

YES, the Negro church has failed. It has failed in a great crisis. Its failure is patent and apparent. The only question before us then is: Why and How?

The chief cause of the failure of the Negro church is economic. That is to say, the church has been converted into a business, and the ruling characteristic of a business is, that it is run primarily for profits. The interest is focused upon debits and credits, deficits and surpluses. This has been the Scylla and Charybdis of the Negro church.

To the money power in the community and the country, the church has bowed. The trustee boards of the smallest and most humble are composed of the most prosperous of the church-members who are adjudged as competent to create a surplus by organizing rallies, and by devising other means that are effective in inducing the public to release the necessary moneys. Preachers break with denominations, and set up independent churches, on account of being removed from "fat charges." Collections occupy three-fourths of the time of most services. Sermons are usually selected with a view to impressing the members with the importance of the injunction that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Then there is that class of Negro churches that is directly dominated by white capitalists. These are the Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist Episcopal. Their policies are molded and handed down from the white ecclesiastical oligarchy. This ecclesiastical oligarchy, in turn, is controlled by the "money power" of the country. It is a matter of common knowledge that Trinity church, situated at the head of Wall Street, is one of the biggest corporations in America. It controls a large number of apartment houses from which it reaps blood money in the form of extortionate rents from the working people.

Now, since the "money power" of the country which consists of the masters of the railroads, mines, factories, land, etc., receive their power from rent, interest and profits, and since the great masses of the people depend upon wages for a living, which are low when profits, rent and interest are high, and high when profits, rent and interest are low, it is plain that the interests of the people and the interests of the "money power" which dominates the church, are opposed.

Since it is beyond question that a servant will obey its master; that the power over a man's subsistence is the power over his will, one is not surprised at the church's obedience to the power that maintains it.

The church split over the issue of slavery into the North and South. The Northern church, at the behest of the industrial power, condemned it; the Southern church, upon the order of the slave owners, blessed it. Thus, the church, now as then, is using its power to defend poverty, crime, prostitution, war, ignorance and superstition which are outgrowths of the system that allows one man to live off another's labor.

So much then for the cause of the failure. Now, how has it failed? Briefly it has failed to educate the people. Ministers are leading Negroes who

are below, in intelligence, the lowest member of their church. The Negro ministry is ignorant of the modern problems of capital and labor. It is disinterested in unionism as a means of securing higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions for Negro workers. It regards the discussion of politics in the church as sacrilegious unless some good, old Abraham Lincoln Republican desires the vote of the Negro, and is willing to pay for educational propaganda.

It has failed to use its power to rouse the Negro against disfranchisement and lynching.

No conference of Negro churches has ever gone on record as endorsing the principle of unionism.

But you ask, what constructive program do we offer?

First, the Negro Ministry must be educated. It must get the education of information instead of the education of inspiration. It needs less Bible and more economics, history, sociology and physical science.

Second, the Negro church must be put to different uses. It must become an open educational forum where problems of hygiene, labor, government, racial relationships, national and international questions are discussed by specialists.

The church might also be used as places for the beginning of co-operative stores that will enable the Negro workingman to reduce the high cost of living.

In conclusion, the world has moved a long way forward since 1914. Times have changed and institutions, if they would survive, must adjust themselves to the changed conditions. The New Negro demands a new ministry—an educated fearless and radical ministry.

The New Negro demands a new church—a church that is the center of his social, economic and political hopes and strivings. The church must become something more than a temple of prayer to a people who are lynched, disfranchised and jim-crowed. Prayer has been tried for over fifty years.

In short, the church must set its face against a philosophy of profits to a philosophy of service.

THE PLUMB PLAN

THE war exposed the bankruptcy of the capitalist system. It revealed the inefficiency of privately owned, controlled and operated public utilities, such as, the railroads. Capital was so wanton, reckless and rapacious in its mad struggle for profits, that all sense of the sacrifice of human life, as a consequence of its criminal sabotage upon efficiency, was lost. The suddenness of the opportunity afforded the capitalist hogs to gorge themselves in the trough of profits, caused them to become delirious. Their efficiency experts, however, soon informed them of the benefits which would flow from a modification of the system of operation, and the government forthwith stepped in to safeguard and to guarantee the investors at a rate of interest on their investment equivalent to the three most prosperous years in the history of the railroads, namely, those preceding the taking over the operation of the railroads by the Government.