

But back of all this and behind the half childish theology of formal religion there has run in the heart of black folk the greatest of human achievements, love and sympathy, even for their enemies, for those who despised them and hurt them and did them nameless ill. They have nursed the sick and closed the staring eyes of the dead. They have given friendship to the friendless, they have shared the pittance of their poverty with the outcast and nameless; they have been good and true and pitiful to the bad and false and pitiless and in this lies the real grandeur of their simple religion, the mightiest gift of black to white America.

Above all looms the figure of the Black Mammy, one of the most pitiful of the world's Christs. Whether drab and dirty drudge or dark and gentle lady she played her part in the uplift of the South. She was an embodied Sorrow, an anomaly crucified on the cross of her own neglected children for the sake of the children of masters who bought and sold her as they bought and sold cattle. Whatever she had of slovenliness or neatness, of degradation or of education she surrendered it to those who lived to lynch her sons and ravish her daughters. From her great full breast walked forth governors and judges, ladies of wealth and fashions, merchants and scoundrels who lead the South. And the rest gave her memory the reverence of silence. But a few snobs have lately sought to advertise her sacrifice and degradation and enhance their own cheap success by building on the blood of her riven heart a load of stone miscalled a monument.

In religion as in democracy, the Negro has been a peculiar test of white profession. The American church, both Catholic and Protestant, has been kept from any temptation to over-righteousness and empty formalism by the fact that just as Democracy in America was tested by the Negro, so American religion has always been tested by slavery and color prejudice.