

ORTHODOX RELIGION

DOES IT HANDICAP NEGRO PROGRESS?

By V. F. CALVERTON

Editorial Note: This is the first of a series of three articles on this important subject. Next month Prof. Kelly Miller will discuss the opposite point of view, and following that Prof. Gordon B. Hancock of Virginia Union University will discuss both points of view.

Mr. Calverton is Editor of "The Modern Quarterly" and author of "The Newer Spirit" and "Sex Expression in Literature."

One of the most grotesque and spectacular contradictions in American life is that of a black man worshipping a white man's God in a black man's church. The gesture is pathetic. Yet it is, after all, as inevitable as it is tragic.

The Negro represents one of the most religious types in America. His extreme religiosity is a direct outgrowth of the economic and social oppression of his life before the Civil War. While religion with the white man, at least with the white intellectual, is on the wane, it seems to have suffered little check or diminution with the Negro. Early in the nineteenth century, over fifty percent of university students were candidates for the ministry or priesthood; today, despite the advance of wealth, the multiplication of churches, and the increase of souls to be saved, the percent of university students studying for the clergy has rapidly fallen. In the city, the preacher is no longer the center of intellectual activity and progress. The preacher is no longer referred to as the apostle of authority in things logical and philosophic. Religion and science too often have been found to conflict. It is only in the little country colleges of the West, or the somewhat backward colleges of the South where an agrarian situation had encouraged superstition, that the preacher still dictates policy and propaganda. White magazines of advanced type no longer feature the cleric or consider ecclesiastical matters of significance. With the Negro, a deplorable contrast is to be discovered. The preacher is still a protagonist in Negro life. The ministry is still an attractive vocation. Religion is still a compelling and dominant motif. Negro colleges of progressive as well as conservative character almost invariably choose an ecclesiastic as their president. (When the ecclesiastic happens to be a very progressive and intelligent thinker such as Mordecai Johnson, recently appointed president of Howard University, attack is unnecessary, but Mordecai Johnson represents an exception as rare as he is excellent). Negro magazines of liberal and modern character, unless of the purely esthetic type such as *Fire*, are inevitably sympathetic to religion. Their pages are often featured with the pictures of bishops, preachers and deacons. They make constant if necessary obeisance to the church. Their fingers must be tender-

tipped whenever they touch the religious theme. The Negro Church in addition to its moral influence is still an important source of financial support. The result is timidity in emotional approach and compromise in intellectual conclusion.

This extraordinary religiosity of the American Negro has its root in the economic soil. While the fact that the Negro, a submerged class, adopted the religion of the ruling class is a reality beyond dispute, the process of submerged classes always adopting the religion of ruling classes is not an inevitable corollary. Certainly it cannot be established as a sociological law. The Jews when in captivity in Egypt did not adopt Egyptian ecclesiasticism. Nor did the submerged classes during the first three centuries following the Christian era adopt the Roman religion. On the contrary, the process was reversed. The religion of the ruling class, the Roman aristocracy, was swallowed up by the growing sweep of Christian doctrine, which was the creed of the suppressed peasant and proletarian. Other sociological factors unquestionably intrude. The Christianity which the American Negro accepted and translated into his life was an other-worldly Christianity that visioned heaven as its millennium and earthly-struggle as a futile delusion. The Christianity of the Southern plantation-owners had acquired a practical aspect, a this-worldly application, a convenient and flexible acquiescence, which salvaged sin but did not interrupt mundane ferocity and acquisitiveness. In addition, Christianity, was an excellent justification for Southern society. The Negro was construed as a scion of Ham, and, therefore, dedicated to eternal bondage. For the Negro, Christianity had a different purport and meaning. It evoked a spiritual attitude at times akin to hysteria and mania. It was an escape-mechanism. Slavery bred despair. Life could offer neither palliative nor aspiration. The Negro turned to another world with the gesture of a falling warrior. It was his only outlet. His religion fed upon the promise of paradise. His whole life became saturated with this conception. His music and songs became pregnant with it. Even with the passing of slavery, as we have already indicated, this consuming spirituality did not disappear. It still remains, a vestige that scarcely has begun to wither.

This religiosity, whose prevalence and origin we pointed out in the preceding paragraph, has been and still is a serious handicap to the Negro in his attempt to adjust himself to his new situation in society. It diverts him from his mundane struggle. It gives to suffering a halo, and to glory a scorn. It acts as a chaotic, centrifugal influence. The Elysian fields compensate for the barren hovel. It is delusion rampant.

What are the definite effects of this religious attitude, this obsessing orthodoxy on the part of the Negro in the struggle for a new social world?

It is obvious that this antagonism to the Negro is only part of a series of antagonisms that dominate the present social world. Our acquisitive society has fostered antagonism in every part of the world. Antagonism is an inevitable concomitant of a competitive, capitalist society. Without antagonisms struggle would have been removed, and competition eliminated. Capitalism would then have been impossible. The very basis of our society is antagonism. Race-antagonisms are an active illustration of the effects of a competitive economics. The Negro was not hated in France or in England or in Germany when upon its soil, because he was not an economic competitor, or a source of social danger. In America he is hated. In America he was first a slave which caused a set of social reactions unfavorable to his advance; now he is steadily becoming an economic competitor, which only intensifies and aggravates his entire situation.

These conflicts are part of the class-struggle of contemporary society. The Negro cannot escape them any more than the white man.

What has orthodox religion to do with these conflicts? What attitude does it encourage?

In the first place, the orthodox religion of the Negro, as we have described it, obscures instead of clarifies the economic issue. It instills other-worldliness instead of this-worldliness. It presents myth instead of science. It features Jesus instead of Marx or Darwin. It is thus a backward instead of a progressive force. Orthodox religion preaches docility and acquisitiveness, not vigor and defiance. It emphasizes submissiveness and not revolt. It disseminates a doctrine emasculate of strength and power. It encourages the delusion that the meek shall inherit the earth. It stresses weakness as a virtue. Its spirit is slavish and sentimental.

The doctrine of Christianity is totally without the gamut of social and economic realities. Instead of indicating it avoids the class-struggle. Instead of attacking, it allows itself to be led by the vested interests. In wars it is used as an equal justification by both antagonists. In the Middle Ages it was used to assail usury; with Baxter and Calvin it was used to justify usury. In brief, it is so flexible that it is spineless.

The hope of the Negro is economic. He must realize the economic structure of contemporary society, and equip himself to change it. He must see his salvation in the rise of the working class to a position of power—in a new economic order! He must become part of this working class. He must ally himself with the cooperative

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Orthodox Religion

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economics of a new social system. There must be no toleration with the present order. His attitude must be one of challenge and no submission. The obstacles that the white man interposes are, after all, expressive of conservatism. The Negro must align himself with the radical movement, which opposes race-prejudice and nationalistic passion. If the A. F. L. refuses him admission to its unions, he must organize unions of his own. Organization, however, is imperative. If race-organization, however, for the moment, is necessary, it must be nevertheless in preparation for an organization in which racial distinctions will be ultimately annihilated. It is upon the economic and not the racial plane that organizations must be constructed. The Negro capitalist will exploit the Negro worker the same as will the white capitalist. It is not against the white man, but against the ruling economic class that the new Negro must focus his assault.

Orthodox religion, by its very philosophy, handicaps the growth of this attitude. In this respect, it handicaps not only the progress of the Negro but the progress of the entire proletariat. It handicaps the process of social change and economic revolution.

Can we allow orthodox religion to impede the advance of a people and a proletariat?

(Watch the August MESSENGER for Kelly Miller's reply. It's one of the best things he's written.—Ed.)

Bodenheim Uber Alles!

NINTH AVENUE, by Maxwell Bodenheim, Boni and Liveright, publishers.

REVIEWED BY MARGARET LARKIN

A little hair dresser from Hell's Kitchen walks through the pages of Maxwell Bodenheim's "Ninth Avenue," and touches that somewhat tawdry piece of writing into a portrait of real humanness.

This talented clown of American letters, Maxwell Bodenheim, has a magician's insight into what we commonly call "human nature." Particularly when he is writing of the riff raff of modern New York, he can build up his "characters" a slang phrase at a time to the stature of unforgettable people. He nearly always writes of people he has known well. If his relations with his "character" have hurt him, the portrait turn out a cruel and devastating caricature. If by some miracle the man or woman he describes has not offended him, the portrait is likely to be rugged enough, but sensitive and real, as Blanche is, or the hero of his "Crazy Man."

In "Ninth Avenue" he has made a picture of Blanche and her dismal family that not even the inane last chapters in which she rises above her surroundings and becomes clever, can obliterate. Her struggles against the assumed superiority of her gangster brothers, against the weak dictatorship of her father and the ineffectual whining of her mother; her encounters with her "boy friends" under a hard-boiled, sex-

wise code; her frustration and dim disgust in her ugly life, all are set down in vivid, salty detail.

It is too bad that Bodenheim let her wander into Greenwich Village and meet himself and his enemy-friend, Ben Hecht. From then on she grows increasingly dull. The author evidently admires her as she takes on "culture" under his tutelage, but the reader finds her only stupid. Her "clever and naive" remarks which delight the gods of Greenwich Village are only incredibly bad wise cracks, and as for the gods themselves—

The portrait of Ben Hecht is probably accurate enough caricature, but the portrait of Maxwell by Maxwell is no less than horrible. The discrepancy between the man as he appears to an unfriendly world and the man as he appears in his own fantasy, "a distinguished outcast, ostracized, attacked, and hated by literary and dilettantish groups of every variety because of his skillful tongued independence, his careless violations of etiquettes and conventions, and the ravages of his unorthodox intellect," is painful in the extreme. It is such a naked revelation of the attempt of a tortured soul to compensate itself, as to be wholly shocking. Even more than his enemies, his friends must writhe at the combination of abjectness and pride in the man that could let him give himself away so miserably.

Besides the elaborate and silly posturings of the author and his friends, the latter half of the book is taken up with the love affair of Blanche and Eric Starling, in which the white girl cleaves to her colored lover over the advice of her friends and the rage of her stupid family. Bodenheim has evaded the issue somewhat by making Eric seven-eighths a white man, but on the whole he has handled the matter with considerable understanding and delicacy.

As I leave the book I am tormented to know whether it was by accident or design that Bodenheim made the people of Hell's Kitchen so much more interesting companions than the people of Greenwich Village. I am inclined to suspect that he has perpetrated a ghastly cynicism upon us all, and has written this book to prove that brilliant people are fools, whereas simple bootleggers, prize-fighters, gangsters, and their lady friends, are the wise men of this generation.

For Salome

By LANGSTON HUGHES

There
Is no sweetness
In the kisses
Of a mouth
Unwarm and dead
And even passion's
Flaming bliss
Turns ashen
In a charnel bed.
Salome
Of the wine red lips,
What would you with Death's head?

In the August Number

"TOY BUSINESS MEN"

By CHANDLER OWEN

Success

By LANGSTON HUGHES

Here I sit with my belly full
And he who might have been my brother
Walks hungry in the rain.

Here I sit with my belly full
And she I might have loved
Seeks someone in the shadows
To whom she may sell her body.

Here I sit with my belly full,
No longer the rain,
No longer the shadows for the
Woman I love,
No longer hunger.

Success is a great big beefsteak
With onions on it,
And I eat.



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ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

Does It Handicap Negro Progress?

By KELLY MILLER

FOR the purposes of the present discussion, we may as well hold in abeyance the superhuman assumptions and metaphysical speculations which underlie all religion. It will boot the opposition nothing to indulge in denial and ridicule of magic, myth and mystery. It suffices the present joined issue to point out the reality of religious reaction upon the course of history and the conduct of mankind. Whether the birth of Jesus was magical or natural, whether or not He performed miracles, whether He rose from the dead or ascended into Heaven may indeed furnish theme for the devotion of the saint or for the ridicule of the sceptic. But the undisputed facts abide. The influence of Jesus upon human history has been greater than that of Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Washington and Lincoln rolled into one and manifolded a hundred times. Judaism and Christianity its first off-spring, form the bed-rock of modern civilization. From thence have been derived the code of ethics, the broadening sense of human fraternity, the zeal for works of love and mercy, and the higher sanction of human behavior.

The dynamic effect of the Christian cult over the lives and conduct of its devotees cannot be better illustrated than its early trials and triumphs under the Roman Empire. A handful of peasants and slaves became obsessed with this new gospel which so energized their spirit and toughened their resolution, that they were enabled to endure cruelties, torture and terror such as never before had ever befallen the lot of frail human nature. But by some magic power which enabled them to glory in tribulation, in course of a few centuries they were enabled to conquer their captors through the passive power of suffering and love. The persecutors became the willing disciples of Him against whose followers they had hitherto breathed out hatred and slaughter. The triumph of Christianity over the power of Rome is the miracle of miracles, which actually happened. How can any one expect to convince the normal human understanding that that religion which raised the serfs of the ancient world to such a pinnacle of power and dominion has become a handicap to the heavy laden and overborne sons of toil of the present age? By what possible process of argument does one hope to persuade himself or convince others that the religion of England, America, France, Germany and of all of the most advanced nations of the world will retard the Negro race in its upward struggle to attain the level which they have already reached through the beneficence of its influence?

The Christian Church is the earthen vessel into which has been placed the heavenly treasure. Like all human agencies, the church has evinced the reactionary and the progressive tendencies. The one looks to the past; the other looks to the future. These opposite tendencies are inherent in the nature of man. The Church has been divided into these two conflicting camps

from its very incipiency. The party of reaction has often stood in the way of progress and thwarted human advancement. At times it has gained the upperhand and cast a stigma upon the name of religion. It has at times burned martyrs at the stake, thwarted the freedom of speech and conscience and indulged in acts of unbelievable cruelty. There are black pages in the history of the Christian Church. But the laven of the progressive spirit has ever been at work. It has steadily made gain over the less enlightened reaction and has won the final victory in every sharply drawn contest. Christianity should be judged by its dominant and triumphant spirit, and not by the ugly incidents and untoward episodes in which all human progress abounds. Like a running stream, Christianity contains within itself the potentiality of self-purification.

Religion and science have seemed to be opposable disciplines throughout the course of human history. Religion is rooted in the instinct of fear; science is grounded in the inward thirst for knowledge which banishes fear. Religion is deferential to the unknown and the unseen; thence defers only to the things we see and know. Religion makes for dependence; science for independence. In every historical conflict between science and religion, science has gained the immediate battle, but religion has won the ultimate victory. Religion is bold, daring, assertive, dogmatic. It demands an instant philosophy which explains in terms acceptable to the intelligence, credulity and superstition of the time of its promulgation, the beginning and end of things. Science is slow, cautious, deliberative. Religion cannot wait upon the slow movement of the intellectual process to explain the phenomena of the Universe. Moses could not wait for Copernicus, Sir Isaac Newton, Darwin and Einstein. But as fast as science fully demonstrates that any of the assumptions of religion are false or erroneous, religion has never failed to adjust itself to the fuller discovery of truth. The Church has accepted Copernicus, Sir Isaac Newton, and Darwin, and stands ready to incorporate Einstein as soon as his theory has been demonstrated in terms of normal human understanding. It is only the backward, reactionary fraction of the Church that has refused to follow the light of science. But it too has always been forced finally to accept the truth. There is no place now in Christendom, except in the dark nooks and corners where this religion seeks to thwart freedom of thought or of conscience.

The Church has made many mistakes; what human institution has not? History is strewn with crimes committed in the name of Christianity. It has been claimed that from first to last a million martyrs have been victim to its cruel exactions. But this, of itself, does not prove it to be a handicap. For every martyr in the name of religion, there have been hundreds of

victims in the name of liberty. Ten million such victims fell on the battle fields of the world war, and yet the cause of liberty was no whit advanced. Now if we do not condemn liberty because its mistaken zealots demand the sacrifice of uncounted victims in its behalf why in logical consistency, should we condemn religion as a handicap because of the sacrifices, fruitful or fruitless, which have been exacted in its name?

Again, it is contended that Christians do not live up to the requirements of their creed, and therefore they are to be condemned as hypocrites who handicap human progress. It is too painfully apparent that professing Christians fall short of the requirements of their faith. The margin between creed and conduct, especially when applied to the Negro race, is appalling in its apostasy. But even here the Christian approximates his creed as closely as the patriot his political professions. The Christian Church in America lives as near to the fullness of the stature of the Sermon on the Mount as the state does to the doctrine of the Declaration of Independence. The Ten Commandments are no more openly flouted and flagrantly violated than the Constitution of the United States. Is the government a handicap to human progress because it deviated from its high pretensions? Then why the Church?

The Negro first came in contact with Christianity when religion was in a reactionary mood. The conscience was not then quickened to the moral evil of the institution. But no one, after reflection, would say that slavery, iniquitous as it was, was a handicap to the progress of the Negro. Slavery was a school of learning, as well as of labor. Through its cruel discipline the Negro learned the language, the industrial method, the moral code, and the cultural canons of the most advanced section of the human family. There was no other way that we can think of by which he could have received these priceless advantages. It may not be unbecoming to quote even the Scriptures in a religious discussion. God makes the wrath of man to praise him, and holds the remainder of wrath in restraint. The African has caught the secret and method of European culture. The enslaved Negro has become the most advanced section of the two hundred millions of his blood. If the continent of Africa is ever to be redeemed, it will be through the enslaved fragment in Christian lands. The enslavement of Joseph made for the salvation of the Israelitish race. It may prove so with the enslavement of the African.

It may be argued that Christianity weakens the Negro's will and makes him satisfied with servility. The reverse is the truth. The Christianity preaches and teaches the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Wherever this doctrine finds lodgment, human slavery is doomed. Christianity and cowardice are incompatible terms. Denmark Veasey and

Nat Turner precipitated uprisings that their race might be free. Frederick Douglass, as did thousands of others, like Job's war horse, scented the breath of freedom afar off, and fled to the breathing thereof. Slaves by the thousands rushed to the Union lines in quest of the consciously felt right of freedom. The germ of Christianity was at work.

The progressive spirit of the white Christians very soon began to sense the wrong of human slavery. The Quaker conscience first began to work. There were doubtless other causes entering into the Emancipation of the Negro race. The political and economic issues had heavy weight. But in final analysis, it was the leaven of Christianity that overthrew the iniquitous and unchristian institution. It split the church in twain. The watchword of the Civil War was instinct with Christian faith and courage.

"In the beauty of the lilies
Christ was born across the Sea,
With a glory in His bosom
which transfigured you and me;
As He died to make men holy,
let us die to make men free;
For God is marching on."

The whole nation sang this battle hymn with joy and gladness. No one who sang it then, and no one who sings it now can ever for a moment let it enter his mind that Christianity is a handicap to the Negro. The war over, the Christian heroes of peace went as missionaries to the far away Southland to labor for the reclamation of the recently emancipated slaves. They built schools and colleges and established institutions of love and mercy in the name of that religion which gave them courage and faith. Howard University, Fisk University, Atlanta, Lincoln, and the rest are the outgrowth of Christian endeavor. These institutions alone will forever stop the suggestion and stifle the thought that Christianity is a handicap to the Negro's progress.

The progressive element of the Church gained so triumphantly over the reactionary adversary that today, there is not a single Christian in America nor on the face of the earth who advocates human slavery. It is an easy prophecy that in the years shortly to come there will be found no Christian anywhere who will advocate or practice human injustice.

Religion was essential to the Negro's well-being because it furnished him a solace in the hereafter for the inescapable ills which he must needs suffer here. There is inherent wisdom in the apocalyptic philosophy which transfers to another world the joys which are forbidden in the vale of tears. The unsophisticated Negro in the darker days of slavery sang exultantly: "Earth is a desert drear; Heaven is my home". But his heaven was always a place of equality and justice. He felt that he would be recompensed in the sweet by and by for all of the wrongs and hardships which a cruel usage compelled him to suffer here below. As deftly as he dared, he called down the justice of Heaven upon the heads of those who did the wrong.

"If religion was the thing
that money could buy,

The rich would live
and the poor would die,
But thanks be to my God
it is not so,
If the rich don't pray
to Hell they'll go".

There was not an advantage which he craved for in Heaven that he did not in the deeper recesses of his being feel ought to and finally would be prevalent here on earth. There was not an injustice which he suffered from cruel usage which he did not believe would redound to his master in the day of reckoning. All of the overborne and heavily laden peoples of all times have had recourse to this apocalyptic philosophy which sustained them in the darker days of trial and tribulation.

It was also essential to the Negro's well being that he should take on the same form of religion as the environment by which he was surrounded. Let us suppose that the Negro had remained a heathen, and had adhered to the ancestral form of religion which he had practiced in the jungle of Africa. His relation to the Christian world would have been far more ruthless than it was. The Fourteenth Amendment makes the Negro a citizen and puts him on a footing of equality with the most coveted citizenship of the world. Does any sane person believe that the American people would ever have thus enabled four million of heathens and have incorporated them in the body politic? A race within a race constitutes a problem of great complexity; but when the issue of race becomes complicated with difference of religion the problem takes on a double order of difficulty.

Religion has not only not been a handicap to the Negro's progress, but it has been in the sphere of religious activity that he has made the greatest headway. Here he has shown the greatest executive ability and effective concerted will. He has organized four millions of his race in definite religious denominational allegiance. He has built thirty thousand churches and ordained forty thousand priests of God. His churches are on a property basis of eighty millions of dollars.

The independent Negro religious denominations have established and supported numerous schools and colleges. The race has no where established nor supported a single college, except under spur of the religious motive.

In politics and in business as well as in movements for political and civic reforms the Negro ministers lead the way.

Religion is not a handicap to the Negro in education, nor in business, nor in politics, nor in culture. It might be well then for the opposition to point out in what particular sphere of human progress does the handicap lie. It is a matter of universal remark that the race has made the most remarkable progress of any people in history. How could it have made such progress if Christianity has been such a heavy handicap?

Now if Christianity has indeed been a handicap to the race's progress, let us suppose, for the sake of argument that this handicap were removed. Wipe out every Negro church and Sunday School. Tear down his Young Mens Christian Association. Let the white race withdraw support from the schools and colleges in the

South, founded and fostered on the Christian philanthropy. Let us contemplate how much better off he would be without this religious encumbrance. There would be a rapid relapse back towards the jungle level of heathenism and barbarianism from which the Christian religion has rescued him.

If Christianity has been a handicap to that portion of the race which has embraced it, we would naturally expect higher standards and greater advancement in that section of the race that has been free from its baleful influence. We naturally turn to Africa for comparison. The native African is free from this handicap, and therefore, according to the opposition, he ought to be many degrees higher than his Christianized brother in other parts of the world. But why argue an absurdity.

Christianity has, in truth and indeed, not only not been a handicap to the progress of the Negro, but has been the chief agency in his salvation; not merely the salvation of his soul in the world that is to come, but his social salvation in the world that is here and now.

Note: This is the second article in the series. Mr. V. F. Calverton took a position opposite to that of Prof. Miller. Next month Prof. Gordon B. Hancock of Virginia Union University will discuss the subject in the September Number.

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ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

Does It Handicap Negro Progress?

YES AND NO

Says GORDON B. HANCOCK

Professor of Sociology, Virginia Union University

Ella Wheeler Wilcox sensed a vital truth, when, in one of her poems she wrote,

"I know as my years grow older
And my eyes have clearer light;
That in each rank wrong somewhere
There lurks the seed of right."

When men pretended to think in absolute terms, it was an easy matter to answer "yes" or "no" to controversial questions, for it was supposed that things were separated by lines easily discerned. But the stubborn fact that all human things are relative precautions against dogmatic utterances. And it becomes increasingly clear that things are separated by zones rather than by lines. Spring is the zone separating winter and summer and so is autumn; twilight is the light zone separating the night and the day and so is dawn; manhood is the time zone separating youth and age, while indifference is a quality zone between love and hate, between the good and the bad. Orthodoxy and heterodoxy in their extreme manifestations are easily distinguished but it is difficult indeed to distinguish between liberal orthodoxy and conservative heterodoxy. So when the question as to how orthodox religion affects the progress of the Negro is propounded, this lack of definite distinction makes either the affirmative or negative position necessarily conditional.

Prefatory remarks would be incomplete without some concept of what is implied in the term, "Negro's progress". Since the social problem is a problem of human relationships the proper adjustment of which is the condition of human progress, it is patent that the progress of the Negro is involved in the adjustment of certain relations whereby he shares more largely and more certainly the larger life of the society of which he is a part.

That religion is a conservative force in human development is a proposition on which social philosophers everywhere agree. It is this fact that tends to alienate the radical elements in society. Yet the mere fact that religion is conservative is not sufficient warrant to strive for its destruction. Had there been nothing old there would be nothing new and the fact that the new has grown out of the old indicates that the old is not without merit. Conservatism therefore no less than liberalism has played its part in improving the condition of mankind and without the centripetal force of the conservatives the centrifugal force of the liberals might have thrown humanity out on tangents of destruction. It is generally agreed that the hopes of any submerged group rest with the radical elements and it is upon this premise that much anti-religious sentiment is based.

A closer study of the question, however, reveals that the profit which submerged classes derive from an allegiance to radicalism, is largely though not wholly contingent upon the success of the radicals. That the Negro in America is a submerged element is apparent; but that he is thereby safe in allying himself with any of the radical "isms" is extremely doubtful. The Negro has gained much, and has much yet to gain from philanthropy. But in the very nature of things philanthropy—at best a poor substitute for social justice—is conservative. Any pronounced tendency on the part of the Negro to ally himself with radical movements may result in a cessation of certain philanthropies; and when this takes place in a social order where the sense of social justice is but faintly awakened tragic developments are sure to follow and especially in view of the fact that the radical element may have little or nothing to offer, being itself at the mercy of a social order overwhelmingly conservative. In so far then as orthodox religion awakens caution in the Negro as he is tempted to cast away the old for the new; and in so far as it sets forth the indispensableness of religion as a factor in his upward struggles; and in so far as it recognizes the necessity of a stabilizing force in the social process, it does not handicap the Negro's progress, for it thereby becomes a mechanism for the conservation of social values without which there can be no progress.

Negro progress demands the conservatism of religion. Down through the ages religion has sustained the strivings of the human heart and the fact that man is "incurably religious" would warrant the supposition that religion has a survival value. Although there are some Negroes who inveigh against religion itself and apparently incline themselves to atheism and irreligion, thanks be, their number is inconsiderable when compared with the great masses of Negroes who seem neither capacitated nor inclined to dispense with the solace of religion. Atheism is negative and progress is positive and the progress of a race cannot be intelligently predicated upon a negation. Atheism, therefore, is subversive of the Negro's highest aspirations. The oncoming ages may produce a culture unrelated to religion, but in this respect it will be much unlike past ages in which the relationship between progress and religion was definitely established and in not a few instances direct and causal. If man's religion grows out of a sense of dependence as all philosophies of religion reveal, there is not the faintest possibility that even in the remote future can man reasonably dispense with a value that sustains him as he journeys to his long home. It is plain that humanity is riding Time's outbound train and so far as mortals know the schedule calls for no return. In so far then as orthodox religion contends for the principle that religion is one of the fundamentals of hu-

man progress it is not a handicap to the Negro's progress.

Much is being said today about the obsolescence of the Scriptures and wherever they cannot be harmonized with more modern theories they are at times derided with blistering sarcasm. The plea is openly made that the Scriptures as a rule of human conduct in modern times should be cast aside. Yet such an argument is specious in view of the fact that to date no better guide to human conduct has been found. What other writings are so full of interest and so full of inspiration? What other writings have turned the stream of centuries out of channel, snatched kingdoms out of joint and lifted empires from their hinges? What other writings are so potent in the affairs of mankind? To cast aside as obsolete this compendium of idealism which has been a world dynamic without something better to take its place is a course that does not commend itself to thoughtful men. The beauty of the Bible consists not so much in evaluating detached passages as in the harmony of the whole; not so much in its letter as its spirit. In so far then as orthodox religion strives to preserve the letter of the Bible as a means of preserving its spirit, it offers little or no handicap to the Negro. The God of the Bible appeals to men and so does its Jesus Christ. Say what we will, Jesus Christ is the world's foremost spiritual expert and as such speaks with authority and from this authority there is no appeal. His deliverances on the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man and on the immortality of the soul and its destiny have made the mightiest spiritual appeal of the ages. These utterances of Christ constitute the "last word" about matters of the profoundest human concern: Man's whence, his why and his whither. The teachings of the Bible have motivated much that has contributed and still contributes to the physical and spiritual emancipation of the Negro. And, if the economic interpretation of history were firmly established it would not fundamentally negate this assertion.

Just as orthodox religion when liberally interpreted may not handicap the Negro's progress when too illiberally interpreted may seriously handicap the Negro. What has been said has been an attempt to give orthodoxy this liberal interpretation. An illiberal interpretation will be made in what is to follow.

For centuries there have been those who were wont to treat reason as a "bastard" in the family of mental attributes. They consequently slighted reason in favor of faith which they contended was a heavenly attribute with heavenly potentialities. The orthodox religionists more than any other group have been prone to make this pseudo-distinction between reason and faith. Out of this distinction has grown the age-long conflict between religion and science which conflict is today deflecting spiritual energies that might be used for more fruitful pur-

poses. The introduction of "monkey bills" into the legislatures of some of our states and the celebrated Scopes trial in Tennessee are but calls to the color in the conflict between religion and science; it is but the recurrence of a social malady that thoughtful men had hoped was abated. There are those who boast of being "Fundamentalists" thereby laying claims to the belief that wherever and whenever science does not comport with religion the former becomes pernicious and maleficent. They commit themselves to the proposition that science has no right that religion is bound to respect. Any fight against science as the myriad tongues of history will testify is a losing fight, for science no less than religion has helped to make the world of today what it is and has lifted untold burdens from the shoulders of struggling man. Those therefore who would make the Bible a criterion of science are the worst enemies of the Bible they are trying to preserve; for it is becoming increasingly difficult to prove the inherent danger of science by which men eat and see and move and have their economic being. And too, men still remember the story of Galileo, Bruno and Copernicus whom orthodox men derided but whom rising generations call blessed. The Negro has nothing to gain by a disbelief in science and in so far as orthodox religion seeks to cultivate the age-long enmity between religion and science it certainly is a serious handicap to the Negro's progress.

The onward strides of science have done much to reveal to man his insignificance in the great scheme of things. Each human being is but an atomic center of infinities that are overwhelming in their nature and extent. There are not only universes without and beyond him but there are universes within him and the opinion of philosophy that seems to become more and more unanimous is, that the universe is infinite in its reach. The larger the concept of the universe the smaller the concept of man and certainly the relativity of his knowledge becomes a powerful suggestion. It must therefore become evident that human dogmatism is far-fetched and fatuous and will encounter the contempt that in the end it justly deserves. What creature who came out of the "somewhere" into the "where" for but a few brief years and then departs for the "somewhere", there to be long gone, can speak with finality? What creature who knows so little about anything can speak so dogmatically about everything, as to merit other than a questioning sympathy? The human vanity that has hitherto been the basis of a militant dogmatism is slowly giving way to a more cautious estimate of human dogmatics. Much of the opposition to religion that is cropping out here and there today has been engendered in religious dogmatism. Religious dogmatism is becoming more and more impotent in its influence upon mankind and it must be supplanted by a rational attitude of mind that allows each to value the opinions of the other. Mayhap Hegel was right after all when he averred that "each synthesis has its antithesis". When orthodox religion commits itself to dogmatism and so impresses itself upon the Negro it incapacitates the latter for freedom of thought and expression so essential to any program of social betterment. The dogmatism of experience has

its place and since experience is personal, dogmatism does not warrant any attempt to foist upon others our personal experiences which others than ourselves may feel justified in rejecting. Life and not logic is the ultimate determinant of what men believe.

Again, in the name of orthodoxy there is a tendency to over-emphasize questions of doctrine and under-emphasize certain questions of practice. In far too many cases ministers are indulging in heated wrangles over controverted theological doctrines while the weightier matters of human conduct are neglected. Many are trying to argue the finer points of the Atonement and the Trinity and the Virgin Birth as affected by evolution when moral delinquencies of the community need attention and the extent to which the religionists strain at the gnat of doctrine and swallow the camel of practice, they thereby divert religious interest out of constructive channels into a mere quibbling over questions that have proven too weighty for some of the most masterful minds of the ages. And by such distorted ideas of orthodoxy perfectly possible preachers become perfectly impossible controversialists. The present stage of the Negro's development calls for some constructive expression of religion and the extent to which such expression is subordinated to theological quibbling the Negro is handicapped. The Negro needs a social gospel and not a theological gospel as some erroneously postulate in the name of orthodoxy. The average man is not seriously hampered by what he does not understand about the ethical metamorphosis which inheres in the doctrine of evolution. To foist the question upon such the average man leads not only to intellectual confusion, it is provocative of questions which the average man has neither capacity nor disposition to debate. When churchmen of a controversial turn of mind realize that the Kingdom must be brought in through the power of righteous living rather than by victories in theological forensics; when they realize that an hour of living the Christ is worth a century of arguing the Christ, the deck will have been cleared for Christianity's action against the foes of its progress among whom are many who make of orthodoxy a stumbling block rather than a stepping stone to the higher life.

Finally, in the name of orthodoxy, many strike hard at all liberal thought that is not in consonance with their own and heap upon the liberal thinker their choicest maledictions. The liberal thinker has been one of the greatest assets to struggling mankind and although in many instances they have been misunderstood, maligned and murdered, the world owes them a debt of gratitude that it can hardly pay. Martin Luther the liberal thinker dared to nail the theses to the cathedral door at Wittenberg; John Huss the liberal thinker dared to insult the Archbishop of Prague and died at the burning stake in Bohemia but merited a title to fame that cannot die; Paul the liberal thinker carried the case of his Risen Lord to the very throne of the Caesars and although he lost his life the world accepts him as one of the most stalwart characters that ever lived; John Brown the liberal thinker dared put his head into a hangman's noose in holy mockery at the monster of human slavery and even today his spirit goes marching on; Jesus Christ was a liberal thinker and as

such got Himself crucified by the orthodox Jews of His day, but though once dead He is alive forever more. Those white men and women of the north and south who believe that the Negro is entitled to every right granted other races are liberal thinkers and as such have merited the rather "complimentary malediction" of many. Any suppression of liberal thought is subversive of the interests of society and certainly it tends to contravene the aspirations of black men. When orthodoxy therefore commits itself to the rather herculean task of muffling the voice of the liberal thinkers it thereby becomes an obstacle to the progress of the race—the Negro. In so far as orthodoxy commits itself to the guardianship of religion it is not a handicap to the Negro's progress; but in so far as it commits itself to the preservation of a definite type of religion to the exclusion of all other types it seriously handicaps the Negro. A race religiously trained to narrow thinking will be more and more handicapped in a world where progress lies along the path of liberal thought only through which submerged groups may hope for relief.

NOTE: This is the third and last of the articles on this subject. Others were by V. F. Calverton and Kelly Miller.

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