

# Africo-American Presbyterian

AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE.—John viii. 32.

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## DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF THE UNITED CHURCH

By Dr. Carter G. Woodson

A friend has just reported to me a Baptist minister who is publicly denouncing me as the enemy of his denomination and the Christian faith because I believe that Negro religious bodies should be united. I am reminded, too, of an A. M. E. Zion pastor who ran out of his church a book agent trying to sell his communicants my "History of the Negro Church."

"Get out of this church," he said. "I do not want that book mentioned here. Woodson is nothing but an A. M. E., and when he wrote that book he said all he could about the Alenites and suppressed facts about the Zionites."

Not long thereafter I experienced practically the same thing elsewhere. A speech which I delivered at a Colored Methodist Conference evoked some inquiry as to my religion. A bishop, referring to the same book, said that I must be a Baptist because I said so much about them in this work.

These facts well illustrate the petty jealousies of our so-called Christians and show how blind they are to the real truth because of their all but blind sectarian bias which they have taken over from ignorant whites. The one can not bear hearing the truth about the other; the one can not be depended upon to tell the truth about the other. Often these so-called Christians do merely that which helps their denominational program whether it be right or wrong. Much good which they might do they neglect merely because they do not see therein how their particular sect can profit thereby.

The leaders of these religious factions, as a rule, know better, but they hold their following by keeping the people divided, by emphasizing non-essentials, the insignificance of which the average man may not appreciate. For example, not long ago some ministers of foresight in one of our largest cities brought together the outstanding pastors to effect a closer union to cooperate for the common good. They presented as speaker to sound the keynote of the meeting an influential Presbyterian minister. In his address he emphasized the fact that we should forget the non-essentials. At that point, however, the meeting was broken up by a Baptist minister who propounded to him this question:

"Does the speaker consider baptism by immersion non-essential?"

The speaker could answer the question, and he could not. He did answer the question and he did not. The answer was not satisfactory. The Baptists of the city would not cooperate any further; and that was the end of the effort, for they represented the large majority.

I would have fearlessly contended that baptism by immersion is a non-essential. The man who believes that this is the way that Christ was baptized is entitled to that opinion. He should be respected for his honest convictions and protected by the community in the exercise of his faith; but any man who goes so far as to say that he who has not been baptized by immersion will be consumed by hell fire, ought to be consumed by something himself and removed from the path of human progress.

The fact is that if you consider the various ways by which the different sects assign each other to hell, you will conclude that hell is going to be filled with Christians; and, if you happen to reach

heaven, you will find few there to keep your company.

The thing about it all which vexes me most is that Negroes took over this nonsense from their ignorant oppressors. I inherited the Baptist faith from my father who learned it from his cruel master. My oldest sister inherited the Methodist faith from her husband which he obtained indirectly from his father's owner of antebellum times. Thus practically all Negroes embraced the religion of those who drove them behind the plow, lashed the blood from their backs when they would not willingly bear the yoke, and, if they survived the persecution, sold them to meet their doom in a more benighted part of the land of cotton.

That the Negroes thus took over the religion of their persecutors, a bishop said to me other day, shows the grip of the faith upon them, but it was not the faith itself. Circumstances usually determined this. Slaveholding, like any other crime, produces narrowness. Masters would not grant missionaries access to their slaves unless they were of the faith which taught, "Servants, obey your masters; for it is right in the Lord."

It was not the Negroes' fault that at any time they accepted all of the foolish ideas of the whites and split up into factions which have impeded the progress of the race in this country. It is a grave fault of the Negroes of today, however, if they continue this insane course; and if they do not change, the generations to come will look back upon their disorder as a monument of their stupidity.

As a friend said to me the other day, "the American Negro has no religion anyway. His so-called religion is borrowed from the white man. The Negro himself has never stopped to see what it is all about." The Negro has been so busy doing what the white man wants him to do that he has not had time to realize that he is often promoting the interests of the segregationists, the slaveholder and the murderer. Tom Hefflin is a Christian. Ben Tillman triumphed in the faith, and King Leopold, the slayer of the innocent natives of the Congo, is now dazling around the throne, according to what is now being taught Negroes.

It seems to me that the Negroes of this country especially are missing a great opportunity. They are not doing as well as those of old Richard Allen, who believed in the united Negro church, so interpreted Christianity anew to his master that he was converted, and so did Henry Evans and George Bentley for other whites in North Carolina and Tennessee. Instead of accepting and trying to carry out the "tommy-rot" which the exploiters of humanity have brought them for a religious program the Negroes should forget their differences and in the strength of a united church bring out a new interpretation of Christ to this unwilling world. Following the religious teachings of their traducers, the Negroes do not show any more common sense than a people would in permitting criminals to enact the laws and establish the procedure of the courts by which they are tried.

The trouble with the world today is that when men become hardened in crime they seek some doctrine or theory to combat those who do not believe in that crime. Some of the promoters of religions which we now embrace were

criminals of the worst type. Some good but ignorant men advanced an idea. A vicious prince, seeing how he could profit politically by giving support thereto, took up the new faith and forced it upon a larger group; and in the interpretation of that faith it has often been made the justification of the crimes of its champion.

Following in the footsteps of such criminals, many preachers say and do almost anything to get a following to support them, although the people thus exploited are thereby weakened to the extent that they cannot meet the demands of the age in which they live. The Negroes of this country have been impoverished by unwise and criminal leaders, for it is almost impossible to bring before the race any constructive program which such exploiters will not oppose. Each one thinks of the job which he does not care to give up or of the prestige which he may lose. Everything is weighed in the light of selfishness and personal aggrandizement. The Negro race, at the present time, therefore, is unable to battle against the forces opposing it. What are you going to do about it?

## CENTRAL CHURCH, PETERSBURG, VA.

The lingering scene of May 31st at Central Presbyterian church, Petersburg, Va., still greets my view. It was a full and busy day. After Rev. and Mrs. J. E. Tice had gone through with the Sunday school lesson, Mrs. Tice marched her band of children in, the which pictured vividly the scene around the throne of God in heaven, where thousands of children stand.

The 6th Sunday Rev. and Mrs. H. E. James were present and worshipped with them after he had made remarks bearing on the lesson, followed by a few words by the writer. Mrs. James assisted in the choir. Rev. Tice preached a soul-stirring sermon ending up on an evangelistic order, and constraining souls. He would make a good evangelist but is needed here at this post which they have striven to make good.

After a sumptuous repast we went for the baptizing. Some wished to be immersed. Here, too, Rev. Tice showed himself fully equal to the task, while Mrs. Tice was very motherly in her attention. Then followed the afternoon services, in which the Lord's Supper was celebrated, all so impressive.

Such a contrast from a few years ago. A comfortable brick church and the cozy manse looked as if Rev. and Mrs. Tice had been settled there for years and are at home for life. They are realizing their dream. Early, too, may they see the enlargement of their school work. Trust in the Lord and He will bring it to pass.

After shaking hands with these good people the Deacons, Mrs. Loftin, Mrs. Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and others, whom space forbids the mention, and having been royally entertained by Rev. and Mrs. Tice, we left Monday morning to preside at the Alumnae Re-Union at Ingle side, the which and the entertainment by Mr. and Mrs. Alex Bridgeforth, sweet memory will cherish long. They kindly conveyed us in auto through the country to Blackstone. We found Mrs. Bettie Bridgeforth somewhat convalescent owing to the careful attention of Miss Lavinia and Mr. Wm. Bridgeforth; Heartiest wishes for her speedy recovery.

MRS. M. B. MARKS, Bracey, Va.

A gospel without the print of the nails is not the gospel of Christ.—J. R. Miller.

## NEGRO FOLK LORE: AN INDEX OF CHARACTER

By H. H. Smith  
In The Presbyterian Advance

Bishop Negrood is reported to have said: "Race prejudice is harder than quartz; who can break it? It is colder than the icebergs of the Arctic; who can melt it?" The good bishop, who was a friend to every race, might have used a stronger simile and said that race prejudice is as cruel as death, for race prejudice has meant death to countless multitudes.

The root cause of race prejudice may be a malicious heart, but a misinformed mind is often a contributing cause. Like many other evils, race prejudice may be cured by turning on the light. "I hate that man," said a great literary character. "Do you know him well?" asked a friend. "No," he replied. "That is why I hate him. If I knew him, I couldn't hate him."

As there is some redeeming quality in every individual, therefore every race has some redeeming trait. Let us consider the Negro race, which has been the cause of so much race prejudice in our country. What are some of the characteristics of the African race? Bishop Walter Lambuth, who planted a mission in the Belgian Congo, and knew the Negro in both America and Africa, says: "Nature has done some wonderful things for the African. He is good-natured, light-hearted, eloquent, musical, forgiving, law-abiding, loyal to his friends, and devoted when religious." Of course, every Negro does not possess all these traits—nor does every white man—but they are some of the worthy characteristics of this race which has had such a tragical history.

Folk lore will often reveal the background of a race. When we study Negro folk lore we are impressed with the fact that nearly every story told around their camp fires ends with a moral. This is encouraging, for these simple stories, with their moral lessons, are an index of character. Henry M. Stanley, in his book, "My Dark Companions," published nearly fifty years ago, gives us a volume of interesting stories which he heard around the African camp fires. He, too, was impressed with the fact that most of the stories carried some moral. Our "Bee's Rabbit" stories and other animal tales were brought here from Africa. Let us note some of the moral lessons drawn from these stories told around the African camp fires. While not giving the exact words, Stanley has endeavored to produce the exact thought as nearly as possible.

The story of the creation of man by the toad and the moon ends with this moral: "You see now, my friends, what mischief the toad did unto all mankind. Had his conceit been less, and had he waited a little, the good moon would have conceived us of a nobler kind than we now are, and the taint of the toad had not cursed man. Wherefore abandon headstrong ways, and give way not to rashness, but pay good heed to the wise and old, lest ye taint in like manner the people, and cause the innocent, the young, and the weak to suffer."

Weatherford, in his splendid book, "The Negro From Africa to America," quotes several Negro folk lore stories from Weeks' "Congo Life," which teach patience, honesty, truthfulness, and other virtues. We quote one on truthfulness:

"One day a Gazelle, being very hungry, went in search of food, and saw a fine bunch of palm-nuts hanging from a palm

tree; but having only hoofs he could not climb the tree. He therefore went in search of his friend the Palm-rat, and said to him: "I know where there is a fine bunch of palm-nuts, and if you will promise to give me some I will show you where it is." The Palm-rat readily promised to share the nuts. So together they went to the forest, and the gazelle pointed out the nuts to his friend. With his strong, sharp claws the Palm-rat quickly mounted the palm-tree, and found there three bunches of palm-nuts; but instead of cutting them down, he sat on a palm-branch and began to eat them. After a time the Gazelle shouted out: "Friend Palm-rat, throw me down some of the nuts according to your promise." "Oh," cried the Palm-rat, "when I am eating I am very deaf, and can not hear what is said to me." An he continued to munch away at the nuts.

"The Gazelle waited a little and again called out: 'Please throw me some of the nuts, for I have hoofs and can not climb a tree like you.' But the Palm-rat ate greedily on and took no notice of his friend's request, except to say that he was deaf when eating. The Gazelle thereupon gathered some leaves, grass, twigs and stubble, and made a large fire at the bottom of the palm-tree. In a short time the Palm-rat cried out: 'Uncle Gazelle, put out your fire, the heat and smoke are choking me.' 'Oh,' replied the Gazelle, 'when I am warming myself by the fire I can not hear what is said to me.' And he heaped more firewood and dried grass on the fire. The Palm-rat, choking with the smoke, lost his grip on the tree, and fell to the ground dead. The Gazelle returned to the town and took possession of all the goods belonging to the Palm-rat. If you make a promise, keep it; and if you want a kindness shown to you, you must do kind things to others."

These stories are indeed an index to Negro character. They show that he is capable of responding to the moral and spiritual appeal. Did not Livingstone find among the natives of the African jungles some of the most loyal friends he ever had? Did not Bishop Lambuth find in John Wesley Gilbert, who tramped with him hundreds of miles through African forests, a true and devoted yoke-fellow of the gospel? Did not Bishop Crowther witness two of his African converts take a stand in the face of persecution that almost equaled that of the intrepid Luther? And have we not all seen among our Negro friends as genuine Christian character as can be found anywhere?

Dr. Weatherford, who has made a thorough study of the Negro, in his book mentioned above, says the Negro is growing morally. He says: "It can not be made out that the Negro is worse now than during slavery. We may hear more of his misdeeds, but a closer study reveals a growth of character which is a real achievement. In this progress the Negro church has had a very large part. The problem of the Southern white man is to face facts squarely. We know we live side by side with ten million Negroes. We know their churches are poorly organized—but for that matter, so are ours. We know their preachers are poorly trained—but who would claim perfection for our white ministers? We know that better training and a more sympathetic attitude toward their religious life is the greatest need of the Negro today. As statesmen of a new day we should see to it that the Negro church fulfills its high function in transforming the moral life of the Negro race. There is every hope for the future—there is no basis for despair."

Ashland, Va.

## THIRD-DISTRICT CONVENTION OF CAPE FEAR PRESBYTERY

The thirty-third annual session of the Third District Sunday School and Christian Endeavor Convention of Cape Fear Presbytery opened its service at 8 o'clock P. M. August 15th, in Dothan Presbyterian church, Maxton, N. C., and continued through August 16.

The annual sermon was delivered by the Rev. H. S. Davis, of Fayetteville, N. C., who took as a text: "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Prov. 29:18). The sermon was one of thought and interest and was enjoyed by all.

With Rev. H. S. Davis presiding we had the registration of pastors, superintendents and delegates. We were pleased to greet a large delegation.

The following named persons were elected to serve as officers of the Convention:

President, Rev. J. B. Francis, of Whiteville.  
Vice-President, Miss L. E. Brinkley, of Overhills.  
Secretary, Miss L. F. Williams, of Manchester.  
Assistant Secretary, Miss Adie Jones, of Lumberton.  
Treasurer, Mrs. P. P. Johnson, of Maxton.

## Welcome Addresses

Mr. David A. Leach extended us a very cordial welcome on behalf of the church, and Mrs. Mays in a very pleasing manner welcomed us on behalf of the Sunday school. After listening to these addresses we felt at home.

Rev. P. P. Johnson, in a very delightful manner, expressed the Convention's appreciation for the beautiful words of welcome.

The offering was taken by Mrs. M. M. Pinner and Miss L. E. Brinkley.

The benediction closed the evening's session of the first day.

Friday morning at 9:30 the Convention was called to order by the President, Rev. J. B. Francis.

After song service a Bible Study Lesson from the Life of Moses was given by Rev. T. T. Branch, D. D., of Fayetteville. He told of the troubles and trials that Moses had to undergo. His discourse was enjoyed by all.

The advantages of the departmental lessons over the International Lessons was discussed by Rev. H. S. Davis, of Fayetteville. Rev. Davis told the difference between the departmental lessons and the International lessons. The departmental lessons are interesting, teachable, can be remembered and follow the trend of modern education. They also help the child to make the proper adjustments at home, in school, church and the community.

The History of the Sunday School, by Rev. J. H. Mayswood, D. D., of Lumberton, was very ably and forcibly delivered. Sunday school history, like all other history, is divided into three parts, ancient, medieval and modern.

After this discourse we were pleased to greet Dr. Savage, of Franklinton. He was introduced and accorded a seat as a corresponding member of the Convention. Dr. Savage addressed us, using as his subject, "We Want a Larger Church." His message was very forcibly and pleasingly given. We are always glad to have Dr. Savage with us in the Convention.

Remarks were made by Elder Cannon, also from Franklinton, after which we joined in singing, "He Leadeth Me."

A demonstration in teaching a Primary class was given by Mrs. Lucille F. Williams, of Manchester.

A demonstration in teaching an adult class (Lesson Gal. 1:10) was given by Rev. J. B.

(Continued on page 4)