

11-1-1967

The Opinion - Vol. 07, No. 02

Fuller Theological Seminary

Thomas F. Johnson

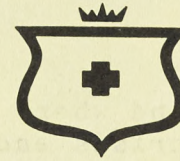
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the opinion



 Vol. VII, No. 2

November, 1967

GRAY-FLANNEL GOSPEL

An Editorial

American society in the 1960's is showing signs of the strain of living in a deep spiritual crisis. Michael Harrington writes in The Accidental Century, "After God died, Man, who was supposed to replace Him, grew sick of himself. This resulted in a crisis of belief and disbelief which made the twentieth century spiritually empty." Harrington is, of course, talking about the atheistic humanists for whom God was a dead option, and who thought that man could now revolutionize and remake the world "...according to human specifications....He would choose his destiny through science and technology rather than be subjected to it by accidents of birth and catastrophe." But this venture was unsuccessful for one simple, yet very profound reason. "As it turned out, Western man revolutionized everything except himself." The resulting disillusion in both man and God has caused a spiritual crisis whose unique character "...is that no one really seems to believe in anything."

The signs of this crisis are quite evident. On one side of society we have the hippies dropping out. On another side, the urban poor, Negro and white alike, are rising up. In the middle of all this, the races seem to be pulling apart rather than pulling together. But perhaps most tragic of all these indicators is the fact that the moneyed masses of suburbia, the ones who have the power to do something about many of these matters, are immobile and do little; whether through complacency or fear. They do not have the spiritual resources and the moral courage to use their power of numbers, money, education and political position to change constructively the structures of society to relieve the well nigh unbearable strain that threatens to crack seriously and damage these very structures and thus society itself.

And where is the American Church in the midst of this spiritual crisis and the evangelicals in the Church in particular? Surely, we of all people would be most active and most effective in this spiritual crisis. Surely, we would be busy channeling the redeeming love of our risen Savior into this spiritual vacuum, the moral energy and courage of our living Lord into this void. Unfortunately, indeed tragically, this doesn't seem to be the case. The examination of a few basic facts will soon bear this out.

First of all, by and large, the evangelical segment of the Church just isn't in the inner city. How can ministry take place without a minister? How can the redeeming love and reforming power of our risen Lord flow into empty lives if the agents by which this flowing occurs aren't around? When Detroit erupts, we cluck with surprise, but should we really be surprised? Surely some deep reflection upon our structures, methods and priorities is demanded.

Secondly, our greatest strength as evangelicals, both numerically and geographically, seems to lie among the moneyed masses of suburbia. Yet, as we have already observed, although the greatest power for constructive change lies with these people, no such change is presently forthcoming. We have often heard it said that the preaching of the Gospel is the only thing that can really change men's hearts and thus men themselves (the very thing Harrington notes the humanists failed to do). From these changed hearts, the argument continues, true moral courage can produce real constructive social change. But it is toward the immobile masses of suburbia that most of our preaching has been directed, and yet no impetus for constructive change seems to be forthcoming from these very quarters. What then are we to conclude?

There are two explanations we could advance to account for this phenomenon. We could say that the Gospel just doesn't work. It just doesn't produce a renewed, morally sensitive humanity bent on reflecting the character of their God in society. Certainly no Christian will accept this explanation. Or we could say that the full Gospel has been muted. Perhaps only those parts of the whole counsel of God have been preached which won't really upset the congregation and thus rock the building fund. This is a highly plausible explanation and cause for some very deep reflection on our message and our call to proclaim the whole counsel of God to those in the society in which we find ourselves.

From all of this, there are sobering implications for those of us who have been called to minister in America in the last half of the twentieth century. We must be sure that we grasp the nature and magnitude of the spiritual and social crisis that is now tightening its grip on American society. Then, in light

of such analysis, we must carefully examine those ecclesiastical structures into which we will go to minister. If changes are going to be made so that the redeeming power of the Gospel can flow to those in the inner city, to the hippies, to the university world, they will have to be made by us and those who will minister alongside us. Finally, we must be sure of our message. Most of us are products of suburban society and we must take this into account. Jesus' call to discipleship in his earthly ministry was no easy call. It was deeply demanding and produced remarkable men. The call of the risen Christ through us to our world can be no less deeply demanding. Remarkable men are desperately needed to live creatively in contemporary American society. Can we be and call forth such men?

H. J. S.

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir:

I'm not much for writing letters, but since I've often criticized others for complaining and doing nothing about it, I'm writing 'my editor.' In fact, I'm mad!

I came to this school full of zeal and vigor, expecting to find a warm-hearted, on-fire, out-to-get-em, evangelical seminary. Instead I find people more interested in the theology of worship than in soul winning; more interested in confessing sins than in living the victorious life; more interested in parsing verbs than in getting to the meat of the text; more interested in playing pool than in fishing men.

What this school needs is to wake up! What's all the fuss about chapel? If you don't make it in your closet, no chapel is going to make you feel good. If the Spirit doesn't show you the meaning of the Bible, what good is all this language study and what-not? (I know, the Bible says "study to show yourself approved"; but that means study the Bible, not academic trivia.) And about this idea of corporate life, this confessing of sins together and playing pool: as Luther or Calvin said (or was it Finney?), 'It's every man alone before God' - you know, the priesthood of all believers!

Don't start quoting verses or theology at me, to prove me wrong. I know how I feel!

Sincerely,

Marvin Schack
B. D.

ANY TIME BUT NOW

by Lewis A. Perry

In 1945, Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy wrote a book on the Negro migrations in the United States entitled "They Seek a City". A revised edition published nearly twenty years later was re-titled "Anyplace But Here". This change in title is indicative of a distinct shift of atmosphere in American race relations during the interim. Until the last few years, the Afro-american community had been generally calm and quiescent except for occasional demonstrations. However, since World War II, attitudes have been changing at a greatly accelerated rate, and demand for the full equality due American citizens in all areas of social, economic, and political life has been rising in an ever increasing crescendo.

All this has had two very marked and closely interrelated and interacting effects. One has been the ever mounting aggressiveness on the part of the younger generation of Afro-americans in resisting the discriminatory and segregative patterns which had been endured for generations. In connection with this there has been a more open and direct expression of the accumulated bitterness and hatred generated by over three hundred and fifty years of continual discrimination, degradation, and abuse. Since, until recently, this hatred and bitterness dare not be expressed, it has largely been hidden under a veneer of quiet resignation and abject subservience. The current outbursts, therefore, have come as a rude shock to the majority of white America.

Closely allied with this is the ambivalent and contradictory reaction and response of the social and political establishment. This response has swung like a pendulum from a patronizing pseudo-concern on the one hand, to open resentment of the Black Man's demands and outright antagonism toward them on the other. The nature of the reaction, of course, has varied depending upon the specific situation, the area of the country involved, and other factors; but the broad basic outlines have remained fairly constant. When the picture is closely analyzed, the conclusion clearly emerges that white, majority America has no real intention of dealing with the social and racial crisis confronting it in any substantive and effective way, particularly if such dealing involves any sincere and general integration of the society.

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LEWIS A. PERRY has read widely on the race issue, has lived in Southwest Pasadena for three years, and is now the Director of Christian Education in one of Pasadena's Afro-american churches.

The root of many of the problems in race relations today is that of real understanding and communication between the communities involved. The white community has carefully and consistently isolated itself from the ghetto, its problems, and its way of life, and has accepted and perpetuated patterns of segregation, discrimination, and denial which have served to create a deep and unbridged psychological and emotional as well as social chasm, not to mention the foundations of serious educational and economic deprivation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the white community now finds itself asking meaningless questions about unreal problems and setting forth platitudinous pronouncements about situations and conditions of which it has no real understanding, while the substantive issues continue to fester blissfully ignored.

In observing various commissions, congresses, and meetings convened to discuss civil rights and related problems one soon reaches the conclusion that the majority community has not really been listening to what the minority community has to say. Statements are constantly made and questions asked which betray appalling ignorance of the conditions under which these people must live and the circumstances and obstacles which they confront in any attempt to improve their situation. The suggested approach to the problem all too frequently shows a total lack of comprehension of what the minority person faces daily in most areas.

Enough has been written and spoken to show both the roots and historic development of this dilemma, and the nature of the current problems which must be faced and dealt with creatively now if anyone sincerely wants to obtain a clear objective grasp of the situation. After reading a great deal of material from various sources and talking to numerous individuals, and participating in conferences and other discussion groups, one can hardly escape the conclusion that the ignorance of the white majority community is largely willful and therefore culpable.

It seems apparent, therefore, that any adequate solution to the dilemma of these times is going to require as an essential prerequisite an openness and honesty of approach which has hitherto been conspicuously lacking. It will be up to the white community to demonstrate the genuineness of its concern and a desire to tackle the situation forthrightly to a people who, considering the history of the relations between the races in this country, are understandably not a little skeptical of the white man's intentions and justifiably wary of his advances. The crucial question at this juncture is -- Can the majority community make the necessary psychological and emotional adjustments to set in motion the kind of changes in attitudes and in the functioning of society which must be made now if a catastrophic confrontation is to be averted?

THE MEXICAN PEOPLE IN URBAN AMERICA

by Thomas S. Johnson

Among the many aspects of the complex urban problem which faces our country today there is one which until very recently has received virtually no attention, and even now is frequently overlooked. I refer to the Mexican-American population of the Southwest, which "is the second largest minority group in the United States that can be identified as economically disadvantaged on nearly every yardstick at hand".¹ The dimensions of the Mexican-American's plight are virtually unknown to the population as a whole, and what is even more sad, they are unknown or ignored by government officials, opinion-molders and decision-makers throughout the country. This situation has been graphically illustrated in some of the conferences sponsored by government agencies to consider Mexican-American problems. On March 28, 1966 a federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission conference was held in Albuquerque, N. M. Only one commissioner even bothered to appear at the conference, which, it turned out, was not even structured to deal with the problems of Mexican-Americans, even though it had been advertised as such.

Who are these people and what are some of their problems? Of between ten and twelve million persons with Spanish surname in this country, some seven to eight million are Americans of Mexican descent. Although some of these Mexican-Americans are located in the agricultural areas of the Midwest, most of them (85%-90%) live in the five states of the Southwest (Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, California) where in mere numbers, they exceed the Negro population, forming, therefore, the largest minority group. Some of these persons are descendants of the Spanish and Mexican settlers who occupied this territory long before it became a part of the United States. Others are second, third, fourth, fifth generation descendants of later immigrants from Mexico, while many of them were born in Mexico, having immigrated to the United States during their own lifetime.

Undoubtedly, the most obvious and oppressive problem which plagues this segment of our population is poverty. The 1960 Census shows that nearly 35% of all Spanish-surname families in

1. Much of the statistical information for this article was gleaned from reports of the Mexican-American Study Project sponsored by U.C.L.A. under the direction of Ralph Guzman.

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THOMAS S. JOHNSON graduated in 1965 from U. C. L. A. with a B. A. in Latin American Studies, and is president of the Senior Class, Fuller Seminary.

the Southwest were in the poverty group (under \$3000/yr. income). In the state of Texas alone this runs as high as 52%. This is well over twice the percentage of poor Anglo families to the total Anglo population, and just slightly better off than the non-white population. However, even these figures are a bit deceptive.

Spanish-surname families are typically much larger than those of other segments of the population. When family income is carried over to a per-capita income, it becomes apparent that the Spanish-surname group is worse off than even the non-whites, as the following statistics from two states will demonstrate. (Note that these statistics are based on the median income of the total population, and not just the poverty group.)

	median family income	median family size	income per person in family
<u>California</u>			
Total pop.	\$ 6726	3.19	\$ 2108
Sp.-surname	5533	4.01	1380
non-white	4971	3.46	1437
<u>Texas</u>			
Total pop.	4884	3.33	1467
Sp.-surname	2914	4.63	629
non-white	2591	3.43	755

It must not be thought that this refers primarily to a rural, migrant farmworker population. At the time of the last census, at least 75% of the Spanish-surname families in the poverty group were city dwellers. What is more, it appears that urbanization may tend to widen the gap in the incidence of poverty between members of the minority group and the majority.

On the urban scene, the incidence of poverty is exceptionally high when the head of the family is 65 yrs. or older, or is a female, the latter being an indication of broken families. In fact, when one or both of these characteristics exists in a family, not to be poor is the rare exception. In spite of the general feeling that Mexican families are exceptionally stable, the Census indicates that 13% of Spanish-surname families have a female head as opposed to 9% for the total population. When this problem is compounded by others, such as age, unemployment, education, etc., as it frequently is, the level of poverty can become appallingly low.

The effect that these problems have on the consumption habits of the poverty group are difficult to assess because of a lack of data. Nevertheless, some insight can be obtained by looking at housing conditions. In the metropolitan areas of the Southwest, nearly 35% of Spanish-surname families live in overcrowded housing units compared to less than 8% of the Anglo and 22% of the

non-white families (overcrowded is defined as 1.01 or more persons per room). Another index of the relationship between poverty and housing is the quality of the housing. In 1960 seven times as many units occupied by Spanish-surname families were dilapidated as were units occupied by Anglos. Furthermore, the level of public installations and services in communities where these housing units are located is extremely inadequate, for the most part. Besides the effects upon one's physical health, this kind of an environment seriously influences the behavior and attitudes of those who live under its continual stress and frustration.

Closely related to the problem of poverty is the level of educational attainment in the Mexican-American population. Spanish-surname males, according to the 1960 Census had attained a median schooling of 8.1 yrs., as compared to 12.1 yrs. for their Anglo counterparts. A recent survey at UCLA revealed that there were less than forty Mexican-American students enrolled on that campus. The Cal-State campus which is located almost within the Mexican-American community on the Eastside, has an enrollment of over 20,000 of which a bare 5% are Mexican-Americans. It is easier for a foreign student from an emerging nation to receive academic support all the way to a high academic degree in our universities than it is for a Mexican-American student from a deteriorating neighborhood in East Los Angeles to receive a subsidy to complete his education.

Educational level is closely tied in to job opportunities and that, in turn, to level of income. In 1960 only 19% of Mexican-American urban males in the Southwest were employed in non-manual occupations as compared to over 47% of their Anglo counterparts. The vast majority of Mexican-Americans are employed in low-paying, low-skilled manual occupations which provide little or no opportunity for advancement, and from which they cannot escape without greater educational opportunities.

However, it must not be thought that the employment problem would be solved merely by raising the level of educational attainment, which in itself will take many years. The Mexican-American, like members of other minority groups, suffers discrimination in the employment market. Indeed, this fact in itself tends to discourage young Mexican-Americans from 'wasting' their time in college. Too many times in the past, and present, has a Mexican-American with a college degree and even a graduate degree, been refused job after job, until he finally ends up at some manual occupation. De facto school segregation with all of its evils plagues the Mexican-American just as much as it does the Negro, and contributes to the oppressive chain of events which enslaves the Mexican-American youngster within the ranks of poverty.

Though there are others, these are at least some of the problems facing Mexican-Americans. More correctly, they are some of the problems facing the Anglo majority. It is certainly clear that the Mexican-Americans are a disadvantaged, oppressed group, of which the majority Anglo population is largely ignorant -- perhaps wilfully so.

THE GOSPEL AND POVERTY

by Harry Klassen

In an affluent, middle class society, where the average family lives moderately at \$9,191 (according to Newsweek Nov. 6), the question of the Gospel's application to the poor is very apropos. What voice does the church with its beautiful edifices have to "the other America". As we watch our colored television sets, and drive to work in air conditioned cars, how easy it is to wax eloquent on the issue of poverty. We appease our conscience by suggesting that the poor are that way because they are indolent, besides which, they drive big cars and take sadistic delight in cheating the taxpayer. A much more astute assessment may be found in the words of Michael Harrington, "But the real explanation of why the poor are where they are is that they made the mistake of being born to the wrong parents, in the wrong section of the country, in the wrong industry, or in the wrong racial or ethnic group".¹ However, the Church has been deluded by the misleading cliché - "Godliness is in league with riches". The resultant attitude is candidly described by Sidney Mead, "The main rule to be followed is to help those who will help themselves and to eschew the indiscriminate charity which presents 'one of the most serious obstacles to the improvement of our race' by encouraging 'the slothful, the drunken, the unworthy'."² The Evangelical with his emphasis upon individualism has been in league with capitalism, whether "robber barons" or the self made millionaire. The new era of unemployment, labor disputes and urban slums so overwhelmed him, that he moved his church to suburbia.

How foreign this attitude is to the "Word made flesh"! Let us briefly examine the Gospel accounts in order to more clearly define our Lord's attitude to the oppressed. The epoch-making ministry of Jesus commenced with the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18). When the Son of Man comes in glory, part of the identifying marks of the sheep include feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the prisoner (Matt. 25:35,36). The good Samaritan is good because of his neighborly act of bringing physical comfort to the miserable victim of robbery.

1. Harrington, Michael, The Other America, p. 23.

2. Mead, Sidney, The Lively Experiment, p. 149.

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HARRY KLASSEN graduated in 1963 from the University of Manitoba. He is vice-president of the Senior Class at Fuller Seminary, and chairman of the Church in Mission at Home Committee.

Who dares to preach on the rich man and Lazarus in 1967? To predict destruction of one who feasts sumptuously at an elegant table of finest cuisine grates on the modern mind. Why Lazarus is a beggar, a social leech! Yet it is Lazarus who is vindicated in the age to come. Another embarrassing story which needs to be excised from the text concerns the story of the man who builds bigger barns. How fortunate that we have made advances upon this primitive economic theory which questions investment and interest! At an Independence day service, I heard an Evangelical extol the greatness of America on the basis of the ever-increasing youthful age of our most recent millionaires. Perhaps a subtle word from the Devil might dampen our enthusiasm at this point, "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you if you will fall down and worship me'." (Matt. 4:8) But Jesus is not alone in his concern for the poor. Paul's words are striking. "Only they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do." (Gal. 2:10).

Historically the Church has been ambivalent to the problem of the poor. Luther's position in the Peasant's Revolt is hardly commendable. By contrast to his attitude, compare the Book of Discipline of the Church of Scotland framed under the leadership of John Knox. The Discipline pleaded nobly for the peasantry so that Mitchell comments, "The history of the world, the history of the Christian Church, has few passages more noble than this, where these poor ministers, not yet assured of decent provision for their own maintenance, boldly undertake the patronage of the peasantry and say they would rather suffer themselves than ask that teinds should be exacted from those who had been so long ground down."³ The rise of the Sunday School movement indicates a concern for the downtrodden and had as one of its functions to teach the illiterate to read. However, the history of the Church in America of the last 150 years cannot be seen in such a positive light. The church stood firmly in the tradition of supporting the status quo especially in regard to labor disputes. It can even be demonstrated that evangelists were supported by entrepreneurs to fix the minds of laborers upon the rewards of the after-life and thereby maintain an unconsciously coerced stability. A recent statement of the Evangelical wing of the Church of England expressed thanks to God for the welfare state. Needless to say, this remark caused much consternation on this side of the Atlantic. What are our contemporary attitudes?

3. Renevick, A. M., The Story of the Scottish Reformation, p. 119.

It is not possible to give a definitive answer to this question, but I would offer the following suggestions. It should be noted that these attitudes are logical consequents of that damnable heresy "God helps those who help themselves."

1. America is still the great land of opportunity (without the frontiers of course). Therefore the unemployment problem reflects an indolence and irresponsibility of one stratum of society rather than a social consequence of industrialization.
2. God rewards the righteous with abundance. Poverty is evidence of a life of evil. As thousands of C. B. M. C. members can attest, "In God we trust," and our bank accounts grow.
3. Labor unions are usually wrong because they infringe upon the blessing of God (profits) in a company's operation. These profits have been given to management as a "trust" (Carnegie) to be disposed of as management sees fit.
4. Flirtation with welfare involves two serious mistakes. First it destroys the individual's initiative by reinforcing irresponsible tendencies. In other words we might create a state in which they never had it so good. Therefore we must force them to work sweeping streets, shovelling snow and the like. "He who does not work shall not eat". Another problem with welfare obtains from its Communist leanings (if not red, it certainly is pink!). It destroys my freedom to exploit and raises my taxes. The problem with a more equitable medical plan for all means that the rich would pay for the poor. Unthinkable!

We have drifted far from the attitude of our Lord and the words of James, "Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation." We have returned to a stratified society in which the rich will have no concourse with the poor. Confused by our own emphasis upon individualism, we can provide no answers for these social ills. The incongruity of a society which assents to paying a superstar \$100,000 for some athletic endeavor, but complains because a war on poverty might increase my taxes a few dollars per annum testifies to our lack of insight and concern. Besides, the Evangelical Church has "come out from among them" to be a purified people. Lets face it, if we have problems talking to someone with bad breath, we certainly won't get close to someone who bathes infrequently. In addition the poor tend to be so evil. They often are alcoholics and may be even living common law. When

I mentioned some of these problems that I had confronted in social work to a leading Evangelical business man, he merely shrugged his shoulders and glibly said "That is why I am becoming a Calvinist". Of course, this is simply evasion of the problem. The poor have been suspicious of the Church for years and with good reason. Confronting the poor on a one-to-one basis in hopeless oversimplification. What would I suggest? I purport to give no easy solutions. The church must recognize Christ's compassion for the poor, and emulate it. The voice of the inner city calls to suburbia. In the words of a powerful folk song "Blowing in the Wind", "How many ears must one man have, before he can hear people cry?" If the love of Christ cannot constrain us into action; if racial riots cannot spur us into action, what shall we say?

by Beldon Lane

He stood with beads of sweat on his neck
the opinion of the court
the court of the Land
the supreme court
was read

He fingered the hardwood rail as he stood
the words of the justice
the chief justice
justice mr. brown
rang out

He wished he could thin his lips and straighten his hair
the law of the Land
the Land of the free
america
took form

"Equal but separate, Mr. Plessey,
that's all we can say.
Times are hard, but they'll change;
understanding has a way.
Laws can't change men;
it's there that they lack
And it just can't be helped
that you're one-eighth black.
Now go home, Mr. Plessey,
be the best that you can,
Be patient, be honest,
be good to all men.
Though for now you must ride
in the car in the rear,
You're separate, but Equal:
of this never fear."

(continued)

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BELDON LANE graduated from Florida State University in 1966 with a B. A. in Humanities. He is presently a middler at Fuller Seminary, and is working in the Brown Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church in Pasadena.

He lowered his eyes as his arms hung still
the eyes of his child
the questioning eyes
the searching eyes
looked up

He smiled with his lips but cursed in his mind
the lies he must tell
lies to his child
lies to protect
lies to be lived

He turned away and led her out
he spoke to her softly
softly of love
softly of freedom
softly of peace

* Supreme Court ruling 163 U. S. 537 was made in 1896 in settlement of the case of Plessey v. Ferguson. Plessey, who was seven-eighths Caucasian and one-eighth Negro, had been arrested in Louisiana for violating a state law providing "equal but separate" accomadations. He had refused to leave a railroad car posted "for whites only". The court ruled that separateness did not imply inequality and that Plessey must ride in the car designated for Negroes.

In 1954 the Supreme Court was to reverse this decision in the case of Linda Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka.

RELATIONSHIP IS ACTION

by Carol Reiss

We have seen the racial and social upheaval in our nation grow from a tiny beginning in one city to monstrous explosions throughout major cities. In 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Mrs. Parks refused to "get up and let a white man have her seat" on a bus.¹ And in the summer of 1967, we witnessed racial violence that swept from Newark to Minneapolis. President Johnson, in his television and radio address on "Law and Order in America," July 27, 1967, claimed: "There is a danger that the worst toll of this tragedy will be counted in the hearts of Americans: in hatred, in insecurity, in fear, in heated words which will not end the conflict, but prolong it."²

The situation demands that Christians who once were blind may see; and seeing, that they may act in love.

Action is needed to bring peace to individuals who feel the burden of alienation and oppression. It is needed to bring peace to our nation, torn by hatred and bitterness born of lack of love.

But the problem reaches also around the world, where other nations look and ask, "Is that Christianity?" John T. Seamands, missionary traveler through the Far East, Southeast Asia, Africa, and India, has stated, "There is nothing that has hindered the Christian message abroad so much as our un-Christian attitudes and actions on the race question."³

The government is working on the problem with a multitude of varied programs to help the disadvantaged. But the government cannot do the unique task of the Church. Billy Graham, in the July, 1967 issue of Decision wrote: "Government can do great

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1. Louis E. Lomax, The Negro Revolt, p. 92
 2. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, XXV (August 4, 1967), p. 1375.
 3. John T. Seamands, The Supreme Task of the Church, p. 95.

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CAROL REISS is completing her final year in the M. R. E. program at Fuller Seminary, after having pursued a program in the field of Christian Education at the Pacific School of Religion.

and mighty things, but people realize that it is impersonal. Here is where the church comes in with its social concern, with compassion, with the love of Christ, to do its work in the name of Christ."⁴

Closing the gap between Negro and white Americans takes place at two levels - the personal level and the societal level.⁵ Let us look at opportunities on the personal level, for this is open to all of us.

"On the personal level, the problem is one of shifting from the role of social inferior to that of social equal."⁶ It is a recognized psychological fact that "we learn who we are and what we are like largely by carefully observing how other people react to us."⁷ The Negro has learned that "the mere color of his skin puts him into a...socially-defined inferior category."⁸ In fact, this knowledge begins at the age of three and develops "to the point of absolute stability at the age of seven."⁹

When I said, "God loves you" to my first class of Negro juniors, one fourth grade boy asked, "Then why did He make us black?"

And when the Youth group studied Ephesians 2:14-18 and read: "...who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility...that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two..." (RSV), they began listing the separated groups - Jew and Gentile, labor and management, rich and poor, white collar workers and blue collar workers, black and white. And they asked, "Why isn't it true?"

If the church has the proper understanding of the Christian doctrines of man, Christ, and God; then we have not applied

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4. Billy Graham, "Communicating the Gospel," Decision, VIII (July, 1967), p. 15.
 5. Thomas F. Pettigrew, A Profile of the Negro American, p. 177
 6. Ibid.
 7. Ibid., p. 6
 8. Ibid.
 9. Kenneth B. Clark and Mamie P. Clark, "Emotional Factors in Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children", cited by Martin M. Grossack (ed.), Mental Health and Segregation, p. 53.

these Christian insights and convictions in everyday living. Benjamin Mays asserts that "the love of God and the love of man is one love...When Jesus combined, in deeds as well as in words, the two great commandments of the Old Testament - the love of man for God and the love of man for his brother... these two commandments became inseparable."¹⁰

10. Benjamin E. Mays, Seeking to be Christian in Race Relations, pp. 26-27.

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the opinion is published the first Wednesday of each month throughout the school year by students at Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 North Oakland Avenue, Pasadena, California. the opinion welcomes a variety of opinions consistent with general academic standards. Therefore, opinions expressed in articles and letters are those of the authors and are not to be construed as the view of the seminary, faculty, student council, or editors of the opinion.

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