

Table Talk

News and Views of the Students Body of The Lutheran
Theological Seminary at Gettysburg.

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TRUE OR FALSE

BLACK POWER/WHITE RACISM

or

To whom it may concern:

The true and false test does not yield clear answers to every problem. If we hold this as fact, we must go further in our search for answers to our problems. For instance, can you answer these statements with True or False?

1) I pay (or others pay for me) \$100 per quarter tuition at Gettysburg Seminary. Therefore, the members of the faculty should produce what I want them to produce.

2) Harry Schmucker puts \$100 per year into church offerings. Therefore, Pastor McHenry should produce what Harry wants him to produce. (This church is also on mission aid)

If you can answer these statements True or False, then I suggest your abilities go far beyond my mortal powers.

May I suggest that at this professional institution (or whatever type of institution it may be) we are answering too many questions True or False. Many of us have been acting like layman Schmucker and only considering what we see as fact. Shouldn't layman S. find out what his fellow laymen want Pastor McHenry to do or be? I am only guessing, but I think he would receive views which are different or only appear to be different from his own. Have others asked Pastor M. how he sees his role and shared with him their views? Don't

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In response to the article submitted by J. R. Hale, I should like to share some observations and opinions.

1. Does the black middle class no longer immitate the white establishment in order to gain "an increasing level of prosperity?" - this to their degredation. History has shown that the black middle class has attempted to deny its past - history including three hundred years of slavery which until recently has wiped out the black man's African heritage and recognition of his many contributions to the world and particularly to the United States. It would seem that some men consider self respect and a positive identity rooted in the fact of history to be more important than money (typical value of all middle classes) which still cannot buy a home in any neighborhood which they might select. Nor will money guarantee their children equal opportunity for education and job placement and advancement. Yet it must be recognized that many black people so romanticize their history that facts are distorted and thereby lose their effectiveness.

Hudschiner's use of "increasing level of prosperity" is misleading. I quote from the Manpower Report to the President written by the U. S. Department of Labor and presented to the president in March 1964:

"The notable advances in Negro civil rights, education, occupational distribution, housing and earnings have led to a widespread assumption that the economic gap between them and the white population of the country is

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True or False (con't.)

these people realize that Pastor M. receives a great part (if not a greater part) of his salary from mission aid? Or, have these people ever thought that Pastor M. is a person and not merely a "broom" hired at a set salary?

I think too many of us have been very much like the "bad" congregations we so often laugh about. Most of us have come here with a goal in mind. Sometimes I find myself slipping or floundering in relation to that goal. Sometimes I have to reappraise the entire situation. I imagine the members of the faculty sometimes find themselves in the same situation. After all, they are people. In fact, most of them are much older than their students. They have set values which may need a looking into. I know I have some. I'd much rather see us sharing in our adjustments than fighting battles or "new vs. old", faculty vs. students, True vs. False. I'd much rather see us helping one another with this challenge face to face than hiding behind the facades of "institution", "administration", "class unity", etc. We are people. We aren't or don't want to be in the future merely "brooms" hired at a set salary.

Paul Xander

Black Power/White Racism (con't.)

consistently narrowing... Instead of catching up, the average hourly earnings of the nonwhite is falling farther behind that of the white worker. The ninety cents an hour difference between the white and nonwhite male worker jumped in a decade to a difference of \$1.45 per hour.

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Black Power/White Racism (con't.)

Commenting in July 1964 that the average earnings of the nonwhite worker is about half that of white workers, W. Willard Wirtz, then Secretary of Labor, said: "There is a continuing lag, and it is getting worse." I suggest that these facts show that the black middle class is truly being "sacrificed" only in a real way and not in the naive, novel-like imagenings of Huldshiner.

2. The writer of the article says that racism is "not tied to the color of the skin but to the closedness of the mind." Yes, I agree that minds certainly are closed among the white establishment men and the people who elect them to their positions. Is there no relationship between their "closedness of the mind" and the fact that black people categorically are most discriminated against. The Kerner Commission writes in its fourth chapter about the causes of civil disorders in cities:

"Of these (causes), the most fundamental is the racial attitudes and behavior of white Americans toward black Americans.

-Race prejudice has shaped our history decisively; it now threatens to affect our future.

-White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II. At the base of this mixture are three of the most bitter fruits of white racial attitudes: Pervasive, discrimination and segregation in employment, education and housing have resulted in the continuing exclusion of great numbers of Negroes from the benefits of economic progress. Black in-migration and white exodus have produced the massive and growing concentrations of impoverished Negroes in our major cities, creating a growing crisis of deteriorating facilities and services and un-met human needs. In the black
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Black Power/White Racism (con't.)

ghettos segregation and poverty converge on the young to destroy opportunity and enforce failure. Crime, drug addiction, dependency on welfare, and bitterness and resentment against society in general and white society in particular are the result.

3. Hudschiner continues: "The black revolutionary has his contribution to make if the options are kept open." It seems as though he is really stating that the black man can contribute only in and through the options as defined and controlled by the white society. The white society thereby retaining the power.

4. Specificity is needed. This is not to say that the demand for specificity has not already been met; e.g., the detailed documents presented to congress during the Poor People's Campaign. In most cases specificity has not produced change. Yet it must be agreed that change is more probable from a detailed request. But is the demand for specificity not part of the white mind pattern? It seems to me that congress knows the needs of the country as city governments know what their cities need, if they could free themselves from political machinery. Continued rejection has led many blacks to believe that the system cannot change primarily because it does not want to; hence, the cry of the separatists. Yet as black people that is their business. I suggest that for whites to dissipate their energy writing about what black separatists are doing and saying is to avoid dealing with the real problem: white racism. The power lies in the hands of the white community. It is the white community that must change before any progress can be made to unite the society.

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Black Power/White Racism (con't.)

5. Blackness is a qualification in the sense that it should not disqualify the black from "leadership, executive positions, admission to college or entrance to seminary." Is it not essential for all educational institutions to compensate for present circumstances by instituting curricular changes so that the black man who has been denied an equal opportunity for a good education can "make up" his loss and "catch up" with his white counterpart in order to participate in the formulation of a society in which all shall be free.

6. Hulschiner is more than kind by stating that the white middle class has shown amazing ability "to accomodate new groups" into their society. I refer Hulschiner to chapter 9 of the Kerner Commission's report which discusses the Negroes experience with European immigrants. "The structure of discrimination has stringently narrowed opportunities for the Negro and restricted his prospects. European immigrants suffered from discrimination, but never so pervasively... Above all, segregation denied Negroes access to good jobs and the opportunity to leave the ghetto. For them the future seemed to lead only to a dead end."

Silberman in Crisis In Black and White describes how the white American rationalized his making slaves of Africans by hypothesizing that black men were inherently inferior. Black men were good for nothing but the menial work in the cotton field. These slaves were black. The white people of America have never been able to break out of this past defense mechanism. The white middle class has not accomodated (in the best sense of the term) the black man because of his skin color.

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7. I agree that churches are preoccupied with race issues but primarily because they are threatened and frightened by something being set loose over which they have no control. How many of our churches are realistically, factually and honestly dealing with the problems which confront the black man, the city, and themselves in the context of racial discrimination?

8. I am most offended by Huld-schiner's statement: "The Lutheran Church is one of the options... But it is nowhere written that it must be something it is not in order to be acceptable to those who might join it if it were not what it is." To be sure the Lutheran Church is at least one of the options open (hopefully) to all of the world. We, the church, are commended to love. Through the Gospel we are freed to do whatever must be done to accomplish God's will. This can be done by pointing to the possibilities of the future in the context of the unity and yet great diversity of the Church's Tradition. Are we not called to be that which we cannot become and yet already are?

If the "values, establishments, and traditions" of the white middle class, which I assume that Huld-schiner equates with the Lutheran Church at this point, "are not much to be proud of" then to improve the situation requires change. It requires a realistic look at our past and an examination of the present, empowered by the Gospel to escape our emotionally controlled, introverted selves, so that we can create a society where we are no longer alienated blacks from whites but as common citizens of the universe.

T. Myers