

November 4, 1837  
Wright, Theodore S.  
New York Evangelist

Resolved, That we claim for our colored brethren all the privileges, civil and social, literary and religious, to which, if they were white, their pressing wants and moral worth would entitle them; and that we look upon those social circles, and those literary institutions, and those Christian churches, which have fully yielded to this claim, with lively complacency and warm approbation.

Nothing but a sense of imperious duty, at all times and under all circumstances, where I am permitted to lift up my voice in behalf of crushed humanity, induces me, at this late period of the evening, to occupy a few moments of your precious time.

Nothing is more common than the remark, that anti-slavery agents are "men of one idea," and that their topics are very common-place. It is true with regard to the great subject involved in this resolution, viz. prejudice against color, and the recognition of all the rights of the colored man, under all circumstances—it is true that it is a trite and common subject with three hundred thousand men in this country. They feel the evils of prejudice, and the subject is emphatically common-place to them. The colored man, at every progressive step, literally runs the gauntlet. He is scarred from head to foot, in all the walks of life. The evils of prejudice are wide spread and wicked; and nothing will be effected for the benefit of the people of color, until a proper public sentiment be formed with regard to this class of the community; until the people feel that the course pursued is a wicked course.—The prejudice entertained in this country is peculiarly American, and robs the people of color of

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their political rights. This was shown by Mr. Yates, in his statements respecting their legal disabilities. It was shown that they were deprived, even in this state, of the right to trial by jury. He who address you might be arrested to-night, and, brought before the magistrates of this city; and if arrested as a slave, would not be allowed a trial by jury.

This prejudice also disfranchises a man of color, takes from him the right of choosing his rulers.— Had we time, we might dwell upon another class of disabilities thrown upon the man of color. It imposes innumerable, and almost insurmountable obstacles to his obtaining a livelihood. It deprives him of acquiring the mechanic arts. The difficulty of colored young men in acquiring the knowledge of trades, and after they have acquired the knowledge of trades of getting employment, is manifest. It is well known that there is a monopoly here, so great a monopoly that men of color cannot enjoy these privileges, or if they do, with great difficulty.— From most of the usual occupations in society, they are excluded. They are not employed as clerks, no matter what may be their talents or skill. They are also deprived of the privileges of education. Every person who is acquainted with the subject knows perfectly well, that throughout this whole state colored children are excluded from common schools. In such places as Schenectady, Poughkeepsie, and Catskill, and all these large places, colored parents train up their children under great disadvantages, in respect to education. From colleges they have been entirely excluded,

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with the exception of two or three—the Oneida Institute and Dartmouth College. These two institutions are now open. They have declared to the world, that they will receive persons irrespective of color.

I confess it is somewhat embarrassing for a man to speak of his own degradation. But when he feels the pressure of such disabilities as I have mentioned; when, whether at home or abroad, in the parlor, the stage coach, the bar room, or the public mart, he feels the pressure of the chain, how can he be silent? Why is all this? Sir, it is to be traced to the spirit of slavery existing in the breasts of men, even in those who think they have sympathy for the oppressed. This is the great support of the system of slavery. Oh! there is enough in this feeling to cause tears of blood to flow from the eyes of those who possess it. It is this that deprives man of his manhood; brings him down from that elevated position which God designed he should occupy, to a place with chattels and things. Oh! if we had time to delineate the effects of this spirit, we should keep you here till midnight, stating facts and telling tales of woe, the thought of which makes our spirits sink within us. I will state but a few facts, illustrative of the effect of the prevalence of the cord of caste.

Miss Betsy Stockton, a colored lady, who accompanied Mrs. Stewart on the first mission, I think, to the Sandwich Islands, was traveling for her health. In coming up the North River, although under the protection of a white gentleman, and although an

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intelligent and philanthropic woman, who had crossed the ocean to aid in enlightening and converting the heathen, she was not permitted a place beneath the deck to lay her head in the damp night. By this exposure her health was injured and her life endangered.

Mrs. Smith was a pious woman, and lived in Newburgh. She was going down the North River on the steam boat. Night began to come on, and she thought of the infant she held in her arms. She went to the captain of the steam boat and plead for a place, where with her dear babe she might be comfortable, and its life and health not be jeopardized. Such a place she was refused. She arrived at the city of New-York. Her child died, and after a short period she died herself, from the cold she then caught.

I might also mention the case of the Rev. Jeremiah Gloucester, former pastor of the Second Presbyterian church in Philadelphia. Eight years since he traveled, on his professional tour, through New England—was excluded from the cabin of a steam boat at night. Although in poor health, like his master, he had not where to lay his head. His exposure threw him into a decline, and he died.

I might relate other painful facts, to illustrate the bearing of this prejudice upon the life of its victims. The following I state by request: In the fall of 1828, a gentleman and a lady, friends of mine, with a little infant, came from Princeton, New Jersey, to visit me at Schenectady. On the steam boat between New-York and Albany, they were denied a

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Now despair almost drank up my spirits. I went from steam boat to steam boat, from line to line, to obtain a place, even below the deck, so that our lives might not be endangered. I made interest with my friends to strive for me, but in vain. At length we went on board of the steam boat, and were compelled to sit on deck. This was in the fall; ice was in the river, and the weather was cold. At night, my wife was permitted to sleep with the cook, in a dirty apartment near the machinery, whilst I was permitted—and thankful was I for the privilege—to lie down on the deck, inclosed as it is from the weather. In the morning, we rejoiced and blessed God together for the preservation of our lives. But alas! my wife had received the fatal shaft, and she died after a few months, in consequence of the cold she then caught. Here are the results of prejudice; and such things are constantly taking place. Now I call upon all present to ask themselves, if *here* they ought not to remember those who are in bonds as bound with them. How would the men and women of this convention feel and act, were they similarly circumstanced? How would the members of this meeting act, were they under the disabilities of the colored man?

As I said before, we have to run the gauntlet. Sabbath before last, I had occasion to visit New Rochelle, to see my family, who were then in that place. I attended the Presbyterian church in the morning—took a place in the gallery. I was requested to leave my seat, and occupy another place. I did not think it proper, however, to move, and

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When we hear you talk of female seminaries, and of sending your daughters to them, we weep to think our daughters are deprived of such advantages. Not a single high school or female seminary in the land is open to our daughters. And when we go into the church, how much of this spirit is here exhibited! In the house of God; in the place which Jesus Christ has appointed for his people; in the place where they sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; even there the man of color is proscribed. Oh! how do these things appear in the eye of Heaven! Let me ask those men and women who are here to-night, how would you feel to be proscribed when you go to the house of prayer? This is the case with the colored man. He is told, "Sit thou there: go and take that place." When he goes into the house of God, and takes a seat, how it depresses his spirits to be avoided; to have

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the whole congregation excited, as though some monster had come in among them. And then at the communion table, to be passed by, till the elements are presented to all the rest! Is there nothing withering in all this? How does the Savior, whose blood flowed freely for all, regard it? Are we not alike going to the grave? Are we not all hastening to the same judgment? Let me tell you, brethren, these things to which I have referred are destructive to souls, because they make infidels. When the man of the dark complexion goes into such a place as Tammany Hall; when he goes among the Shaking Quakers, or into the Catholic house of worship, he finds no distinctions. There the people seem to be for God and truth; the cord of caste is almost entirely disregarded; there he may sit without molestation. But among those who profess to be most orthodox, nearest the Bible, with a few exceptions, he finds the most prejudice! Now these things give a prevalence to skepticism; and of course tend to ruin souls. I know of many men who turn away from Christ on this account. They inquire, naturally, Can this be the religion of Jesus Christ? Now let me beseech you to look to this matter; to look at the bearing of these things upon the colored community.

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One more fact with regard to prejudice, illustrative of its bearing upon the conversion of the world. A few weeks since, a vessel arrived from Africa. The captain was an African; the crew mostly natives, and a part of them converted Africans. On [a]

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Sabbath they were taken to meeting by a gentleman, and seated as other people. A great excitement was produced. These men made inquiry into the cause; and they were told that in this country, even in Christian churches, where they pray that Ethiopia may stretch forth her hands unto God, and send Bibles to Africa, the people revolt at the idea of having colored men sit with them. On another Sabbath they went to one of the churches, and sat on the steps during all the services. They were not invited to take a seat in the sanctuary.

These men are converted heathen, and are going back to Africa. Oh! what a specimen of American slavery! And yet, those who entertain this prejudice, which is destroying the beauty of the religion of Jesus Christ, complain that the abolitionists are neglecting the missionary and Bible cause, that they are combining all their influence, and concentrating all their efforts, to accomplish one object; and that they are "men of one idea." The abolitionists are aiming at the removal of the greatest obstruction to the conversion of the world. For this let them employ their powers. For this let them labor and pray; and in due time they shall reap their reward.

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