
CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SOUTH

else the emergence of such a group signifies, it is clear that among those socially classified as negroes there was a considerable minority who are not unfit for the competitions and achievements of white civilization. Under slavery its members were socially suppressed. So far, at least, the inferior status of the race was not due to inferior capacity. Now that part — and only part — of the pressure has been removed their fitness manifests itself, and they take their natural place of successful leadership. The progress of the negro under this leadership has already been marvelous, and is a reliable indication of still wider capacity and potential worth awaiting to be revealed when opportunity is more perfectly equalized.

Such are some of the phases of the great process of social selection working in the South. To illustrate and interpretate them still further will be the work of subsequent discussions.

IV. STUDY OF THE WELL-SIFTED NEGRO COMMUNITY

What the process of selection concretely means and how it actually works out is best realized through the study of the particular population. Thomasville, Georgia, shows such a well-sifted negro community. The facts relating to it here summarized were gathered by Rev. William H. Holloway, pastor of the local Congregational church.

In 1900, Thomasville was a city of 3296 colored and 2026 white population. It has grown to probably 8000 people, about the same relative proportion between the races being maintained. The county had at the last census 17,450 negroes and 13,626 whites. It is part of the "Black Belt" lying in Southwestern Georgia, about twenty miles above the Florida line.

THE SIFTING OF THE SOUTH

An investigation of the distribution of the two races within the city limits of Thomasville shows clearly the Segregation of tendency to segregation. The negroes the Races occupy solidly four distinct areas lying in general toward the outskirts of the city. Some of their better homes are near the center, and, in fact, they are well represented on the best streets, but such property was acquired before the recent growth in population. Contiguity between the races is due largely to the filling in of population between. A negro would not now easily find a central location. There is a marked tendency, and one vigorously encouraged by both races, toward geographical separation.

On this account the most extensive of recent movements of negro population have been suburban. Within five Suburban years three distinct sections beyond the city Development limits have been developed as exclusive residential sections for the race. In them the acquirement of property and the building of homes has gone on most extensively. These developments have been modern, furnished with streets and drainage. Trees have been planted, and in one of the new additions a children's playground established. The district adjoining the American Missionary Association school, called the Normal School Annex, has seen the erection of thirty-five comfortable little homes and half as many more lots sold to prospective builders. In "Dewey City" twenty or more cottages have been built, while in a single season over a hundred lots were bought and several homes built in Normal School Park. Similar developments of exclusive residential sections for negroes are going on in most of the South Georgia cities. They are partly due to the activity of real estate promoters

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SOUTH

but rest back upon the community building spirit of the race.

The development of these residential sections means not merely the geographical separation of the negro from the white population, but also the geographical segregation within the Negro Race separation of the better from the poorer classes of negroes. It means segregation within the race. Whole streets and blocks of negro homes stand in sharp contrast to equal areas of tenant property. The houses are invariably painted, the yards neatly fenced, the surroundings generally beautified by shrubs and flowers. Within these homes are mothers and daughters who are primarily home makers. Frequently they employ servants. Such negroes maintain their own social distinction as strictly as do any American group. The tenant quarters, on the other hand, show long rows of bare, decrepit, unkempt cabins where turbaned Amazons may be seen washing over fires built in the front yards, or cutting their own fuel from the log, fences and door-steps frequently being used for kindling. These external contrasts stand for deep differences between negro groups. They are evidences of the sifting of the race.

It has been found impossible to collect complete information as to the ownership of homes by Thomasville negroes. Large areas within the city limits have been built up, and the negroes almost invariably own the property which they occupy, while the suburban developments just described are virtually all extensions of home ownership. "It is rare," says Mr. Holloway, "to find a colored man who has lived any number of years in Thomasville, who does not wholly or in part own his own home." City taxes in 1907 were paid by negroes on \$139,000 worth of property — undoubtedly a conservative estimate, for



HOME OF NEGRO LANDLORD, THOMASVILLE, GA.
Tenant houses adjoining



NEGRO ARTISAN AND STREET OF ARTISANS' HOMES, THOMASVILLE, GA.

THE SIFTING OF THE SOUTH

the colored man has learned from his white neighbor how to return as small a tax list as possible.

Eighteen business enterprises carried on by negroes are housed in property owned by members of the race. These
Business range in value from \$2500 to \$7500 and are
Property situated in all parts of the town. Near the business center on Broad Street is a two-story brick building in which the negro owner conducts a first-class shoe business. On Jackson Street, the second business street of Thomasville, is a \$3000 building in which the negro owner carries on his own grocery business. Another negro owns unimproved property worth \$3000.

The most surprising extension of ownership by Thomasville negroes is, however, in the line of property for rental
Rental purposes. Mr. Holloway has tabulated 207
Property separate dwellings, valued at from \$75 to \$1000, owned and rented by them. Ten of them are rented to whites. The most extensive negro landlord is a widow, Mrs. Toomer Hamilton. In a single block she has sixteen tenements, and in all twenty-six pieces of rented property, bringing her in a comfortable monthly income. The property was first acquired by her late husband, a successful liveryman, but has been added to by the shrewdness of his widow. Another negro landlord has twelve rental houses, another seven, and many others own from one to five.

All told this makes an impressive showing of property ownership by the Thomasville negro. To be sure the value of his property averages much less than that of the whites, but as representing the acquirement of the race within forty years it is most creditable. Moreover, as indicating a *tendency* toward ownership it is highly significant. Probably as many negroes own property in Thomasville in

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SOUTH

proportion to their numbers as whites do, and according to the real estate agents they are now building homes twice as fast as the white population.

Appended to this paragraph is a table showing that there are eighty professional negroes in Thomasville, representing fifteen different professions. A very disproportionate number of them are preachers. The list indicates, however, that the Thomasville negro group is almost self-sufficient in the matter of professional service. It carefully limits itself, moreover, to those only whose professional standing is commonly called first-class. Thus there are many nurses able to command as much as \$10 per week for their services, but only the two who are graduates of nurse-training schools are listed.

The two physicians have each an extensive practise. Both are graduates of reputable medical colleges and have licenses from the Georgia Medical Association. One has practised in Thomasville eight years, the other five. They receive all professional courtesies from the white physicians and have equal privileges in the use of the city hospital.

The colored dentist is also a graduate of a first-class institution. His well-appointed office has the latest type of pneumatic chair and a cabinet of modern instruments. The colored community gives him an almost exclusive patronage.

The entire force of mail-carriers, numbering four, is colored. All happen to be graduates of schools of the American Missionary Association and members of the Congregational church. The positions were of course secured by competitive examination.

Of the fourteen negro pastors of Thomasville, five are college graduates, two of whom hold also diplomas from

THE SIFTING OF THE SOUTH

Northern divinity schools. These five serve the largest and most intelligent congregations. In thoughtfulness and careful preparation their preaching is in striking contrast to the emotionalism of the old-fashioned negro exhorter. They are men of good character, whose chief shortcoming is parochial narrowness and blindness to the large mission of the church to the community.

The nine other preachers represent the older type. With one or two exceptions they are ignorant and most of them are immoral. Nowhere indeed is the moral sifting of the race more strongly marked than in its church life.

The Thomasville negro has an almost undisputed monopoly in skilled industry. The statistics of the appended **Occupations:** table are compiled from the books of the **Industrial** labor-unions and list only first-class workmen, who constitute only about one-fourth of the membership. In the Carpenters' Union, for example, out of a membership of seventy-four only about twenty command the highest wage, \$2.50 to \$3 per day. Many of the palatial winter homes of the Northerners, some costing upward of \$100,000, were almost entirely built by Thomasville negro workmen. All the white contractors of the city have negro foremen and there are three licensed colored contractors.

At the time of Mr. Holloway's investigation the city had just given to a colored man a \$30,000 contract for an addition to the sewer system. Negro contractors had also secured the brick work for the new city hall and for the two brick business buildings then being erected. The negroes say there are no first-class white carpenters or masons in Thomasville. The same question put to a white contractor brought the answer that perhaps three white carpenters were first-class and two masons. This

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SOUTH

shows the dominant place of the negro in the building industries.

Many of the skilled negro workmen live in comfortable homes and bear the highest reputation for character in the community.

The appended table shows that in the whole range of skilled industry the Thomasville negro holds a commanding position. There is not a single occupation in which he is not found, and in which he does not compete successfully with white workmen. This, however, has led to little industrial friction, white and colored laborers working side by side on almost all jobs. Indeed this is usual in the smaller places throughout the South. In a recent carpenters' strike for a nine-hour day, white and colored unions met in conference, and when their demands were refused all stuck together.

The three blocks of Jackson Street leading up from the railroad station to Broad Street are in importance the Occupations: second business center of Thomasville; the Business street, a paved thoroughfare with electric lights, good water and sewerage facilities, and lined with substantial brick stores. In these three blocks there are twenty-six different enterprises conducted by negroes. Their patronage is, naturally, chiefly within the race, but the better firms have also considerable white trade. In fact whenever the negro store is believed to carry a high grade of stock and to furnish first-class service it is favorably regarded by a large number of Southern white patrons. This fact has been the means of raising the standard in a considerable number of enterprises. While many of the twenty-six are businesses with small stocks and poor fixtures, an increasing number are thoroughly equipped and in every way creditable. Mr. H. Daniels, for example, in



NEGRO BUSINESS MEN'S HOMES, THOMASVILLE, GA.



NEGRO DRUG STORE AND PROPRIETOR, THOMASVILLE, GA.

THE SIFTING OF THE SOUTH

twelve years of business, has come to own a fine grocery store, occupying his own two-story brick building. He also conducts a first-class colored restaurant and a barber shop, runs a woodyard, and has considerable real estate which he rents to whites as well as negroes. In ten years Robert Mitchell, formerly an itinerant fishmonger, has acquired the largest stock of general merchandise of any colored business man. He has a branch store in the suburbs and owns five rental houses. Of the seven grocery firms on Jackson Street, five have been in the business for over seven years and one boasts a fifteen years' record. In addition to the Jackson Street business center, there are fifteen suburban stores run by negroes. The Local Business Men's League claims that at least two-thirds of the colored grocery patronage of Thomasville is held by negro merchants.

The strong tendency thus revealed toward a self-sufficient group life is of comparatively recent origin. It is interesting to note the circumstances which have brought race consciousness to light and hastened its development. For example, the colored physician had but a precarious practise until a well-to-do negro called in a young white doctor to attend his wife. The doctor walked into the patient's room with his hat on and sat down on the bed with a smoking cigarette in his mouth. The husband leaned upon the bedside, as he said, "mad enough to fight a cross-cut saw." He made no remonstrance, but later tore up the white doctor's prescription and called in a colored doctor. Probably no other white doctor in Thomasville would have been guilty of such discourtesy; yet, under the strained condition of race feeling, the incident set the negro community against all white doctors.

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SOUTH

Now the tendency is strong to favor physicians of their own race.

The case of the negro dentist was similar. For years a prominent white dentist had held practically all the patronage of the negro population, making no discrimination in his treatment of them. Whites were made to wait their turn when negro patients were in the chair. When this man retired from active practise, new white dentists came in, who set up second-hand chairs for negroes in their back storerooms. The same prices, however, were charged, and in response to this discrimination, the negro community imported and now exclusively patronizes its own dentist.

Similarly a leading millinery store inaugurated the custom of not allowing any negro customer to try on a hat. She must be satisfied with viewing it on the head of the white clerk. When a colored minister's wife was refused this privilege the minister took the incident to his congregation. As a result the firm lost all its colored patronage and soon went into the hands of a receiver.

These incidents indicate two things: on the part of the negro, a new sensitiveness as to his rights and a new consciousness of racial resources; on the part of the later generation of whites, new tendencies to discrimination.

Between seven and ten colored insurance employees make daily rounds to the homes of the negro community, collecting the small dues which secure sick and accident benefits. They represent three companies, one with headquarters in New York, the other two large Georgia institutions, organized and operated by negroes. Three years ago the legislature enacted some undoubtedly necessary laws to regulate such companies. Probably, however, their immediate instigation was by white insurance companies in the hope of put-

THE SIFTING OF THE SOUTH

ting their negro rivals out of business. The result was that a large number of local companies combined and three negro insurance enterprises were able to make the deposit of \$5000 required by state law.

Almost every negro home in Thomasville carries policies in some one of these companies. A weekly premium of five cents secures a sick benefit of \$2 per week and a death benefit of \$10. Ten cents secures a sick benefit of \$3 and a death benefit of \$15. Twenty-five cents secures a sick benefit of \$5 and a death benefit of \$25. In addition to this humbler type of insurance, Mr. Holloway reports that a number of families carry policies in regular "old-line" companies. Georgia has also two negro fire insurance companies, one of which maintains an office in Thomasville and secures a large share of negro patronage.

Besides their churches already enumerated, the Thomasville negro community has a full quota of social institutions. An organization of colored women called the "How to Live Club" has a membership of about forty. Besides literary features, it has undertaken as its particular work the support of the colored ward in the city hospital. The Women's Federation is building a negro "Old Folks' Home." Some thousand dollars have been collected for this purpose, and the race is thus attempting to keep its aged members from the hardship of the county poorhouse.

Besides a public school, poorly housed, and with almost no playground, there are two schools for Thomasville negroes supported by philanthropy. One is a small parochial enterprise attached to an Episcopal Church and taught by its minister. The other, Allen Normal Institute, a well-equipped and growing girls' seminary, admits boys also as day pupils. This institution is described at

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SOUTH

length in another connection. These private schools are patronized almost exclusively by the better class of negroes. Thus segregation within the race is expressed also in its education.

The relations between negro and white in Thomasville are on the whole kindly and mutually helpful. There are occasional frictions, but they have never been serious. Discriminations are met by the negroes by the withdrawal upon their own resources instead of by active resentment. There has never been a lynching in the city and only one in the county, which was universally condemned by the better element of white citizens. Mr. Holloway writes, "There seems to be a growing conviction among both races that not all negroes are bad and that not all white men are good. There are evidences on every hand that good white people are lending a helping hand to the good negro in his efforts to rise, and the negro in turn is striving to make good his citizenship in the community where his rights are so secure and his opportunities so numerous."

The whole story means that the negroes of Thomasville constitute a fairly typical American group. If they do not quite reach it, they at least closely approximate the national average of attainment. Their deficiencies are mere backwardness, not abnormal or unwholesome. They are practising a relatively complete group economy, yet without bitterness or practical antagonism to or from the dominant white population. From every reasonable human standpoint the black citizens of this typical city have made good.

THE SIFTING OF THE SOUTH

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III

TABLE I

OCCUPATIONS (PROFESSIONAL)

Physicians	2
Pharmacist	1
Dentist	1
Chiropodists	2
Graduate Nurses	2
Graduate Hair Dresser	1
Preachers	15
Teachers (male)	5
Teachers (female)	30
Civil Service	5
Rural Free Delivery	3
Government Service	1
Insurance	9
Editors	2
Musician	1

TABLE II

OCCUPATIONS (INDUSTRIAL)

Licensed Contractors	4
Carpenters, first-class (Union-men)	20
Brick Masons, first-class (Union-men)	18
Plasterers	11
Painters	6
Tinners and Plumbers	4
Skilled Mechanists	2
Pressman	1
Wheelwrights	2
Blacksmiths	4
Bakers	2
Paper-hangers	2
Carriage Painter	1

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SOUTH

TABLE III
NEGRO BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

NO.	KINDS OF BUSINESS	EACH VALUE	MEN EM- PLOYED	OCCUPY OWN PROPERTY	YRS.	UP- TOWN	SUB- URBS
1	Drugstore	\$4000	3	..	2	1	..
1	Grocery	3000	2	..	8	1	..
2	Groceries	2000	5	1	10-11	2	..
4	Groceries	500	7	..	..	4	..
15	Groceries . . . . .	....	22	15	1-8	..	15
1	Undertaker	2000	2	1	4	..	1
1	Harness shop	300	2	..	2	1	..
1	Tailor	200	2	..	10	1	..
6	Barber Shops . . . . .	....	12	..	..	6	..
1	Hotel . . . . .	....	3	..	8	1	..
3	Pressing Clubs . . . . .	....	7	..	2-8	3	..
1	Butcher	250	3	..	2	1	..
3	First-class restaurant . . . . .	....	8	1	3-5	1	..
1	Dairy	300	2	1	1	.	1