

TWENTIETH CENTURY NEGRO LITERATURE

OR
A CYCLOPEDIA OF THOUGHT
ON THE
VITAL TOPICS RELATING
TO THE AMERICAN NEGRO

BY
ONE HUNDRED OF AMERICA'S
G R E A T E S T N E G R O E S

EDITED AND ARRANGED
and written
BY
D. W. CULP, A. M., M. D.
AN AUTHOR AND LECTURER, ETC.

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The religious life of the race is being uplifted by the Negro Christian pulpit. Sound is being displaced by sense in the pulpit. Senseless emotion by thoughtful and reverential worship in the pew, and a clear conception and deep knowledge of divine truth is being gained by the people. The individual of pessimistic temperament may say that the masses are not being influenced and lifted up by the Negro pulpit, but this would be a mere statement and not an actual fact. The pessimist lives in an unwholesome atmosphere, he will not see the sunshine because he prefers to stay down in the valley beneath the cloud of doubt and surmounted with the fog of hopelessness. The educated Negro pulpit is mainly optimistic and sees beyond its immediate surroundings. It sees to it that the leaven of sound doctrine and moral ethics are being put into the meal, and from personal developments believes that in process of time the whole lump will be leavened. The Negro pulpit is awake to the gravity of its responsibility and it is putting forth its best efforts and mightiest endeavors to uplift the race socially, morally and religiously. Evidences of this aim and purpose are not difficult to be seen in all communities.

THIRD PAPER.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE NEGRO PULPIT UPLIFTING THE RACE?

BY REV. R. P. WYCHE, D. D.

The question has been raised as to the part taken by the pulpit in the uplift of the race. The most casual observer must conclude that there are influences at work which are elevating the Negro race, and it is interesting and instructive to trace out the work which is done by each individual agency.

The pulpit has long been recognized as a potent factor in the formation of character, and the Negro pulpit is not an exception to the general rule. Its influence may be elevating or degrading. The character and the ability of the man in the pulpit will determine its nature and extent.

The office itself implies an active interest in the elevation of man from the lower to the highest stage of life. But the uneducated ministry proved itself unequal to the task of teaching and leading the people along the difficult path to true excellence.

Some of the most stubborn opposition to the progress of the race was found in that class who had good reasons to fear the loss of power as the



Rev. R. P. Wyche.

REV. R. P. WYCHE, D. D.

Robert P. Wyche was born near Oxford, the county seat of Granville County, N. C. His father was a carpenter by trade and early taught his son the use of tools. In his humble home he was taught the dignity of labor, fidelity to duty, obedience to God and faith in prayer. These simple lessons shaped the course of his life probably more than any other influence. For a while he attended night school, as he worked in the day in order to earn the means to buy his books and to pay other necessary expenses. Robert was ambitious to excel. From the night school he went to a private school at Henderson, N. C. This school was conducted by the Rev. J. H. Crawford, a Presbyterian minister. Here Robert prosecuted his studies with eagerness, fitting himself to enter the preparatory department of Biddle University. The President of the university, the Rev. S. Mattoon, D. D., became interested in Robert, whom he esteemed as a promising student, and assured him that no worthy student should leave school for the want of means.

After graduating in 1877 his first thought was to enter the medical profession, but afterward he abandoned this idea and began seriously to consider the call to the ministry. After teaching school for a short period he returned to the seminary and took the full course in theology. He was licensed and ordained by the Presbytery of Catawba and was called to the pastorate of Seventh Street Presbyterian Church, at Charlotte, N. C. The degree of A. M. and the honorary degree of D. D. were conferred upon Rev. R. P. Wyche by Biddle University. He is at this time Moderator of the Synod of Catawba.

He married Miss Belle Butler, a popular educator, who unites with her husband in every measure for the true elevation of the Negro.

race advanced in intelligence. All of the higher interests of the people suffered at the hands of this class of leaders.

But let us now turn to another and better class of leaders. There are ministers who have enjoyed the benefits of a Christian education. This class of men form a strong factor in the elevation of the Negro. The present attainments of the pulpit are far-reaching in their beneficent influence upon the race.

The Negro pulpit is absolutely necessary to the higher moral development of the Negro. This development should lie at the foundation of all of his attainments, for men cannot reasonably hope to rise permanently along other lines while they neglect moral culture. The moral influence of the pulpit is now creating correct views of life in the Negro and leading him to good citizenship. The practical pulpit teaching along this line is having its effect in the moral uplift of the Negro. In this way the pulpit is serving as an uplifting force. Moral stability is the only solid foundation of an enduring elevation.

Considered from an intellectual point of view, the pulpit is of great value to the Negro race. The example set by the Negro pulpit in acquiring its intellectual status is worthy of imitation, and the youth of the rising generation will profit by it. The positive instruction and counsel coming from safe and trusted leaders will certainly yield its fruit. We cannot estimate the worth of the pulpit as the moulder of the thought, the character and the destiny of the race.

The financial status of the pulpit, under existing conditions, may be considered comparatively good. It has been made what it now is by industry, economy and self-denial, and stands as an object lesson for the benefit of those wishing to better their condition. The salaries paid Negro preachers are usually small, even less than the wages of mechanics. But these small earnings are carefully saved and wisely invested. As a result many of the Negro preachers have comfortable homes, while others of them have small bank accounts. The Negro minister has learned the dignity of labor and does not hesitate to labor with head and hands in order to attain to the position of usefulness and influence in the world. The people are taught in this practical manner the lessons of industry and economy more forcibly than in any other way, and they are thus led to secure homes, to enter into business and to educate their children.

Our elegant church edifices are largely due to the taste, tact and busi-

ness qualities of the pulpit. These beautiful edifices exert a refining and uplifting influence upon the lives of men.

The spiritual power of the pulpit—this is the chief power that it is expected to wield in the world, for its mission is spiritual, and this great fact should ever be remembered. Our deepest needs are of a spiritual nature, and the pulpit offers to supply these deep-seated needs and to assist us to rise to the rank of “the sons of God.”

The Gospel is the divinely appointed means to elevate men in Christian character. The promulgation of the Gospel and the exhibition of practical Christianity are the essential elements to an onward and upward progress.

FOURTH PAPER.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE NEGRO PULPIT UPLIFTING THE RACE?

BY REV. I. D. DAVIS, D. D.

The influence of the Negro pulpit on the race is immeasurable. It is to the race what the lighthouse is to the ship laden with human souls upon the tempestuous sea. At the close of the war when the Negroes were in darkness, the Negro preachers were the first to come forward to lead them to the light, and whatever may be said to the contrary, the Negro preachers have done more for the Negro's uplift since his emancipation than any other class of persons. We delight to boast that the Negroes pay taxes on \$400,000,000.00 worth of property, that they have thousands of well educated men and women, that their illiteracy has been reduced forty-five per cent, that they have hundreds of newspapers, that they have four hundred or more skilled physicians who are making good money, that they have hundreds of men who are engaged in business enterprises, that they have thousands of honest, sober, upright Christian men and women.

Now, to whom are we more indebted for all this than to the Negro preachers, who have faithfully taught their people to save their money and buy homes and lands, who have constantly advised them to send their sons and daughters to the schools, who have urged their people to patronize Negro business enterprises and Negro physicians and lawyers, who have shown their people the importance of taking Negro papers, who have enjoined them to be honest, sober, industrious citizens?