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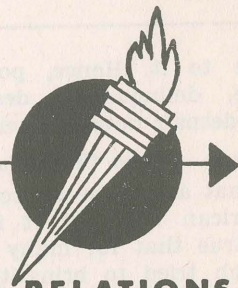
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THE VANGUARD



... THE CHURCH IN HUMAN RELATIONS

Volume 4, Number 11

December, 1957

THAT THE CHURCH MAY LEAD

Among American Indians

On a number of occasions friends have asked me, "Why don't The VANGUARD, the Valparaiso Institute on Human Relations, and the Lutheran Human Relations Association of America feature human relations as they affect our American Indians?" The answer usually given was something to this effect: "The principles involved, and enunciated by us, are applicable to all racial and ethnic groups. What is God-pleasing in Caucasian-Negro relations applies with equal force to white-Indian relations. We speak or write about

Caucasian-Negro relations more than about relations between other groups primarily because we have some 16 million Negroes in our country as compared with, for example, approximately 400,000 American Indians. Our Indians are largely far away from our major population centers and for this reason are little known and spoken of."

To Get On —

Perhaps more than one administration of our Federal government has tried to right the wrongs of our American forbears perpetrated against the American Indians. But the sad result of many of those sincere efforts was that greedy neighbors of the Indian

reservations and sometimes conniving and selfish state governments made the good work of the Federal government ineffective, with the Indians holding the bag. We know what happened on the west coast on more than one occasion in the case of people of Oriental background. We know what is happening in some of our southern states today — people and politicians are putting forth Herculean efforts to thwart the work of the administration in Washington intended to insure first-class citizenship to our Negro people. People in Asia and Africa oftentimes fail to understand why we cannot be what we say we are. Neither can I understand.

Reservation life as it is today is hopeless, and prospects for the future are worse, not better. There are many facets of the problem, some due to our not keeping faith with the Indians according to treaties solemnly accepted, some because all of us are being swept along by the swift currents of the twentieth century which are leaving no people anywhere untouched and unaffected.

If the condition of Indians on reservations is hopeless, the condition of many of them that are now living off of the reservations is still worse. They know of one culture — that of their reservation. Many of them are reluctant to change; neither are their new white neighbors ready wholeheartedly to have them assimilated into white society. Many of these Indians cannot speak English or they cannot speak it well. They are not acquainted with the impersonal and hurry-up city life. They are not equipped for skilled or semi-skilled jobs. Agriculture is all they know. They are neither ready to be assimilated into the life of the city nor are they wel-



This picture of children who took the part of angels in a Christmas drama was sent to **The VANGUARD** office by The Rev. George Kraus of St. Paul, Minn. It graces the front page of this issue to help give it a Nativity atmosphere. It is hoped that the picture has a degree of relevance to human relations as espoused by this paper. We are sure the Nativity has.

come to it. Hence, poverty, disease, delinquency, despondency, and despair develop easily.

Indians — The Church's Concern

What about the church and our American Indians? It is perhaps too true that for many years the church tried to bring the Gospel of Christ to our American Indians while it remained untouched by their need for physical help and political justice. There is at this

The Lutheran Welfare Association of Montana invited me to attend, however, among the churches an encouraging trend for the better.

tend and to participate in the Annual Montana Conference on Indian Problems and at the same time to attend dinner meetings with Lutherans of that area, to lead them in a discussion of human relations. The reason for this arrangement was to help increase the interest of Lutherans in their Indian neighbors. I found pastors and some laymen keenly aware of the problems involved in doing their duty and conscious of their responsibility toward our American Indians. That was my experience too when on my return from Montana I stopped in Minneapolis for a meeting with the Executive Board of the Twin Cities Chapter of LHRAA.

Three-Pronged Approach

Even from this distance, far removed geographically from the places where our Indians live, we can envision a three-pronged approach for a Christian to the problems involved in Indian-white relations: First and foremost, a restudy of one's own personal attitude toward the specific group referred to, with the intent of rooting out evident or latent unchristian prejudices; second, becoming a good Samaritan in fact toward these people by alleviating as much as possible their immediate wants and by working aggressively with others toward the complete acceptance of those Indians who want to be accepted; third, taking our Lord's words seriously, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people," by working toward the full acceptance of one's Indian neighbors into the fellowship of the church at the Lord's altar in Holy Communion and into the whole complex social

fabric of Christian and church life.

Friendly Forbearance

Our friends who have had lifetime experience in the field of Indian-white relationships will, we are confident, bear with us if we have been in error in one or more details. We are equally confident that the basic principles, including the Christian approach herein suggested, will be endorsed by them wholeheartedly.

Nor is this article intended to be the end of this discussion on the pages of The VANGUARD. It is hoped that interested persons will supply newsworthy and enlightening material for future publication.

A request has been sent to one of the offices of the U.S. Bureau on Indian Affairs that a Bureau representative (preferably an Indian) be delegated to attend and to participate in the 1958 Valparaiso University Institute on Human Relations scheduled for July 25-27.

A Pastor -- To Pastors

Some time ago The VANGUARD brought excerpts from a letter addressed by the Rev. Ralph L. Moelner of Chicago to his fellow-pastors of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in the Chicago area. A few more excerpts from that letter.

"Ministers of the Good News will have to give an account before the judgement seat of Christ as to how can they rationalize their neglect of that population within their parish which is of a darker hue. How can we ever justify withholding the Word of Life from our neighbors because certain people within our congregation are allegedly 'not ready' for an all-inclusive mission outreach? It is a flagrant abuse of the New Testament teaching about 'weak brethren' to take refuge behind Romans 14 and plead that we should not offend our members by asking them to worship and commune with Negroes. It is to be doubted if any Christian has or ever will lose his faith because integration has been practiced. If any numerical losses should be sustained because the Church takes a courageous stand on what is true and right, it could

only be the removal of the tares from the wheat.

"One vivid illustration of our mission neglect is to be found in the vast public housing developments in Chicago. At First Immanuel we do not presume to have accomplished all that we should have in this area, and we implore God's forgiveness for our shortcomings, but our experience is indisputable evidence that this potential for Christ's Kingdom should be vigorously and systematically tapped in all parts of our city. Most of our 200 Baptisms over the past two years, the 300-plus children in our Sunday school, and the 36 confirmations last year came from this source. And these statistics show only part of the picture. Additional hundreds and thousands of people have been brought a Christian witness through word of mouth, written tract, or private counsel. Why have these building projects remained untouched in many instances? Would the salvation of people in the lower income brackets ruin the record of per capita contributions in Northern Illinois? Or is it impossible to extend a sincere Christian invitation to an interracial population? There are inexhaustible opportunities to influence people with the Message of Reconciliation in changing neighborhoods, particularly among Negroes. If racial bias were not a deterrent factor, there is no reason why a score of our congregations could not have gained Negro converts by this time, and some of them could have recorded a large number of accessions.

"It would be contemptible hypocrisy to pretend that Chicago Lutheranism has been and is doing everything possible to reach all people with the saving love of God in Christ. In these turbulent days, when almost everyone is affected by the race question in one way or another, any Lutheran minister who does not relate Law and Gospel to the development of proper racial attitudes among his parishioners is assuredly not preaching the full counsel of God. More disconcerting than this capitulation to sin by silence are the recurring reports from laymen that their pastors reflect a patron-

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Indians Too Are People

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man whose acquaintance I made at the Conference — Mr. Iliff McKay, Secretary of the Blackfeet Indian Tribal Council of Browning, Montana. I am now an acquaintance of Mr. McKay; I hope some day to become his friend. He is a comparatively young man and, I suppose, every inch an Indian. At least he looks like what I assume an Indian looks like. He speaks like a person who understands Indian needs and Indian affairs. In three minutes allotted him as a member of a panel he gave a clearer picture of the status of our American Indians than I was able to glean from all the books and magazine articles I had read on the subject. After the panel discussion I congratulated him on his clear presentation and asked him if he had anything in printed form along the line of his panel talk. He said, "No, I simply speak what the occasion seems to demand." When the Conference was nearing the hour of adjournment, he extended an invitation to all to visit the Blackfeet Reservation. Saying goodbye to him, I asked him if his invitation applied to people of Indiana. Since his answer was in the affirmative, my old Olds may yet travel in that direction.

It's good to know people. They are all the handiwork of the Creator, the object of His love in Christ, the opportunity for the fullest expression of our love.

A Pastor -- To Pastors

(Continued from page 2)

izing or even antagonistic outlook toward minority groups. If the preacher has not cleansed his own

heart from social antipathies, how can we expect his congregation to rise to the need of the hour and favor equality of opportunity for all races in church and community?

"Brethren, our responsibility in instructing the consciences and guiding the actions of our members in the field of race relations during these days of transition and tension are enormous. The teaching of Scripture and the implications of Lutheran theology for this issue are plain and undeniable. The unity of God's creation and the universality of Christ's redemptive achievement are beyond dispute. We cannot evade interracial contacts within and without the Church by relegating the thought that we are 'all one in Christ Jesus' to some ethereal realm. Neither the Bible nor the early Church knew anything about racial division based on color. This modern phenomenon, based, in our own country, on the institution of slavery and perpetuated by the desire to preserve economic advantage and social status, should be analyzed for what it is. It is time that misconceptions and faulty information on this subject be superseded by scientific facts and sound theology. (How many of our people still imagine that the 'curse of Canaan' can explain the servitude of Negroes in our country as the writer was once taught in a Lutheran school? How many of our ministers realize how superficial the physical characteristics are that are used to distinguish races?) The eradication of racial animosities should be spearheaded by the testimony and action of Christians everywhere, with the ministers of the Church

Jew to Jew

"Why do we not recognize Jesus as the Messiah? It is because our Bible is a sealed book to most of us, and **because so-called Christians have, in their stupidity, persecuted Jews until the very visage of our Messiah has become disfigured for us.**" (Bold type our own. Quotation from **The Mediator**, XXIX, 4, 1956.)

A very common practice among many Christian people is to speak of Jews in a derogatory manner or to make them as a group the subject of ridicule and laughter, employing against them all the stereotypes in the book, and then lamenting the fact that they will not believe in "our Jesus."

The persecution of the Jews by Hitler and the many Jewish purges of history perpetrated "in the name of Jesus" are abhorrent in the extreme as we read about them. But what does more harm to the cause of winning Jews for Christ — the occasional bloody purge, or an after-dinner conversation in Christian homes, spoken without even the semblance of a guilty conscience? Do Christians by their jokes and anecdotes about Jews prove themselves in that instance to be friends of the greatest of all Jews, Jesus, or do they prove themselves enemies of Christ? One wonders!

giving leadership to the movement.

"We hope that you will join us in the prayer . . . that God will speed the day when His ambassadors rise with prophetic fervor to denounce the sin of racial prejudice wherever it rears its ugly head and to establish the pattern of a truly Christian **koinonia** in their congregations."

LUTHERAN HUMAN RELATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana

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