

BRADBY SAVED NEGRO IN DETROIT,' SAYS U. S. POSTON

Preacher Used Personal Influence To Get Race Workers In Ford Plant

Is Recommended to Schuyler and Mencken As Symbol Of New Negro Minister Who Is Also An Economic Leader

By U. S. POSTON
(Concluding Installment)

NEW YORK, Nov. 17.—Personally, I don't think Bradby is much of a doctrinal preacher. I think he would be as much at home in a community church as he would be in a Baptist one. He may have his opinions on such subjects as the Virgin Birth, Origin of Man, Immaculate Conception, etc., but he doesn't waste much time trying to fasten them on the persons whom he is leading. He spends his time rendering a greater service. The history of Detroit will never be written without giving Rev. Robert L. Bradby much space.

The migration North during the World War, increased the Negro population of Detroit from about 10,000 to 80,000. During this drama of social adjustment, Rev. Bradby played an important role. These new migrants had to have work. Rev. Bradby, having been reared as a boy with Senator Couzens, the mayor of Detroit, at that time, and high up in

the councils of the Ford Automobile Works, used his influence personally and with the Urban League, in having the Ford Works opened to Negroes. About 20,000 Negroes are now employed there. Rev. Bradby has not housed his congregation in one building as Mr. Schuyler suggests, with apartment stores, etc., to supply their needs, but he has been the one big inspiration in the economic, social, political and religious development of Detroit.

The Liberty Life Insurance Company of Michigan was born in the Second Baptist Church. A chain of grocery stores and a large garage corporation saw the light of day in the same place. He worked hand in hand with Mr. Dunbar in building one of the largest Y. M. C. A.'s in America for Negroes. The two Negro hospitals of Detroit are the results of his co-operation and brains. He inspired thousands of Negroes to move out of the slums and purchase homes in the healthy and beautiful sections of the city. He led the way by purchasing and

telling others to follow. Dr. Sweet followed and his home was bombed. It was Bradby who forsook the gospel of the other cheek and preached "protect your home at all cost." Sweet believed in Bradby and protected his home. During his hours of trouble, he was not forsaken by Bradby, who worked day and night with the N. A. A. C. P. and other agencies until Sweet was freed and the good name of the race vindicated.

During the economic depression of 1921, when crime was prevalent in Detroit and police brutality rampant in the Negro section of the city, it was Bradby, with others, who brought this nefarious practice to a halt.

When the Garvey movement was sweeping the country and disturbing the old social order to the extent of entering the Negro church, Bradby did not denounce or approve until he had made a thorough investigation. I recall an incident when his congregation was divided somewhat on the movement and challenged the leadership of the pastor. Rev. Bradby met the challenge by coming to New York and investigating the movement. He met Garvey and his officials, got first-hand information and then returned to Detroit. In his big Sunday afternoon meeting he invited prominent speakers to discuss such subjects as "The Future of the Negro in America," etc., and left it to his membership to make their own decision as to the Garvey movement.

It seems to me that Rev. Bradby does not labor under the belief that the church and ministry were endowed with a divine right to lead in every endeavor of Negro life; but he realizes that such a varied leadership was thrust upon the church and ministry by the institution of slavery and during the period of reconstruction, and that since the race has not evolved a varied leadership, it is incumbent upon the minister to make the best of his leadership.

Rev. Robert L. Bradby is only a symbol of the type of Negro minister to be found throughout America, who is not an "Elmer Gantry," and who has not led his flock into moans and groans. I am satisfied that if Schuyler, Mencken and Sinclair Lewis had the privilege of sitting under the leadership of this distinguished divine that they would become converted and would dedicate their lives to a religious movement patterned after the life and works of Robert L. Bradby.