

THE WORKS OF FRANCIS J. GRIMKÉ

Edited by

CARTER G. WOODSON

Volume I

Addresses Mainly Personal and Racial

The Associated Publishers, Inc.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Printed in the United States of America

in developing in the race a manly self-respect; and is a standing argument against the professed friendship and Christian character of the men who have permitted this condition of things to continue as long as it has. There is no good or sufficient reason why Lincoln University should be the only one of all Negro institutions of higher learning to shut colored men out of its trustee board and out of its professorships. In the last analysis, when we get down to the bottom fact, the real reason will be found to be, though there isn't honesty enough, moral courage enough, to own up to it, is RACE PREJUDICE. This, I know, will be denied, but no denial can alter the fact. Lincoln, while professing faith in the Negro as a man and a brother, is not willing to accord to him the same rights, the same privileges that it accords to white men. And, when you ask, why? the question is evaded, or some flimsy excuse is given, when, as a matter of fact, the real reason is this accursed race prejudice, this dread of social equality, which is so widely prevalent in this country, and, which, even Christianity, the Christianity that is current in this country, is powerless to eradicate.

Lincoln ought to be ashamed of its record in this respect; and the men who are on its Trustee Board and in its faculty ought to see that a change is made; or else get out and let others get in who will have the moral courage and the Christian grace to put the University on a par with other Negro institutions in this respect. It is time, I say, that something was done. Let us hope that it will not be much longer delayed.

From what I have said, you will understand why I still cannot comply with your request. I am,

Yours truly,

FRANCIS J. GRIMKÉ.

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ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS¹

“Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us.”—I SAMUEL 7:12.

We have met here today for the purpose of celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of this church. On No-

¹ Delivered on the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, Washington, D. C., November 19, 1916.

vember 21, 1841, on the Lord's day, in the afternoon, in a little frame school house, located on H Street near the corner of Fourteenth, the organization was formally effected. The leading spirit in the movement was the Rev. John F. Cook, who was at that time engaged in the work of education. Seventy-five years ago things were pretty dark in this country for our people. The blight of slavery was upon the land. The pro-slavery forces were in the ascendancy, and were never more confident of their strength, or more insolent in their demands, than at that time. And yet, dark as things were, as discouraging as the outlook seemed, here was a man who had a thirst for knowledge, and who wanted in some way to bring to his people the blessings of an education, however simple, however rudimentary it might be. And so he opened a private school and continued for years to teach all who came to him for instruction. In this way, through his influence, many learned to read and write, and so were started on the upward way.

Mr. Cook was not only interested in the intellectual development of the colored people of the City of Washington, but also in their moral and spiritual development as well, and so the thought of the organization of a Presbyterian Church, which should become a new center of religious life in the community took possession of him. Not that he was wholly dissatisfied with the churches that were already in existence—as a matter of fact, he was himself a member of one of them—but he felt that he could better carry out his ideas in a new venture that would be largely under his own control, untrammelled by existing customs.

With this end in view, after due consultation with the Rev. John C. Smith, pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church of this city, and others, Mr. Cook was received by the Presbytery of the District of Columbia as a licentiate October 11, 1841. In thus receiving him he was not only authorized to preach the Gospel, but was encouraged by members of the Presbytery to carry out his ideas of organizing a Presbyterian church among the colored people.

The way now being clear, and having back of him the Presbytery, on the 23d of October he caused to be printed and circulated among the people of color, and also to be read in all the white Presbyterian churches, the following notice :

“By Divine permission, the Rev. John C. Smith will preach and explain the principles of the Presbyterian Church to the colored friends at John F. Cook's school room, on H near the corner of

Fourteenth Streets, on Wednesday evening next, at 7 o'clock, after which will be taken into consideration the propriety of forming a colored Presbyterian Church and congregation in this city. The colored members of the several Presbyterian churches and the friends generally are respectfully invited to attend.

“By order of the Presbytery of the District of Columbia.

(Signed) “JOHN F. COOK, Licentiate.”

In this connection I wish to say, I received shortly after it was announced that we would have this celebration the following note:

“To the Rev. Francis Grimké.

Dear Sir: I heard you say on Sunday that the church would celebrate its seventy-fifth anniversary. I thought I would send the printed notice that was sent to call the founders together. It was the property of my foster father, Alfred A. Cook, who died in 1857. It has been in my possession ever since. You can turn it over to the church so that it can be placed in its archives.

“Most respectfully yours,

“GEORGIANA THOMAS.”

I wish, in behalf of the church, to thank Mrs. Thomas very much for this souvenir of those early days. This is, perhaps, the only copy that has been preserved.

In response to this notice, on the evening of October 27, 1841, a number of persons of color and a few white friends assembled in the school room on H Street near Fourteenth. Dr. John C. Smith presided. After singing and prayer, a sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Stratton of Portsmouth, Va. After the sermon, Dr. Smith gave a clear exposition of the principles, doctrines, and government of the Presbyterian Church. An invitation was then extended to any persons present, members of any of the Presbyterian or other evangelical churches who approved of the organization of a Presbyterian Church, to signify the same by giving their names. In response to this invitation, nineteen persons enrolled their names. These persons were John F. Cook, David Carroll, Jane Noland, Mary Ann Tilghman, Clement Talbert, Lydia Williams, Elizabeth Carroll, Ann Brown, Charles Bruce, Basil Gutridge, Clarisa Forest, John Madison, Catherine Madison, Ann Chew, Rutha Smith, Emily Norris, Maria Newton, Alfred Cook, and Eliza Stewart.

On the Wednesday evening following, November 3rd, another meeting was held at the residence of Mr. David Carroll, at which the following resolutions were submitted and unanimously passed: