

THE WORKS OF FRANCIS J. GRIMKÉ

Edited by

CARTER G. WOODSON

Volume IV

Letters

The Associated Publishers, Inc.
WASHINGTON, D. C.

COPYRIGHT, 1942
BY CARTER G. WOODSON, TRUSTEE



Printed in the United States of America

ii

Wallace Radcliffe to Francis J. Grimké

Washington, D. C., May 24, 1916.

My dear Grimké:

I wish in the first place to thank you for your call and expression of sympathy during my illness. I wish you had asked to see me, for I was seeing at that time several of the brethren, and you would have been cordially welcome. As you may know, I have gotten back home after six weeks in the hospital and am doing well. I will not, however, be ready for public work of any kind until October 1.

I was very much interested in your tract concerning the American Bible Society. Of course, just at that time my illness had begun, but I knew something of what was contemplated. I confess to the surprise in your statement that they offered a separate pageant for the colored people. Dr. Fox was in my room on his earlier visit and made no mention of that, but of the general pageant including all. The other must have been a subsequent development. I do not think it was a wise suggestion. One recognizes, of course, the prejudice of many, but I question very much whether that prejudice would have had any such development as to suggest the propriety of the other.

Your tract is a strong, intelligent and a right protest. We will hope that more and more there will be a better conception and a better action on the part of Christian people.

With all good wishes

Yours cordially,
Wallace Radcliffe.

Matthew Anderson to Archibald and Francis J. Grimké

1926 S. College Avenue, Philadelphia, 5-29-16.

My dear Friends:

I am sure you have followed the reports of the Assembly as given by the daily press and from these accounts you naturally concluded that we lost most ingloriously our fight, but let me assure you that we gained the greatest moral victory of our life, which is admitted by both friend and foe. On arriving at the Assembly Wednesday evening, May 17th, I found that both Boards were entrenching themselves against any attack. The Freedmen's Board were lining up their colored contingents who

were dependent upon the Freedmen's Board for their living. A meeting was held at one of the hotels at which there were some forty colored men, Dr. Gaston, the Associate Secretary representing the Freedmen's Board. I was told that he attempted to assail my position and also to weaken my moral honor and that the only colored man present who arose to defend my position was Rev. J. A. Thos-Hazell, of Denver, Colo. He told Dr. Gaston that there should not be a meeting assailing me in my absence and made a strong speech against the action of the Rochester Assembly and in favor of the Overture sent up by the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

I tried for several days to get some leading white man to appear before the Committee on Bills and Overtures to urge them to bring out our Overture No. 33 in open Assembly as I felt sure they meant to bury it in the Committee, but I could not get a man to appear before them, not even a member of the Philadelphia Presbytery, who sent up the Overture. I was so persistent that some one would be heard, that I finally concluded that I would force the issue myself. I was admitted, but was given to understand by the Chairman that they could only give me ten minutes, to which I said I thought that I could say all that I wanted in five minutes, and sailed out. I told them that the Overture which was passed at Rochester, practically turning all work among colored people arbitrarily over to the Freedmen's Board, was seriously objected to by all the colored people of the north and by many of the white people also, and that we, the colored people, felt that it was simply a segregation of our churches, that it was drawing the color line, that it was a wet blanket upon all our work and that the colored churches in the north could not hope to succeed; that we did not want any special ecclesiastical legislation for our churches; that we wanted absolutely to have the same status that the white churches have, that we did not want any special Boards, that our work was Home Mission work and that under that Board it ought to remain. This was the substance of my address to the Committee on Bills and Overtures, but before leaving, however, I urged that the Overture asking for the rescinding of the Rochester action be brought out in open Assembly and there be freely discussed. They suggested that it be turned over to the Committee on Freedmen and that they would likely bring it out in open Assembly. Feeling that there would possibly be a

chance and the only chance to bring it out in open Assembly, I reluctantly consented.

For several days after this I tried to get before the Committee on Freedmen and finally succeeded, on Saturday evening, the 20th to get before them. I practically made the same speech before the Freedmen's Committee that I did before the Committee on Bills and Overtures. I soon found that the Committee was a packed one, Drs. Cowan and Gaston were both there, though they were not members. There was but one white member who seemed at all inclined to give me fair play, the chairman of the Committee, Dr. Fleck of Scranton, was extremely biased against me, the contemptible insinuation against my honesty which was brought out at the colored meeting on Wednesday at the hotel was brought out at this meeting greatly to my desire. Gaston touched a member as a signal to ask me the following question: "Dr. Anderson you have been receiving money from two sources for your work, haven't you? From the Board of Home Missions and also from the Synodical Committee?" "Yes, I have, and I understand that a fling was made at my honor at the meeting which was held on Wednesday night. Yes I received \$600 from the Home Board and at the same time received \$600 from the Synodical Board and my Presbytery knew all about it at the time as it was no secret when I received it. My Presbytery was anxious to help me out in my very straightened condition, having lost the State Appropriation for the educational work and practically laboring without salary in my church. I want this Committee to understand that there is not a man on it who is making a greater sacrifice than I am making. Last year I gave a thousand dollars personally to help the school. This year thus far I have given since the first of July \$1,300 and I have pledged myself to give \$300 more this year. There is nothing that I do, gentlemen, in an underhanded or in a secret way, as my Presbytery will bear me out." At this juncture the Chairman said that the question was too personal and not germane to the discussion. Dr. Gaston then arose to give the history of the Overture that was sent up by the Churches and was passed by the Rochester Assembly for my enlightenment, but with which I was perfectly familiar, but when he attempted to make the colored people the chief cause for the passing of the Overture at Rochester Assembly the result of a meeting of colored men called in Philadelphia about eighteen months ago, and that there

were twenty-five or fifty at this meeting, when asked the number by another party, I turned to him and asked if he would answer one or two questions which I wished to ask, and consenting, I inquired "Were you at the meeting in Phila.?" He replied, "I was." "How many colored men were present, Dr. Gaston?" "There were at least 24 or 25." "Well, Dr. Gaston, I was not at the meeting but was informed by one who was there that there were not more than 12 at the meeting. Dr. John B. Reeve was at the first meeting but was not at the second, and that he was my informer." I was before this Committee fully an hour and a half, but I saw plainly that there were but three men in my favor, two of whom were colored and one white.

When the Committee on Freedmen presented its report on Monday I attempted to reply, but they said I could speak when the Committee on Bills and Overtures would present its report. This report was presented on Tuesday, I was told I could not speak then but that they had decided to have an extra session on Thursday night for special discussion of this Overture 33, which would be the first order of the day. On Thursday night I succeeded in getting the floor about half after eight o'clock, when I presented the address which I will send you under another cover. Judging from the response that I received all through the address, I was satisfied that the house was largely with me, indeed, pressure had been brought upon the Assembly by a number of delegates saying that they wanted fair play, and strange to say this pressure was brought largely from the southern white men. I am positively certain that the Overture would have been carried by a large majority if Dr. Lee, who was not a delegate to the Assembly, but who had been brought on by the Freedmen's Board to help them in their fight, had not employed the usual tactics of the Negro orator to play upon the prejudices of the audience, by using sophistical flings. White men all over the house clamored to speak in defense of the Overture but were ruled out of order. It was a miserable exhibition of unfair ruling on the part of the Moderator, which should clearly show that he was biased in favor of the Freedmen's Board. The final result was therefore as stated above, the Overture was defeated by a very small majority, but from Thursday until the Assembly closed there was a growing feeling that injustice was done and that it should be rectified.

Just before adjourning on Friday noon to take recess for the

afternoon session, a delegate from Seattle, the Rev. F. L. Forbes, D.D., sent to me a member of his Presbytery, Rev. E. A. Johnson, D.D., to ask whether I would favor a motion to merge the Home and Freedmen Boards and I told him that I would and it was decided there and then that before adjourning that evening he would make a motion to that effect. The motion was put just thirty minutes before adjourning, Friday evening, and after all the docket was completed, Dr. Forbes arose and wished to know whether the Moderator would entertain a motion. This request was granted. Dr. Forbes said that ever since Thursday night after hearing the address that this whole Negro subject had been growing on him and that he wished to make the following motion, which he did not want discussed, namely, that the two Boards, the Freedmen and Home, be merged into one, under the name of the Home Board, that the colored work was really Home Mission work, and the term "Freedmen" would then be done away with which was distasteful to the colored people. It was seconded by Elder Roland of Seattle, and was unanimously carried. The motion suggested that the subject be placed in the hands of the proper Committee to be brought up at next session of Assembly.

After adjournment men came to me from all over the house saying that a great moral victory had been won. I am exceedingly grateful but I know that in order to make the victory fully successful it must be followed up assiduously throughout the whole year. All of our forces should be lined up because I know positively that the Freedmen's Board will spare no pains and will resort to all means to defeat the object.¹

There was not a single southern white man that voted against it as they sat very close to me and were observed closely.

I have thus given, in the main, the character of the fight which was made. While I am exceedingly grateful for the final outcome I am nervously anxious, in fact fearful, of the result when the subject is brought out in open Assembly, if it gets out, when the Assembly will meet, May 17th, 1917, at Dallas, Texas.

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Anderson.

¹ This was not a sporadic case. In practically all religious organizations of that day Negroes had to fight continually against the increasing tendency to yield to race prejudice and accord Negroes such treatment as they were accustomed to before the Civil War.