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Editorials

COMES *Nigger Heaven*, Carl Van Vechten's
amazing novel of Negro Harlem, with the
already evident promise of warm debates within
the "belt" on proper racial

On the Meaning of Names
nomenclature. There is much
sensitiveness to the word,
"nigger," as a term of contempt,
a sensitiveness varying in intensity according to
geography and according to degrees of sophistica-

tion. It is, perhaps, weakest in the most emanci-
pated Negro circles of the east, and at the same
time, paradoxically enough, among the least emanci-
pated Negroes of the South. It is strong generally
throughout the West. An interesting problem of
racial psychology is present here. Although the
term is in common usage among Negroes in refer-
ring to themselves, there is a blind racial ritual on
the matter of its use by others with reference to
them. Resentment, where it is most bitterly ex-
pressed is indiscriminating. The Negro news-
paper which, to limit its public currency, resorts to
unintelligible vagaries when the word is a part of
the news, the amateur Brutus Jones who insists on
changing "You bush-nigger" to "You bush-man,"
or "You bush-rat," the meticulous ones who object
to the appearance of the word in stories even of
Negroes about Negroes, are expressing the racial
ritual, and there has been ample justification. But
what is evident now in much of the objection is
disturbingly evident in the objection to the use of
the word *Negro* itself. There is a society in Phila-
delphia whose purpose is to outlaw *Negro* as a
device for humiliating the race. Mr. Edward
Morris, a distinguished Chicago Negro attorney
and member of the Commission on Race Relations
appointed by Governor Lowden to study the race
riot, refused to place his signature to the report
because *Negro* was used instead of *colored*. The
Chicago Defender has coined the word *race-man* to
escape it. There are those who insist on *colored*,
Afro-Americans, *Ethiopians*, *Lybians*, with the same
fire that members of this race, immediately after
Emancipation insisted on the pedantic and im-
practicable *gentleman of color*. Moreover, what
is evident in the objection to the various racial
designations was evident, until very recently, in the
objections to dialect quotations, to the spirituals,
and to the words *mammy* and *darky*. The
cause of resentment is obvious, of course. But it
seems that an unnecessary burden is assumed by
the Negroes whose tastes and education remove
them from the classes in question. It is a needless
sensitiveness that denies that there are, or rather
were, Negro "mammies." They were contentedly
loyal black servants and mid-wives in the house-
hold of white southerners of the slavery regime
who filled a definite position in the household.
Only a few remain, and panicky protests invite

Let Us Prey!

By IRA DE A. REID

INCREDIBLE as it may seem there are within the radius of one hundred and fifty blocks of that section of Harlem occupied by the colored population more than one hundred and forty churches. At the time of the count there were exactly that number. Since then more have been instituted or have moved into the district. These churches have an estimated membership of more than forty thousand.

One hundred and twenty-six of these institutions have become a part of the community since 1911 at which time the colored population was much below the 175,000 people who now give Harlem its local color. In the year mentioned there were fourteen churches. At that time the colored population was centered around the West Fifties and in the area west of the Pennsylvania station. There were to be found a few of the churches that have recently moved to more spacious and attractive quarters in Harlem. In that district one may yet find a large number of religious institutions that are filling the needs of the population that remains. But Harlem has been and is a magnet. As the people have come so have their institutions. Especially the churches.

In this large collection of religious institutions one may find the church respected and the church reviled, the church militant and the church penitent, the church "modern" and the church "fundamental," the church esoteric and the church exoteric. One may also find a diversified assortment of denominations—Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian as well as Moravian, Lutheran, Apostolic and African Orthodox. And here is the mother church of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the National Headquarters of the Eureka Oasis Discipleship.

There is no doubt that there are churches in each denomination rendering valuable service to the community. Unselfish and broad-minded ministers have realized the social value of the church and are interpreting it to their parishioners. Through such methods they have arrived. Hence there is cause to respect the achievement of such institutions as Bethel A. M. E., Rush Memorial and Mother A. M. E. Zion, Abyssinian (the bulwark of Baptists in the East), Metropolitan and Mt. Olivet Baptists, St. Mark's Catholic, Williams Institutional C. M. E. (an institution started in 1919 with twelve members, now boasting 2,500, and pastored by a Ph.D.), Grace Congregational, Salem and St. Mark's M. E., St. James' Presbyterian, St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal (the ecclesiastical landlord of Harlem), and some smaller churches.

However, these churches have an arduous task. Not only are they called upon to minister to the social and religious needs of their people, but they

must also keep established a defense mechanism to offset the subtle encroachments of a large number of smaller institutions called churches, whose leaders have advertently or inadvertently revised the well known entreaty to prayer. For them it reads "Let us prey."

Only fifty-four of these churches are housed in regular church edifices, or residences that have been converted to a peculiar style of church architecture. The churches remaining are in the class known as house churches. They are to be found occupying the first floor of a private dwelling, a site formerly used for business purposes, or the back room of a flat. In fact they are anywhere and everywhere. Yet one cannot register a wholesale criticism against a church because it is located in a house, for there are many larger churches whose general conduct is less moral. It is likewise true that many of the larger churches have had their beginning in houses. Nor can one evade the fact that in this same group there is found a large number of so-called churches that do little or no good and much harm in the community.

DENOMINATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF HARLEM CHURCHES

Baptist	34
Spiritual	20
Missions	10
Church of God	6
African Orthodox	5
A. M. E.	5
M. E. Catholic, three mixed congregations ..	4
Apostolic	3
Holiness	3
M. E.	3
A. M. E. Z.	3
Presbyterian	2
Congregational	2
Seventh Day Adventist	2
Wesleyan Methodist	2
Protestant Episcopal	2
Christian Scientist	1
Unity	1
Christian	1
Moravian	1
Lutheran	1
C. M. E.	1
Miscellaneous	28
Total	140

It is needless to say that all of these churches are not purchasing their property. When tenancy is considered we find that there are at least three different types. The first of these includes all churches owning or purchasing their property. In this group we find the greater portion of those mentioned as having regular housing facilities. The

purchasing of a site is, however, a hard proposition. Many a good institution has been slain in its infancy because of the strenuous demands that were involved. At the same time many of them survive the struggle. It is a survival of the fittest. Mention may be made of an institution that was started six years ago in a private house that is now purchasing two residences that have been converted into an auditorium seating five hundred people. The church, though somewhat rough in the exterior, has a comfortable interior that was worthy of the efforts involved. There now remains a mortgage of \$21,000 which the members feel may be easily met.

The second group of churches rents its meeting place. The average rental seems to be from fifty to one hundred dollars a month. Some pay as much as two hundred dollars. All depends upon the size of the congregation, the attitude of the landlord, and the location of the institution. The members of one particular church in this group are required to pay dues amounting to eight dollars per month to pay the rent which is fifty dollars, and payments on the piano, which is ten dollars per month. The pastor is a porter by occupation and has no fee for his services.

The third group comprises those churches whose rent is paid by the pastor or some charitable member at whose home the services are held, with or without the permission of the landlord. The pastor assumes all responsibility for rent, light, and heat, as well as his salary, and receives *pro tanto* all incoming collections. The pastor of one such church is a student in one of the local schools, and from his church (which is conducted in the front room of his house) he derives enough money to defray all of his expenses. The church is non-denominational. The pastor boasts that he is not bound to any organized body and simply "preaches Jesus." His seats are chairs rented from a neighboring undertaker. He conducts his services on such days as he feels disposed mentally and indisposed financially. To this gentleman of the cloth—he is an ordained minister—the church is a legitimate business.

Ministers of the leading churches in this section have been opposed to this spurious growth of so-called Christian churches for some time, and have violently condemned the esoteric cults that have arisen. The latter are in most cases conducted by exploiters and charlatans. But they are dynamically opposed to the activities of the "one-man" church. The pastor of one of the largest churches said in a sermon a few weeks ago: "No we haven't too many churches in Harlem. We do have too many house churches. Somebody wants to be a leader, deacon or preacher and if the large church doesn't give it to him he will establish a little church of his own where he can be seen. Selfishness is really the cause of so many of these house churches." Thus speaks one. And many others have been more violent. Yet these churches have increased.

The churches that spasmodically arise from nowhere and in many cases disappear in much the same fashion are a general nuisance. Neither their appearance nor their character warrants the respect of the community. Their ministers are familiarly called "jack-legs," while their poorly written sign-boards advertising the name of the pastor with his title and degrees, and incidentally the name of the church and the order of service have become the butt of many jokes. Look at one. This holy tabernacle of God is in the very heart of Harlem. One thinks of all save church as he sees a dilapidated frame structure panting beneath the crush of two brick buildings that have been erected on either side of it. There is a yard. A hungry cat slinks through the gate. She reposes on an old push cart in the yard. One sees a rusty milk can, a cot, and several well-aged pieces of wood scattered promiscuously in front of the entrance. An old stone walk leads to the door. It is well worn and cracked. The crevices have been worn to the level of the walk. The steps have been patched so often that little of the original framework seems to remain. The house is paintless except in isolated spots. A dry-rotted trellis hangs dejectedly down the side. In the basement a carpenter plies his trade awaiting the coming of such persons as will follow his teachings blatantly expressed on the shingle which reads:

*We Believe That All Manner of Disease Can
Be Cured*

by the power of GOD divine. Healing is always needed; no matter what your ailment may be it can always be cured. This place is open day and night for the healing of the sick and prayer.

*Jesus is the Doctor
Services on Sunday*

In this group of churches there were fifty meeting in places that had outlived their usefulness as homes or places of business. These places rarely if ever seat fifty persons at the utmost, and are poorly lighted and ventilated. They are chiefly immediate neighborhood affairs, support depending upon the activity of the pastor in securing members from the surrounding apartments and tenements. It is because of this fact that the turnover among these churches is very high. They are forced to follow their members, secure new ones, or go out of business. Six weeks after the preliminary list of the churches was made seven of the churches previously listed could not be found.

The wrath of the public when it is active is centered upon the ministers of these churches rather than at the churches themselves. It is the feeling that they are the ones responsible for such a condition. But they must live and despite what may be said against them it is true that in them you find one group that is doing the thing it wants to do. There is no doubt that the assertion made by a minister that selfishness was the underlying motive of many of the organizations is true. One is re-

mind of the incident relating to the young swain who had come to the church meeting to show good reason why he should be ordained as a Christian minister. He stated that he had a dream. In this dream a still small voice told him to "G. P. C." and when he heard it he knew that he was instructed to "Go preach Christ." After further questioning by the council the chairman told him that he had misinterpreted his dream, for it certainly meant "Go plant corn."

A Southern minister had lost his charges because all of the members had moved North. For five years he had travelled from Georgia to Cincinnati to Chicago to Detroit, thence to New York, where he would assemble his old members for Sunday services. He would exhort and extort in each place. Recently his New York followers became weary of contributing to his wanderlust and suggested that he establish himself here and organize a church. He did not think it wise to do this because his many members in other cities would be neglected. As a result the members failed to transport him South again. Then was he willing to accept their suggestion. It was too late. At present he represents himself as a "pastor at large." He is the supply minister for many of the smaller churches in the city. He boasts that he is a pioneer and has never pastored the church that another has held. He is going to establish the ideal church in Harlem, and has his plans well laid.

The Clergy Bureau has charge of the reduced rates that are offered to ministers by the railroads. It is said that the ministers themselves have been shamed many a time when the investigators from the Bureau called to see the charge held by the Reverend So and So. As many of these institutions are not recognized as established churches there is no one who can vouch for the absolute character of each of them. It is certainly true that when some of the privileges as this of the Clergy Bureau are withheld the commercially inclined ministers lose interest.

Yet, these "little fry" are not sitting idly by. They are contending for what they call their rights. Benefits of clergy. They have as much right to exist as the larger churches. And who knows but that out of one of them there may rise an Abyssinian, or a St. Marks? Even the mother church of a powerful organization? Quite true. Even the pastors most severe in their criticisms admit this possibility. Another says yes. Let them all live. He needs a place to send the trouble makers from his church. For this purpose he keeps letters of transfer on his desk that he may release them at their will. If they don't go, the pastor will—eventually. So they are divided on this question of the little church movement in Harlem. In the meantime the little churches, through their pastors, are feeling that they are persecuted. They compare their predicament with that of the early Christian church in Rome. They claim that the Mayor of New York was visited at one time and asked that he use his power to prevent the establishment of

these institutions that were giving a bad name to our fair city. But their efforts here were futile. However, this group was determined to protect the rights of the chosen few in the ministry and consequently formed a "ring" composed of the "select." How pitiless was this persecution. These churches now fraternize with one another, raise large collections for each other in the "ring," while the church without the pale looks on disgruntledly. As a result they are sorely grieved. A bull has been posted. There will be organized The Interdenominational Union of Ministers with Small Churches. A self-perpetuating, self-advertising, and self-preserving organization. Then they will wage an ecclesiastical war.

Meanwhile others of the ministers are merrily engaged in deploring the vices of sinners and Christians and forewarning them of the wrath that is to come, only to find themselves apprehended on the morrow for the alleged violation of civil and criminal codes. Some of them have found temporary resting places in the unclerical confines of the police station.

All these things do not loom as large upon the horizon of church problems as does the rapid growth of the church esoteric in Harlem. Within the last six years there has been a tidal wave of these groups, many of them sincere in their beliefs but hampered and degraded by a large number of exploiters and charlatans. There are they who dabble in spiritualism, exhibiting their many charms and wares in the form of Grand Imperial incense, prayer incense, aluminum trumpets, luminous bands and other accessories. Among the exploiters in this group one is wont to find as many men as women engaged as pastors, directors and leaders.

It is astounding to note the growth and variety of these movements. Here one finds "The Commandment Keepers, Holy Church of the Living God, The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth," "The Temple of the Gospel of the Kingdom," "The Metaphysical Church of the Divine Investigation," "Prophet Bess," "Mt. Zion Pentecostal Church," "St. Matthew's Church of the Divine Silence and Truth," "Tabernacle of the Congregation of the Disciples of the Kingdom," "Congregation of Beth B'Nai Abraham," "Holy Temple of God in Christ," "The Church of the Temple of Love," and many others—all practicing various doctrines and creeds provocative of no good save the financial returns obtained by the leader.

A visit to the average fake spiritualist meeting proves to be of an innocent if not stupid nature. There are possibly ten or twelve believers present when the service begins. Terrible discords and hymns that were deserving of a better fate were sung. Then the plate was passed and the leader or the assistant passed the plate, appealing for funds to pay the rent already past due. Then the messages started.

This medium, who chanced to be an immense fat man, used none of the regular tricks of the trade. He relied upon the stupidity of the audience and

his own. After a few convulsive shivers he started to get messages. Standing in front of each person in turn, and holding some article belonging to him, he proceeded to bring him the good word from those who had passed beyond. Half of the time the messages were wrong, most of the time they were so general they could be applied to any one, and the rest of the time they were so jumbled nobody could understand them. The whole thing was a farce yet one old man sat in the meeting, paid the medium his two dollars—that he evidently needed very badly for himself—and listened with tears in his eyes to the message from a dead relative. The medium failed to mention just which relative it was.

This medium belonged to the "piker" class. There are some who charge larger fees and work with all the paraphernalia of the profession. They get their messages in the dark and have various ways of speaking through collapsible trumpets, and tapping those who are to receive the messages. They prey upon people whose better judgment has been deadened by worry or sorrow, and reap an immense profit. Most of the people thus engaged are in the business for easy personal gain, and are out and out frauds, although there are some sincere mediums and some sincere spiritualists.

This prostitution does not stop here. There have infested Harlem, groups that to all appearances have "acquired" the distinguishing features of the Jews and have called themselves Black Jews. They claim to have come from Damascus, Palestine, and various parts of the Orient. Their activities range from a grocery store to a conservatory of music.

Recently the head of one of these cults has been sent to the Federal Penitentiary for the violation of the Mann act. This group conducted a "baby farm" in Abescon, N. J. Here was said to be the home of the many children of the "Messiah" (who was their leader). They were borne by such "virgins" as had been elected by him to give themselves to the propagation of the cause. Here are Elder Lazarus, Elder Kauffman, Rosenthal, Goldberg, and many other interesting characters. Under their leadership the Temple of the Gospel of the Kingdom continues.

This "Temple" preaches the doctrine "To live and not die to them that believe." A pamphlet issued by the organization states about their belief and their leader: "Elder Ishi (the Messiah, also known as Elder Roberson) who originated (sic) from the East of Jerusalem is the Author and Founder of the Doctrine of Life which is taught by the Temple of the Gospel of the Kingdom." They conducted two services a week and claimed to have a total membership of 150. As would be expected there was a waiting list of prospective neophytes who wished to become Black Jews.

Despite the fact that the Messiah was sentenced for an eighteen month period on only one charge Federal investigators feel that he could be convicted on at least a dozen more. It is claimed that this group has been robbing the public of at least \$800 per day for the last ten years.

When the prosecution of this group was begun another organization of Black Jews also caught the revealing glare of the spotlight. This was the Congregation of Beth B'Nai Abraham, pastored by a rabbi, who was not pre-conceived, but taught by a Jew and ordained at his will.

Reasons for the establishment of this group seemed to be based on the fact that there was an error in the early translations of Holy Writ. It is claimed that the Israelites came out of Ethiopia, and that this place was the seat of all religions. Hence in this synagogue of Black Jews they were teaching the descendants of Ethiopians their long lost languages—Hebrew and Arabic—for fifty cents a lesson.

Investigations show that the rabbi, who is a native of the British West Indies, spent some time travelling in South America with a group of Hindoos and Arabs. Here he picked up bits of language which when coupled with his general intelligence gave him the nucleus for his Congregation. The Jewish Federation of New York has been investigating this group and as a result has classified it as "N. G." It is claimed that they keep within the laws but subtly extort monies for various uses for which they never account.

Then there are other cults that function in their own peculiar fashion. A former minister of the Methodist church, who resigned in 1913, conducts a clannish thing called a Discipleship. There are associated and initiated members. When this minister became the founder and head of the sect he assumed the title of Bishop and the degree of D.D.T.

In this group when one has earned the title of Disciple there is erected in his or her home an altar. The Disciple is now qualified to minister to the physical and spiritual wants of those who are willing to believe. Their services are conducted under such high-sounding phrases as "The Sanctiloquent Equity Exposition," "Inquisition and Information Service," "Practical Biblical Deliberation," and "Ethical Development Classes."

The whole group is characterized by the machinations of impostors who do their work in great style. Bishops without a diocese, those who heal with divine inspiration, praying circles that charge for their services, American Negroes turned Jews "over night," theological seminaries conducted in the rear of "railroad" apartments, Black Rev. Wm. Sundays, Ph.D., who have escaped the wrath of many communities, new denominations built upon the fundamental doctrine of race—all these and even more contribute to the prostitution of the church. And there seems to be no end to their growth. Already have five new institutions been opened for business. One thinks of the much advertised cinema production "Hell Bent For Heaven."

Despite the great religious cooperative efforts that have been launched in Harlem and are associated with similar groups throughout the city one cannot overlook the grim picture that exists. While the organized churches have been the source of much good the others have been a troublesome briar.

Where one has progressed in the type of ministers selected and in the reformation of the church program, the other has become stuffed with cast-offs and religious criminals who will not be denied. While the aggressive minority is pushing forward with intelligent and modern interpretation of a gospel that was once wholly emotionalized, the sattelites have glittered with their emotional paroxysms and illusive and illiterate mysticisms.

It is unfortunate that the efforts of sincere and well-established churches in Harlem, both small and large, have to be hampered by the manipulations of these groups—both orthodox and pagan—of the outer fringe. While the one steadily prods at social problems with instruments both spiritual and physical, and methods religious and humanitarian, the others are saying "Let us prey." And they do.

African Sculptor

By HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN

"transcend the medium by virtue of its inherent characteristics"

WHEN you have learned details you have still
lacked
the whole. You have but learned the threads, you
have not yet
attained to meaning. Is your soul tactile? can it
touch?
does it see with open pores? and does it yield
and yielding still maintain its guise, its self, its
hue?

Diligent practitioner, when you have once ransacked
the closets and the chests, you have still to get
the enterprise in motion. Hew rock, sculptor, in
such
melting way that rock is of itself no longer rock,
but spilled
into a lucid rivulet or mayhap torrent that grew
and grew
within the rock waiting to be freed, released.

This creeping black,
of whom a visage amid long tusks and hungry
paws
you hold, what was the manner of his attainment
here
with this stripped wood that held such juice as
might be naught
but marrow of its life for self, and might be this
transcendent figure that is flow, lines flowing up
and back,
through these curves and angles, into these eyes
and jaws.

Mind you, this once was wood that is now a listen-
ing ear,
not ear that listens to the modes of sound, but ear
that listens to the line in motion. Break down the
form
for new totalities, moving coordinate and in
parallel.
What does the conch acclaim, what does the tym-
panum hear
in the movement of these lines? They are not a
swarm
of buzzing wasps, but his universe, his hell
and heaven and earth, gathered to a function
that will bless him with immortality, if not with
unction.

Oh, this once was wood that was the fiber of a
thought,
not measured in a word, but in the proper knife's
significance
transported beyond the keen metallic sense, that is
a richer kiss
than wine, to realms where concepts and the graces
ply
their cosmic labors.

This unschooled and learned soul
whose apprehending nostrils wing to mould and
modify
wood and rock by soaring with them, flowing with
them—O droll
conspiracy that gave this woolly hunter touch and
flow! This is Conspiracy!

Star Fancy

By LEONARD DARVIN

Stars
are little holes
in the roof
of the world,
and the light
of heaven
leaks through
and trickles
down. . . .