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THE VANGUARD

... THE CHURCH IN HUMAN RELATIONS

Volume 6, No. 1

January, 1959

That the Church May Lead

Can a Church Paper Remain Silent?

At the occasion of the 43rd convention of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in 1956, a resolution on "The Church and the World-Wide Race Issue" was adopted. A brief resume of what happened behind the scenes and in the committee meetings before this resolution was adopted may not be altogether out of place.

A number of overtures on race relations had been submitted to the Synod for consideration at the convention. Besides stating the Scriptural principles involved, the overtures called for a declaration on the part of the Synod in two areas where these principles must be applied. The one was the integration into the fellowship of the local congregation of all people of the community who are united with the Church in the confession of Christ. The second recommendation called for Christian social action to combat discrimination based on race or ethnic origin in the community in which the Christian lives as well as beyond the confines of that community. The floor committee found it comparatively easy to accept and to propose to the convention for its adoption a statement calling for communicant integration. The application of Scriptural principles to social action against community discrimination, however, was another matter.

In its first report to the convention the floor committee neither referred to nor offered any resolution relative to the Christian responsibility for social action. After some discussion from the floor, the report was referred back to the committee for restudy. The committee met later with some 200 delegates and convention visitors who expressed their concern over the omission from the resolution of that part of the overtures referring to Christian social action. On the following day, the committee presented the resolution referred to at the beginning of this

article. It included the following statement:

"That since Christians are constrained to do justice and love mercy, we acknowledge our responsibility as a church to provide guidance for our members to work in the capacity of Christian citizens for the elimination of discrimination, wherever it may exist, in community, city, state, nation, and world."

After a few brief comments from the floor, the convention adopted the resolution unanimously.

What has happened since? In a sense nothing has happened officially until now to translate that part of the resolution which refers to Christian social action into life and action in the church; at least that is the case if one must judge by what appeared, or, better, what did not appear, in **The Lutheran Witness**. That periodical is the one official popular magazine of the Missouri Synod. No editorial or contributed article has until now appeared in **The Lutheran Witness** calling attention to the social action pronouncement, explaining it, and speaking for its implementation.

In October 1956 **The Lutheran Witness** published an article written by the editor of **The VANGUARD**. The

(Continued on page four)



"They ought to stay in their place."

A LOOK AROUND

By Martin H. Scharlemann

1. Intruding

This is the story of a Negro Christian woman who decided to attend a Lutheran church. She had become disillusioned with the superficialities of her own denomination and had heard that the Lutheran church in her community was one of those rare houses of worship where the Word of God was still being proclaimed.

She soon discovered that these claims were not exaggerated. In fact, after she had left the service she exclaimed enthusiastically to her friends about the beauty of the service and the substance of the proclamation. But then, when her neighbors asked her whether she was going there again, she brought them up short by saying, No! This they could not comprehend; so they asked for an explanation. This is what she said, "No, I don't think I could go back; I felt too much like intruding."

This is the feeling that the Pharisees inspired in publicans and sinners. They made them feel like intruders on territory that they claimed for themselves and their kind. Remember the one who started his prayer by saying, "I thank Thee, God, that I am not like other men . . ." What gesture do you suppose he used with the words, "Or even like this publican?" Surely, it was one of exclusion. This is unquestionably the reason for the publican "standing afar off." He, too, felt he was intruding.

2. A Challenge Met

In a column prepared for **U.S. News and World Report**, David Lawrence commented on the statement of the Catholic Bishops of America defending the rights of Negroes. He laments the fact that these ecclesiastics fail to take into account the problem of intermarriage. He concludes by saying, "It is to be hoped that some religious group will soon give us the answer as to how to put these ideals into practice."

Well, this has been done. The Human Relations Institute at Valparaiso University of last summer dealt with this particular problem from a biological, sociological and theological point of view. The results have been so well received that for the first time in the experience of the Association a second printing of these Proceedings had to be ordered. We'd like to put our plug in at this juncture.

Incidentally, in this article David Lawrence quotes Allan Nevins of Columbia University as saying:

"In broad terms we must plan, North and South, to raise the Negro race to a plane in character, cultivation and manners where it will be entirely fit to intermarry with the white race.

"As a historian, I do not for a moment believe that, in our mighty American river of many nationalities, two currents can flow side by side down the centuries without ultimately becoming one.

"At first the fusion will be imperceptible; then it will be perceptible but slow; then it will move with a rush. I could cite a dozen analogies from history to prove that such a process is inexorable, irresistible. Any sociologist could cite a dozen reasons why it is inevitable."

3. A Monstrous Document

Some time ago there came to hand "A Resolution on Segregation," issued by what is called the American Council of Christian Churches. It reads in part:

"Segregation within the church on racial, linguistic, and national lines is not unchristian nor contrary to the specific commands of the Bible . . . To make integration the standard of Christian conduct and to hurl the charge 'unchristian' against conscientious, God-fearing men of both races who desire to maintain a social pattern in their churches and communities in keeping with the principles of States Rights (sic!) and their convictions and faith, stimulates bitterness and strife and denies the liberty that every believer has in Christ . . ."

This is certainly a curious mixture of States Rights philosophy and extremely superficial theology. One can hardly help concluding that the people (or was it just one person?) who drew this up had no conception whatsoever as to the nature and function of the church. And yet it purports to be a pronouncement of Christian Churches!

Race Relations in Fort Wayne

In that old Lutheran metropolis, Fort Wayne, Indiana, a group of concerned people came together a number of times, disturbed by the ignorance of some and the apathy of others as the Church is confronted with the world-wide race issue. They were determined to fit the action to the word. To that end they decided to organize a chapter of the Lutheran Human Relations Association of America. But to give other similarly interested people of the church opportunity to participate with them and to help them plan and organize their work, they decided to conduct an institute on human relations before formally organizing.

On the first Sunday after Epiphany the Institute, attended by some 325 persons, was held. The temporary chairman, Dr. Thomas Coates, Head of the Religion Department of the Senior College of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, and Secretary of the LHRAA, made the introductory remarks, some of which are herewith presented to our readers. We think

they are worthy of being passed on to you.

"We have come together tonight as those who are sincerely concerned with the Church's role in and impact upon the area of human relations — inter-cultural, inter-racial, and inter-national. It is fitting that a subject that looms so large in our modern world, and that so dramatically involves our social, economic, and civic responsibilities, should also engage the attention of the Church, and that it should be viewed by the Church in the light of the Christian Gospel — and no other.

"It is therefore doubly fitting that this meeting is taking place in the Epiphanytide — the season of the Christian year that signifies the universality of God's Kingdom and the world-embracing redemption that is the common heritage of all who kneel before the Incarnate Christ. There is no segregation at the Manger.

"The English poet-mystic Charles Williams has given us a striking word-picture of this fact in his poem: 'The Epiphany':

It was a king of Negro-land,
A king of China-town,



A five-member committee, above, made arrangements for the Lutheran Human Relations Institute which was held at Redeemer Church in Fort Wayne, Sunday, January 11. Left to right: Don Muchow, senior at Concordia Senior College; Dr. E. H. Essig, Professor of English at the College; Dr. Thomas Coates, Chairman of the Religion Department at Concordia; Dr. Harold Haas, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Concordia; and Professor Paul Harms, Associate Professor of Speech and Drama at the College, standing.

And an old prince of Iran,
Who to the Child kneeled down.

It was a king of blackamoors,
A king of men slant-eyed,
A lord among sun-worshippers,
Who at the New-born spied.

It was a king with savage eyes,
King with a queer pigtail,
King with a high and sunlit brow,
Who bade the New-born 'Hail!'

Back they rode to one country,
One spiritual land,
Three kings of my soul's country

Who touched the New-born's hand.
"In the Epiphany we behold one
Lord, we follow one star, we yield to
one Truth, we share one life, we in-
herit one Kingdom.

"This, then, is the keynote of our
Institute: 'One in Christ'."

Indignation vs. Bitterness

By John Strietelmeier

A good friend of ours has written us a very thoughtful letter in which he warns us against allowing our efforts in the cause of better human relations to be nullified by a spirit of bitterness. Coming from a friend, this warning has caused us to re-examine back issues of **The VANGUARD** and, more important, to re-examine our conscience. For, certainly, the cause of better human relations will not be furthered by bitter people who treat men with the same lack of charity that they deplore in others.

It is difficult sometimes to distinguish between bitterness and indignation. We have, with what we believe to be ample cause, felt indignation at the debasement of man and the insult to the Church which are the inevitable evil fruits of racial and ethnic snobbery. In this we hope we are following the example of St. Paul who said (II Cor. 11:29): "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" Indeed, the whole purpose of this Association (LHRAA) and of **The VANGUARD** is to work in the members of Christ's Body a holy indignation at the afflictions and sorrows and humiliations which men created in the divine image and redeemed by the saving blood are forced to bear because of man's persistent determination to find someone he can look down upon.

Bitterness, we take it, is the fruit of injured pride. We confess that we are plagued by a stubborn and overweening pride and that it has often reacted bitterly to injury. To what

extent this bitterness has been evident in our writing someone more objective than we ourselves must judge. It is certainly our constant endeavor to keep personalities, our own included, out of the picture and to keep our comments and criticism focused on issues and principles. After all, what is there to gain by destroying an opponent when one's whole purpose is to win him for the truth?

So if we have been bitter, it is a denial of all that we and our Association stand for and we shall be grateful to any brother or sister who will be kind enough to correct us in the spirit of brotherly admonition. But when we have been indignant we have hoped that our indignation would be catching and would serve to cauterize wounds which the pride and snobbishness of man have inflicted upon the Body of Christ. We are still in business because our indignation has proved only mildly infectious.

The Christian Century Speaks Out

The article appearing in this issue entitled "Can a Church Paper Remain Silent" was occasioned by reading several articles on race relations in the January 14th issue of **The Christian Century**.

The contrast between the forthright articles on race relations appearing regularly in that paper and the all but complete silence on that subject of **The Lutheran Witness** editors and contributors seemed very obvious.

Some of the articles that appear in **The Christian Century** are too erudite for this writer to understand. Because of his admitted incompetence, he shall in this case by-pass some of **The Christian Century** material. With

other articles in that paper he is at times in disagreement. One special weakness of that periodical is what seems to be a consistent lack of a clear and unequivocal witness to the Christian doctrine of the atonement through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But when **The Christian Century** moves in the area of race relations, it is as good as the best. For that reason **The VANGUARD** recommends **The Christian Century** as one of the finest sources of information and education in the field of race relations. Pastors will do well not only to read it themselves but to get it into the hands of the intelligent leaders in their churches.

Until **The Lutheran Witness** becomes a real witness in the area of race relations, helping to give its many readers material so that they can find God-pleasing answers to the problem of race that is confronting them in their daily lives, until then we who want to be true to the best tradition of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod are compelled to direct the attention of our fellow Missourians to other periodicals, especially **The Christian Century**.

Very Unequal

City architects are about to begin the erection of a sparkling glass and steel combination Museum-Library for white people, which will cost the taxpayers \$900,000. The same architects will build for the 46% Negro population a "branch" library costing \$100,000. One wonders at the "conscienceness" of city planners who can take a million dollars of public funds and allocate nine-tenths to 54% of the city's population and one-tenth to the remaining 46% and expect "good race relations" to exist. -- **News Letter**, Montgomery Improvement Association.

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Advances Despite Setbacks

The following are gleanings from a booklet, **The People Take the Lead**, a record of progress in civil rights, 1948 to 1959. (Order from The American Jewish Committee, 386 Fourth Ave., New York, N.Y. 41 pp. Single copy, 25c)

Civil rights continue to advance despite headline-provoking setbacks.

Armed Services: Racial segregation has been eliminated in all of the armed services, and in VA hospitals.

Citizenship: Registration of Negro voters in the South has more than doubled in 10 years, reaching 1,266,488 in 1958. . . . In 1957, Congress adopted the first civil rights law in 82 years; the first Federal challenge of maneuvers barring qualified Negro voters from the polls is now before the courts.

Education: Close to 2½ million white and Negro children are in Southern public school systems that have been, or gradually are being, desegregated. . . . Some 220 formerly segregated colleges and universities now admit Negroes.

Employment: Fair employment is now enforced by law in 14 states, and by Federal regulation in firms doing business with the Government. More than one-third of the population is protected by state or local FEP statutes.

Housing: Restrictive covenants were ruled unenforceable by the U. S. Supreme Court in 1948. . . . Segregation in public housing has been barred in nine states and many major cities, including Louisville, Ky., and St. Louis, Mo. . . . Several state laws and court rulings have hit at discrimination in publicly-assisted housing, including dwellings financed with VA or FHA mortgages. . . . First ordinance banning racial or religious discrimination in

private housing was adopted in 1958 by New York City.

Public Accommodations: Twenty-two states have laws banning racial or religious discrimination in public facilities. . . . U.S. Supreme Court has barred racial segregation in interstate (1951) and intrastate (1956) travel. . . . Discrimination in Washington, D.C., has been virtually wiped out.

Religious, Professional, Fraternal and Civic Societies: Mergers of formerly all-Negro and all-white congregations and ministerial associations have taken place in many parts of the country. . . . Scores of medical, educational, legal, and other professional societies have opened their ranks to Negroes. . . . Some 40 Greek-letter societies in colleges and universities are taking steps to end discriminatory membership practices.

These advances have been overshadowed by reverses in recent months. But "last-stand, defiant efforts, instead of retarding social progress, may ultimately speed it; for the forces of moderation, law and order are mobilizing in a determined stand against lawlessness."

That the Church May Lead

(Continued from page one)

article as it was sent to the **Witness** covered the whole of the Synod's pronouncement on the world-wide race issue. But every reference that was made by the author to that part of the pronouncement, which had to do with the Christian's responsibility when discrimination is practiced in the community, was deleted from the article. That was a serious mistake. But it was hoped that this mistake would be corrected by another article dealing specifically with the responsibility for Christian social action. More than two years have now passed and, although we have been looking for it ever since,

no editorial or contributed article has appeared bringing that section of the pronouncement to the attention of the **Witness's** several hundred thousand subscribers.

One might understand, although disagree with, a policy of silence on the part of a periodical like **The Lutheran Witness** when the church body has made no official pronouncement. It seems incomprehensible, though, that silence should be maintained after the body has spoken.

If what has thus far been written in this article is true, at least in its essential elements, it would seem that some change in the editorial procedure of **The Lutheran Witness** is vitally necessary.

If concerned people bring something to the attention of a church body at its national convention, and that body, after devoting much of its precious time to the question, adopts as its own a pronouncement in keeping with what is considered necessary, and especially if the resolution moves in the area of a vital need for the faith and life of the Church, can a church paper remain silent?!

Mouthing Moral Teachings

"I pity the children of the South today. No, not the Negro children; the white! In twenty years from now the children of Negroes will be proud of their parents' struggle, their courage. The children of white will be ashamed and frustrated in trying to rationalize or justify their parents who merely mouthed moral teachings through the years but chose not to identify themselves with those teachings in their patterns of living." (Dr. Alfred Marrow, Chairman, New York City Commission on Intergroup Relations)

LUTHERAN HUMAN RELATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana

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