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Guide to the R. A. (Revels Alcorn) Adams Papers

JWJ MSS 48



by Tina Evans and Jennifer Meehan

2009

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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CALL NUMBER: JWJ MSS 48

CREATOR: Adams, R. A. (Revels Alcorn), 1869-

TITLE: R. A. (Revels Alcorn) Adams papers

DATES: 1902-1945

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 6.35 linear feet (14 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection consists of writings, sheet music, scrapbooks, photographs, and other papers, stemming from R. A. Adams's activities as an evangelistic minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and as a writer, lecturer, and publisher of pamphlets on topics relating to race, religion, contraception, interpersonal relations, and socioeconomics. The collection documents aspects of African American religion and culture, especially in the South, in the early 20th century, and in particular the evangelistic, educational, and literary activities of one African American Methodist minister.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.adams>

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from William Reese Co. on the Edwin J. Beinecke Book Fund and Serendipity Books on the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts & Letters Fund, 2008.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The R. A. (Revels Alcorn) Adams Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

R. A. Adams Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

The two acquisitions comprising this collection were received by the library within six months of each other. Even though the two acquisitions were purchased from different vendors, the original source of the material was the same. Therefore the decision was made to interfile material from both acquisitions. Along with interfiling, material in this collection was rehoused and organized as a whole. This work was carried out as part of basic processing shortly after receipt of the material in 2008.

R. A. (Revels Alcorn) Adams (b. 1869)

R. A. Adams was born on 28 February 1869 in Vicksburg, Mississippi. He attended Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce, Ohio, and served as a Methodist minister in Clarksdale, Brookhaven, Jackson, and Natchez, Mississippi. According to his own biographical statement, Adams entered the ministry, presumably of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, on 23 August 1891 and worked in the pastorate until 1910, after which time he traveled around the South and parts of the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions as an evangelist and lecturer. He wrote and lectured on the topics of religion, theology, philosophy, race, eugenics, prophylactics, and social behavior. As president and presumably founder of The Progress Publishing Co. in Wichita, Kansas, he collaborated on and published pamphlets on the same topics, including his own *Highlights of Negro History*, *Psychoanalysis and Racial Affinity*, and *Syphilis, The Black Plague*.

In addition to sermons and lectures, Adams also wrote novels, critical essays, poetry, and music, most, if not all, of which were never published. His novels include *Babylon*, described by Adams as "Religious - Sociological - Interracial - Stresses Gospel as Panacea for all Social Ills", *Deacon Simpson*, "Story of Negro Church Life - Contrasting Old, Unlettered Ministers with Modern Products - Evolution in Negro Church Life", and *The Great Cathedral*, "Exposure of Graft, Corruption, Autocracy, and Ecclesiastical Misfeasance - Predicting Revolution and Reformation of the Negro Church". His critical essays likewise explore the Negro Church in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in addition to other topics, and include works such as "The Negro and His Church" and "The Negro Church - What Ails It?".

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of writings, sheet music, scrapbooks, photographs, and other papers, stemming from R. A. Adams's activities as an evangelistic minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and as a writer, lecturer, and publisher of pamphlets on topics relating to race, religion, contraception, interpersonal relations, and socioeconomics. The collection documents aspects of African American religion and culture, especially in the South, in the early 20th century, and in particular the evangelistic, educational, and literary activities of one African American Methodist minister.

Writings by Adams comprise the bulk of the collection and include typescripts, some of which are corrected, and manuscripts of addresses, sermons, and critical essays, as well as typescripts and manuscripts of creative works such as poetry, novels, and a play. Also included are typescripts of writings by others, on which Adams collaborated or which he seems to have published as president of The Progress Publishing Co.; as well as typescripts of musical programs and sheet music for songs by Adams; scrapbooks containing correspondence, letters of introduction, resolutions, testimonials, and clippings, documenting Adams's evangelistic activities from 1910 to 1921; photographs of Adams and his family; and printed material and other loose papers.

Arrangement

The collection is organized into four subseries: I. Writings, 1902-1944. II. Writings by Others, 1930s. III. Music, undated. IV. Other Papers, 1911-1945.

Collection Contents

Series I: Writings, 1902-1944

3.75 linear feet (9 boxes)

This series consists of typescripts, some of which are corrected, and manuscripts of creative, philosophical, religious, and educational works written by R. A. Adams.

Arranged into six subseries: Addresses, Novels, Plays, Poetry, Sermons, and Shorter Works.

Addresses

b. 1, f. 1	Letters and address	circa 1941, 1944
b. 1, f. 2	Miscellaneous pages, typescript, corrected	
b. 1, f. 3	Untitled typescript, corrected	
b. 1, f. 4	"The Battles of Peace", typescript, corrected	
b. 1, f. 5	"Better trained and more consecrated ministry necessary to perpetuate the church among our people", typescript	
b. 1, f. 6	"From possibility to achievement", typescript, corrected	
b. 1, f. 7	"Gospel minister and the community", typescript	
b. 1, f. 8	"The Grammar of Duty", typescript, corrected	
b. 1, f. 9	"Great Social Uplift Campaign", booklet	circa 1919
b. 1, f. 10	"Industrial Education", typescript, corrected	
b. 1, f. 11	"Joy in Accomplishment", typescript	
b. 1, f. 12	"Lecture I Chapters One - Four", typescripts	
b. 1, f. 13	"Love the chief attribute in the character of God", typescript, corrected	
b. 1, f. 14	"Milestones", typescript	
b. 1, f. 15	"The Pastor a leader and guide in church worship", typescript	
b. 1, f. 16	"The Pastor as leader in church worship", typescript	
b. 1, f. 17	"Service", typescript, corrected	
b. 1, f. 18	"The Story of Bethlehem", typescript	
b. 1, f. 19	"Sunday school an asset to the church", typescript	
b. 1, f. 20	"True mission of the gospel preacher", typescript	
b. 1, f. 21	"Untrodden Paths", typescript	
b. 1, f. 22	"Welcome address by the Rev. James Arthur", typescript	
b. 1, f. 23	"What is required for a spiritual advance in the relation of the churches to the race problem", typescript	December 7, 1933

Novels

b. 1, f. 24-31	"Babylon", typescript
b. 2, f. 32-39	"The Great Cathedral", typescript
b. 3, f. 40-45	"Deacon Simpson", typescript
b. 3, f. 46	Untitled novel

Plays

b. 3, f. 47	"Daniel", typescript
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Poetry

Arranged alphabetically by title.

b. 3, f. 48	"Anniversary Poems", typescript	
b. 3, f. 49	"Complete Poetical Works of R.A. Adams, Volume Two, Book I: Characteristics of Love", typescript	
b. 3, f. 50	"Complete Poetical Works of R.A. Adams, Volume Two, Book II: Diversities of Love", typescript	
b. 3, f. 51-52	"Complete Poetical Works of R.A. Adams, Volume Two, Book III: Tragedies of Love", typescript	
b. 3, f. 53-55	"Destiny of the sons of Noah", typescript	
b. 14 (Oversize)	"Events of Passion Week", typescript See: Oversize, Box 14	
b. 3, f. 56-57	"Memorial Day Poetry, Memorial Day Prose, Independence Day Poetry", typescript	
b. 3, f. 58-59	"The Messiah", Synopsis of Contents and Book I, typescript, corrected	
b. 4, f. 60	Poetic Cullings, typescript	
b. 4, f. 61	"Poetic Works, Volume One, Book I: Inspiration", typescript	1906
b. 4, f. 62	"Poetic Works, Volume One, Book II: Heroism", typescript	1906
b. 4, f. 63	"Poetic Works, Volume One, Book III: Service", typescript	1906
b. 4, f. 64	"Poetic Works, Volume One, Book IV: Religious Life", typescript	1906
b. 4, f. 65	"Poetic Works, Volume One, Books I-IV", duplicates	
b. 4, f. 66-68	"Some Love poems", manuscript and typescript	
b. 4, f. 69-70	Synopsis of poetical works of R.A. Adams with specimen pages from various volumes, typescript	
b. 4, f. 71-72	Untitled collection of poetry by R.A. Adams, typescript	

Sermons

Arranged alphabetically by title.

Sermons (continued)

b. 4, f. 73-76	"Annual Sermons", manuscript and typescript, corrected
b. 4, f. 77	"Bible Way of Salvation", typescript
b. 4, f. 78	"Church Extension - 2", typescript
b. 4, f. 79	"The Church of the Living God Is the Greatest Institution in the World", typescript
b. 4, f. 80	Church service plan for special Sundays, typescript, corrected
b. 4, f. 81	"Consequence of rejecting reproof", typescript
b. 4, f. 82	"Defiant builders", typescript
b. 4, f. 83	Doom of Death, an Easter Service, typescript
b. 4, f. 84	"Educational Sermon", typescript
b. 4, f. 85	"Ezekiel's vision and its lessons", typescript
b. 5, f. 86	"Good Tidings", manuscript
b. 5, f. 87	"The Gospel and Peace", typescript
b. 5, f. 88	Gospel Minister and the Community, typescript
b. 5, f. 89	"The gospel minister as a witness", typescript, corrected
b. 5, f. 90	"Hell no. 3: the gulf between", typescript
b. 5, f. 91	"How about your conscience", typescript, corrected
b. 5, f. 92	"How I can be done", manuscript, corrected
b. 5, f. 93	"Judgement by analogy", typescript
b. 5, f. 94	"The King of the Home", typescript
b. 5, f. 95	"Life means opportunity", typescript
b. 5, f. 96	"Marring our thanksgiving celebration", typescript
b. 5, f. 97	"Mary's lost child and yours compared", manuscript and typescript, corrected
b. 5, f. 98	"Memorial day", typescript, corrected
b. 5, f. 99	Memorial sermon, typescript
b. 5, f. 100	"Memories in hell", typescript
b. 5, f. 101	"The mission of free masonry", typescript
b. 5, f. 102	"The need of consecrated workers", typescript
b. 5, f. 103	"Our building and its master-builder", typescript, corrected
b. 5, f. 104	"Parable of the eagle's nest", typescript, corrected

Sermons (continued)

b. 5, f. 105	"Parson's personal problems", manuscript	
b. 5, f. 106	"Passing of Helen Brook", manuscript	
b. 5, f. 107	"Power of the Gospel", manuscript, corrected	
b. 5, f. 108	"Question of hell", typescript, corrected	
b. 5, f. 109	"Rainy day", typescript, corrected	
b. 5, f. 110	"Role of church in the changing world", typescript	
b. 5, f. 111	"Salvation to the uttermost", typescript, corrected	
b. 5, f. 112	Sermons, typescript and manuscript	1902
b. 5, f. 113-115	Sermon notes, notebooks	
b. 5, f. 116	Sermons and Addresses, typescript	
b. 5, f. 117-118	Sermons for young men, typescript	
b. 5, f. 119	"Shall we keep faith with the dead", typescript	
b. 5, f. 120	"Sins of Youth" and other sermons, typescript	
b. 5, f. 121	"So eleven indictments are brought against these roaming heretics", typescript	
b. 5, f. 122	"Sowing and Reaping #4", typescript	
b. 5, f. 123-125	Special addresses and sermons, typescript, corrected	
b. 5, f. 126	"Stanza One", typescript, corrected	
b. 5, f. 127	"Story of Calvary", typescript, corrected	
b. 5, f. 128	"The street called straight", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 129	"Subject: Exposure of excuses", typescript	
b. 6, f. 130	"Subject: The Great Commission", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 131	"Subject: Jesus Christ the source from which all of our needs may be supplied", typescript	
b. 6, f. 132	"Subject: The lights that failed", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 133	"Subject: The man without a wedding garment", typescript	
b. 6, f. 134-135	"Subject: Parental righteousness", typescript	
b. 6, f. 136	"Subject: Refusing God's call", typescript	
b. 6, f. 137	"Subject: The wretched sinner", typescript	
b. 6, f. 138	"Suffer them to come unto me", typescript	
b. 6, f. 139	"Text, Matt. 2:16. Out of Egypt I have called me son", typescript, corrected	

Sermons (continued)

b. 6, f. 140	"Text-Matt. 11:7 ... 'St. John the Baptist'", typescript, correct	
b. 6, f. 141	"Text- Num. 32:23 / Subject- Exposure of sin inevitable", typescript, corrected	
b. 5, f. 142	"Theme: Fixing Responsibility", typescript	
b. 5, f. 143	"Theme: The foolish virgin", typescript	
b. 5, f. 144	"Theme: The refuge of lies", typescript	
b. 6, f. 145	"Theme: Sold for naught", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 146	"Utterly Abandoned", typescript	
b. 6, f. 147	"War and Peace", typescript	
b. 6, f. 148-150	Weekly Short Sermons, typescript	1931, undated
b. 6, f. 151	"What is sin?", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 152	"Who is on the Lord's Side?", typescript	
b. 6, f. 153	"Worship God", typescript	
b. 6, f. 154	"Your father and mine", typescript, corrected	
	Shorter Works Arranged alphabetically by title.	
b. 6, f. 155	"Apostrophe to death", typescript	
b. 6, f. 156	"Architecture", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 157	"Astronomy", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 158	Autobiographical statement, typescript	
b. 6, f. 159	"The awful curse of illegitimacy", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 160-161	"Ben Oni", typescript	
b. 6, f. 162-163	"Bible Mothers", typescript	
b. 6, f. 164-165	"Bible Wives and Bible Mothers", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 166	"Book Agriculture", typescript	
b. 6, f. 167-169	"Can the Church Survive?", typescript	
b. 6, f. 170	"Can You Define It?" printed version	
b. 6, f. 171	"Chapter I: Mathematics", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 172-173	"Confessions of a Philanderer", typescript	
b. 6, f. 174	"Crowning Sin of Womanhood", typescript, corrected	
b. 6, f. 175-176	"The Crux of the Criminal Situation", typescript	

Shorter Works (continued)

b. 6, f. 177	"Cullings and Comments, Volume III", typescript	
b. 7, f. 178	"Defence of Beautiful Isle", typescript	
b. 7, f. 179	"Double Moral Standard", typescript, corrected	
b. 7, f. 180-184	"Eugenics", manuscript and typescript, corrected	
b. 7, f. 185	"I: The Exodus: Cause and Effect", typescript, corrected	
b. 7, f. 186-187	"Fallacies Exposed", typescript	
b. 7, f. 188	"Funeral", typescript	
b. 7, f. 189	"Further analysis of sin", typescript, corrected	
b. 7, f. 190-191	"Glorious Death", typescript	
b. 7, f. 192-193	"Hallucinitis", typescript	
b. 7, f. 194-195	"Heroes Unsung", typescript	
b. 7, f. 196	"Highlights of Negro History", printed version	
b. 7, f. 197	"Home Life", typescript	
b. 7, f. 198	"Ideal Womanhood", typescript, corrected	
b. 7, f. 199	"Immortality and Crime", typescript, corrected	
b. 7, f. 200	"Indulgent Mothers", typescript	
b. 7, f. 201	"Inequity of the Double Moral Standard", typescript, corrected	
b. 7, f. 202	"Light on race adjustment", typescript, corrected	
b. 7, f. 203	"Longfellow's philosophy of life", typescript	
b. 7, f. 204	"Menace of lust", typescript, corrected	
b. 7, f. 205	"Mothers of men", typescript corrected	
b. 7, f. 206-209	"The Negro and His Church", manuscript and typescript	
b. 8, f. 210-211	"Negro and the nation", typescript	
b. 8, f. 212	"The Negro Church- What Ails It?", typescript	
b. 8, f. 213-214	"One Church", typescript	
b. 8, f. 215	"Our Young People", typescript	
b. 8, f. 216	"Philosophical Trends", typescript	
b. 8, f. 217	"Physics of Natural History", typescript, corrected	
b. 8, f. 218	"Pioneers", typescript, corrected	
b. 8, f. 219	"Practical Hymnology", printed version	1936

Shorter Works (continued)

b. 8, f. 220	"Pronunciation Plus Division One Biblical Proper Nouns", typescript	
b. 8, f. 221	"Psychoanalysis and Racial Affinity", printed version	
b. 8, f. 222	"Question of Engagement", typescript, corrected	
b. 8, f. 223	"Quotations from Negro Authors", typescript	
b. 8, f. 224	"Remade Men", typescript, corrected	
b. 8, f. 225	"Revival Hymns", printed version	
b. 8, f. 226	"Ritualistic Revision", typescript	
b. 8, f. 227	"Select Hymns", printed version	1927
b. 8, f. 228-229	"Sense vs. Sound in Singing", typescript	
b. 8, f. 230	"Serious Anthology", typescript	
b. 8, f. 231	"Shall we stabilize our moral system?", typescript, corrected	
b. 8, f. 232	"Society and its criminals", typescript, corrected	
b. 8, f. 233-235	"The Songs We Sing", typescript	
b. 8, f. 236	"Sowing and Reaping", typescript	
b. 8, f. 237	"Stories of Mothers", manuscript	
b. 8, f. 238	"Story of Bethlehem", typescript	
b. 8, f. 239	"Study of Verbs and Auxiliary Verbs", typescript	
b. 8, f. 240	"Syphilis / the Black Plague", printed version	1919
b. 8, f. 241	"Tennyson's Christmas Sermon (the writer's interpretation of 'Ring Out Wild Bells')", typescript	
b. 8, f. 242	"Texts and Topics", typescript	
b. 8, f. 243	"Things Worthwhile", typescript	
b. 8, f. 244-245	"Topics and Texts", typescript	
b. 8, f. 246-248	"Tragedies of Love", typescript	
b. 8, f. 249	"What I Believe", typescript, corrected	
b. 8, f. 250	"What Others Say About Us", typescript	
b. 9, f. 251	"When Negros Pray", typescript	
b. 9, f. 252	[Women] "The Young Woman and Her Problems", typescript, corrected	
b. 9, f. 253	[Women] "The Young Woman and the Social Evils", typescript, corrected	
b. 9, f. 254	[Women] "Oblation", typescript, corrected	
b. 9, f. 255	[Women] "Her Personal Problems", manuscript	

Shorter Works (continued)

b. 9, f. 256	[Women] "The Problems of Mothers", typescript, corrected
b. 9, f. 257	[Women] "Physical Degeneracy", typescript
b. 9, f. 258	[Women] "Transcendent Motherhood", typescript
b. 9, f. 259	[Women] Miscellaneous pages about women, typescript
b. 9, f. 260	"Your Family and Mine", typescript
b. 9, f. 261-263	"Your Father and Mine", typescript
b. 9, f. 264-267	Fragments, manuscript and typescript
b. 9, f. 268-275	Untitled works, typescripts

Series II: Writings By Others, 1930s*0.42 linear feet (1 box)*

This series consists of typescripts of works, mainly on religious topics, written by others. Many were written in collaboration with R. A. Adams and were published by him under The Progress Publishing Co.

Arranged alphabetically by author and then by title.

Bearer, A. G., in collaboration with R. A. Adams

b. 10, f. 276-277 "Bible Fathers and Bible Mothers", typescript

b. 10, f. 278-279 "Bible Perverts", typescript

b. 10, f. 280 "Bible Wives and Bible Mothers", typescript

b. 10, f. 281-282 "Parables of our Lord", typescript

b. 10, f. 283-284 "Social Sins", typescript, corrected

b. 10, f. 285-288 "Weekly Short Sermons", typescript

b. 10, f. 289-290 "Weekly Short Sermons for boys", typescript

b. 10, f. 291 Gregg, John A., "Of Men and Of Arms", typescript

b. 10, f. 292 Horsey, G. E., "The Challenge of Efficiency in the Work and Leadership of the Christian Ministry!", typescript

b. 10, f. 293 Horsey, G. E., "The Pastor's Role in Man's Salvation", typescript

b. 10, f. 294-296 Ish, Videtta, in collaboration with R. A. Adams, "Looking Back", typescript

b. 10, f. 297-298 McAllister, Rev. C. Lopez, "Working with God", typescript

Mann, A. B., in collaboration with R. A. Adams

b. 10, f. 299-300 "Habits", typescript, corrected

b. 10, f. 301 "Myths and Morals", typescript

b. 10, f. 302 "Madam X", in collaboration with R. A. Adams, "My Wife and Others", typescript

b. 10, f. 303 Mr. "X" in collaboration with R. A. Adams, "These Husbands of Ours", typescript

Series III: Music, undated

0.42 linear feet (2 boxes)

This series consists of typescripts of musical programs dramatizing Bible stories and other religious topics, and sheet music for what appear to be songs by R. A. Adams.

Arranged by format.

b. 11, f. 304	"Music, Programs and Dramas: Bible Stories Dramatized", typescript, corrected
b. 11, f. 305	"Music, Programs and Dramas: Story of Bethlehem", typescript, corrected
b. 11, f. 306	"Music, Programs and Dramas: The doom of death, an Easter service", typescript, corrected
b. 11, f. 307	"Music, Programs and Dramas: The House of Many Mansions", typescript, corrected
b. 11, f. 308	"Music, Programs and Dramas", manuscript and typescript, corrected
b. 11, f. 309	Sheet Music, manuscript and typescript
b. 12, f. 310-315	Sheet Music, manuscript and typescript

Series IV: Other Papers, 1911-1945*0.42 linear feet (1 box)*

This series consists of scrapbooks, photographs, letters, and printed material, variously documenting the evangelistic and literary activities of R. A. Adams.

Arranged in rough chronological order.

b. 13, f. 316	Scrapbook of correspondence, letters of introduction, resolutions and testimonials relating to R. A. Adams and his evangelistic activities	1910-1919
b. 13, f. 317	Scrapbook of clippings documenting R. A. Adams and his evangelistic activities	1916-1921
b. 13, f. 318	Photographs, R. A. Adams	
b. 13, f. 319	Photograph, Adams Family	
b. 13, f. 320	Letter to R. A. Adams from Jennie Seamon, Eva Stewart and Margaret Wood	
b. 13, f. 321	An open letter to Christian Herald, typescript, corrected	1920
b. 13, f. 322-323	Form letter regarding the education of African-Americans	undated
b. 13, f. 324	Literary Productions of R.A. Adams, list, typescript	
b. 13, f. 325	Calling Card	
b. 13, f. 326	Celebration Golden Anniversary Offering Envelopes	1941
b. 13, f. 327	Envelopes	
b. 13, f. 328-329	Printed material See also: Oversize, Box 14	
b. 13, f. 330	"Schedule of Kansas City District"	1944-1945
b. 13, f. 331	Statement, Adams Printing Company	circa 1935
b. 13, f. 332-335	Original Folders with notes on them	

Oversize

1.34 linear feet (1 box)

b. 14 (Oversize), Poetry, "Events of Passion Week", typescript (from Series I)
f. 336

b. 14 (Oversize), Printed Material (from Series IV)
f. 337

1945

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

African American authors -- 20th Century
African American churches
African American clergy
African American Methodists
African American preaching
African Americans -- Religion -- 20th Century
American literature -- African American authors
Contraception
Economics -- Sociological aspects
Eugenics
Evangelistic work
Interpersonal relations
Race
Religion
Theology

Names

Adams, R. A. (Revels Alcorn), 1869-
Bearer, A. G.

Corporate Bodies

African Methodist Episcopal Church
Progress Publishing Co