

is based upon Genesis 1:27; certain biblical texts were keystones of the southern case.

Sometimes there is retrospective humor in the account. Here are otherwise sensible men solemnly inferring God's blessing on racism from the account of Shem, Ham, and Japheth in Genesis 9 or from some strange interweaving of Leviticus 25:44-46 with a generous measure of self interest. In the main it is a tragic story with a few heroes but almost no characters capable of transcending their own time and place to advocate genuine freedom. No denomination in the American South has a good record on racism; even the Quakers came to conviction late and at great cost. The uniformity of white supremacy notions is depressing. The abolitionists themselves were often stoutly racist.

Racism was the crucial social issue of Smith's chosen period. The alliance of churches with anti-Negro forces assured that the racist issues would not be fairly met or settled. Churches supported the Confederacy in order to preserve the institution of slavery. After the war the churches helped fashion patterns of white supremacy to keep the black "in his place." So the wound of racism was passed along to newer generations, constantly bruised but never healed.

*Lilly Library,
Indiana University, Bloomington*

L. C. Rudolph

The Booker T. Washington Papers. Volume I, *The Autobiographical Writings*. Edited by Louis R. Harlan; assistant editor, John W. Blassingame. Volume II, 1860-89. Edited by Louis R. Harlan; assistant editors, Pete Daniel, Stuart B. Kaufman, Raymond W. Smock; William M. Welty, fellow in historical editing. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972. Pp. xl, 469; xl, 557. Notes, illustrations, maps, bibliography, indices. \$15.00 per volume.)

Some historians have recently observed, with scant effort to conceal their indignation, that virtually all current projects to publish the papers of great Americans serve to perpetuate an elitist and hence inadequate version of history. These published collections, critics point out, exclude such numerically significant groups as the poor and ethnic minor-

ities as well as the vast and otherwise undefined mass of American humanity now modishly designated as "the inarticulate." Thus is our understanding of the past rendered faulty and incomplete and the historical role of the majority unacknowledged as well as uncommemorated.

Publication of the Booker T. Washington papers should help satisfy these objections. Not that Washington himself in his palmy days was clearly excluded from the elite! A magisterial figure, despite his humble origin and black complexion, he eventually enjoyed greater power on the national scene than almost any of his white southern contemporaries. Indeed, if the present collection were confined solely to Washington's own writings, one would have ground for consigning the enterprise to the same "elitist" category to which critics contend practically all the other projects now supported by the National Historical Publications Commission belong. But such categorization is not in this instance appropriate; for the editors have adopted an extended selective principle that allows them to include not only letters from Washington's own hand but also letters addressed to him and a variety of other documents related to his life and work. Thus there is presented an array of items emanating not so much from establishment figures as from obscure blacks and others who hitherto have scarcely been represented at all in published documentary collections. It need hardly be pointed out that the recovery of such material should prove of inestimable utility in expanding awareness of the character, activity, and aspirations of persons until now all but lost to formal history.

While republication of Washington's full scale autobiographies and of his autobiographical articles as volume one of the series is appropriate and welcome, it is the second volume, comprising the initial installment of his manuscripts, that constitutes the major achievement. As would be expected of a man born in slavery, Washington's early years are sparsely documented. Yet the editors resourcefully located census records to confirm early traces of his existence; and to chart his emergence from utter anonymity, they uncovered such sobering information as the fact that at the age of five this future adviser of presidents was valued in the inventory of his master's estate as worth \$400. Sixteen fat hogs on the same occasion were worth \$128. While much in the collection

concerns life at Hampton Institute when Washington studied and taught there, the focus naturally is on the founding and first years of Tuskegee Institute, the period when Washington constructed the base on which his later power and eminence rested. But even here the importance of the material lies less in tracing a great man's early achievements than in documenting the activities of hitherto faceless people engaged in momentous efforts of self improvement at a critical time and an inauspicious place.

Readers with varying interests can find much of value in these publications. They may also be persuaded that those who assert the wisdom of according greater attention to the seldom acknowledged molders of our past are not merely captious in their critiques and proposals.

The Ohio State University, Columbus

Merton L. Dillon

The American Mail: Enlarger of the Common Life. By Wayne E. Fuller. *The Chicago History of American Civilization.* Edited by Daniel J. Boorstin. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972. Pp. xi, 378. Bibliographical essay, index. \$8.95.)

Despite the somewhat innocuous title, Professor Fuller has written an exceptionally good and long needed account of the American postal service from its colonial beginnings through the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970. The work is immeasurably enhanced by the author's ability to weave postal history into the broader fabric of the American past. His descriptions of the relationship between the postal revisions of Queen Anne's Act and the later Stamp Act controversy, the effect of Benjamin Franklin's improved postal service on the solidarity of the colonies during the 1760s, the appalling financial condition and the growth of postal service during the heyday of Jacksonianism, the emerging struggles between rural and urban America, and the overriding issue of whether the postal service should pay for itself are cases in point. In all of these areas Fuller outlines the problems and draws the necessary implications. There are, in addition, several chapters—"Bond of Union," "Expansionism and the Post Office," and "Government Business vs. Private Busi-