

The Church Complicit and Complacent in Racism

Caldwell Presbyterian Church

Dr. Rodney Sadler

Dr. Lori Thomas

The Table of Nations

- **Genesis 10:1** These are the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; children were born to them after the flood. (Gen 10:1 NRS)
- **Genesis 10:6-20** ⁶ The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. ⁷ The descendants of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. ⁸ Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first on earth to become a mighty warrior. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." ...²⁰ These are the descendants of Ham, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

The Curse of “X”

Genesis 9:18-27 ¹⁸ The sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was peopled. ²⁰ Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. ²¹ He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and he lay uncovered in his tent. ²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵ he said, "Cursed be Canaan; lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers." ²⁶ He also said, "Blessed by the LORD my God be Shem; and let Canaan be his slave. ²⁷ May God make space for Japheth, and let him live in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his slave."

Problems in 2 Loci

- -If we substitute “Canaan” for the X, this passage serves as the legitimating ideology for Israel’s systematic oppression, depopulation, and genocide of the Canaanite peoples; it offers the reasons why it is appropriate and more than that, God-ordained, that one group eliminate and oppress another group of human beings. *This is its author’s intention!*
-
- -If we substitute “Ham” for the X, in light of our “racialized reading of Genesis 10, this passage serves as the legitimating ideology for the North Atlantic slave trade and the murder, rape, enslavement, and dehumanization of tens of millions of Africans on this continent. In this instance it is a curse differently conceived, but no less deadly in its application. *This is its history of interpretation!*

Josiah Priest on Ham

“...exceedingly prone to acts of ferocity and cruelty, involving murder, war, butcheries, and even cannibalism, including beastly lusts, and lasciviousness in its worst feature, going beyond the force of these passions, as possessed in common by the other races of men...the word signifies deceit, dishonesty, treachery, low mindedness, and malice. What a group of horrors are here, couched in the in the word Ham, all agreeing in a most surprising manner with the color of Ham’s skin, as well as with his real character as a man, during his own life, as well as with that of his race even now.” (Priest, *Slavery*, 33)

Josiah Priest on Japheth

“fair white man...the progenitor of a race who were to fill the world with their glory...for the white man, and the white woman are paramount in all the improvements of the earth.” (Priest, *Slavery*, 36)

Robert Louis Dabney

“God’s sentence here pronounced by Noah, was based on his foresight of the fact, that Ham’s posterity [i.e. blacks], like their father, would be peculiarly degraded in morals; as actually history testifies of them, so far as its voice extends...The words of Noah are not mere prophecy; they are a verdict, a moral sentence pronounced upon conduct, by competent authority; that verdict sanctioned by God.” (Dabney, *Defence*)

Eph 6:5-9

- ⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ;
- ⁶ not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.
- ⁷ Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women,
- ⁸ knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free.
- ⁹ And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality.

Nancy Abrose to Howard Thurman

“During the days of slavery...the master’s minister would occasionally hold services for the slaves. Old man McGhee was so mean that he would not let a Negro minister preach to his slaves. Always the white minister used as his text something from Paul. At least three or four times a year he used as a text: ‘Slaves, be obedient to them that are your masters..., as unto Christ.’ Then he would go on to show how it was God’s will that we were slaves and how, if we were good and happy slaves, God would bless us. I promised my Maker that if I ever learned to read and if freedom ever came, I would not read that part of the Bible.” (Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 30-31)

Thurman

“It cannot be denied that too often the weight of the Christian movement has been on the side of the strong and the powerful and against the weak and oppressed—this despite the gospel.” (Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 31)

Frederick Douglass,

The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass

“What I have said respecting and against religion, I mean strictly to apply to the slaveholding religion of this land, and with no possible reference to Christianity proper; for, between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference—so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is *of necessity* to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. To be the friend of the one, is *of necessity* to be the enemy of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land. Indeed, *I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity.*” [Italics mine] (Douglass, “Slaveholding Religion and the Christianity of Christ” in *African American Religious History*, 106.)

Frederick Douglass

“The Church Complicit”

“He who proclaims it a religious duty to read the Bible denies me the right of learning to read the name of the God who made me. He who is the religious advocate of marriage robs whole millions of its sacred influence, and leaves them to the ravages of wholesale pollution. The warm defender of the sacredness of family relations is the same that scatters whole families...We have the thief preaching against theft, the adulterer against adultery. We have men sold to build churches, women sold to support the gospel, and babes sold to purchase Bibles for the *poor heathen! all for the glory of God and the good of souls!* The slave auctioneer’s bell and the church-going bell chime in with each other, and the bitter cries of the heart-broken slave are drowned in the religious shouts of his pious master...The slave prison and the church stand near each other...The dealers in the bodies and souls of men erect their stand in the presence of the pulpit, and they mutually help each other. The dealer gives his blood-stained gold to support the pulpit, and the pulpit in return, **covers his infernal business with the garb of Christianity.** Here we have religion and robbery and allies of each other—devils dressed in angels’ robes, and hell presenting the semblance of paradise.” (Douglass, “Slaveholding,” 107)

Martin Luther King, Jr.

“The Church Complacent”

“I felt that the white ministers priests and rabbis of the South would be some of our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many other have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of the stained-glass windows.” (King, “Letter,” 299).

Problems with the Church

- We ended slavery, but we never got rid of the ideology that supported this notion and we never spent the time weeding this out of the church. So, when Dr. King engages in the Civil Rights Movement, he has to do so with a divided church that is steeped in racial thought. Really both the black and white churches were now beholden to a theology that was racialized and worked against freedom and equality based on intentional perversions from the centuries before.
- The result is a church that was more concerned with maintaining order, peace and quiet, than doing justice. Though becoming increasingly aware of the evils of racism, it was convinced that change would only come gradually and that it should wait and that active efforts to promote change “disturbed the peace” and therefore were more problematic than racism and racial disparities themselves.
- This racial ideology had undermined the church’s corporate witness and made it a pawn in the larger segregationist effort.

It Is to this Church that We Belong

1. One that has compromised Christianity
2. One that has been built on corrupted theology
3. One that has an unexamined racial past
4. One that continues largely to benefit from the theological compromises it made
5. One that is predicated on “charity” and not “justice” solutions to systemic crises
6. One that is ultimately not about systemic change, but about maintaining the status quo while providing a release to the pressure in the system caused by injustice

The “Compromised Church” is Manifest As

1. Congregations built from resources of a supremacist society
2. Congregations that have force a split between black and white members
3. Congregations that choose “spiritualized” silence in the face of racism and social injustice

Table Reaction & Reflections

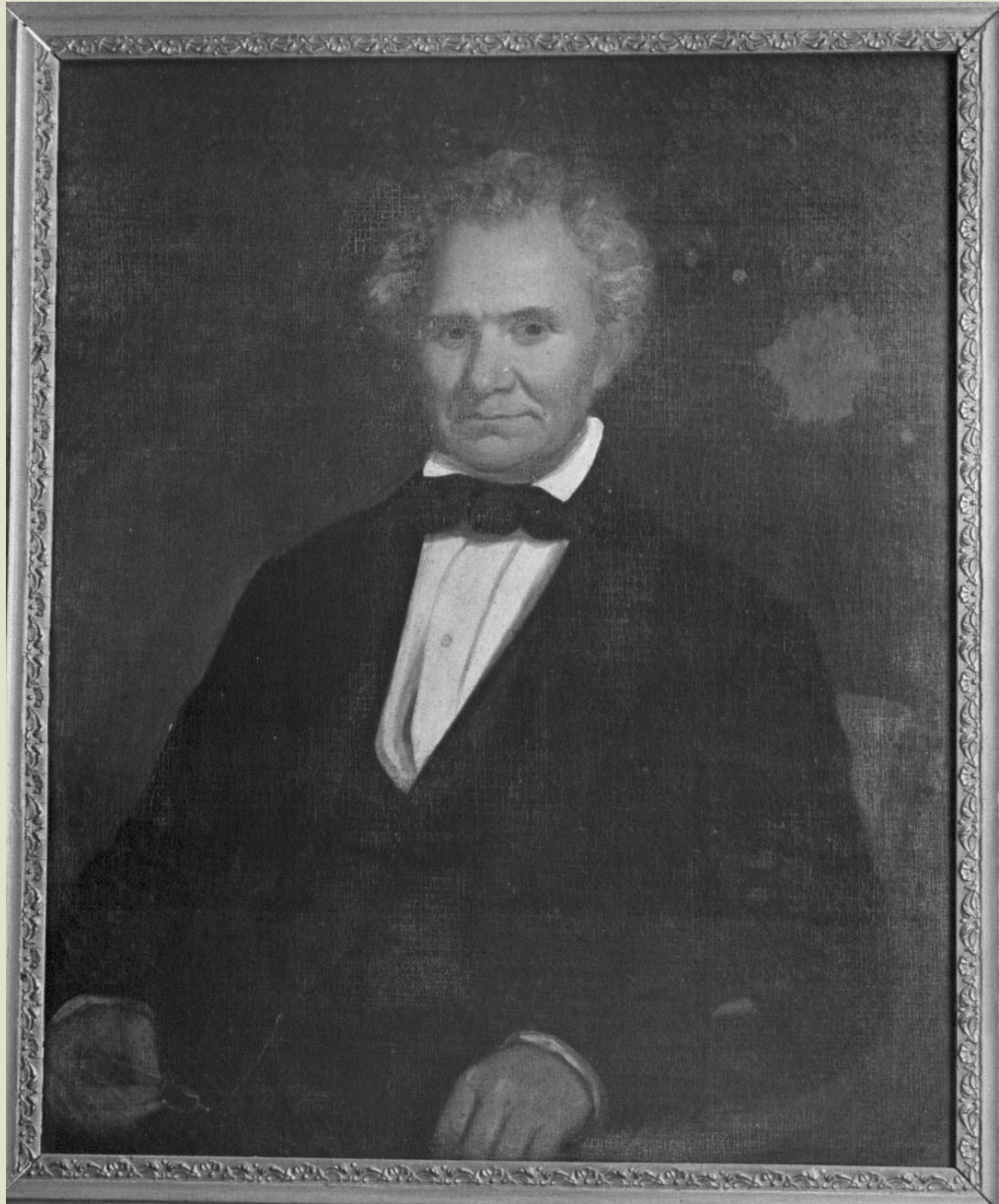




David Alexander Caldwell bought and cultivated a farm six miles north of Hopewell and five miles east of Cowan's Ford. He was trained on the farm of his uncle, Robert Davidson, as an overseer and general manager. His uncle was a very early riser, and would have his nephew in the fields ready for work with horses and hands, as soon as sufficiently light to see the rows. His uncle taught him to get up soon, but never taught him to love early rising. While building up his farm, Mr. Caldwell

David A. Caldwell was probably the best cultured man in the county. He read extensively, but not promiscuously. The Reformation, the Scotch Covenanters, Cromwell's regime, the Puritans and the results of their immigration to America, were themes and subjects with which he was perfectly familiar. In his younger days he was particularly fond of Scott's novels for historical romance, Byron and Burns for poetry. Possessed of a logical mind and retentive memory, he was ever ready to draw whatever he desired from his great store-house, the contents of which had been so carefully prepared during a long life. Religiously he was a devoted Presbyterian, and

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
HOPEWELL SECTION
ALEXANDER.



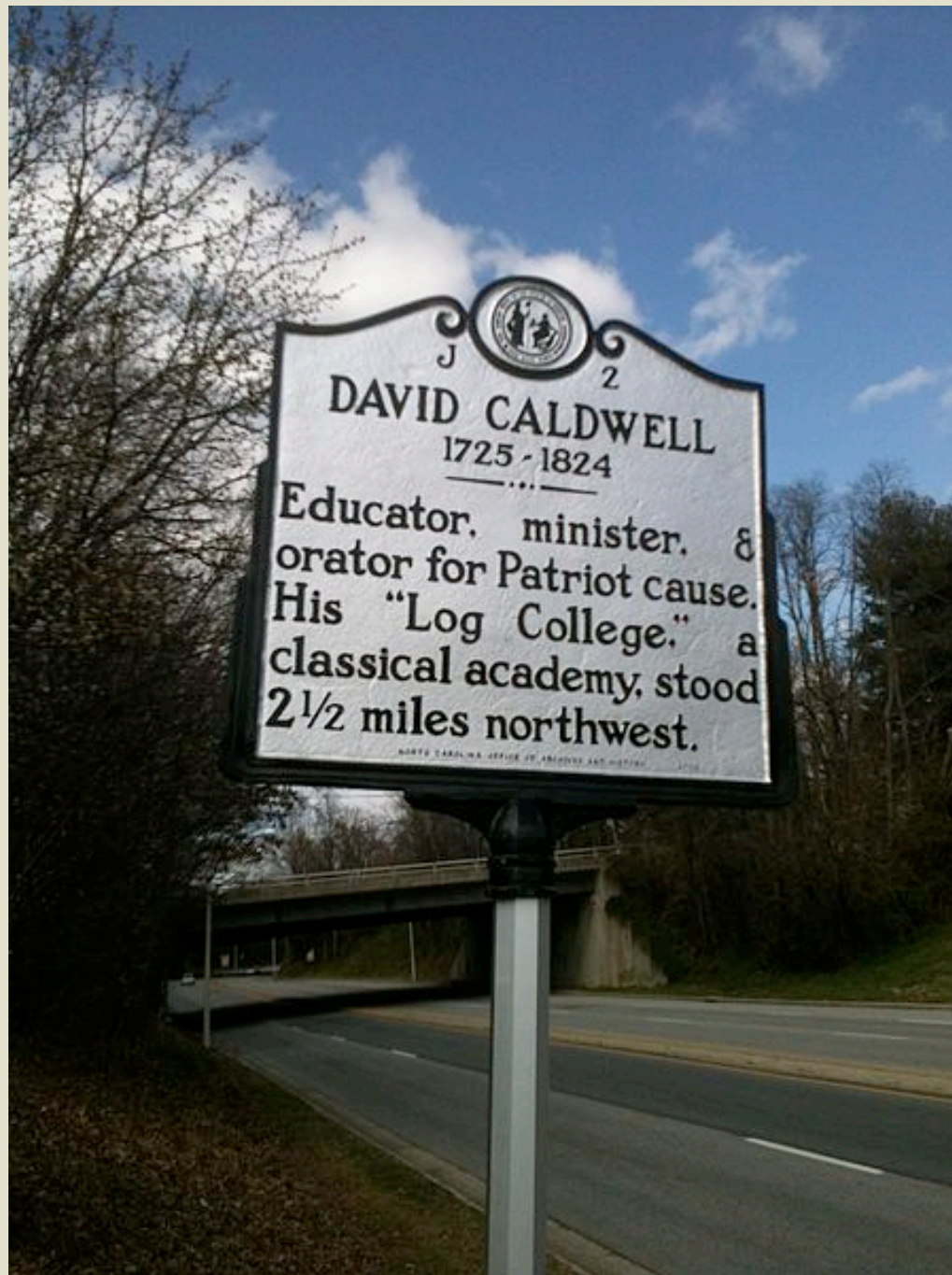


HI

MAJOR
JOHN DAVIDSON

— . . . —
Revolutionary War patriot
and signer of the
Mecklenburg Declaration
of Independence.

Family homesites, Rural
Retreat and Rural Hill,
1760-1992.



J

2

DAVID CALDWELL

1725 - 1824

...
Educator, minister, &
orator for Patriot cause.
His "Log College," a
classical academy, stood
2 1/2 miles northwest.

NORTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

Sally Davidson married Rev. Alexander Caldwell, a son of Rev. David Caldwell, D. D., of Guilford, N. C., who exercised a wonderful influence in behalf of the patriot cause, and also of religion and education in North Carolina. Mr. Alexander Caldwell's mother was a daughter of Alexander Craighead, the noted minister who taught the people to resist tyranny, who suffered himself to be driven from Maryland and Pennsylvania for his preaching opposition to kingly tyranny; when he came to Mecklenburg the people heard him gladly, and accepted his political teaching, the same as his religious teaching. A great deal is due the memory of Mr. Craighead, for the lessons of liberty he taught the people, that in a few years developed into the out-spoken Declaration of Independence, that astonished the British no less than it did the people of other colonies, who thought our people hasty, and action premature. Mr. Craighead ceased from his labors

Rev.
Alexander
Craighead
(1705-1766)

Agnes
Craighead

Rev. & Dr.
David
Caldwell
(1725-1824)

Rachel
Craighead
(1742-1825)

Maj. John
Davidson
(1735-1832)

Violet
Wilson
(1742-1818)

Rev.
Alexander
Caldwell
(1770-1840)

Sarah
Davidson
(1774-1842)

David
Alexander
Caldwell
(1799-1891)



In 1850 there were seventeen planters in Mecklenburg who owned thirty or more slaves. Ten years later, in 1860, there were thirty. In the year 1860, these families were as follows (the numbers following the names indicate the number of families of the same name in the list): Alexander, Ardrey, Bell, Caldwell, Davidson (3), Davis, Grier (4), Johnston (2), Kirkpatrick, Lawing, Mills, Morris, Morrow, Patterson, Parks, Potts (2), Walker, Wallace (2), and White.

Easter
 William
 Umphrey
 Plum
 Cyrus
 Phillas
 Lethy
 Hannah
 Henery
 Nancy
 Custis
 James
 Caleb
 Sucry



Ede and her infant
 (Photo by: Jim Gray)

No.	Names.	Age.	Occupation.	Value.
1.	Thomas,	50	Miller	500
2.	Adams,	42	Wagoner	900.
3.	Logan,	30	Farm	1000.
4.	Alexander	34	Blk. Smith	1200.
5.	Phill,	27	Wagoner	1000.
6.	Hampton	24	Blk. Smith	1200.
7.	Umphrey	24	Farm	1000.
8.	Gloze,	24	Farm	1000.
9.	Alfred	20	Farm	900.
10.	Julie	14	Farm	600.
11.	Joe	11	Farm	550.
12.	Harrison	11	"	550.
13.	Moses	8	"	400.
14.	David	9	"	400.
15.	John	6	"	350
16.	Bill	7	"	300
17.	Prufuf	3	"	300
18.	Jim	1.	"	200
19.	Ann	61.	H. Hand	300
20.	Julia	49.	Weaver	400
21.	Lina	53.	H. Hand	500
22.	Sarah	30.	Cook	800
23.	Hannah	29.	Farm	800
24.	Nancy	26	"	800
25.	Belie	22	"	800
26.	Poly	17	"	800
27.	Jinney	15	Housemaid	700
28.	Susan	12	Housemaid	700
29.	Amy	6	Child	300
30.	Delia	3	"	200.
				\$19,450

David
Alexander
Caldwell
(1799-1891)

Martha
Bishop
(1810-1883)

Susan
Gaston
(1843-1909)

Dr. John
Edward
Caldwell
(1838-1908)

Lila Caldwell
(died as a
child)

Sallie
Caldwell
White
(1838-1919)

William
Edward
White
(1835-1861)

Edith White
(b. 1861,died
by age 3)

Susan
Gaston
(1843-1909)

Dr. John
Edward
Caldwell
(1838-1908)

William Gaston (1862-1914)
Theodore Gaston (1864-1955)
John Gaston (b. 1867)
Gertrude Gaston (b. 1869)
Lula Gaston (b. 1871)

Corrie Gaston McCauley
(1875-1958)
James Gaston (1878—died as
child)
Webb Gaston (b. 1879)
Cad Gaston (b. 1880)
Sudie Gaston Graham
(1884-1921) Harry Gaston (b.
1888)

The Sins of Claiborne

CALL DOWN THE STORM. By LeGette Blythe. 315 pp. New York: Henry Holt & Co. \$3.95.

MISCEGENATION used to be a fighting word south of the Mason-Dixon line; it still is in many sections, for that matter. Judging from recent trends, there appears to be a move on among novelists to clean the word up, polish it a bit, and drape it with respectability—somewhat in line with Supreme Court-ordered school integration.

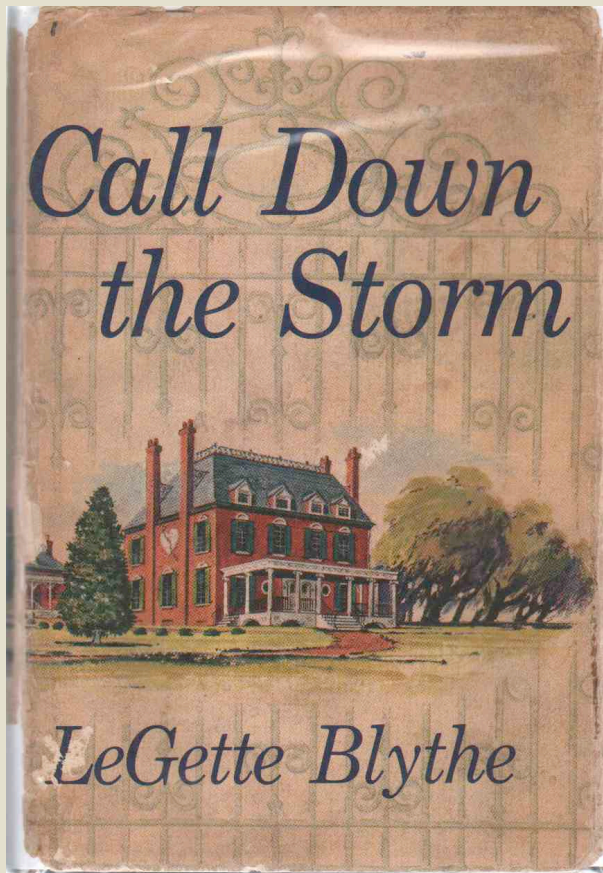
The subject has been approached bare-handed by more than one earnest novelist. Now comes LeGette Blythe's "Call Down the Storm," a more restrained exposé—despite the title—which treats the mixing of white and colored races from a reasoned attitude rather than through purpled verbalisms. The "amazing story" of the Cardell clan, once aristocratic North Carolina plantation owners, a character in Mr. Blythe's novel explains, is one of "miscegenation." He goes on to comment that, in his opinion, "miscegena-

tion is more bugaboo than fact" at the present time.

There is irony in this comment and situation. The above-mentioned character, Osborne Gunn, is a descendant of post-Civil War Melissa Osborne, who rejected Dr. Claiborne Cardell in the beginning. Gunn addresses his remarks to pert and lovely Sarah Gordon Vicente, who, unwittingly, is a descendant of the



LeGette Blythe.



The New York Times

Published: July 20, 1958



GASTON

CORRIE GASTON MCVILEY
MAY 4 1871
NOV 16 1958

ELIZ. GASTON
OCT. 1861
DEC. 1891

FATHER
WILLIAM M. GASTON
SEPT. 14 1861
JUNE 2 1941

These were the days of African slavery, when the negroes were happy creatures, owned by Christian masters, their every need was supplied, whether crops were plentiful and prices good, or drought stared them in the face. When sick the best medical skill was employed to attend them, and the "white folks" gave every dose of medicine, in fact watched after them with the same solicitude they gave their children. These slaves were well housed, well fed and well clothed; and a fact of physiological interest, not one in a thousand ever had consumption. These negroes were guardians of their master's interests, were proud of their master's family, and most cordially hated "poor white trash." But times have changed, the negro is free, is no longer cared for, either in health or sickness; he has fallen an easy prey to consumption, has but little attention when sick, and his mind has been poisoned by political demagogues until he believes the whites are his enemies, yet they are the only ones he can appeal to with any hope of relief. Their best and happiest days passed away when their freedom was thrust upon them.

Table Reaction & Reflections