

Howard University

Digital Howard @ Howard University

First Congregational Church, Washington, D.C.

Oliver Otis Howard Collection

1-28-1868

First Congregational Church, Washington, D.C. - True Position 1868

O.O. Howard Collection

Follow this and additional works at: https://dh.howard.edu/ooh_fc

Recommended Citation

Collection, O.O. Howard, "First Congregational Church, Washington, D.C. - True Position 1868" (1868). *First Congregational Church, Washington, D.C.. 2*.
https://dh.howard.edu/ooh_fc/2

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Oliver Otis Howard Collection at Digital Howard @ Howard University. It has been accepted for inclusion in First Congregational Church, Washington, D.C. by an authorized administrator of Digital Howard @ Howard University. For more information, please contact digitalservices@howard.edu.

THE TRUE POSITION
OF THE
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
Washington, D. C.

At a regular business meeting of the First Congregational Church, Washington, D.C., held January 28th, 1868, at the Columbian Law Building, the enclosed statement of the Pastor was ordered to be placed upon the records of the Church for future reference, and the following preamble and resolutions sustaining the same were unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, articles have occasionally appeared in the "Congregationalist and Recorder," of Boston, and the "Advance," of Chicago, seriously misrepresenting the character and position of our beloved Pastor, Rev. C. B. Boynton, D.D., and tending to jeopardize the interests of the First Congregational Church and Society, at the National Capital; and

WHEREAS, it is our right and duty to adopt some appropriate measures to correct these misstatements, and authoritatively present to our Congregational brethren, and the Christian public throughout the country, the true position and belief of our Pastor and membership on the great doctrines of equal, civil, and religious rights to all men, regardless of race, color, or nationality; therefore,

Resolved, first. That we cheerfully indorse the following views of our Pastor, as submitted this evening for the Church Record, to wit:

"I claim that the colored man is entitled to all the rights of our common humanity, and that this includes all the civil and political rights and privileges that other men enjoy. I admit that he differs from the white man in many particulars, but deny that he is on that account to be regarded as belonging to an inferior type of humanity. I claim that the whole field of human effort and enjoyment should be open to him as to others, and then his social rank and position must depend upon his own exertions and upon those usages which apply to other men. I demand that he should not be excluded from business pursuits, or places of amusement, nor from our schools, or colleges, or theological seminaries or benevolent associations, or from our churches; that there should be no rule which, on account of his race or color, should shut him out from what other men enjoy; in a word, that he should be freed from every disability and hindrance, and then left free to work out his own proper destiny, with such assistance as his fellow men can give.

"While thus demanding for the black man the same rights and privileges that other men enjoy, I believe that the colored people will not reach the highest condition of which they are capable, except by a culture which shall be so far separate as to preserve the characteristics of their race.

"An African civilization may yet play as important a part in the world's recovery as that of the white man. I therefore rejoice in the manifest favor and blessing which God is bestowing upon the schools, colleges, and churches, in which the colored people are making such rapid progress. I think that the perfect earthly condition of humanity is to be reached, not by attempting to blend all races into one homogeneous mass, but by the full development, under Christian culture, of the excellencies of each, and uniting this variety into one homogeneous whole by the ties of Christian brotherhood."

Resolved, second. That we believe Dr. Boynton to have been sent to us by God; that we have found him peculiarly adapted to the wants of our Church; that he has proved himself efficient and faithful as a pastor; and that we do now, as a Church, renew our pledge to stand by and support him by our prayers and efforts; and, furthermore, that we do now renege ourselves to the great work of elevating, christianizing, and advancing the interests of our common humanity, for which purpose God has placed us here.

Resolved, third. That the papers herein named, and others which have manifested an interest in our church, be requested to publish this preamble and resolutions.

WILLIAM WEBB, *Clerk.*

PROTEST.

WE, the undersigned members of the First Congregational Church and Society of Washington, D.C., differing in opinion from our brethren with regard to the resolutions copied above, desire to express our views freely and frankly, so that we may not be misunderstood upon questions fundamental in importance, and deemed vital to us as a Congregational body.

Most of us were not present at the passage of the above resolutions, and others either ~~voted against them, or did not vote upon their adoption.~~

Our position can best be explained by stating an incident that has occurred in connection with this matter: Two young colored men presented themselves, at a meeting of the pastor and deacons of the Church, for admission, upon profession of faith. After they had undergone a thorough examination, they were told that they were welcome to unite with the Church. At the same time, however, the pastor, in a general discussion as to the future position of the negro, gave an opinion to the effect that his (the negro's) interests would be best conserved if intelligent colored men, and indeed all colored people, should remain in their own organizations.

On the next Sabbath succeeding this meeting, the sermon, which has been so extensively criticised, was preached by the pastor. Upon this, the young men in question concluded not to complete their union with our Church. In this sermon the same opinion is set forth in these words:

"In view of their own best interests and highest happiness, should we induce or advise them to come? Where they have no church organizations of their own that they can enter, I should do so; but in a community where suitable churches and schools of their own people abound, I cannot conscientiously as a friend to the blacks advise them to avoid these organizations of their own, and bury themselves in a living grave, an unheeded little company in the larger masses of the whites."

And again—

"We can afford to receive the colored people; but their own race cannot afford to lose them."

Without meaning any disrespect to our pastor, we wish to say that we do not endorse this opinion ~~without qualification.~~ We have quite a large number of colored people in our Sunday-school, and we earnestly desire that they shall not only be welcome to the Church on profession of faith, but that the same reasonable inducements and advice shall be extended to them as to other people to become followers of Christ, and members of the First Congregational Church of this city.

We have a great work to perform, to overcome the spirit of caste and of slavery; and unless we make our doctrine of "Love thy neighbor as thyself" as broad as humanity, we cannot succeed.

The practical effect of the sermon referred to has been to keep our colored Congregational brethren from uniting with our Church; and if such a sermon should be preached in all the white churches of our polity, we believe the effect would be the same, and that we thereby should build up a wall of partition between races as real and impassable as any that ever was erected to destroy the unity of the Christian body.

As ours is the only Church of our polity in Washington, the direct effect of our pastor's sentiment is to send colored Congregationalists who may come here into other denominations—a result that we as Congregationalists deprecate.

We do not feel called upon at this time to express our opinion with regard to ~~the pastor, and upon~~ other points presented in the resolutions.

These being our sentiments, we wish them published as extensively as the resolutions which fully indorse our pastor in these matters.