

Destiny and Race: Selected Writings, 1840-1898

Alexander Crummell



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A major 19th-century reformer and intellectual, Alexander Crummell (1819-1898) was the first black American to receive a degree from Cambridge University. Upon graduation, he sailed to Liberia, where from 1853 to 1872 he worked as a farmer, educator, small business operator, and Episcopal missionary. Returning to America in 1873, he established St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., serving as its pastor until 1894. Crummell remained active in the black community throughout his later years and in 1897 founded the American Negro Academy, which he intended as a challenge to the power of Booker T. Washington's accommodationist philosophy. Throughout his long life, Crummell was a prolific, sometimes controversial, and often acerbic writer. His pioneering work on black nationalism, black self-determination, and Pan-Americanism influenced many African-American leaders of his day, including W.E.B. Du Bois, who devoted a chapter to Crummell in "The Souls of Black Folk". Crummell's surviving papers include over 400 sermons and political essays and a voluminous correspondence. Despite his importance to American and African-American history, Crummell is little known today. With the exception of the facsimile reprints of two of his books in the 1960s, there have been no modern printings of his work. This volume is intended to restore Crummell's voice and to prompt a reevaluation of his writings.

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