

Our Christian Obligation to the Negro

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It has now been sixty years since the Negro was given his freedom. These have been years of phenomenal progress by him in various directions. It has been said freely that no other race has made such progress in such short time. This fact pays worthy tribute to his ability and energy. It also speaks in convincing phrase of the kindly interest, the fairness, even the magnanimity of his white neighbour.

Not yet, however have we reached perfection. Inevitably has our attitude been colored by the former relations in which we stood to each other. This is still true. But the time has come when we must look upon the Negro as a fellowman, and treat him with a finer justice than hitherto. Indeed, we must continue to go beyond justice and treat him with a yet larger generosity.

In dealing with this question we must not idealize the situation. It may be true, as some contend, that the white race has no innate superiority to the black race. It may be true that under equal conditions and the proper lapse of time the Negro race might prove itself the equal of the white race. But this much is unquestionable fact—as the two races exist side by side to-day they are not equal. The white race has a decided advantage. This evident fact must color our practical decisions, whatever ideal principles might dictate. Furthermore it must be borne in mind that some statements must be general. In so brief compass we cannot delay to note possible exceptions. The reader must supply these without imputing to us undue rashness.

Never for a long time has education been so emphasized. We believe that its privileges are essential if a man is to come to his full stature. Here the South has done a fine part by the Negro. But a higher goal is summoning us. He must have an equal share with ourselves. His buildings must be as good as ours, his teachers as well qualified, his opportunities as extended, running even to the university. Circumstances may not permit the attainment of this goal in the immediate present, but it must be the end toward which we inflexibly strive and which we shall establish at the earliest date that is reasonably practicable.

The railroad issue is still very much alive. So long as the Negro pays as much for service as the white man there must be no difference in the accommodations that he receives. The car in which he rides must be as good in every respect as that in which his white brother rides.

Rigid fairness in business is axiomatic. A full wage for full work is imperatively demanded. Where white and colored people labor together at the same task, work equal in quantity and quality calls for the same remuneration. Advantage must no longer be taken of his ignorance or helplessness. This principle must apply to domestic employment alike with every other kind of oc-

cupation. In many instances a higher wage scale must be inaugurated. As a rule the Negro is being doomed by slender pay to levels of life that defeat the finest unfolding of his being. He must live under conditions that twist his nature toward deformity. There must be relief. Justice demands it. If not justice, then generosity. There is else no hope for his elevation.

The full rights of citizenship are his. He must be allowed to exercise the franchise on the identical terms that determine the vote of the white man. Even-handed justice must handle the scales when he appears in court, either as defendant or prosecutor. In matters of paving sanitary arrangements, police protection, charitable institutions, that are provided by the government, care must be taken to deal fairly. Every voice must be his prize if he has sufficient prowess to possess himself of its prerogative.

Courtesy is demanded. Sometimes a Negro is gratuitously offended simply because he is a Negro. He is entitled to kindlier consideration. He is human. Cut him and he will bleed. Trample upon his sensibilities and they will quiver with pain as truly—though often not as keenly—as his Anglo-Saxon brother. He must be addressed in terms of respect.

To follow this line of thought is bound to bring us at last to social relationships. The writer does not believe that it would be wise to break down social barriers between the races in the South. The effort to do so would widen a breach that is gradually closing. If left alone this question will eventually adjust itself. If the attention of the white race is centered upon an absolutely fair deal toward the colored race in business, professional life, industry, domestic relations, education, courtesy religion, civic affairs; if the two races meet each other on terms of mutual self-respect in all other relations, the question of social relations will take care of itself. As the Negro achieves worth, he will be treated with increasing consideration.

There is no occasion, therefore, for agitation that leads toward social intermingling and its concomitant of intermarriage. These questions are not at issue and there is no need to spend time in their discussion. On the other hand there is great need that the principles of Jesus be applied to our relations to the Negro. As these principles become pregnant in our spirits all needed transformation will be wrought.

Little Rock, Ark., March—An announcement has been received here from the Russell Sage Foundation, New York, of the selection of Miss Mattie Nance, Philander Smith college senior, as the colored member off the group of twelve college women who will make a tour of Europe under the auspices of the National Students Council of the Y.W.C.A. The group will sail June 20th and return Sept. 4th.

The women will visit the principal centers of Europe to make a survey of social and economic conditions.

Miss Nance must raise \$500 by March 20th while the Y.W.C.A. body gives \$500 to complete the amount necessary to meet the expenses of the trip.

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