

WHITED SEPULCHRE

The American Church Morally
Dead When It Comes to
Race Problem.

THE PRESBYTERIAN FALL

Ministers Sacrifice to Southern
Prejudice 20,000 Black Com-
municants—Rebuked by Dr.
Grimke, Justice Harlan and
President Gordon—Maryland
Ministers Oppose Disfranchise-
ment—Mrs. Terrell's Address.

Staff Correspondence of THE AGE.

WASHINGTON, April 17.—The American Church in dealing with the Afro-American does not know and never has known what real Christianity is. Before the war and the destruction of slavery, the Abolitionists indicted it as the bulwark of human slavery. The indictment was tried and impartial history has returned a verdict of guilty against the Church.

It was the bulwark of chattel slavery. It is to-day the bulwark of race prejudice, the forerunner of caste feelings and distinctions in the United States. Were it to do its duty to-day, to live up for a single year to the principles of Jesus, to the Golden Rule and His Sermon on the Mount, there would be at the end of that time no more race question, no more Negro problem to vex the country in general and the Afro-American people in particular. The Church of Christ, were it actuated by the spirit of the Master, could bring peace on earth, could make the white man's lion and the black man's lamb lie down together in all parts of the country, and the child Jesus would lead them to human fellowship, to Christian brotherhood in this Republic, which is now torn and tormented by the devils of race prejudice and race oppression.

These devils are in possession of the pews. They are also in possession of the pulpits of the land. They are the makers of public sentiment against the Afro-American, North and South, East and West alike. Nowhere in this Church is the Afro-American wanted. Everywhere he is openly contemned and rejected. Let a colored face enter one of its houses of worship on the Lord's day, and see what will happen. The cold stare, the contemptuous treatment which meet him on the threshold strike him in the face like sleet, and drive him bruised in spirit and bleeding with pain from its doors. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gathers his lambs into his bosom. Not so the American Church if the lambs happen to be black. The American Church draws the color line everywhere, not between the goats and the sheep, but between the sheep themselves. Alas, poor lambs, if they are black! The rest of the flock attack them, driving them from the still waters and the green pastures, and the men who are supposed to be the shepherds join in the attack and beat off with their crooks the poor, worried lambs because they happen to be of a different color from the rest of the flock.

And this is American Christianity, or rather American Churchianity, for Christianity it surely is not, judged by the standard which Jesus set up when He was on earth. For He was the friend of Publicans and sinners, of Jews and Gentiles. Before Him the despised Samaritan was the equal of the proudest descendant of the House of David, and His divine scheme of salvation embraced the whole human family on equal footing, whether rich or poor, high or low, learned or ignorant, white or black. They were then all one in Christ Jesus. This is emphatically not so to-day in the American Church, which divides mankind into believers, unbelievers and Negroes. Indeed, were Jesus to come into America in this year of grace with a dark skin, with a trace of Negro blood in his veins, the Church would reject him, slam all of its doors in his face. This corrosive acid of race prejudice, of color distinction, has eaten deep into the body of the American Church. It has bitten through all denominational differences and tissues into the false soul of all sects of so-called believers. Not even the Salvation Army people have escaped the envenomed teeth of colorphobia.

Some time ago a physician in this city was in attendance upon a poor patient when a member of the Salvation Army entered. This woman, with more zeal than discretion, proceeded to question the physician. "Do you know Jesus?" To which he promptly replied "Yes." "What do you know about him?" was the next searching question of the Salvation inquisitor. And the physician answered: "I know him to be a very fine colored gentleman!" Whereupon the inquisitor exclaimed: "Blasphemy, blasphemy!" The physician, who is a wit, then turned inquisitor. "What is blasphemy," he asked, "is it that I said that Jesus was a gentleman?" "No," answered the excited Salvation agent, "but you said that he was a colored gentleman." Comment is needless. American color-prejudice, not genuine Christianity, spoke through that woman and revealed as in a flash her foolish and unchristian contempt of some men because of their race and color.

A short while ago the Christianity of the interdenominational clergy of Washington was put to the test on this question and proved wanting. They were too full of race prejudice to have Afro-American members of the clergy meet with them in conference to consider the subject of moral and religious instruction in the public schools, although these same Afro-American ministers represented a third of the school population of the capital. During the past week the Presbyterian Church has been put to a similar test, in the Presbytery of Washington, and it, too, failed to make good. It fell down before this idol of the Nation, American color-prejudice, and showed in the fall the horns, the cloven feet, and even the caudal appendage of its real lord and master. Not even this last and sorry proof of its obsession could be tucked out of sight under its long sanctimonious garments of pretence and insincerity. Below the longest robe of deceitful words and hollow professions showed the tail of the serpent of colorphobia, whose trail, alas! was upon all. No, not upon all, as shall presently appear.

The overture for separate Presbyteries for white and Afro-American churches, and the overture for union with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church with the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America came up for action on April 11 before the Presbytery of Washington. And the Presbytery of Washington has put itself on record in favor of both overtures by an overwhelming majority. The Afro-American has been turned down and shot out on account of his race and color by a body of men professing to be believers in the religion of Him in Whom there is neither Jew, Greek, nor Gentile, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised. But the infamy was not consummated before Jesus appeared in the midst of that recreant body of professed followers, and spoke to them memorable words of rebuke from the mouths of His anointed servants in that assembly. It was something to witness and to remember, too, the countenances of that gathering of Presbyterian ministers and elders when the Savoricola-like figure and face of the veteran pastor of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church rose in the pulpit of the Westminster Church, and poured forth on his brethren the hot torrent of his Christian protest and denunciation. For nearly an hour the Divine Master fulminated from this good man's lips. The righteous wrath of the preacher burnt through the spiritual bubble of the Presbytery, through its meanness, its narrowness, its base betrayal

of the Master, touched with tongue of flame the conscience of that body and for one fleeting moment quickened it with life. Dr. Grimke spoke long and earnestly, and said:

It may not be popular, but we must stand up for principle, and there is no option left to us as Christians. Christ was not ashamed to eat with publicans and sinners, and He drew no distinction among men on account of their color. Christ died for all races.

Who are we, that we should say to any race, "Be ye separate; stand off by yourselves." It would be a change in our form of government. The success of the work in our church has been because the colored men have not been segregated. It is not the spirit of Christ to humiliate a race and ignore their manhood. The great progress among the colored people in the South has been owing to the aid given by the Board for Work Among the Freedmen, while in the North there is no help from any church board. This complexion of Presbyteries has nothing whatever to do with the growth of Pre-byterianism among either white or black; it depends on the amount of push and energy put into the work.

The Presbyterian General Assembly worked itself up into a frenzy against exhibiting the Liberty Bell on the Sabbath but it was willing to set up the color line. Verily, this is tithing mint and anise and cummin and omitting the weightier matters of the law. Our duty is to face the issue squarely, and we must hold up the standard Christ set up or sever our connection with Him. It would be positively wrong to set up separate Presbyteries within the same bounds. It is simply a movement to cater to Southern sentiment, which holds that the white man disgraces himself by any sort of affiliation with the black man. Up until even the present time, white men and women who go South to work among the colored men are ostracised. An eminent Englishman recently said, "I have worked hard for thirty years among colored people, and there are not to-day five white men in the city of Atlanta who would invite me into their houses."

It is a base surrender to such sentiment as that for the great Presbyterian Church to adopt such an overture as that proposed.

I sometimes wonder how God can sit still and see such things going on in the Presbyterian Church; it must be an abomination unto God. It would be shameful to approve union with the Cumberland Presbyterians, thus diluting Calvinism and sacrificing twenty or thirty thousand faithful old members of the colored race.

Dr. Grimke's address extorted applause from his audience, and his last burning words were still ringing in the church when several men were on their feet, seeking to gain the floor, and among them, towering tall above the tallest, stood the venerable form of the famous Supreme Court Judge and grand old friend of the Afro-Americans, Mr. Justice Harlan. After saying that he considered it a privilege to have heard Dr. Grimke's address, Judge Harlan proceeded to put himself on record against the principle involved in the overture, saying that he was against separate Presbyteries for whites and blacks even if the whites and the blacks were to agree mutually to have them. For Christianity has nothing to do with race, but only with men. "Let us," he concluded in weighty words, "stand in the way of the fathers, and say to the world that as far as our church is concerned, we are race blind and color blind." And again for a fleeting moment the worldly heart of the Presbytery burst into fitful flame in the long continued applause which followed those noble words.

The address of Dr. John Gordon, president of Howard University, was hardly less satisfactory. For he opposed the overture on high grounds. He had found that the color line, whether on railroads or in the church, which shuts one race out shuts the other race out also. As an American citizen he considered that "Jim Crow" laws infringed his personal liberty as well as that of the colored race, and he foresaw that "Jim Crow" Presbyteries would do the same, that is, encroach upon his own personal liberty as a Presbyterian minister. "I will be forever opposed to the organization of any Presbytery in which I could not become a member, where the door could be shut in my face," he declared firmly and boldly. Dr. Gordon deserves all the greater credit for his independent and Christian stand in the Presbytery, since his his brother-in-law, Rev. Dr. Tennis S. Hamlin, president of the Board of Trustees of Howard University, was one of the leaders in the General Assembly last May for union with the Cumberland Church at the expense of the Afro-American, and was of course one of the leaders in favor of the overtures in the Washington Presbytery last week.

The overture for "Jim Crow" Presbyteries was finally adopted by a vote of 41 to 23. The Washington Presbytery has thus put itself on record in favor of this ecclesiastical infamy. And the great Presbyterian Church of the United States of America is about to put itself also on record in favor likewise of the infamy. For the sake of union with the Cumberland Church it has consented to humiliate 20,000 of its Afro-American members, to part with its noble heritage of Christian brotherhood and equality for a mess of Southern pottage, to betray its Lord and Master for less than thirty pieces of silver, to deliver him again, in the persons of his little ones, to the agonies of another Gethsemane and the tortures of another cross. It has committed this great crime against Christianity, against humanity, in deference to race prejudice, in order to square itself with American caste feelings, founded not upon character but upon color only.

Whittier's awful lament over Webster in that terrible poem called "Ichabod" may to-day issue from the lips of the 20,000 colored members over the fall of their church:

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once she wore!
The glory from her gray hairs gone
For evermore!

Then, pay the reverence of old days
To her dead fame;
Walk backward with averted gaze,
And hide her shame!

We are glad to note, among so much that is discouraging and unchristian about the American Church on the race question, the action of the Baltimore M. E. Conference which met in this city, relative to the proposed constitutional amendment by Maryland looking to the disfranchisement of its Afro-American citizens. The conference placed itself on record by an emphatic resolution and a no less emphatic vote against the iniquitous scheme of Gorman and Company. Faithful among the faithless it is found in America to-day.

At the opening meeting of the National Council of Women of the United States, Mrs. Mary Church Terrell made an excellent address on "Citizenship From a Woman's Point of View." She said among other good things:

The colored women of the country are doing as much to promote good citizenship as their more fortunate white sisters. This is interpreted by them to mean an intelligent and tender care for their children and a conscientious and careful consideration of every question which concerns the welfare of the race. They feel a great apprehension for the future of their youth, whom unjust discriminations in the field of labor may send to the poorhouse or to the jail. For that reason we feel it our duty to preach the dignity of labor in season and out, and we are urging our youth to make themselves proficient in the various trades.

We are asking our sisters of the dominant race to aid us and to show that they are good citizens by throwing their influence on the side of justice and right. We are asking them to teach the white children of to-day that when they grow up to be men and women, if they deliberately prevent their brothers and sisters of a darker hue from earning an honest living by closing the doors of trade against them, the Father of all will hold them responsible for the crimes which are the result of their injustice and for the human wrecks ruthless hope and lost ambition always make.

ARCHIBALD H. GRIMKE.

Hotel Arrivals.

Recent arrivals at the Clarendon House are: J. E. Ennis, Bayona, N. J.; R. T. Hydin, Lincoln University; Geo. E. Lee and Mr. and Mrs. J. Williams, Baltimore; E. Mouldin, Savannah, Ga.; Claborn Howard, Robt. Palmer, and W. H. Frazier and wife, Washington; L. J. Martin and wife, Westbury, L. I.; L. D. Rickey and wife, Naples; Mr. and Mrs. Chavis, Asbury Park; G. D. Garwood, Montreal; M. Perry and wife, Albany; Chas. H. Smith, Morristown, N. Y.; Lena Garnett, Versailles, Ky.; W. H. Miller, and Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Dinsmore, Philadelphia; Phil H. Hayden, and L. M. Nelson and wife, Princeton; Rev. and Mrs. M. J. Palmer, Germantown; J. D. Carter, Flatbush; Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Cox, Long Branch, N. J.

Arrivals at the Hotel Maceo are: E. J. Chestnut and Wm. A. Hinton, Cambridge, Mass.; C. R. Rantis, Jr., Peekskill; Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Shaw, Newark, N. J.; Joseph W. Henderson, Providence; and G. W. Sonnas Centre Moriches, L. I.