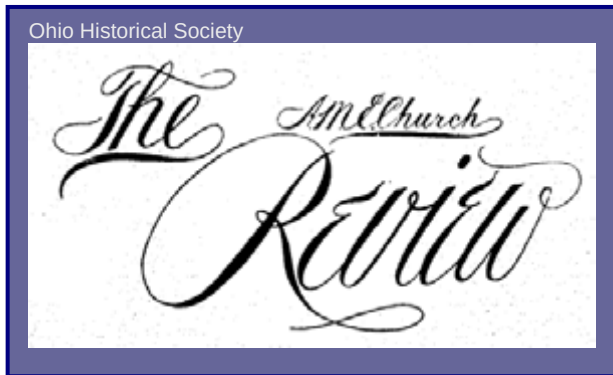




RACE LOVE

Editorial

A. M. E. Church Review

[American Methodist Episcopal]

April 1886 Excerpt

In the public domain. Acknowledgement is due John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier, and Elliott Rudwick, eds., *Black Nationalism in America*, Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1970, in which this editorial is included.

There can be no doubt that fish think a deal more of fish, supposing them to be in any way capable of such emotion, than they do of birds. And the same may be affirmed of birds; these, beyond question, think more of one another than they do of beasts; while beasts, in turn, think more of beasts than they do of man. And man follows the same bent. He thinks more of man than he does of fish, of or birds, or of beasts. Exactly why this is so may be more difficult of demonstration than many might suppose. One of the chief reasons is doubtless found in the principle of *self-love*. This self-love, or love of self, is everywhere assertive. Indeed, the social structure may be said to rest upon it. And it is doubtless well that it is so. Without it what would the individual amount to, and everything depends upon the individual; for the status of the individual gauges the world. Let the individual be low, as he most surely would be did not this self-love exist, and the whole mass would be low; for as is the part, so is the whole. This principle of self-love is, then, the preserving and uplifting force of life. . . . Self *first*. That is nearest like self, *next*. And thus we are brought to see how natural race love is, or should be. That an Indian should love an Indian better than he loves a white man, all things being equal, is of all things to be expected; and for the reason that the Indian is more nearly like him than the white man. And so of the Chinaman. And so of the white man. And so it ought to be of the Negro. That each should be expected to love the one most nearly like himself is as much to be expected as that he should love himself better than he loves another. Nor does this run counter to the teachings of Scripture, which requires universal love of the brotherhood. Scriptures nowhere run counter to or abrogate great principles of being. On the contrary, they

simply direct them into right channels. That an Indian who is a Christian should prefer an Indian, but not to the hurt of any other, is to be expected. And he does it in keeping with a great natural law upon which, as we have said, the whole fabric of nature hinges.

And it is just here that the American Negro comes short. He has no self-love. Everybody is better than himself; and, were it possible, he would be somebody else at once. With the average American, he thinks that to be an Indian, Chinaman, Japanese—in short, anybody, is better than to be a Negro. All this is wrong, and it is at the bottom of not a few of our troubles. We must learn to love ourselves. We must learn to respect ourselves. Until this is done, we cannot expect others to love or respect us. Why should they? Are not their tastes as good as ours? Why then expect them to love that that we ourselves despise, or respect that that we condemn. Race pride has need to be cultivated among us; and we rejoice to know that the press is doing its full share in the work of having it done.

And in the shortcoming alluded to above, the Negro-American is the exceptional man of the world. He is the one only who has no respect for self or race. Prof. Whitney* . . . feels especially drawn toward those whose similarity was one of speech, though they lived thousands of years ago. Philip Gilbert Hamerton, in his article, “French and English” (*Atlantic*, May), incidentally alludes to the self-love of the three peoples who inhabit the island of Great Britain—the English, the Scotch and the Welsh. Each insists that he shall be known as himself. The Scotchman will have you understand that his is Scotch blood. And so the others.

“Oh, yes,” said a Welsh physician to us a few years since in the town of Llanally, “Oh, yes! these English have come down here and subdued us; and while there is nothing for us to do but submit, we yet have to think of the old times, when we had our own government and kings.”

And so it must be with the Negro-American before he fully and completely gets upon his feet. *And so it will be.*

* Ellipsis in Bracegirdle et al.