his freedom back.

We gwine wo'k dis ol' plantation fu' whatevah we kin git,  
 Fu' I know hit did suppo't us, an' de place kin do it yit.  
 Now de land is yo's, de hands is ouahs, but I reckon we'll be brave,  
 An' we'll bah ez much ez you do when we have to scrape an' save."

Ol' Mastah stood dah trimblin', but a-smilin', thoo his teahs,  
 An' den hit seemed jes' nachul-like, de place fah rung wid' cheahs,  
 An' soon ez dey was quiet, some one sta'ted sof' an' low:  
 "Praise God," an' den we all jined in, "from whom all blessin's flow!"

Well, dey wasn't no use tryin', ouah min's was sot to stay,  
 An' po' ol' Mastah couldn't plead ner baig, ner drive us 'way,  
 An' all at once, hit seemed to us, de day was bright agin,  
 So evah one was gay dat night an' watched de Chrismus in.

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Many examples might be given of time's failure to impair the bond of affection that waxed strong on the old plantation.

Two instances that have very lately come under the personal observation of the writer are selected. They are like the obverse and reverse of an old coin whose image and superscription remain clear-cut and distinct in spite of the abrasion of years.

The first instance illustrates the very common interest felt by former slave-holders and their families in the welfare of the freedmen

whom they once owned; the second is a rare manifestation of the no less common gratitude and affection abiding in the hearts of ex-slaves for those whom they still call "Massa" and "Missus."

More than thirty-five years after the Emancipation Proclamation this letter was addressed by the daughter of a slave-holder to the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Asheville.

—————, N. C., Dec., 2, '98.

Dear Sir:—May I venture to tax your time and strength to visit a poor sick negro man in Asheville, who once belonged to my father? His mother was our faithful servant, and in his childhood he lived in the family until some years after they were freed. Since then he has led a bad life and now is dying slowly by disease. Perhaps the gospel message might reach his heart now at the eleventh hour and save him at last. I am sure you will rejoice to be the bearer of the precious message to a dying sinner, and may God make it a saving one.

Your sincere friend,

—————

Directions were given for finding the poor man and the message was delivered. He said joyfully that he had been trusting Jesus Christ as his Saviour for several months, that "Miss Sarah" had been very kind in sending him money to buy medicine and food, and he sent her word that he would meet her in heaven.

The reverse picture is vouched for by a Presbyterian elder on whose place the ex-slave spoken of now lives. About 1856 the holder of a small tract of poor land, which was worked by a few slaves, died, leaving a widow and two children. The surrender left this little family with only the very poor and worn-out plantation.

In 1876 the son died, and about the same time the daughter married a worthless man and removed to another state. This left the widow alone with no means of support. One of the negroes formerly owned by the family, seeing the condition of his old mistress, came at once to her relief and began to supply her with food purchased with his own wages.

In 1891 he moved to another part of the State, 225 miles from the old plantation home. But before leaving he told one of the leading merchants of the community to see that his old mistress did not suffer for anything, and to send the bills to him. At first bills for food came, but later he has paid for her clothes, too, and all this without the slightest expectation of getting anything in return. She is now over eighty years of age, and her last days are made bright by the gratitude and affection

of her former slave. The Presbyterian elder who gave me these facts says of him: "He is quite reticent about it, and I learned of it only about a year ago."

No one will contend that slavery is an ideal system. At best it could be only temporary, not final. But as a matter of fact, there has never been in the world an economic system which could compare with Southern slavery in forging bonds of personal affection between capital and labor, grappling the hearts of the two together with hooks of steel.

Any stable superstructure of good-will between the two races under the new conditions in the South must be built upon the foundation laid in the days of slavery, a foundation that has been shaken but not destroyed by the storms that have beat upon it. This is recognized by the wisest leaders of the negro in both races, notably by that great and good colored man, Booker T. Washington.

My friend, Dr. Thomas Lawrence, now President of the Normal and Collegiate Institute of this city, who spent twelve years of his life in educational work for the negro at Biddle University, has said to me repeatedly, that in his opinion all efforts of Northern philanthropists to help the negro will be in vain, unless conserving the friendly relation between the two races and enlisting the approval, sympathy and co-operation of the best white people of the South.

No graver mistake has been made in dealing with the race problem than the ignoring of this first principle by some of the negro's would-be-friends.

It must not be understood from what has been said of the benefits that came to the negro through slavery that the Southern whites regret the passing away of this institution. It put shackles upon Southern industry and retarded the economic development of states richly dowered with material resources.

"For domestic purposes," wrote Thackeray in the paper already quoted, "it seemed to me about the dearest institution that can be devised. In a house in a Southern city, you will find fifteen negroes doing the work which John, the cook, the housemaid, and the help, do perfectly in your own comfortable London house. And these fifteen negroes are the pick of a family of some eighty or ninety. Twenty are too sick, or too old for work, let us say: twenty too clumsy: twenty are too young, and have to be nursed and watched by ten more. And master has to maintain the immense crew to do the work of half a dozen willing hands."

It was a common saying that the greatest slaves in the household and on the plantation were master and mistress.

That the abolition of this double bondage has been a blessing to the white man, no one can doubt, whatever may be the judgment concerning his brother in black. Though clouds and darkness veil the final issue of the new race problem, we may trust that in pursuing "the right, as God gives us to see the right," clouds and darkness will flee before us. It is the path of the just that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

IV. And here emerges a question of grave importance because of its bearing on the future. Has the negro improved since emancipation? To those who have given little heed to the history of the freedmen, it may seem strange that this inquiry should be raised. But there are two sides to the question, and, while one side seems very bright, the other is just as dark.

Let us look at the question from several points of view.\*

1. *The Negro and Education.*

"Here," says Bishop Penick, "is one of the wonders of the time." In 1865 a very small proportion of the negroes of the South could read. "Today not less than twenty-five thousand are professors or teachers in colleges and schools. A vast number of well-read preachers, lawyers, doctors, mail agents and clerks are at work."

There are about one hundred and fifty newspapers edited by black men, all established since 1865.

For the school year 1896-'97 there were 1,460,084 negro children enrolled in the public schools. This enrollment is nearly 52 per cent. of the colored school population as against an enrollment of about 68 per cent. of the white school population. The percentage of illiteracy among the negroes fell from 70 per cent. in 1880 to 56 per cent. in 1890.

According to the estimate of Dr. A. D. Mayo, of Boston, the Southern States have contributed \$85,000,000 for negro education, which large sum has been supplemented by \$25,000,000 from philanthropists of the North and the national government. †

Dr. W. T. Harris, Commissioner of Education, says, "It is believed that since 1870 the Southern States have expended about \$100,000,000 for the education of colored children." ‡

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\* For the statistics that follow, so far as based on the Census of 1890, I am indebted largely to the Rt. Rev. C. Clifton Penick, D. D., of the Protestant Episcopal Church, who has made a thorough study of this question, in the light of that Census, in his "Struggles, Perils and Hopes of the Negroes in the United States."

† First Capon Springs Conference, p. 5.

‡ Report of Commissioner of Education, 1896-97, Vol. 2, p. 2296.

2. *The Negro and the Churches.*

It is well-established, and ought to be well-known, that provision was made in the cities and on most of the plantations of the South for the religious instruction of the slaves, and that large numbers of them were members of the various churches along with the white people. A few examples selected from scores that might be cited will show that white masters were not indifferent to the spiritual welfare of their black slaves.

In 1848 an enterprise was begun for the more thorough-going evangelization of the colored people in Charleston, S. C., under the auspices of the Rev. Dr. J. B. Adger and the session of the Second Presbyterian Church. In 1859 a church building costing twenty-five thousand dollars, contributed by the citizens of Charleston, was dedicated. From the first the great building was filled, the blacks occupying the main floor, and the whites the galleries, which seated two hundred and fifty persons. The Rev. Dr. J. L. Girardeau, one of the greatest preachers in the South, was for years the pastor of this church. The close of the war found it with exactly five hundred colored members, and nearly one hundred white.

A minister in Natchez wrote to Dr. Charles Colcock Jones in the '30's: "I have committed to me the instruction of the negroes on five plantations, in all about three hundred, the owners of whom are professors of religion. I usually preach three times on the Sabbath, and after each sermon I spend a short time catechising. I have occasional meetings for inquiry."

Another wrote from the Savannah river: "I visit eighteen plantations every two weeks: catechise the children, and pray with the sick in the week. Preach twice or thrice on the Sabbath. The owners have built three good churches at their own expense, all framed; 290 members have been added, and about 400 children are instructed each week."\*

Stonewall Jackson took the deepest interest in the religious welfare of the slaves, and his colored Sunday school at Lexington, Va., has become famous.

"A day or two after the battle of Manassas, and before the news of the victory had reached Lexington in authentic form, the postoffice was thronged with people, awaiting with intense interest the opening of the mail. Soon a letter was handed to the Rev. Dr. White, who immediately

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\* Dr. R. Q. Mallard's "Plantation Life before Emancipation," pp. 148-149, 156-157. Those who desire to study plantation life as it really was should read this book, published by Whittet and Shepperson, Richmond, Va.; and also "The Memorials of a Southern Planter," by Mrs. Smedes; Cushing & Co., Baltimore.

recognized the well-known superscription of his deacon soldier, and exclaimed to the eager and expectant group around him: 'Now we shall know all the facts.' Upon opening it the bulletin read thus: 'My Dear Pastor,—In my tent last night, after a fatiguing day's service, I remembered that I had failed to send you my contribution for our colored Sunday school. Enclosed you will find my check for that object, which please acknowledge at your earliest convenience, and oblige yours faithfully,

T. J. Jackson.' ”\*

These are not exceptional instances. They might be multiplied indefinitely. The Rev. T. C. Thornton, late President of the Centenary College, Clinton, Mississippi, who traveled extensively through the South, wrote in 1841, "In some places they (the negroes) have large, spacious churches for themselves, as in Baltimore, Alexandria, Charleston; in others they have seats appropriated for them on the lower floor, or a portion or the whole of the galleries of the churches. We do not know in any slave-holding State in the Union, a neighborhood, where a church has been built for any of the orthodox Protestant denominations, in which a portion thereof was not set apart for the colored people, unless they have a church of their own, or other provision in some church in the vicinity." Mr. Thornton estimates that there were at that time at least 500,000 church members among the slaves, or about one-fifth of the negro population, and that 2,000,000 were regular church attendants. †

It was about this date that the Hon. William Jay, of New York, charged the people of the South with "having compelled 2,245,144 slaves to live without God and die without hope among a people professing to reverence the obligations of Christianity." ‡

On the other hand, the Hon. Henry A. Wise declared in a speech before the Colonization Society of Virginia, of which President Tyler was the chief officer, "Africa gave to Virginia a savage and a slave—Virginia gives back to Africa a citizen and a Christian!" §

These facts have been given because the religious history of the negroes since the war cannot be understood apart from them.

"It was fortunate for the negro," says Dr. H. K. Carroll, of the United States census staff, "that while he was the slave of the white

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\* Mrs. Mary A. Jackson, "Memoirs of Stonewall Jackson," pp. 181-2.

† Rev. T. C. Thornton, "An Inquiry into the History of Slavery, etc.," pp. 110-111.

‡ Ibid., p. 98.

§ Ibid., p. 277.

master, that master was a Christian and instructed him in the Christian faith." \*

Emancipation loosed the tie that bound the negro to his master's church, and he straightway became a church-builder on his own account. In the twenty-five years from 1865 to 1890 the negroes built 19,753 churches, with a seating capacity of 5,818,459, at a cost of \$20,323,887. While a large part of this has been contributed by white neighbors, the negroes have shown commendable liberality and self-denial in this work, sometimes mortgaging their little homes in order to build their churches.

Dr. H. K. Carroll, compiler of the religious census, put the number of communicants in 1890 at 2,610,525 out of a total population of 7,470,000, or nearly one in three.

### 3. *The Negro's Material Prosperity.*

Beginning with nothing in 1865, this race has accumulated property whose assessed value is \$260,000,000. Many of them own their homes, some are land-holders, and the more thrifty and industrious live in neatness and comfort.

There is much that is encouraging and hopeful in these statistics, and they would seem to indicate that the negro's condition has wonderfully improved. But, unfortunately, there is another side to the question, the facts of which look dark for the future of the race. These facts may be grouped under two heads.

#### 1. *Vital Statistics.*

From 1870 to 1880 the negro population increased nearly 36 per cent.; from 1880 to 1890 the increase was only a little over 13 per cent. This is about one-half the rate of increase among the whites.

"For the year 1895, when 82 white deaths from consumption occurred in the city of Nashville, there ought to have been only 49 colored, whereas there really were 218, or nearly four and one-half times as many as there ought to have been. It is an occasion of serious alarm when 37 per cent. of the whole people are responsible for 72 per cent. of the deaths from consumption. Deaths among colored people from pulmonary diseases seem to be on the increase throughout the South. During the period 1882-1885, the excess of colored deaths (over white) for the city of Memphis was 90.80 per cent. For the period of 1891-1895, the excess had risen to over 137 per cent. For the period 1886-1890, the excess of colored deaths from consumption and pneumonia for the city of Atlanta was 139 per cent. For the period 1891-1895, it had risen to nearly 166 per cent. . . . Before the (civil) war this dread disease was virtually unknown among the slaves. According to

\* "The Religious Forces of the United States," pp, liv, lv.

Hoffman, deaths from consumption have fallen off 134 in 100,000 among the whites and increased 234 in 100,000 among the blacks since the war."\*

When we remember that tubercular and scrofulous diseases are the natural agents that have swept away the weaker races before the onward march of Anglo-Saxon civilization, it would seem that unless the progress of these diseases among the negroes is checked, that race is destined to gradual extinction.

2. Closely associated with these "vital statistics," and underlying them, is the question of IMMORALITY AND CRIME. And this is the saddest part of the picture.

Prof. Eugene Harris says in the report already quoted: "The constitutional diseases which are responsible for our unusual mortality are often traceable to enfeebled constitutions, broken down by sexual immoralities. According to Hoffman, over 25 per cent. of the negro children born in Washington City are admittedly illegitimate. According to a writer quoted in *Black America*, in one county in Mississippi, there were during twelve months 300 marriage licenses taken out in the county clerk's office for white people. According to the proportion of the population there should have been in the same time 1,200 or more for negroes. There were actually taken out by colored people just three. . . . A few years ago I said in a sermon at Fisk University, that wherever the Anglo-Saxon comes in contact with an inferior race the inferior race invariably goes to the wall. I called attention to the fact that, in spite of humanitarian and philanthropic efforts, the printing press, the steam engine, and the electric motor in the hands of the Anglo-Saxon were exterminating the inferior races more rapidly and more surely than shot and shell and bayonet. I mentioned a number of races that have perished, not because of destructive wars and pestilence, but because they were unable to live in the environment of a nineteenth century civilization; races whose destruction was not due to a persecution that came to them from without, but to a lack of moral stamina within; races that perished in spite of the humanitarian and philanthropic efforts that were put forth to save them."

If the cause of the excessive death rate among the negroes be moral rather than sanitary, then, as Prof. Harris says, this fact ought to appear not only in the vital, but in the criminal statistics as well. And there it is found in most appalling figures. Three-fourths of the crimes in the South are committed by negroes. The negroes, constituting about 11

\* Prof. Eugene Harris, Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., "Report on the Social and Physical Condition of Negroes in Cities," in Report of Commissioner of Education, 1896-97, Vol. 2, p. 2310.



per cent. of the entire population of the nation, furnish 37 per cent. of all its homicides, and 66 per cent. of its female homicides. The statistics seem to indicate that the full harvest is yet to come, for the rising generation far outstrips in crime the generation that is passing off the stage. Of homicides from 50 to 60 years of age, the negroes furnish about one-fifth, which is not quite twice their share in proportion to population; from 30 to 40, they furnish about one-third; from 20 to 30 nearly one-half; and of homicides under 20 years of age two-thirds are negroes, that is, six times their share in proportion to population.

That this disparity is not due to any prejudice against the negro in the courts of the South is shown by the fact that in the State of Pennsylvania, where the negroes form only 2 per cent. of the population, they furnish 16 per cent. of the male prisoners and 34 per cent. of the female; and in Chicago, which some colored people call the "Negroes' Heaven," while they form only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the population, they furnish ten per cent. of the arrests.\*

In order to avoid every appearance of prejudice or unfairness that might be supposed to color a white man's portrayal, I have presented the dark side of the picture as painted chiefly by a prominent negro educator who is giving his life to the amelioration of his people. One of the most hopeful auguries for the race is to be found in the clear-sightedness, candor and moral earnestness of Prof. Harris and his compeers.

V. And now, we come to the serious question, Wherein lie the causes of this appalling increase in immorality and crime?

The main causes are three:

1. The sudden and violent removal of the restraints put upon the negro by slavery and his elevation to a position for which he was not prepared. The *New York Voice*, which will not be suspected of a bias toward the institution of slavery, said in a recent editorial: "It has been the subject of frequent remark in the last thirty years that these same negroes showed themselves remarkably free from any disposition to commit either murder or rape prior to the civil war and during the civil war when they were left as almost the sole guardians of the women of the Southland. Where were these primitive instincts then? They were latent, we are told. Why are they not latent now? The question is a formidable one. Doubtless the conditions of freedom, the removal of habitual restraint, the sense of unaccustomed liberty, has had something to do with it."

In slavery the negro was kept under the influence, largely, of the best people of the South. The firm hand of the good master and the

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\* Prof. Eugene Harris in "Report of Commissioner of Education." 1896-97, Vol. 2, p. 2312.

gentle ministry of the kind mistress, and the care of little children, made him tender, loyal and affectionate. Since emancipation, "while the good of the land have left him largely alone, the workers of sin have been active to a remarkable degree; the vicious of both races have met and mingled and ripened into criminality, until the land cries aloud." \*

The negro was plunged into an environment for which he was not prepared; he was not ready for sudden emancipation, much less for citizenship. The bestowment of the franchise alienated him from those who were his life-long and natural friends, and betrayed him into the hands of those who have proved to be his worst enemies. This is now clearly seen and strongly expressed by some of the wisest leaders of the race.

The Rev. James L. White, a colored minister of North Carolina, in an address delivered before a large audience of colored people in Washington City a few weeks ago, said, as reported in the Washington Post: "Colored men have been marshaled for over thirty years to fight against the interests of the South. This political war in the South will continue as long as the colored men are led by these third-class men. These men have misled the colored people ever since the civil war."

Prof. Booker T. Washington in an address recently delivered in the Old South Church, Boston, said in part: "It was unfortunate that, with few exceptions, those of the white race, from the North, who got the political control of the South in the beginning of our freedom were not men of such high and unselfish natures as to lead them to do something that fundamentally and permanently would help the negro, rather than yield to the temptation to use the negro as a means to lift themselves into political power and eminence. This mistake had the effect of making the negro and the Southern white man political enemies.

It was unfortunate that the negro got the idea that every Southern white man was opposed by nature to his highest interest and advancement, and that he could only find a friend in the white man who was removed from him by a distance of thousands of miles." †

The very statesmen of the South who deprecated most earnestly the existence and continuance of slavery saw most clearly the dangers of sudden emancipation.

"Much as I deplore slavery," said Patrick Henry, "I see that prudence forbids its abolition." Chief Justice Marshall declared that abolition would not remove the evils caused by the negro's presence.

Jefferson dreaded the effects of immediate emancipation, and leaned towards colonization as a remedy, with grave doubts of its practicability.

\* Rt. Rev. C. Clifton Penick, D. D., "The Struggles, Perils and Hopes of the Negro in the United States," p. 17.

† "Boston Transcript," January 9, 1899.

Henry Clay declared, "The evils of slavery are absolutely nothing in comparison with the far greater evils which would inevitably follow, from a sudden, general and indiscriminate emancipation." \*

The sentiment in favor of gradual emancipation was beginning to take hold in the South, "when the counter movement of forcible and immediate abolition by the general government was initiated." †

The circulation of incendiary publications intended to instigate the slaves to insurrection put the South on the defensive, and the instinct of self-preservation estopped all plans for the education of the negro with a view to preparing him for freedom.

Our Northern friends who take it for granted that we have safely passed the dangers predicted by the statesmen of a hundred years ago, will do well to ponder recent words of thoughtful men of the North on the race question of today. Theodore Roosevelt writes, in his *Life of Benton*: "It was perfectly possible and reasonable for enlightened and virtuous men, who fully recognized slavery as an evil, yet to prefer its continuance to having it interfered with in a way that would produce even worse results. Black slavery in Hayti was characterized by worse abuse than ever was the case in the United States; yet looking at the condition of that republic now, it may well be questioned whether it would not have been greatly to her benefit in the end to have had slavery continue a century or so longer."

G. T. Curtis, in the *Life of Buchanan*, declares. "Emancipation without any training for freedom could not be a blessing. . . . The Christianity and the philanthropy of this age have before them a task that is far more serious, more weighty and more difficult than it would have been, if the emancipation had been a regulated process, even if its final consummation had been postponed for generations."

These sentiments of Northern men sound like an echo of those expressed by Gen. Robt. E. Lee, in 1856: "There are few, I believe, in this enlightened age, who will not acknowledge that slavery as an institution is a moral and political evil in any country. It is useless to expatiate on its disadvantages. I think it a greater evil to the white than to the black race. While my feelings are strongly enlisted in behalf of the latter, my sympathies are more strong for the former. The blacks are immeasurably better off here than in Africa, morally, physically and socially. The painful discipline they are undergoing is necessary for their further instruction as a race, and I hope will prepare them for better things. How long their servitude may be necessary is known and

\* White's "Lee and the Southern Confederacy," p. 66.

† Rev. H. M. White, D. D., "W. S. White and His Times," chap. 13; Stephen B. Weeks, "Anti-Slavery Sentiment in the South," publications of the Southern History Association, Washington, D. C., April, 1898.

ordered by a merciful Providence. Their emancipation will sooner result from the mild and melting influences of Christianity than from the storms and tempests of fiery controversy. This influence, though slow, is sure. . . . While we see the course of the final abolition of human slavery is still onward, and give it the aid of our prayers, and all justifiable means in our power, we must leave the progress as well as the result in His hands who sees the end; who chooses to work by slow influences; with whom a thousand years are but as a single day." \*

Of course no one deems it either possible or desirable to re-instate the institution of slavery. We must face the situation as it is. One of the greatest dangers threatening the South today is, that burdened with the evils that have grown out of sudden and violent abolition, she may resort more and more to sudden and violent means of relieving herself of these burdens. The shot-gun policy is far from being an ideal one among a civilized people, and political legerdemain is even worse. Any limitation that may be put on the suffrage should not discriminate against the negro as such, but should apply to white and black alike. Let us beware of the boomerang of injustice.

2. The second cause of increased crime among the negroes is the all too common resort to lynching instead of to law, as a corrective of crime.

Within the past fifteen years nearly 2,500 persons have been lynched in the United States. According to a record kept by the Chicago Tribune there were, for the years 1886 to 1895, 1,655 lynchings as against 1,040 legal executions. †

We need not be surprised to find that crime has progressed with rapid strides under the lash of lawlessness. In 1886 there were 1,449 murders committed in the United States; in 1895, by an alarming yearly increase, the record had grown to 7,900.

A large proportion of the lynchings are perpetrated in the South. In the year 1889 there were 117 lynchings in the United States, of which 94, or about 80 per cent. of the whole number, were in the South. Some one may say that this is due to the presence of the negroes among us, and that under the same conditions lynchings would be just as prevalent at the North. This may be true, and if we were answerable only to Northern newspapers, the reply might suffice. But it will not satisfy a healthy conscience. Much less will it adequately meet God's awful question, "Where is thy brother?" Verily, our brother's blood crieth against us from the ground.

The prevalence of the terrible crime against womanhood does not

\* White's "Lee and the Southern Confederacy," pp. 50, 51, 77.

† "Encyclopedia of Social Reform," p. 694.

excuse us. Unless we can find a way to deal with this exasperating evil by process of law rather than by the fury of the mob, we shall be overwhelmed by the lawlessness that lawlessness begets. "Lynch law as an epidemic will never be suppressed," says Dr. E. L. Pell, "by ignoring the conditions which keep the atmosphere infected with the germs of the lynching fever. Briefly stated these conditions are: 1. The prevalence of crime among the blacks, and 2. The prevalence of race prejudice among the whites. A serious difficulty which has confronted the student of the problem from the beginning is the popular disposition to ignore one or the other of these conditions. For a long while the friends of the negro at the North saw nothing to account for the infected state of the atmosphere but race prejudice, while the average Southerner could see nothing but negro crime."

As to the proper attitude of North and South respectively to this question, Dr. Pell makes a most valuable suggestion. He recommends that the two sections exchange texts. That Northern preaching, which is most influential with the negro, should be directed against negro crime, and that Southern preaching, which is most influential with the white people of this section, should be directed against lawlessness and race prejudice. \*

The trouble has been that the thrusts of North and South have been against each other rather than against lynching and the crime that provokes it. The result has been an endless logomachy that has only aggravated these evils.

3. The third, and chief, cause of the demoralization of the negroes has been the comparative indifference of the white Christians of the South to the religious interests of these people since the civil war.

Under the regime of slavery, as we have seen, a great deal was done by the Southern whites for the evangelization of the negroes. Whilst no one will claim that all was done that might have been done, yet, admitting all shortcomings, it remains true that the history of the world furnishes no parallel case of so rapid an uplifting of a race from the lowest fetichism to Christian worship. Slavery, with all its drawbacks, was as Gen. Armstrong says, "the greatest missionary enterprise of the century."

Now, if the Southern whites had, after the war, not only continued but redoubled their direct efforts for the religious advancement of the negro, there would have been a very different state of affairs in the South today. But, unfortunately, since 1865 the mass of the white Christians of the South have taken no serious interest in the evangelization of the negroes. This indifference may be explained in part, but it

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\* "The American Review of Reviews," March, 1898.

can never be justified. When the negro and the Southern white man parted company politically, they also parted company ecclesiastically. When, as Booker Washington says, the negro got the idea that "every Southern white man was opposed by nature to his highest interests and advancement," it was inevitable that this should make it extremely difficult for the Southern white man to reach him with religious instruction. The negro, taught to believe that the whites of the South knew nothing of politics, drew the inference that they knew even less of religion. But the presence of a difficulty can never absolve from a duty. And it was the duty of the white Christians of the South to put forth more persistent efforts to help the negro religiously. We might not have been able to do all that was desirable, but this does not excuse us for doing little or nothing.

As to the Southern Presbyterian Church it is not too much to say that, except for sporadic efforts here and there, it has practically settled down to a policy of inactivity, if not of indifference, towards what in the minutes of our ecclesiastical courts we are pleased to call "Colored Evangelization."

In their report to the General Assembly of 1898, the Executive Committee of Colored Evangelization have this to say of the difficulties met with: "Many of the obstacles that confront us are, perhaps, inherent in this particular work. But by far the most serious difficulty is the indifference of our people."

Rev. O. B. Wilson, who was appointed by the Assembly of 1897 to visit the churches in order to raise \$10,000 for Stillman Institute, says in his report to the Assembly of 1898: "The task was not an enviable one, neither easy nor pleasant. It was encompassed with difficulties. The cause itself is unpopular; the times were stated to be 'very unsuitable for raising money'; the 'other calls were numerous,' etc. But a conviction of the crying needs of the work—a conviction that came from actual contact with it—converted the difficulties into a stimulus. I was deeply convinced that the very lethargy prevailing was a reason of unanswerable force demonstrating the need of vigorous work. . . . While I found much prejudice against the work in the minds of very many people, and a great indifference toward it, yet it was also noticeably true that in nearly every congregation there seemed to be a few persons, earnest souls, who took more than a mere passing interest in the subject, as if they had already felt that this part of our work was greatly neglected, and they stood ready to assist in it. Unless our professed belief in the value of souls is empty talk, how can it be otherwise?"

It will appear from all that has been said that the race problem in the South is, perhaps, the most difficult problem that God in His provi-

dence ever submitted to any people for solution. There is, after all, but one satisfactory solution to be found, the preaching to white and to black of the everlasting gospel, which is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Dr. A. L. Phillips quotes a distinguished divine as saying, "Unless the gospel solve this matter, then it will be bang! bang!" \*

VI. This paper will conclude with some reasons why the church, and especially the Southern Presbyterian branch of the church, should cast off indifference and gird herself for this work.

1. The welfare of our own posterity is at stake. Our children and the children of our negro neighbors are to live side by side. Unless the white man elevates the negro, the negro will inevitably degrade the white man. Can our children live in contact with a race which, as has been shown, is making fearful strides in immorality and crime, and not be affected for the worse thereby?

It is said that Sir Robert Peel's daughter died of typhus fever of the most malignant type, and when inquiry was made as to how she had caught the infection, it was discovered that it was through a beautiful riding habit presented to her by her father. This riding habit, bought from a London tradesman, had been made in a miserable attic, where the husband of the seamstress was lying ill of fever, and it had been used by her to cover him in his shivering fits. The highest are not proof against infection that originates among the lowest.

Unless we meet this moral leprosy with Christ's word of power, "Be thou clean," it will pollute and destroy both races alike!

It is also to the interest of the coming generations that the South should be the negro's chief almoner. While we have no right to complain if others do what we leave undone, and while we are gratefully to welcome aid from without, the South cannot afford to relegate the evangelization of the negroes to others. What Gov. Vance said of the state and secular education applies equally to the church and religious instruction: "I regard it as an unmistakable policy to imbue these black people with a thorough North Carolina feeling, and make them cease to look abroad for the aids to their progress and civilization, and the protection of their rights, as they have been taught to do, and teach them to look to their own state instead; to teach them that their welfare is indissolubly linked with ours." †

2. The Presbyterian church can do more than any other for the negro. In saying this, there is no intention to disparage the work done by other denominations. It is only claiming for the Presbyterian

\* "Presbyterian Quarterly," October, 1891, p. 539.

† "Message to the General Assembly of N. C.," 1877.

church what each denomination claims for itself without breach of true charity.

The Presbyterian church believes that it is peculiarly fitted to give the negro what he needs. The negro is, on the one hand, extravagantly emotional, and, on the other hand, extravagantly fond of uniform, whether military or ecclesiastical. The first of these characteristics has given the churches that emphasize emotionalism a strong hold on him in the past, and the second will give the churches that emphasize ritualism a firmer and firmer hold on him in the future, as his love of the showy blossoms into estheticism. These same characteristics will cause the work of the Presbyterian church for the negro to be slow; that is, if we are to give him what he needs rather than what he wants. His needs are, in our judgment, a soundly educated ministry, sober instruction, simple and quiet rather than ritualistic or emotional modes of worship, a simple and orderly system of church government and discipline, and a "home life in which the children will be carefully trained and instructed in the word of God and in the faith of the church."\*

3. The work of the Southern Presbyterian church for the negro has reached the gravest crisis in its history. The few, feeble, and widely scattered negro churches, heretofore in organic union with the white churches, have been organized into an Independent African Presbyterian church. The charge has been brought against us that we have taken this action because of race prejudice, and with the purpose to rid ourselves of the burden of colored evangelization.

Those who bring the charge ignore the fact that it was at the request of the colored ministers and elders in convention assembled that this step was taken. †

Our critics, too, wherever they are brought into ecclesiastical proximity to the negroes, manifest the very race prejudice they charge against us.

These facts may serve as missiles to hurl at those who censure us; but they will not relieve us of odium in the sight of God and man, if we allow the new-born African Presbyterian church to perish for lack of sympathy and support. We shall be "made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men."

4. The Southern Presbyterian church should enter with fresh faith and enthusiasm into this work, because of the wide door that has been opened to us in Africa. The story of our Mission on the Congo may be classed among the wonders of modern missionary annals.

Our Secretary of Foreign Missions has said that if the work of col-

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\* Rev. D. Clay Lilly.

† Dr. A. L. Phillips, "The Independent," Feb. 24, 1898.



ored evangelization had done nothing more than to raise up the colored missionaries now in the African field, the church would still be repaid a hundred-fold for all the money she has expended for the blacks. How are we to enlarge the work in Africa so signally blessed with God's favor except by enlarging the work for the negroes at home? And how absurdly inconsistent to send missionaries to Africa while we neglect the Africans at our doors!

5. This is a singularly opportune time to enlist the intelligent interest of the Christian people of every section of the Union in the race problem.

Events that have occurred in Ohio within the past two or three years, and more recent events in Illinois are calling attention to the race question as a national problem, whose difficulties develop wherever the two races are brought together, especially where there has been no prior period of gradual adjustment as in the South. What would be the result if half a million negroes could be suddenly injected into the population of one of these states?

The annexation of Hawaii and the proposed policy of expansion have brought the whole American people with startling suddenness face to face with a new race problem.

The Spanish-American war has done much to heal the breach made by the war between the states. When we see the grandson of General U. S. Grant serving on the staff of General Fitzhugh Lee, it looks as if North and South had indeed clasped hands.

We may expect from henceforth, with the blessing of God, a better understanding and a closer sympathy between the people of the two sections in regard to the race problem.

Much has been said of late years about the "New South," but out of the mists of ignorance and prejudice concerning the race problem, "there is emerging a New North." \*

The New North and the New South, recognizing the common responsibility of the two sections for the existence of the race problem, and approaching this problem with mutual understanding and sympathy and an earnest desire for the best interests of white and black alike, can do more in five years towards a satisfactory settlement of the race question, than has been accomplished in thirty-five years of mistrust and contention.

Let the prayers of Christians, white and black, from one end of this land to the other, rise to God for wisdom and grace to solve this problem according to His righteous will!

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\* "The North Carolina Presbyterian."

