



The Baltimore Conference, (1917) of the Church Workers.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND THE BLACK MAN.

By The Rev. George F. Bragg, Jr., Rector St. James' First African Church, Baltimore, Maryland.

We are not surprised that Prof. Brawley is ignorant both of the Episcopal Church and its work for and among the Colored Race. For years we have endeavored to persuade the authorities in the Church with respect to the vital importance of employing a Colored priest to give attention to the matter of Negro history, and statistics, in the Church, and to touch bodies organized among Negroes and their leaders, in such a way as would better inform them concerning the Church and her work for the Colored race.

The Episcopal Church was the very first religious body in this country to baptize and to receive into membership the people of African descent. It was not only the very first to do as much, but it was also the very first of all such bodies "to treat them as equals." On this subject no other religious body in America, dominated by white people, can show as consistent a record during all the years as can the Episcopal Church.

The Episcopal Church is the only Christian body of note, covering the entire country, with representative assemblies. In this respect, it is in a class by itself. There is only ONE Episcopal Church. It knows neither north or south, east or west, race or color. The American Episcopal Church until now has most positively refused to recognize the "color-line" in its canons and general laws. And in considering what the Church has done or has not done, this fact must constantly be borne in mind.

There is no such thing as a National Baptist Church. Each Baptist congregation is a sovereignty in itself. We have a white Methodist Church, north, and we have a white Methodist Church, south. But before the Methodists were divided into two bodies, the undivided body had not matched the equality of treatment of the Negro, displayed by the Episcopal Church. The Northern Methodists did not begin to ordain black men as regular ministers until the year 1865. The Episcopal Church was the very first in this country to set t

example of ordaining black men to its full Priesthood. Its first ordination of this character was as far back as the year 1795. As a matter of historical fact the black race itself is responsible for the drawing of the "color-line," to the extent of organizing the race into separate congregations in the Episcopal Church.

A company of black Methodists worshipped with the white Methodists in St. George's Church, Philadelphia. They felt that they had been humiliated and insulted by their white Methodist brethren. They left the white Methodists: First, organizing themselves into a Benevolent Society; then, later they turned the Society thus organized into an independent African Church. Still later they voted almost **unanimously** to affiliate themselves with the Episcopal Church under three conditions: First, as an organized body of persons of African descent; second, that they should forever have local self-government; third, that one of their number should be licensed as a Lay Reader, and subsequently if found fit ordained as their own immediate pastor.

The Episcopal Church accepted these conditions, received into fellowship this African body, and gave this First African congregation **every** right possessed by white congregations of the Episcopal faith. Here is the record: Under date of September 9th, 1794, the following is a memoranda of the official minutes of the Council of Advice and Standing Committee of the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania, held in Bishop White's house.

"Resolved and declared, therefore, that as soon as the Trustees or Deputies of the said congregation, being duly authorized, shall sign the Act of Association of the said Church in this state, they shall be entitled to **all** the privileges of the other congregations of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

"Agreed that Dr. Samuel Magaw and Dr. Robert Blackwell, be a committee to meet the Trustees or Deputies of the African Church, and see them ratify the Act of Association.

Extract from the minute,

SAMUEL MAGAW,

A member of the Council."

A Pioneer in the Education of the Black Man.

With respect to the education of the Negro, there are one or

two incidents in very early days, which are extremely suggestive of the great interest of the Episcopal Church in the mental illumination of the black man.

As far back as 1761, the Rev. Thomas Bacon, a clergyman of the Church of England, inaugurated a free school for black children in Frederick county, Maryland. And even long before this time, the same clergyman had inaugurated a school in Talbot county for the poorer classes of both races. With respect to this early effort, Mr. Lawrence C. Wroth, Assistant Librarian of the Pratt Library, and Historiographer of the diocese of Maryland, of this city, in a published essay of some years ago, among other things, said:

"Mr. Bacon had set an example in the Province in regard to the Christian education of Negro slaves, which was not generally to be followed by either clergy or laity for many generations. It was probably his work among the Negroes which led to the project of founding a sort of manual training industrial school for poor children. In a subscription paper circulated in 1750, he remarks upon the profaneness and debauchery, idleness and immorality. . . . especially among the poorer sort in this province, and asks for yearly subscriptions, 'for setting up a Charity Working School in the Parish of St. Peter's in Talbot county, for maintaining and teaching poor children to read, write and account, and instructing them in the knowledge and practice of the Christian Religion, as taught in the Church of England.' A few months later he had received from a goodly list of subscribers, among them the Proprietary and Lady Baltimore, Cecelius Calvert and Bishop Wilson, a sufficient fund for the running expenses, and in the course of a few years his subscriptions permitted the purchase of one hundred acres of land and the erection of a suitable brick home and school. Thus, in the year 1755, and for many thereafter, Talbot county boasted a fine charity school, but thirty years later, when Bacon and nearly all of the original trustees were dead, it was turned over to the county for use as a poor house. The institution seems to have been born before its time so far as Maryland was concerned."

Even earlier than the above, the Episcopal Church maintained a day school for Negro children in the city of Charleston, South Carolina. Two Negro youths were actually purchased by a Missionary Society in England, set free, and educated, that as Catechists, they might carry on the educational work inaugurated.

As a sample of the interest of every Southern Bishop previous to the Civil War in the work among the Negroes we shall quote from only one of them. We take the late Bishop

Stephen Elliott, of Georgia, because in Georgia and South Carolina, before the Civil War, the Church was strongest among the Colored people. Bishop Elliot came to Georgia from South Carolina, where for many years he had labored most successfully among the Negroes. In his very first Convention address, 1841, he reviews, at great length, the matter of the religious care of the black people. He began with this significant paragraph:

"The religious instruction of our domestics, and of the Negroes upon plantations, is a subject that never should be passed over in the address of a Southern Bishop."

Six years later, in his convention address of 1847, he is particularly gracious in his treatment of the subject. In part, he said:

Master and Servants Partakers of the same Communion.

"During the last week, I visited the mission upon the north side of the great Ogeechee River, under the charge of the Rev. William C. Williams. A neat country church has been erected by some of the planters of that side of the river, which was sufficiently completed for service, but not for Consecration. I officiated in it on Sunday the 18th of April, when eight candidates were presented for Confirmation, the first fruits of the earnest labors of their missionary. Mr. Williams is pursuing the only plan which will be of any service with this class of our population, identifying himself with their spiritual condition and going in and out among them as their Pastor and Guide. The impression is that the Negroes are averse from the services of our Church. It is a great mistake except so far as that aversion may have arisen from ignorance or neglect. Let a clergyman of the Episcopal Church settle anywhere in the midst of them and make himself comprehended among them, and minister at their sick beds, and be with them in their moments of temptation and affliction, and prove himself their friend and teacher, and very soon will they welcome him to their hearts with the same true affection with which they now cling to those who now labor among them. It is my earnest hope that our Episcopal Planters will take this matter into consideration, and make arrangements for the employment of missionaries of their own Church, so that Masters and Servants may worship together in unity of spirit and in the bond of peace. It would tend very much to strengthen the relation of Masters and Slaves by bringing into action the highest and holiest feelings of our common nature. There should be much less danger of inhumanity on the one side, or of insubordination on the other, between parties who knelt upon the Lord's day, around the same Table, and were partakers of the same Communion."

Scarcely anything could be farther from the truth than to account for the failure of the Church, in reaching larger numbers of the black people, on the ground of not "treating them as equals." Ordinary commonsense and experience would rather suggest that, on account of the dominance of education, culture and refinement more largely possibly among Episcopalians, than among others, such would prove the surest group where equality of treatment would attain its highest exemplification. And such, verily, is true. For, even at the present time, in the few dioceses which either exclude or restrict Negro membership in the diocesan convention, apart from this matter of ecclesiastical suffrage, there is a closer fellowship and co-operation between colored and white Episcopalians than exist between the two races of other religious bodies.

More than twenty-five years ago the present author who was spending some time in Savannah, Ga., upon the insistent invitation of the reverend rector of Christ Church, that city, vested and walked in procession with the clergy of Georgia, in connection with the diocesan convention, when the late Bishop Hugh Miller Thompson preached the memorial sermon in honor of the late Bishop Beckwith, of that diocese. This act upon the part of the late Rev. Robb White was simply a mere "courtesy." We were not a member of that diocese, but only a visitor.

The Church set the Example of Negro Ordinations.

The Presbyterians did not ordain John Gloucester, the first Colored Presbyterian minister, until many years after the ordination of Absalom Jones in the Episcopal Church. We have never noted any evidence offered to prove that any of the Colored Baptist Churches in the South, said to have been organized before 1794, were directly organized by some white Baptist Church, and the minister of such ordained and commissioned by such white Baptist Church. We are not dealing with voluntary bodies springing up from among the Colored People themselves, but of such having natural descent and continuity from some recognized body of white Christians.

As it is today the Northern Presbyterian Church has in communion with its General Assembly Colored congregations, in charge of Colored ministers. In the North, Colored

Churches are united with white Presbyteries, but in some sections of the country, there are not only Colored Presbyteries, but likewise, Colored synods.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, North, has a Colored constituency of some several hundred thousand communicants. But the "color-line" is more sharply drawn in that body than in the Episcopal Church. The Colored and white ministers and laity are separated into separate and distinct annual conferences. In the same territory, the whites are members of one conference, while the Colored are members of another; although the same white Bishop may preside over both.

In the Episcopal Church, whether North or South, ALL races are comprehended in ONE diocesan organization, under the same Bishop. Within the entire country, there are only about two dioceses where the Negro is wholly eliminated from the organized diocesan legislature. There are less than a **half-dozen** dioceses where Negro representation, in the diocesan organization, is limited or restricted. Aside from these exceptions noted, the Colored clergy and laity have the same rights and privileges in all the other diocesan conventions possessed by any others.

Some Examples of Brotherly Treatment.

In Nebraska the only Colored priest in the whole diocese has been for a number of years at one and the same time an examining chaplain, the diocesan Historiographer, Secretary of the Diocesan Convention and Editor of the Diocesan Journal. In the diocese of Newark a Colored priest is a member of the Diocesan Missionary Board. A few years back a Colored priest held a similar position in the diocese of Washington. *Some years ago, during the life-time of the late Bishop Dudley, of Kentucky, a Colored priest preached the opening sermon at the diocesan convention. At the regular diocesan convention of the diocese of North Carolina, held in 1918, in which convention there were possibly less than a dozen Colored delegates, clergy and laity, a Colored priest was unanimously elected Suffragan Bishop of that diocese. Colored priests and laymen have served on committees of the various conventions in the South as well as in the North. The late Bishops Holly and Ferguson frequently preached in white*

churches to white congregations. On one particular occasion, in Emanuel Church, Baltimore, at a great Missionary meeting, some four or five Bishops being present, Bishop Holly, by reason of his seniority not only delivered an address, but took the most conspicuous part of the service, presenting the alms, offering the closing prayers and pronouncing the Episcopal Benediction. By special invitation Bishop Holly visited the Hannah Moore Academy, for white young ladies, took tea with the Principal and his wife and addressed the young ladies assembled in the Chapel.

Ordinations of Colored men have frequently taken place in white churches in the South as well as in the North. The first ordination of any black man, south of Mason and Dixon's line, occurred in a white church, in Maryland, at eleven o'clock Sunday morning, in the year 1834, the Bishop ordaining being a native of Maryland, and a lineal descendant of Colonial Governor Stone. During the Episcopate of the late Bishop Paret, a Colored man was ordained to the priesthood by him in the old historic Church of St. Anne, Annapolis, the Governor of the State being present. The preacher upon this occasion was a Colored priest. Only a few years back, in the same edifice, another black man was advanced to the priesthood by the present Bishop Murray. A Colored priest read the epistle, a white priest the gospel, a genuine black priest being the preacher on this occasion. The alms were lifted by four men, two white and two colored. The white men were no less distinguished than one being the President of St. John's College, while the other was a retired Rear Admiral in the United States Navy.

More than one Colored priest has been Secretary-Treasurer of local clerical associations, in some of our large cities. The diocese of Texas, for two terms, elected its only Colored priest as one of her four clerical representatives in the General Convention, the highest legislative body of the National Church.

At the time of the Consecration of St. James' First African Church, Baltimore, 1827, the first Negro parish on southern soil, there were only two white parishes in the City of Baltimore. On the morning of the Consecration the two white rectors of the city, and the Bishop of the diocese, were together in the chancel of that church, with its black minister. Thus,

giving every possible sanction to the work initiated on slave territory by a black man, who, at the same time, was conducting a day school for the children of the people of African descent.

The late Chief Justice Fuller, of the Supreme Court of the United States, was a delegate from the diocese of Chicago to the General Convention which met in Baltimore in 1892, and he knelt before the altar to receive the Holy Communion, side by side with a black priest, one of the deputies from Texas. This black priest had been a slave, and when the Civil War ended he was 21 years old, and could neither read nor write.

In 1859, the Theological School, of Gambier, Ohio, graduated the first Colored man ever to receive such honor from such an institution of the Church. He was immediately ordained and entered upon work.

Mr. Harry T. Burleigh, the noted colored singer, a member of St. Philip's Church, New York, also a member of the choir of St. George's Church, New York, of which church the late Mr. J. P. Morgan, the great American financier was an officer, at the request of the deceased, sang the solo at the time of Mr. Morgan's funeral in St. George's Church.

There are many incidents, rather of a social tendency, rare courtesies, and kindnesses in the South as well as in the North, of too delicate a nature to recount here. But the mere mention of the fact is additional proof of the sincere effort of individuals of the Episcopal Church to treat the Negro as a man and brother.

Kind and Sympathetic Relations in the South.

The writer distinctly recalls a most pleasant fact in connection with the attendance of the colored clergy, when there were ten or eleven such upon the annual conventions in the old undivided diocese of Virginia. In a number of places where the convention met annually in those early days there were no local congregations of colored Episcopalians. Yet the white committee on hospitality took especial pains to secure among the most representative colored citizens of the place, the very best homes that could be obtained. We well remember how extremely gracious and kind were many of the white ladies of the highest social position in the community in coming to us and

inquiring as to our comfort and the hospitality provided. They absolutely spared no pains in seeing that everything was as it should be. Neither by look or otherwise during our entire connection with Virginia conventions or convocations were we able to discover the least disposition intimating anything else than a most hearty and sincere welcome. No speakers received more sympathetic attention than the colored clergy when they had anything to say. And, in all those dioceses at present where colored men attend the St. Andrew's Brotherhood and colored women the meetings of the Woman's Auxiliary, there is ever a most gracious welcome and hearty reception.

When we cross the Atlantic and note the reception given black priests and bishops in the mother Church of England it certainly has been all that one could wish. As far back as 1849, with letters commendatory from Bishop Henshaw, of Rhode Island, Eli W. Stokes, a colored priest of Providence, received distinguished consideration and princely treatment at the hands of the Archbishops, Bishops and clergy of that country, and brought back to America enough money to free his little church from a heavy mortgaged indebtedness. And we could go on and speak of the royal treatment received by the late Rev. Dr. Alexander Crummell, and of Bishop Holly, who was asked by the late Dean Stanley to preach in Westminster Abbey; of the late Bishop Ferguson, who had the honor of being presented to the late Queen Victoria, and of the late Rev. Joshua B. Messiah, who, upon invitation, preached in the great St. Paul's Cathedral.

Large-hearted Generosity.

Episcopalians have been so large-hearted and generous in promoting the welfare of the colored race that their material assistance has been far more bountiful apart from the strictly organized channels of the Church than through such. One has simply to call up the two words, "Hampton" and "Tuskegee," to be certified of this significant fact. It would be an extremely difficult matter to estimate the proportion of financial and other help extended to such institutions as well as to other enterprises among the colored race by members of the Episcopal Church.

In every community throughout this broad land Episco-

pali-ans have been foremost in promoting the welfare of the black race. No set of black men more fully appreciated the strength of this help than the early Bishops, and leaders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The late Bishop Turner, in the presence of this writer, and in the presence of the whole Board of African Methodist Bishops, in an interview with the late Bishop Paret, confessed, with much emotion, the kindnesses and assistances which he and many of his colleagues had ever received from this source.

It is not adequately appreciated, the leading part sustained by colored Episcopalians, in building up the African Methodist Episcopal Church, immediately following the close of the Civil War. In Georgia and South Carolina, where colored Episcopalians were strongest, numerically, there was a wholesale exodus of colored people from the Episcopal Church. Bishop Davis, of South Carolina, greatly lamented it, and sought strenuously to arrest the movement, but without success. If, as it were by magic, colored Episcopal clergymen could have immediately been brought into being, we would have been able largely to have arrested this "exodus." The people who left, for the most part, were among the most choice of the colored race. By their close contact with the white man during the past they had received a better practical education than such gotten from text books. A number of them could read and write. As they beheld the multitudes of their own people they were moved with compassion. Not that they loved the Episcopal Church less, but loving their own race more they estimated that they could be of more value to them in going into this new racial organization being set up for them by men of their own color and therein using to the full what they had received than remain as mere "hangers on" in the "galleries" of white churches. So the racial church was a door of opportunity and a great medium of service for them and they were not slow in availing themselves of the same. We have heard the story in essence from the lips of many of the old-timers. The same thing was true of hundreds, yea, thousands of colored persons who had come to the States from the West Indies. They still loved the old Church, but they cared not for the conditions surrounding their membership therein. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, both in administration and public wor-

ship, bears the stamp of all that we have said in its wide divergence from the parent Methodist body.

The reason, or one of the strongest, why the multitudes of the colored race have not been attracted towards the Episcopal Church is identically the same reason why the multitudes of the white people have not been attracted in the same direction. A church setting forth the very highest ideals, educationally and ethically, cannot hope to attract those wholly unprepared to receive and appreciate the same. But it was seriously thought years ago that with increasing education among the colored race, there would be a large increase indeed from among the progressive and intelligent of the race. Undoubtedly there has been a great increase from this source, yet nothing like the ratio of increase by some predicted. The explanation of this situation, in part, lies in the wonderful increase in "race consciousness" among the great body of the people and the remarkable growth of Negro enterprises of all description. The great army of educated race leaders are found in the religious bodies exclusively dominated by black men. They are not there so much because of any positive religious convictions, as for commercial and other selfish purposes. Many of them treat religious convictions with absolute indifference. They are where the people are because they believe their influence for success in business and other worldly promotion will be best served therein.

Another reason why the growth in the Episcopal Church, among the colored race, has not been greater is because in so strenuously striving to preserve the real catholicity of the Church, those in authority, have not as yet been able to clearly see that the necessary adjustment can be made without the least injury to Catholic principle. Sooner or later such adjustment will be made. The present plan of diocesan unity, and oneness, will not be altered or changed. It will remain as it is. But an honest way will be found to fully recognize that postulate of racial life which has come to stay, at least for a long while. It is possible for such an extraordinary, but permissive plan to obtain which will recommend itself in certain contiguous territory, not only to the bishops, but as heartily to both races. In such a plan diocesan unity will be respected

and at the same time every reasonable wish of the black people will also be fully realized. Such a system will develop able and effective leadership among colored Episcopalians and will result in freeing thousands of the educated class of colored people who are now "engulfed" in systems which neither their hearts or minds approve.

The Black Man Drawn by Elective Affinity.

Many years ago that grand old man, Bishop Richard Hooker Wilmer, said along this very line:

"We must get rid of an impression which prevails very largely and will inevitably enter as an element to be considered in our legislation—an impression that we will have to deal with a people who will come to us in great numbers. On the contrary, there is no symptom of any such disposition on their part. Everything in the attitude of this people towards this church is against such a supposition. Not at all because this Church does not offer and afford all that they most need, but because they are already attached to, I might almost say engulfed, by religious systems which, however, illy suited to instruct and elevate are powerful to fascinate them. The few only will come to us at first. They will be drawn to us by elective affinity, because they love the order and reverence which characterize the worship of the Church. For a long time they will constitute a fragmentary portion of the great mass. But, in time, as they are elevated by education, they will become centers of good influence, and like salt, help to season the race. But this must be a work of time and patience, as well as a labor of love."

A General Summary.

Despite the fact that while the Episcopal Church was the very first religious body, in this country, to care for the black man, yet, after so long an endeavor she has made but little or no impression upon the great multitudes of Negroes, yet, she has a record of service on their behalf of which she need not be ashamed.

Aside from the ordinary care of all souls, through her parishes, scattered all over this broad land, when in 1794, a body of black people sent in a petition requesting their reception, as a body, and the ordination of one of their number as their minister, she not only responded to their wishes, but received them as a parish with all the rights of white parishes.

Twenty-five years later, after faithful training and preparation, by Trinity Parish, New York, she set up St. Philip's Church, that city, not as a dependent mission of Trinity, but as a regular parish, with all the rights of other parishes. Then, about six years later, a black missionary priest, the first fruits of the Church of 1794, came to Baltimore, slave territory, and with the hearty approval of diocesan authority organized another colored congregation, which, also was given the right of local self-government. And then some twenty years later, a black missionary from this Southern Church proceeded to New England and there organized a parish of colored people. And, because there was no one else to do it and one must be planted in the west, God put it into the heart of a pious and devout colored Baptist preacher, "Elder Munroe," of Detroit, Mich., to enter the ministry of the historic church. And he planted St. Matthew's Church in the city of Detroit.

No human being can possibly estimate the helpfulness and influence for good to the black race of these centers of the Church, established in the "free states" long before the Civil War. The black people of the "free states" wrought nobly in those early days, and it cannot be questioned that these centers were of the greatest possible value in developing high and noble ideals among them.

As it is at present, the Church maintains among the colored people of the South, about one hundred parochial schools. Then, there are other schools of higher grade and of a general character. Such as: St. Augustine's, Raleigh, N. C.; St. Paul's, Lawrenceville, Va.; The Bishop Payne Divinity School, Petersburg, Va.; St. Athanasius, Brunswick, Ga.; St. Mark's, Birmingham, Ala.; The Vicksburg Industrial School, Vicksburg, Miss., and St. Mary's School, Keeling, Tenn. Entirely aside from the thousands of colored communities throughout the country in white parishes, we have about 30,000 such communicants embraced in nearly three hundred exclusively colored congregations, ministered to by more than one hundred and fifty Negro clergy.

The present writer ought to be considered good authority for the statement we are about to make, for possibly no one has more freely criticized, in the strongest language, the hesi-

tancy of the Church, and her slowness in adapting her machinery to the needs of the work. Yet, as a matter of simple fact there is absolutely no religious body in this whole country, considered as a whole, which respects the manhood of the race and its right to attain actual and cordial equality with all other peoples than the Episcopal Church. It is genuine and sincere. The reason those outside of the Church cannot appreciate this fact is largely because they do not place the same value on the unity of the Church as do Churchmen. We can scarcely bring this contribution of love and affection for Mother Church to a close in more fitting language than in using the words of the late Bishop Holly, in a letter to us more than a quarter of a century ago, when the colored clergy of Virginia were much concerned with respect to a curtailment of their ecclesiastical privileges. In part, Bishop Holly wrote:

The Anglican Communion the Hope of the Race.

"I send you this exhortation, because I sincerely believe that the African race must find in the Churches of the Anglican communion the powerful lever, which under God, will elevate them to the full stature of their Christian manhood. That race is under a dark and heavy cloud of spiritual ignorance. It is only the entrance of God's word that giveth light. That saving word of inspiration (leaving aside the explanation of the human preacher), can be heard in its purity in those churches in the scriptural order of the liturgical services, in greater abundance, and by a clearer and more systematic presentation of the whole mystery of Godliness, than in any other or all other churches under the sun. Hence, in a somewhat lower sense than the occasion on which the Apostle Peter spoke, we may say before thinking of turning away from the Church of our love: "Whither can we go; for thou, our spiritual Mother, hast the words of Eternal Life."

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