

The Next Step in Racial Cooperation.

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THE NEXT STEP IN RACIAL COOPERATION.

During the past week, beginning with the fifteenth and extending through the seventeenth, the Fifth Annual Convocation of the Howard University School of Religion was held in this city at the University. The general subject discussed was, "THE NEXT STEP IN RACIAL COOPERATION."

As it is the desire of Dean Pratt to extend the influence of the Convocation as far as possible, to carry the message it brings to all of our churches through the ministers and laymen in attendance, and through the churches to reach all the people, it has occurred to me that I might do my part in helping to carry out his desire if I took the subject up and directed your attention to it for a little while this morning. And this is what it is my purpose to do at this time.

It may be well in beginning the discussion to define the *terms* of the subject:

(1). **COOPERATION.** Cooperation means the *joining* of forces, the *working together* towards a common end, or for a common purpose. That common end or purpose must be something in which all are interested, which somehow effects the interest of all. People are not likely to work together or *continue* to work together very long unless they feel that it is to their advantage to do so, that somehow they are to be mutually benefitted.

(2). **RACIAL COOPERATION.** By *racial* cooperation is meant the *races joining hands, working together* towards some common end; *agreeing* upon a program that all will strive earnestly and honestly to carry out. There was such an understanding

between the nations composing the Allies in their resistance of German aggression. They all *worked together* with a view of overthrowing Germany. And they did it because they felt that it was mutually to their interest to do so.

(3). The Next Step in Racial Cooperation. This implies: 1. That *some steps have already been* taken. 2. That other steps are to follow, and the question is which next? Or it may mean the *final* step, the *something more* that is needed in order to complete the task, to reach the goal, the end aimed at * * * *

With these definitions of terms, let us now look at the subject and see what light we can throw upon it.

I. COOPERATION. In order to cooperate four things are necessary if it is to be effectual:

1. The end or ends aimed at must be clearly set forth; we must know definitely what we are working for. There must be no misunderstanding here, no clouding of the issue: all must see alike, must be moving towards the *same* end.

2. All must approve the end aimed at, must feel that it is the *right*, the *proper* thing to do. If there is any doubt as to the propriety, as to the advisability, the expediency or the wisdom of what is to be done, the movement will be, so far, a failure.

3. There must be a *real* desire on the part of *all* to further the end or ends aimed at. And,

4. There must be *steady, persistent* effort to reach the goal, to realize the end aimed at. Cooperation without these conditions being *fulfilled* will be in *name* only, and will accomplish little or nothing.

II. RACIAL COOPERATION.

1. It must be a cooperation that will conserve the SELF-RESPECT of each race—a cooperation between equals and not between superiors and inferiors. There must be no arrogant assumption of superiority of one race over the other in any work of cooperation if things are to move on smoothly, harmoniously. For the purpose that we have in mind here, there are no superior and inferior races, in the sense: 1. of one race being more human or less human than another. Whatever is essential to humanity belongs to all alike. As human beings all stand on precisely the same plain. And, 2. In the sense that all races are equally bound by the Ten Commandments, by the Sermon on the mount, by the Golden Rule. *All races*, in their relations one with the other, must be governed *alike* by these great moral requirements. No race, because of its *greater* knowledge and *greater* material possessions, in its dealings with less knowing and less well-to-do races, may, because of its intellectual and material superiority, arrogate to itself the right to sidestep any of these great moral laws. The cooperating parties

must work in the spirit of *mutual respect*. Each must recognize the right of the other to think for himself, and not be expected to accept blindly what others may think. I mention this here because it sometimes happens in gatherings of white and colored people that colored people are expected to listen quietly, to have no ideas of their own, but simply to accept what may be advanced by others. In all meetings or gatherings of this kind there must be the largest liberty, each must be perfectly free to give expression to his own views unhampered by the thoughts of others. The freest expression should always be invited and encouraged.

2. *It must be a cooperation that aims always to conserve the ends of justice, fairplay, mutual good.* These ends are never to be lost sight of. Nothing which runs counter to them is to be allowed to enter. It must be a cooperation that faces the issues of right and mutual good-will squarely.

III. *The Next Step in Racial Cooperation.* This implies, as I have already said, (1) that some steps have already been taken. What are they? *We have come*, I mean a goodly number of white people and of colored people, to an understanding as to certain things in regard to the race issue in this country. There are many things that we have not yet come to an understanding in regard to, but some things we have. And later on, when we have been sufficiently educated in Christian principles and in the rights of man, in the true principles of democracy, there will be others added to the list.

1. We have come to see that race-hatred is an evil; that no good can come out of it; that it will be better for both races and for the country at large to put an end to it, and to put an end to it as speedily as possible. As long as it exists it will be a source of irritation—a disturbing force, a source of weakness and not of strength. It is love that should be cultivated, and not hate, good-will and not ill-will. * * *

2. We have come to see that the Negro is an American citizen and that he, as well as the white man, is entitled to the full protection of the law—protection as to life, liberty, property, the pursuit of happiness. This is guaranteed to him in the Constitution; but over a large section of our country these guarantees have been ignored, he has had little or no protection under the laws. There is, however, a growing sentiment in the South itself, among the better class of whites, among men and women who represent the best brain and conscience of the South, against the *continuance* of *this condition* of things. There is a goodly number of such, and that number is growing and will continue to grow, who are saying, and saying it not in secret, but loud enough to be heard, that the Negro *must have justice* in the courts. And they are organ-

izing with that end in view, and have already done some very effective work.

3. We have come to see that what is good for the white man is good for the colored man; that what is good for the white child is good for the colored child. If education is good for the one, it is good for the other. If playgrounds, recreation centres are good for the one, they are good for the other; if schools of all grades, from the kindergarten up to the highest, are good for the one, they are good for the other. If healthy surroundings, sanitary dwellings, the chance to make a decent living are good for the one, they are good for the other. Every good thing that will help to make the white man a better man and a better citizen, the colored man also needs and ought to have: * * *

4. We have come to see that lynching is an evil, that it is just as much a crime against society, *a blow* at civilization to lynch a colored man as it is to lynch a white man. We have come to see that the spirit of the mob cannot be sanctioned, winked at, condoned, quietly acquiesced in, without striking at the foundation of civil government itself, without destroying all respect for law and order. Sentiment against the mob has been steadily growing for years, and now the matter is crystallizing, as we hope, in the form of a national law against lynching, now before Congress. * * *

So much for the steps already taken.

2. By *the next step* in cooperation may mean, *what next* is to be added to this list of cooperative things—things that we can unite our forces in pushing? President Harding in his recent Birmingham address insists very strenuously upon a threefold equality for the Negro—political equality, economic equality, educational equality. From one equality only he shuts him out, and that is social equality. So far as social equality is concerned the colored people are not troubling themselves about it in the least; it is the very last thing they think about. But they are concerned, and deeply concerned, about the other three. And they are concerned about them because without them they would be placed at a very great disadvantage in the struggle of life. In every true democracy, in every democracy worthy of the name, these three equalities, at least, should be the heritage of every citizen. And some day not only the friends of the Negro, but all good citizens, all honest, fair-minded white Americans will concede them, and join hands in seeing that they are realized in the life of the nation. The white South does not *believe* in the educational equality of the Negro; *it believes still less* in his political equality. If we listened to such men as Senators Harrison, Watson, Heflin, and others of their ilk, the Negro is never to have his political rights in the South. Of one thing we are sure, however—men of their stamp will soon be off the stage of action, and other men, bigger

in brain and heart, more liberal in sentiment, with more enlightened consciences, will come to take their places; and the leaven of true democracy, which is already beginning to work in the South, will go on working until it has leavened the whole lump. The Negro's *political* outlook in the South is not a *hopeless* one; it will be sure to improve with the advancing years. The time is coming, must come, when his vote will be counted *there* as well as the vote of the white man. Either *that* or the South's representation in Congress will be cut down. One or the other is bound, sooner or later, to take place. The rest of the Nation will not continue to allow that section of the country to be represented *for voters* who are not counted. * * * For the present, therefore, the political equality of the Negro *in* the South must be left out in any scheme of cooperation. There is no hope of getting any considerable number of southern white men to cooperate at this time in securing to the Negro his political rights there. They may in secret concede his right to vote under the Constitution, but they will be very slow in saying so publicly, and will be still slower to make any move in that direction.

3. This brings us to the *last sense* in which the next step in Racial Cooperation may be understood, in the sense of the final step—the step that remains to be taken in order to complete the work of race adjustment, of bringing about the harmonious working together of both races in mutual good-will and respect. *That step*, I believe, is the *acceptance* on the *part* of both races of *Christianity*, pure and simple, without additions or subtractions. I believe now, as I have believed for years, that the solution of our race problem, as of every other problem, is to be found *in* Christianity. Jesus Christ *laid down* certain principles *and acted upon* them which, if we accept and act upon, will heal all of our differences and will make us brothers in fact as well as theory. The question *of* race, *of* color never troubled Jesus Christ. He was just as much at home with a Samaritan as he was with a Jew, with the Syro-Phoenician woman who came to him in behalf of her daughter grievously tormented with a demon as he was with the woman of Jewish extraction who crept up behind him and touched His garment, saying, "If I but touch the hem of his garment I shall be made whole." *And why? Because He thought of men and dealt with them, affiliated with them, not as members of any particular race, but as children of God, and each one as equally precious in the sight of God. Thinking of man, as He did, recognizing each individual, irrespective of race or color, as bearing the image of God, as made in His likeness, it was impossible for Him not to be perfectly at home with all. The superficial distinctions that count for so much with us counted for nothing with him. He moved upon*

a plain far, far removed from the petty distinctions which we make. And *the purpose* of Christianity, if I understand it aright, is to lift the whole human race up to that same high level. We hear a great deal about ineffaceable differences of races, impassable barriers which separate one from the other—of the black peril and of the yellow peril, and the necessity for all the white races to stop fighting each other and get together for the purpose of resisting the darker races. *That kind of talk and that kind of sentiment is entirely alien from the spirit of Christianity.* Jesus Christ has set up on this earth a kingdom that is to be *world-wide*, that is to embrace all races, and is to weld men of all races together in a great spiritual brotherhood in which the color of a man's skin and his race identity is to play no part. Its *great aim* is to make over the individual after the likeness of Jesus Christ. In other words, to make us into what the apostle calls saints of God, to start us on the road to sainthood, to holiness of heart and life. "Till we come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Now, we all *know*, or *ought* to know, that a *full grown man*, in the sense in which the apostle is using the term here, *that sainthood* is not a matter of color or race, but of character. The *qualities* that enter into the make-up of a saint are the same whatever may be the race or the color of the individual. I am emphasizing this in order to call attention to the fact that the great aim of the religion of Jesus Christ is to develop *character*, and character of a certain type. The *matter of race, color, condition* never enters for a moment into His thought or calculation. What cares He about a man's race or color. It is *what the man becomes, develops* into under His leadership, that alone concerns Him. He *thinks* no more of a *white saint* than He does of a black saint, or a saint of any other color. The one is just as dear to Him as the other, the one is held by Him in just as high estimation as the other.

If we can only get this thought into our heads and into our hearts: if we will only stop thinking about race and color and begin thinking in earnest about what Jesus Christ is thinking about, and what the whole purpose of His kingdom in this world is for; it will go very far towards settling all race differences. We magnify the things that count for nothing in the sight of God, and give very little attention or place but very little value upon the thing that is of greatest value in His sight—character. This will be denied, of course, on the part of a great many; but it is true, nevertheless. In this country society, within the Church as well as out of it, is built upon the idea that a white skin is not only of value, but even where there is neither intelligence nor virtue

associated with it, it is of more value and is entitled to greater respect or consideration than a dark skin, however much of virtue or intelligence may be connected with it. *Think of the places from which colored people are excluded simply because of their color! Think of the difference in the treatment that is accorded to people on the basis of color solely, simply because of their complexion, their race identity. This is the kind of education that is going on all over the country; the standard of measurement that is being set up everywhere, in the churches, as well as out of them. And it all arises from a failure on the part of the church to read aright the mind of the Master, as revealed in His life and teachings—a failure on the part of the church to put the emphasis where Jesus puts it, upon character and not upon race and color. Unfortunately, in the present order of things in this country, character, intelligence, culture are of small account when put over against race or color. As some one has expressed it, the most degraded white man is better than the most intelligent, the most upright and virtuous colored man. The white people, as a whole, would not admit that such is the case, I know; but the course which they are pursuing in their treatment of the colored man teaches, if not just that lesson, what amounts to the same thing. His color is the only thing that is ever taken into consideration in determining what treatment should be accorded to him. In all public utilities or places the white man goes any and everywhere on his color, provided he is able to meet expenses; the colored man can go nowhere, or scarcely anywhere, because of his color, never mind how able he may be to meet expenses. Everywhere he is proscribed, segregated. Wherever he goes he finds the stress laid on color; he finds a white skin counts for more than character or intelligence, or both. The evil of estimating people in this way lies in the fact that it puts the emphasis in the wrong place; it magnifies, out of all proportion, a thing which, in and of itself, is of no possible value, certainly none in the sight of God. No man is held responsible, according to the word of God, for his race or color; or is any account taken of his race or color in grading him, but every one is held responsible for his character and conduct, and is estimated accordingly. That is the standard set up by the great Teacher; and it is the only standard that should ever be set up. Peter saw this, and with great clearness sets forth the attitude which all Christians should take, which the Church should take and hold unflinchingly to, in the statement: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him." You will notice here, the thing that makes men acceptable to God is not that they are of any particular race or nation, but the fact that they fear Him and*

are upright in character and conduct. It is character, not race or color, that Christianity stresses, and that it is seeking to make dominant throughout the world. *All distinctions* based on race or color, *all talk* about ineffaceable differences, impassable barriers; *all attempts* to segregate people on account of race or color, are contrary to the *spirit* and *teaching* of Jesus Christ, and are *directly opposed* to the *great purpose* of the setting up of the kingdom of God on earth. The apostle Paul, who knew the mind of Christ as well, perhaps, as anyone, tells us that He came to *break down* walls of separation, to *destroy* all enmities, and to make us all brethren; that in Christ Jesus there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all and in all." These lesser distinctions are all to be swallowed up in the greater realization and consciousness of oneness in Christ Jesus. It is the purpose of God, clearly revealed in the scriptures, to bring together, in Christ Jesus, believers of all the races of mankind in one great fellowship. "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

It is because Christianity is what it is; its aim what it is; its spirit what it is; its great governing principles what they are, that I am saying, the next step in Racial Cooperation, the step which alone will bring about the desired result, is for both races to swing in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ; is for both races to be governed in all their relations with each other by the standard which He has set up. And I mean just that—the next step in racial cooperation should be the honest acceptance of the principles of the Christian religion, and the purpose, solemnly formed, to follow wherever they lead, regardless of personal consequences. It will require courage, of course, to take such a forward step. To be true to Christian principles, to live out the spirit of Jesus Christ in dealing with this race question, will set us in opposition to public sentiment, in opposition to what has been the custom, what has been sanctioned by both church and society for generations. But it must be done. We cannot continue to misrepresent, as we are doing in our teaching and in our acts, the principles and ideals of Christianity, as we know we are doing, and truthfully go on calling ourselves Christians. Whatever of suffering it may entail we must take this final step. Jesus said, "If any man would be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." He said to the rich young ruler: "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow me." He said to His disciples as He was sending them forth, "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. They will deliver you up to coun-

cils, and in their synagogues they will scourge you; yea, and before governors and kings shall ye be brought for my sake. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father his child; and children shall rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." It shows that though it may entail suffering, may bring us in disfavor with our friends, relatives and others, Jesus expects us to be true to him and to his teachings. It is only in this way that He is to gather out of the world a peculiar people. And until we are willing to take this final step, and take it without reservations, the thing that we are aiming at—good-will, peace, harmony between the races—will never be realized. It is the willingness on the part of both races to be true to Christian principles and ideals that alone holds the solution. We may go on trying, as we have been doing, to substitute something else in place of pure, unadulterated Christianity; but ultimately we have got to come to it, or else go on as we have been going on, in strife and hatred. The one thing needful is to be found in Christianity alone, in Christianity which emphasizes the sacredness of the individual, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man—of man, of all men, white, and black, and yellow, and brown, and red—all brothers, the children of one common father, God. It will not be an easy matter to take this final step. There are great obstacles in the way: prejudices will have to be overcome, long established customs will have to be uprooted. Old things will have to pass away, and a new order of things set up. And if we had to tackle the problem in our own strength alone, it would be a hopeless one; but we need not tackle it in our own strength alone. Back of the Christian religion is the mighty power of God. "Who art thou, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of host." "Hail! All power in heaven and earth hath been committed unto me. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the ages." In and of ourselves we will never be able to weld men of all races together in one great brotherhood, but God Almighty and Jesus Christ his Son, working through us, can. And that is our hope, and our only hope. If the change for the better ever comes, it will be in this way, and in no other. The more we make of Christianity; the nearer we get to Jesus Christ in character and life; the more fully we come to accept His great principles, His leadership; the more of His spirit we get into us, the nearer we will be to the solution of all of our problems, racial and otherwise. The prayer, the great prayer, that we all need to be sending up, and sending up continually, is "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." And

see to it that we are doing all that we can to answer our own prayer. We can all help to bring in the kingdom of God here on earth if we will, if we make up our minds to do so.

I read recently a very interesting book by Mr. Fred Eastman, entitled, "Unfinished Business," prepared particularly for the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., in the introduction of which these words occur: "The reason for our striving for religious and political freedom, education, and service is deeply rooted in our theology. You cannot plant in the human heart the great conception of a sovereign God, indwelling in the human soul, without that idea some day flowering in reverence for human personality. And sooner or later reverence for human personality bears fruit in practical efforts for freedom, education and service; for freedom, education and service are necessary for the full development of the divine possibilities in human personality. This is why the Presbyterian Church has always made evangelism, by which we mean getting the human soul into fellowship with God, fundamental in all its work."

And this is the point, particularly, to which I am calling attention. According to this definition, what is the work of the great work to which the Church is committed? It is EVANGELISM. And what is EVANGELISM, as here defined? It is getting the human soul into fellowship with God. If that is what the Church really believes evangelism to be; and if that is what it is aiming to effect—to bring the human soul into fellowship with God—how is it possible for the question of race or color ever to come up in determining its attitude towards any human being or any class of human beings? For if men may fellowship with God, men of all races and colors, why may they not fellowship with each other? Dare we, in the name of Jesus Christ, take the position that men who may fellowship with God may not fellowship with us; men who may fellowship with Jesus Christ are not fit for fellowship with us? And yet that is just the attitude, largely, of white American Christianity. It is seeking, it says, to bring men into fellowship with God, and at the same time it is not willing itself to fellowship with men if they happen to be of a different race or color. The inconsistency between this definition of evangelism and the actual practice of the Church is most glaring, and the assumption underlying it, as it seems to me, is most blasphemous. I can't help feeling that if we would stop and think seriously of this definition of evangelism, and it is a correct definition, as outlining, in part, the mission of the Church, it would make a difference; it would revolutionize things; it would put the whole question of race relations in an entirely new light. Day by day, if we would carry about with us the thought that men of all races and

colors may fellowship with God, and get that fact well and firmly established in our hearts and minds, I think, we would be slow to set up barriers against any one on account of race or color; we would be slow to arrogate to ourselves a superiority to God himself. And yet that is just what race prejudice does. It refuses to fellowship with, holds itself above affiliation with those with whom God fellowships. It has always seemed to me a most arrogant and blasphemous position to take: so different from the spirit of the lowly Nazarene. When the sheet was let down from heaven, a voice was heard which said to Peter, "Rise, kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean." And the voice came unto him again the second time, "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common."

I do not know whether Mr. Eastman fully realized what he was saying when he framed this definition of evangelism; whether he saw its far-reaching import, its bearing upon the very thing we have been discussing, race relations, or not; but I hope he did. And I hope that it will not be long before we will all come to see that fellowship with God is a much bigger thing than fellowship with man; and that since men of all races and colors may fellowship with God, it ought to be possible for men of all races and colors to fellowship with each other. It will be possible, if men who profess to be Christians will set the example, will throw their influence actively in favor of such fellowship. As long as a man's status, contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ, contrary to the teaching of reason and common sense, is determined by the color of his skin or his race identity, things will go on from bad to worse, will never be any better; the kingdom of God will never come; men will never be brothers in any true sense of the term. And, therefore, I say deliberately, our next step, and the step next to the next in racial cooperation is a step nearer to Jesus Christ; is the opening of our hearts more fully, more completely to the dominating, controlling influence of Christian ideals and principles. When Jesus Christ reigns in our hearts there will be no trouble along race lines; there will be no raising of the color question anywhere. Men will be received and treated everywhere on the basis of character and worth. Tennyson's noble lines are well worth remembering:

"Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

The more we are educated under that kind of teaching, the less there will be of race friction, the easier it will be to work together in peace and harmony, to pursue the even tenor of our ways with-

out being reminded of one's race or color. The greater things of the Spirit will come in and drive out the lesser things of the flesh, and so the whole plain of living will be lifted. Men will be brothers and not a set of barbarians ever clashing with each other, ever seeking to lord it over each other.

“Less of self and more of Christ,
None of self and all of Christ.”

is the way out of our present difficulties; is the way to permanent racial peace and harmony. Not until we are willing to meet all men as brothers, on the basis laid down by Jesus Christ, will it be possible to break down the barriers which now separate us and which keep us apart in envy and strife. In Jesus Christ alone will there be perfect racial cooperation; in Christ Jesus alone will men be able to live together in justice, righteousness and brotherhood. There is no other way: and the sooner we come to realize it and yield ourselves to the great Teacher, the better it will be. Interracial relations will be adjusted in his way, or not at all.