

SONS  
OF THE PROPHETS

*Leaders in Protestantism from  
Princeton Seminary*

EDITED BY HUGH T. KERR



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# IX. FRANCIS JAMES GRIMKÉ (1850-1937)

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## *Christian Moralist and Civil Rights\**

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BY CLIFTON E. OLMSTEAD

IT was Sunday, October 26, 1913. In Washington, D.C., the congregation of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church sat in silence as the words of a beloved pastor, now, at a venerable sixty-three, in the thirty-fifth year of his ministry, came winging their way into mind and heart. Dr. Francis James Grimké stood erect in the pulpit, his serene countenance testified to his senior citizenship. His pince-nez spectacles, tilted at the appropriate angle, gave added distinction to a firm but compassionate face marked by the personal sorrows and victories of more than half a century. The sermon, bright but never florid, was intensely moving in its pathos and sincerity; it bespoke the bitter experience of a downtrodden race striving to greet the dawn of its social redemption. There had been heartbreak and defeat, but there had also been progress. The future seemed auspicious.

“The struggle before us is a long and hard one,” prophesied the pastor, “but with faith in God, and faith in ourselves, and indomitable perseverance, and the purpose to do right, in spite of the forces that are arrayed against us, we need have no fears as to the ultimate result. Success is sure to crown our efforts. We are not always going to be behind; we are not always going to be discriminated against; we are not always

\* See *The Works of Francis James Grimké* (Washington: The Associated Publishers, 1942, 4 volumes); *Anniversary Address on the Occasion of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, Washington, D.C.* (Washington: R. L. Pendleton, 1916), by Francis James Grimké; *The Journal of Charlotte L. Forten* [Mrs. Francis James Grimké] (New York: Collier Books, 1961), edited by Ray Allen Billington; *Theodore Weld, Crusader for Freedom* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1950), by Benjamin P. Thomas; *Records of the Presbytery of the District of Columbia* I (1823-1849); *Records of the Presbytery of Washington City* I (1870-1878); x (1916-1920); xv (1936-1946).

going to be denied our rights. For, as Sojourner Truth said, 'God is not dead.' And some day, in His own good time, the right will triumph."<sup>1</sup>

I

No smug complacency prompted Pastor Grimké's sanguine hope. His conviction that the lot of the Negro must and would be improved had been baptized in the fire of civil conflict and the smoldering antipathies that lived on in the aftermath of war. He was the scion of two traditions, master and slave, and he bore in his body all the qualities of that passion that characterized intersocial relationships in the antebellum South. His sire, Henry Grimké, member of a prominent South Carolinian family, had compelled Nancy Weston, a slave, to serve him as wife. Three children, Archibald Henry, Francis James, and John, were born of the union.<sup>2</sup>

Francis Grimké was born on November 4, 1850. He was reared in Charleston, South Carolina, first by his father and then, after the father's death, by his half-brother, E. Montague Grimké. At the outset of the Civil War, Montague attempted to enslave Francis, though his father had provided in his will that Francis should be free. The young Negro lad escaped, however, and for a time served an officer in the Confederate Army. Two years later, when Francis was on a visit to Charleston, his half-brother had him thrown into the "workhouse," where he became seriously ill and might have died had it not been for the ministrations of his mother. No sooner had Francis regained his health than his half-brother sold him to a Confederate officer who held him in bondage until the close of the war.<sup>3</sup>

Through the good offices of two benefactors, the years immediately following Appomattox found Francis and his brother Archibald in the North in pursuit of an education. Arrangements were made for them to attend Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania; they graduated in 1870, Francis

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Francis James Grimké*, I, 513.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. viii.

at the head of his class. Archibald went on to Harvard Law School and to a distinguished career as lawyer, editor, author, diplomat, and public servant.<sup>4</sup>

During the year before their graduation, the two brothers made a providential encounter with two famous aunts on their father's side who had long since removed from Charleston to become Quaker abolitionists in Philadelphia and who, therefore, had no knowledge of the boys' existence. Angelina Grimké, now married to the eminent abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld, and her older sister, Sarah, had chanced to read in a Boston newspaper of the enviable record maintained at Lincoln University by a Negro youth named Grimké. Knowing that the surname Grimké was unique to Charleston, Mrs. Weld wrote to Francis for an explanation. Later she visited the university and publicly declared her relationship to the two brothers. Thereafter she and her husband treated them as members of the family and gave them much-needed financial assistance.<sup>5</sup>

For a time Francis pursued the study of law at Lincoln University and later at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Failing to find satisfaction in this calling, he determined at length to prepare himself for the Christian ministry. In the fall of 1875 he matriculated in Princeton Theological Seminary.

## II

At Princeton he roomed in the dormitories and encountered little if any racial prejudice.<sup>6</sup> Here he came under the tutelage of such illustrious scholars as Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, Caspar Wistar Hodge, and William Henry Green.<sup>7</sup> He never departed from the thorough methods of study that he learned at their feet. A year after his graduation in 1878, James McCosh, President of Princeton College, wrote

<sup>4</sup> Charlotte L. Forten, *The Journal of Charlotte L. Forten*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin P. Thomas, *Theodore Weld, Crusader for Freedom*, pp. 256-258.

<sup>6</sup> Grimké, *op.cit.*, I, 526.

<sup>7</sup> Orion C. Hopper, compiler, *Biographical Catalogue of Princeton Theological Seminary, 1815-1954*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

that "the late Dr. Hodge reckoned him equal to the ablest of his students."<sup>8</sup> In another letter, written in 1881, Dr. McCosh testified: "While here he convinced all the professors under whom he studied as a young man of a very high order of talent and of excellent character."<sup>9</sup>

Despite the demands of his ministerial studies, the young seminarian found time for an affair of the heart. The lady was Charlotte Forten, member of a wealthy and influential Negro family of Philadelphia. Her grandfather, James Forten, had amassed a fortune through his sailmaking business and was widely respected as a man of high moral principles whose life was dedicated to public service, especially to the elevation of the Negro.<sup>10</sup> Charlotte carried on the family tradition in her early career as a teacher and author of considerable repute. Both before and after her marriage to Mr. Grimké, on December 19, 1878, she labored tirelessly for the people of her race. Her husband found her a constant strength in his own crusade for social reform. Theirs was an idyllic marriage, nurtured by tender and loving devotion, and saddened only by the loss of their child in 1880.<sup>11</sup> When Mrs. Grimké passed away in 1914 after a long and painful illness, her husband could write with perfect candor: "She was a most devoted companion and a woman in whom there was no guile. And yet with all her sweetness, gentleness and rare delicacy of nature, she was a woman of great strength of character. She could take a stand and hold it against the world."<sup>12</sup>

### III

Francis Grimké's public ministry began with a call to the nation's capital. There, in 1841, the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church had been organized under the leadership of the Reverend John F. Cook in order that there might be an adequate ministry to the colored people of Washington.<sup>13</sup> By the

<sup>8</sup> Grimké, *op.cit.*, I, x.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Forten, *op.cit.*, pp. 17-19.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>12</sup> Grimké, *op.cit.*, III, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Presbytery of the District of Columbia, *Records*, I (October 6, 1841, and May 4, 1842), 305-306, 313.

1870's the congregation, which occupied a handsome edifice on Fifteenth Street between I and K Streets, Northwest, numbered one hundred and fifty communicants.<sup>14</sup> Francis Grimké, even as a young licentiate, seemed to this well-educated, relatively affluent Negro congregation an ideal choice for the pastorate. Having received a unanimous call, he was ordained and installed on July 7, 1878.<sup>15</sup> The work prospered under his leadership, but in 1885 his health failed him and he accepted a call to the Laura Street Church, Jacksonville, Florida. There he ministered effectively until 1889 and, in the salubrious climate, gradually regained his health. By that time the pulpit of the Fifteenth Street Church was again vacant; and when a second call was issued to Pastor Grimké, he accepted it. He returned to Washington and assumed the pastoral obligations of what proved to be his first and last parish.<sup>16</sup>

It was not long before Francis Grimké came to be recognized as the most outstanding Negro clergyman in the capital city. As a craftsman of the homiletic art, he had few peers. His messages were consistently the product of careful and mature reflection, and they were delivered with power and conviction. As his reputation spread, he found himself ever more in demand as a preacher and lecturer. He became a regular lecturer at the Tuskegee Institute and for several years preached during the summer at the Hampton Negro Conference. Always conscious of his civic responsibility, he served with distinction as a Trustee of Howard University and as a Trustee of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia. In recognition of his meritorious service, Lincoln University, in 1888, conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.<sup>17</sup>

Physically the Fifteenth Street Church enjoyed a healthy growth during Dr. Grimké's pastorate: the record shows that the congregation expanded from one hundred and fifty communicants to more than five hundred.<sup>18</sup> In 1918 the congre-

<sup>14</sup> Presbytery of Washington City, *Records*, I (April 5, 1871), 60.

<sup>15</sup> Presbytery of Washington City, *Records*, I (July 7, 1878), 476.

<sup>16</sup> Grimké, *op.cit.*, I, xii.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xii-xiii.

<sup>18</sup> Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., *Minutes of the General Assembly* (1930), p. 588.

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gation moved to a handsome brick building at Fifteenth and R Streets, Northwest.<sup>19</sup> Dr. Grimké remained in its active service until 1925, when he felt the necessity to relinquish his pastoral responsibilities. Out of gratitude, however, the congregation refused to accept his resignation, and, though most of his duties were taken by another minister, he held the title of pastor until his death on October 11, 1937.<sup>20</sup>

Early in his career, Dr. Grimké endeavored to establish a warm and friendly relationship with the white ministers and churches of the Presbytery of Washington City. Unfortunately racial prejudice significantly limited the contacts he could make, and as the years passed he entered into increasingly fewer associations with his ministerial brethren. As a protest to unfair discrimination against the Negro, he even refused to attend the meetings of his presbytery; the white churches within its bounds, he maintained, were largely apathetic or hostile to his people's advancement. In 1908 he wrote to the presbytery: "if there is any one thing that Jesus himself desired to accomplish, more than others it was to break down these artificial and anti-christian walls of separation. When will the church of Jesus Christ cease its hypocritical cant about religion, and begin to live it, in spirit and in truth?"<sup>21</sup>

Never a man to compromise with principle, Dr. Grimké habitually endeavored to proclaim the truth as he saw it. Tactfulness was hardly one of his virtues, a circumstance that cost him many friends and brought him excoriation from his critics. Some of his associates agreed with him in principle but felt that he was attempting to accomplish his purposes in a deleterious manner. Perhaps his most loyal friend in the presbytery was the distinguished pastor of the New York Avenue Church, Dr. Wallace Radcliffe. Writing to Grimké in 1919, he reflected on the question of race. "The only philosophy that will settle this question is the philosophy of Jesus Christ. The only solution is as you say to treat the Negro everywhere as a

<sup>19</sup> Presbytery of Washington City, *Records*, x (April 5, 1918), 208.

<sup>20</sup> Presbytery of Washington City, *Records*, xv (November 8, 1937), 48.

<sup>21</sup> Grimké, *op.cit.*, iv, 115.



man and brother. And it will certainly come or the Republic will go down. Its life is in its righteousness."<sup>22</sup>

## IV

The central purpose of Dr. Grimké's life was the application of the Gospel to the social order, particularly in regard to the elevation of his people. He labored in a time of great social ferment, one by-product of which was an increasing predilection, in both the North and South, to relegate the Negro to inferior status. At the close of the Civil War, most southern whites, though reconciled to the abolition of slavery, were determined that the Negro should remain in a servile capacity.<sup>23</sup> In the North, Negro workers encountered stern opposition from white artisans and factory workers, who regarded the freedmen as a threat to their economic security.<sup>24</sup>

Republican politicians regularly sought civil rights legislation, but their primary motivation was the strengthening of their party in the South. With the application of Radical Reconstruction, however, secret societies such as the Ku Klux Klan were founded to maintain white supremacy, through violence whenever it seemed necessary.<sup>25</sup> After the eventual passing of Reconstruction, southern Democrats returned to power; wherever possible legislatures disfranchised Negroes and enacted laws for the segregation of the races. By the end of the century it was apparent that the Negro had lost the peace. Any attempt to gain his civil rights was met with threats, beatings, and finally lynchings.<sup>26</sup>

If the last half of the nineteenth century brought few gains in the economic and social position of the Negro, at least it witnessed significant advances in the area of education. Thousands of Negroes enjoyed the benefits of secondary and higher education as a result of enlightened giving by philanthropic

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>23</sup> John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom, A History of American Negroes*, p. 299.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 321-323.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 328, 338.

and ecclesiastical agencies. Though most professions were scarcely open to Negroes, by 1900 there were 28,560 persons of that race in the teaching profession.<sup>27</sup> A new era in Negro education began in 1881 with the coming of the indomitable Booker T. Washington to Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Washington believed in Negro advancement through a combination of hard work and respect for the white authorities. He favored a program of industrial education that would enable the Negro to serve where he was and not antagonize southern leaders. A man of conciliatory nature, he became, paradoxically, to his own people the colored version of an Horatio Alger hero, while to the white man he was invariably a symbol of placid conformity to a fixed social and economic system.<sup>28</sup>

It might be said of Francis Grimké that during the early years of his ministry his solution to the Negro problem was not unlike that of his friend Booker T. Washington. In 1892, for example, he told the Ministers' Union of Washington: "The future of the Negro, his ability to hold his own as a permanent factor in the world's civilization, and against the aggressions of his enemies, in this country, depends more upon character than upon anything else, and therefore upon that the chief emphasis should be laid. Every Negro, in every part of the country, by some means should be made to feel, and to feel at once, the transcendent importance of character."<sup>29</sup>

The sobering evidences of racial prejudice during the next few years, however, caused Dr. Grimké to view the social conditions of his time with considerably more realism. In a sermon delivered on November 20, 1900, he declared with considerable justification: "After thirty-three years of freedom, our civil and political rights are still denied us; the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution are still a dead letter. The spirit of opposition, of oppression, of injustice is not diminishing but increasing. The determination to keep us in a state of civil and political inferiority and to surround us with such conditions as will tend to crush out of us a manly and

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 383.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 384-386.

<sup>29</sup> Grimké, *op.cit.*, I, 224.

self-respecting spirit is stronger now than it was at the close of the war."<sup>30</sup>

Still, Dr. Grimké was convinced that the doors of opportunity would yet open to the Negro of high character and training who was devoted to his work. He told a conference at Hampton Institute, Virginia, in July 1897: "This is the lesson which you need, and which I need, and which we all need to learn if this poor race of ours is to survive in the struggle. Here is the key to the future, and that key will respond to no touch but our own. White men cannot help us except in an indirect way. We have got to work out our own salvation. The power that is to level the mountains of prejudice and opposition, and make clear our path in this country, lies within ourselves—in our own intelligence and pluck and fidelity and conscientiousness and high resolve to make the most of ourselves,—to put our best into whatever we do. If we use this power we will succeed; if we do not we will fail, and ought to fail."<sup>31</sup>

If Pastor Grimké believed that self-help was the major clue to progress, he was not unmindful of the value inherent in well-placed connections. He had his favorite champions among the nation's white leadership, and he never ceased to extol them for their benefactions. Theodore Roosevelt's record in matters Negritic was not impeccable; but it was good, and Dr. Grimké held him in highest esteem. When the President invited Booker T. Washington to dinner at the White House in 1901, Grimké was ecstatic in his praise. "We have at last in the White House one who is every inch a man; one who has convictions, and convictions in the right direction, and who has the courage of his convictions."<sup>32</sup> Although the incident evoked a rash of excited and vitriolic comment from prejudiced observers, the colored minister saw in it an omen of a brighter future.

## V

Meanwhile, a virile and vociferous segment of the Negro community had determined to reject the moderation of Booker

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 565-566.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 340.

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T. Washington and to press immediately for full civil rights. They met at Niagara Falls, Canada, in June 1905 under the leadership of W. E. B. DuBois and drafted a manifesto that called for Negro suffrage and the abolition of all distinctions founded upon race. Thus was initiated the Niagara Movement with its militant program for the achievement of Negro rights.<sup>33</sup>

At this juncture the brothers Grimké sided with the anti-Washington faction; thereafter Francis Grimké was publicly critical of Washington's work.<sup>34</sup> When Washington passed away in 1915, the minister wrote of him: "His attitude on the rights of the Negro, as an American citizen, was also anything but satisfactory. He either dodged the issue when he came face to face with it, or dealt with it in such a way as not to offend those who were not in favor of according to him full citizenship rights. He never squarely faced the issue, and, in a straightforward, manly spirit declared his belief in the Negro as a man and a citizen, and as entitled to the same treatment as other men."<sup>35</sup> Whether this judgment was just, only history can determine. It should be noted, however, that many responsible and dedicated white friends of the Negro regarded Washington as the greatest man of his race and were convinced that the polemical Niagara Movement would serve only to impede the Negro's advancement. Lyman Abbott's editorial in the *Outlook* of July 29, 1905, was perhaps representative: "The real leaders of the American negroes are not complaining; they are too busy inculcating habits of thrift, energy, and self-control among the people to whom they are proud to belong."<sup>36</sup>

Within a few years the leaders of the Niagara Movement joined forces with a group of distinguished white reformers, among whom were numbered Jane Addams, William Dean Howells, and John Dewey. Together they made plans for a permanent organization pledged to fight segregation and to

<sup>33</sup> Franklin, *op.cit.*, p. 437.

<sup>34</sup> Grimké, *op.cit.*, iv, 89-90.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, iii, 16.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Ira V. Brown, *Lyman Abbott, Christian Evolutionist*, Harvard Univ. Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1953, p. 207.

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campaign for the full civil rights of Negro citizens. In May 1910, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was born. Immediately it inaugurated a crusade to gain better legal protection for Negroes and to win for them greater opportunities in industry.<sup>37</sup>

From the outset the N.A.A.C.P. had the loyal support of Pastor Grimké. In 1914 he urged his congregation to give thanks for the Association, which he believed was inspired of God.<sup>38</sup> Seven years later he was no less enthusiastic: "I do not hesitate to say that, of the great, live forces today at work helping to make this race manly, self-respecting; helping to batter down the walls that race prejudice is ever setting up in the way of our progress, there is not one of them that is doing more than this National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Its very existence is a constant protest against the vile treatment to which we are subjected in this country; is a notification to the enemies of the race that we are not going to be put down. . . ."<sup>39</sup> By the 1930's Dr. Grimké noted with some concern that the Association was becoming more secular in its outlook and inclined toward a routine professionalism, but he continued his support of the organization in the faith that it would recapture something of its pristine idealism.<sup>40</sup>

The second decade of the twentieth century found Dr. Grimké becoming steadily more vehement in his denunciation of those who were not avid supporters of Negro advancement. He was sharply critical of President Woodrow Wilson for "the disposition, under your Administration, to segregate colored people in the various departments of the Government."<sup>41</sup> On the occasion of William A. (Billy) Sunday's Washington, D.C., campaign in 1918, the colored minister became highly censorious. "This man, Rev. Billy Sunday, at times, seems to be a little courageous, judged by his vigorous denunciation of many sins; but when it comes to this big devil of race prejudice, the craven in him comes out; he cowers before it; he is afraid to

<sup>37</sup> Franklin, *op.cit.*, p. 439.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 626.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 518.

<sup>38</sup> Grimké, *op.cit.*, I, 518-519.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 612-613.

speaking out; at heart, he is seen to be a moral coward in spite of his bluster and pretense of being brave. What are you afraid of Mr. Sunday, and, what are your ministerial brethren afraid of?"<sup>42</sup> Many clergymen in high places felt the bite of Grimké's words when they did not stand militantly in favor of integration. Even the citizens of Washington were censured in 1917 for the ovation they gave a troop of Confederate veterans marching in parade. It was unthinkable, cried Grimké, that these "unreconstructed, unrepentant rebels" should be "treated as if they had been fighting in the most holy cause!"<sup>43</sup>

Then came 1917 and America's entrance into World War I. Most American Negroes responded to the crisis in a fine patriotic manner and supported the government in every way possible. There are records of exceptional heroism on the part of Negro troops in battle. Much discrimination was evident in the military services, and most Negroes reacted to it with nobility.<sup>44</sup> Dr. Grimké's attitude toward the political order was rabidly critical and would have been rejected by most of his fellow Negroes. In 1918 he wrote these acrid lines: "As a government, we pretend that we are fighting to safeguard democracy in the world, are fighting in the interest of justice, of equal rights for all. It is a lie. What we are really fighting for, and what the Allies are fighting for is to insure white supremacy throughout the world, and the only difference between Germany and this country and the Allies is that Germany wants not only white supremacy, but German supremacy, which the rest of the white nations are not willing for her to have."<sup>45</sup> Later that year he refused to make some short addresses for the government in the interest of the Fourth Liberty Loan, arguing that "the money is not to be used in defense of liberty, but only in defense of the liberty of white men, with no thought or desire of safeguarding the liberty of colored people."<sup>46</sup> Thus wrote the man who regarded Booker T. Washington as a detriment to Negro advancement.

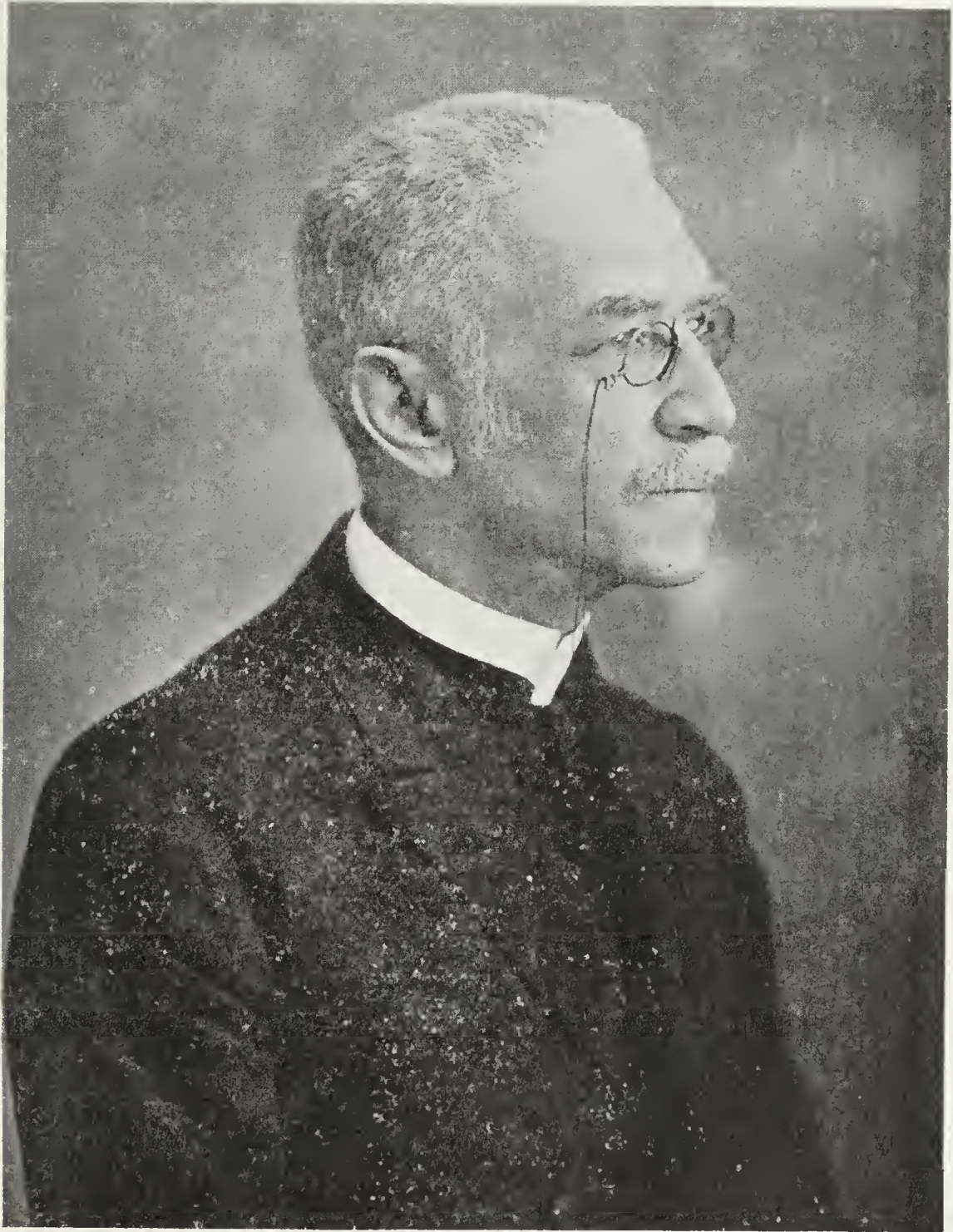
<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 559.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 31.

<sup>44</sup> Franklin, *op.cit.*, pp. 447-453.

<sup>45</sup> Grimké, *op.cit.*, III, 45.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.



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## VI

In 1919 Pastor Grimké addressed himself more positively to the Negro problem. He found the Negro's responsibility to be small in relation to that of the white man. "The problem with the Negro is largely that of self-development; with the white man, that of getting rid of his prejudice, his race-hating spirit."<sup>47</sup> No solution could be found that did not involve a change of attitude on the part of white citizens. Above all, the white churches would have to become centers in which the Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of man is both taught and lived. "There is but one solution to the race problem, and, it is to treat the Negro as a man and brother. It will be solved on principles laid down by Jesus Christ, or it never will be solved. . . . Let us hope there will be an awakening; that common sense and the principle of love, of righteousness, will somehow get the ascendancy, and so shall begin the ushering in of a better day."<sup>48</sup>

Francis Grimké did not live to see the death of racial prejudice. He did witness the virtual annihilation of lynching, the establishment of greater benefits for the Negro worker through unionization, the election of Negroes to public office, and the beginning of a large-scale effort to end segregation. If there had been retrogression during his lifetime, there had also been progress. With the support of the churches or without it, legal discrimination would continue to decline and the Negro would come finally to enjoy the full rights of citizenship.

Since Dr. Grimké understood Christianity to be essentially a way of life rather than a system of thought, he would not have aspired to the title of theologian. Theologian he was, nevertheless, and, in the grand tradition of Protestant orthodoxy, modified somewhat by the idealistic temper of the age. He believed in a God who was at once transcendent and immanent, a God who stood at the center of a civilization, "directing, controlling, influencing it in all of its movements."<sup>49</sup> He believed that this God was incarnate in Christ and that,

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 595.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 596-599.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 429.



through Christ's life and sacrificial death on the cross, salvation for sinful men had been made possible. With all his being he trusted that Christ had been victorious over the power of death and that in his name men might inherit eternal life. Men are called to Christ in the proclamation of the Gospel, and, though they are saved by grace, "there must be the most earnest cooperation on our part with the Spirit of God."<sup>50</sup> The doctrine of God's irresistible decree held no place in his thinking. "The direction in which we go is determined by ourselves, we go the way that we want to go, that we will to go. We are free and responsible moral agents, and are not in the midst of forces that destroy our freedom."<sup>51</sup>

In his view of the Christian life, Pastor Grimké reflected the ethos of middle-class pietistic evangelicalism. He stood firm in the conviction that Christianity was best exemplified in personal character, especially in the virtues of diligence, trustworthiness, thrift, punctuality, and forthrightness. He shared in the repudiation, common among Protestant moralists, of liquor, tobacco, dancing, and the theater.

Liquor was the chief devil to be conquered. In many a sermon he expatiated on this evil, never more eloquently than in a discourse delivered in 1906: "Strong drink has done more to unman men, to degrade them to the level of the brute than any other single influence. It makes no difference what our gifts may be, if this appetite is awakened within us, if we yield ourselves to the seductive influence of the wine cup, it is only a matter of time when we shall be brought low. The intoxicating bowl has never, in all its history, been a stepping stone to anything worthy or honorable. Its trend has always been downward."<sup>52</sup>

As a Puritan reformer of public morals, Dr. Grimké gave his full support to the movement that culminated in the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment on National Prohibition in 1919. During the 1920's, when the law came under attack by persons who insisted that it bred crime, the Negro pastor

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 625-626.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 627-628.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 473.

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was adamant in its defense. The repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment at the advent of President Franklin Roosevelt's administration was for him a crushing blow. In 1934 he wrote with great feeling: "As to what conditions were, you know, I know, we all know. Bad as they were under prohibition . . . they were nothing like as bad as before the 18th Amendment was enacted and the Volstead Act passed. Already the evil effects are being seen and felt, and things are growing steadily worse. Our streets are already witnessing a steady increase of drunken men and women on them, and the number of arrests for drunkenness is steadily on the increase."<sup>53</sup> And yet Dr. Grimké's pious though justified fulminations could not dispel the indisputable fact: the lights of an old order were going out, and they would not be lit again in his time.

What manner of man was Dr. Francis James Grimké? Perhaps no one dares speak with finality on the subject. There are at best impressions, and these are highly subjective. To the present writer, Dr. Grimké was a Negro Puritan, a man of exceptional character who possessed a strong sense of right and wrong and the unfailing courage to defend his cause against overwhelming opposition. He had all the aggressiveness common to minority groups that experience the dynamics of social prejudice, and occasionally he displayed an attitude of vindictiveness wholly inconsistent with the Christian love that he regularly preached and often practiced. His vision carried him into the ideal world that was not yet and that would not be in his generation; it was largely because he lived so much in this utopian realm that the present world of stark reality seemed so unbearable. He was a prophet, and so he attempted to bring the ideal world into the dreams of men. If he failed, then all men are the losers, for life without dreams is empty and vain. If he succeeded, then all men are the better for his having lived. For into a broken, fragmented world he came bearing the Gospel of the Christ he loved and the assurance that with God all things are possible.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 529-530.