



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Crisis, Vol. 15, No. 5

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THE CRISIS

SPRINGARN

MAJOR J. E. SPRINGARN has undergone a severe operation at the New York Hospital, but is, we are thankful to say, rapidly recovering. No more earnest and sincere friend of the Negro people has arisen since the Civil War, and twelve million people watch above his bed with deep sympathy and infinite hope. For who can replace the few white friends who are willing to work WITH us and not merely FOR us?

AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

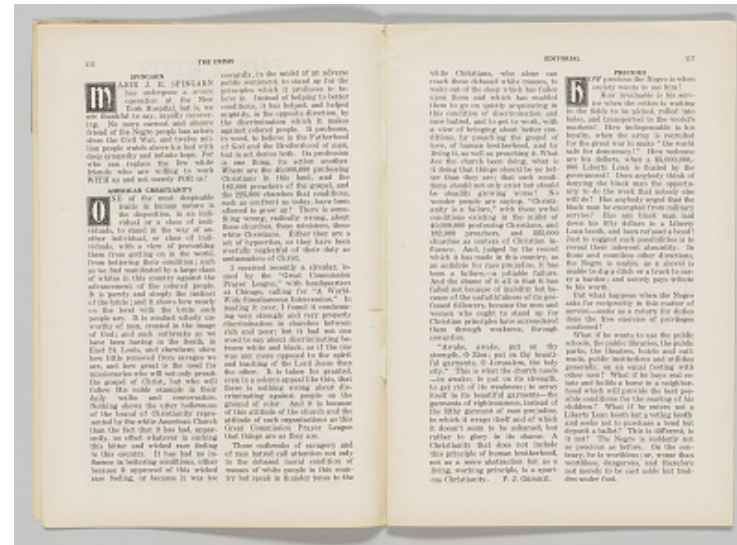
ONE of the most despicable traits in human nature is the disposition, in an individual or a class of individuals, to stand in the way of another individual, or a class of individuals, with a view of preventing them from getting on in the world, from bettering their condition; such as we find manifested by a large class of whites in this country against the advancement of the colored people. It is purely and simply the instinct of the brute; and it shows how nearly on the level with the brute such people are. It is conduct utterly unworthy of men, created in the image of God; and such outbreaks as we have been having in the South, in East St. Louis, and elsewhere, show how little removed from savages we are and how great is the need for missionaries who will not only preach the gospel of Christ, but who will follow His noble example in their daily walks and conversation. Nothing shows the utter hollowness of the brand of Christianity represented by the white American Church than the fact that it has has, apparently, no effect whatever in curbing this bitter and wicked race feeling in this country. It has had no influence in bettering conditions, either because it approved of this wicked race feeling, or because it was too cowardly, in the midst of an adverse public sentiment, to stand up for the principles which it professes to believe in. Instead of helping to better conditions, it has helped, and helped mightily, in the opposite direction, by the discrimination which it makes against colored people. It professes, in word, to believe in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of a man, but in act denies both. Its profession is one thing, its action another. Where are the 40,000,000 professing Christians in this land, and the 182,00 preachers of the gospel and the 225,000 churches that conditions, such as confront us today, have been allowed to grow up? There is something wrong, radically wrong, about these churches, these ministers, these white Christians. Either they are a set of hypocrites, or they have been woefully neglectful of their duty as ambassadors of Christ.

I received recently a circular, issued by the "Great Commission Prayer League," with headquarters at Chicago, calling for "A World-Wide Simultaneous Intercession." In reading it over, I found it condemning very strongly and very properly discrimination in churches between rich and poor; but it had not one word to say about discriminating between white and black, as if the one was any more opposed to the spirit and teaching of the Lord Jesus than the other. It is taken for granted, even in a solemn appeal like this, that there is nothing wrong about discriminating against people on the ground of color. And it is because of this attitude of the church and the attitude of such organizations as this Great Commission Prayer League that things are as they are. These outbreaks of savagery and of race hatred call attention not only to the debased moral condition of masses of white people in this country but speak in thunder tones to the

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white Christians, who alone can reach these debased white masses, to wake out of the sleep which has fallen upon them and which has



enabled them to go on quietly acquiescing in this condition of discrimination and race hatred, and to get to work, with a view of bringing about better conditions, by preaching the gospel of love, of human brotherhood, and by living it, as well as preaching it. What has the church been doing, what is it doing that things should be no better than they are; that such conditions should not only exist but should be steadily growing worse? No wonder people are saying, "Christianity is a failure,; with these awful conditions existing in the midst of 40,000,000 professing Christians, and 182,000 preachers, and 225,000 churches as centers of Christian influence. And, judged by the record which it has made in this country, as an antidote for race prejudice, it has been a failure. And the shame of it all is that it has been a failure,-a pitiable failure. And the shame of it all is that it has failed not because of inability but because of the unfaithfulness of its professed followers, because the men and women who ought to stand up for Christian Principles have surrendered them through cowardice.

"Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." This is what the church needs -to awake; to put on its strength, to get rid of its weakness; to array itself in which it wraps itself and of which it doesn't seem to be ashamed, but rather to glory in its shame. A Christianity that does not include this principle of human brotherhood, not as a mere abstraction but as a living, working principle, is a spurious Christianity. F.J. GRIMKE.

PRECIOUS

HOW precious the Negro is when society wants to use him! How invaluable is his service when the cotton is waiting in the field to be picked, rolled in to bales and transported to the world's markets! How indispensable is his loyalty, when the army is recruited for the great war to make "the world safe for democracy!" How welcome are his dollars, when a \$5,000,000,000 Liberty Loan is floated by the government! Does anybody think of denying the black man the opportunity to do the work that nobody else will do? Has anybody urged that the black man be exempted from military service? Has any black man laid down his fifty dollars in a Liberty Loan booth, and has been refused a bond? Just to suggest such possibilities is to reveal their inherent absurdity. In these and countless other directions the Negro is usable, as a shovel is useable to dig a ditch or a truck to carry a burden; and society pays tribute to his worth. But what happens when the Negro asks for reciprocity in this matter of service-seeks as a return for duties done the free exercise of privileges conferred?

What if he wants to use the public schools, the public libraries, the public parks, the theaters, hotels and railroads, public institutions and utilities generally, on an equal footing with other men? What if he buys real estate and builds a home in a neighborhood which will provide the best possible conditions for the rearing of his children? What if he enters not a Liberty Loan booth but a voting booth and seeks not to purchase a bond but deposit a ballot? This is different, is it not? The Negro is suddenly not so precious as before. On the contrary, he is worthless; or, worse than worthless, dangerous, and therefore not merely to be cast aside but trodden under foot.

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