

REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERRACIAL MEETING

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At the general session of the I.S.O. convention having to do with race relations I sat well to the rear, scanned the many intelligent heads in front of me, and listened to the spoken words of wisdom. Thoughts went through my mind.

Chief among them was the unavoidable impression that emotional thinking charged the atmosphere. Such thinking (or lack of thinking) is the habit of the average white American when discussing race relations. It should be different with Jesuits! Those who did speak the truth seemed timid and afraid and nervous as though the simple truth about one of our most important social problems was an atomic bomb whose force was likely to do more harm than good. When sheer nonsense was spoken the speaker was not at all timid, but cock-sure apparently that his nonsense was wisdom.

We must discipline ourselves to take an objective view and have a rational approach to this question of race relations based not on foolish emotions and inhibitions as with the average white American, but upon solid and unassailable scientific and theological fact. I would have liked to have voiced this criticism and to have aired a few other thoughts at this general meeting itself, but time did not permit, so I am sending these impressions to the BULLETIN.

One of the speakers, apparently feeling that in his remarks he was on the most solid of solid ground, boldly and without any apologies (another who enuniated obvious truths was rather apologetic speaking of being on "ticklish ground") frowned upon miacegenation, seemed apprehensive about inter-marriage, condemned interracial social mingling, and lamented the fact of mulattoes as though a mulatto was an evil tragedy and not a most exalted work of God. Blessed Martin de Porres was and is a mulatto awaiting the glorious resurrection of his "mixed" blood. This speaker's remarks contributed much to the unscien-

tific and untheological atmosphere of the meeting. His thinking seemed like that of the average emotional and misinformed or prejudiced American.

One of the warlied inaccuracies I ever heard about the Negro is the untruth that he emits a disagreeable odor unlike white people. Similar to the old die-hard, "the end justifies the means", this false idea goes merrily on its way and was seriously discussed at the meeting to misinform and add to the ignorance of the many men who had traveled hundreds of miles to learn something. Any dirty people smell and there is no choice in the disagreeable odor emitted by any dirty people of whatever race. If the segregation of any Catholics is to be justified because they are dirty and smell, then the same justification and policy should apply to all Catholics, irrespective of race, who are dirty and smell. For us which should be more important, the odor of perspiration on the body or the perfume of grace in the soul? Equitable race relations can be established only in the light of grace about which I heard nothing said at this meeting.

But to come back to miscegenation! The term commonly means interbreeding between Negro and white. In a wider sense it means interbreeding between any so-called races of whatever kind. As Jesuits we should always keep in mind that both Anthropology and the Church teach that there is only one human race all the members of which are descended from Adam. In view of this fact it is difficult to see how miscegenation is possible!

At best all that can be meant by "race" is geographic, cultural, and national background accompanied by the accidental physical characteristics which these give rise to. All present-day human beings are the product of miscegenation if we accept "race" in this only possible sense. Every present-day race and nationality, and the individual members thereof, are the product of miscegenation. The Anglo-Saxon, Chinese,

European, African, Russian, South American, Japanese, and American are all mongrels if we are to admit a variety of human races in the only sense in which such a variety can be admitted. In this same sense, if a malarial fever is the product of miscegenation, we are all mulattoes.

In the only sense in which it makes sense miscengenation has been going on since the time of Adam and will continue in spite of Bilbe until the crack of doom. Apparently it is natural and in keeping with divine plan.

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Today one of the greatest incubators of this/so-called miscagenation is the southern part of the United States where it is a common saying of the Negro that you white people deny us social equality by day but grant it by night.

Anthropologists seem agreed that the product of this miscegenation is superior biologically to either of the parent stock. It is inbreeding that causes a people to deteriorate. My Jesuit teacher of natural theology at Mount Saint Michael taught that that is why in human nature there is a strong sexual impulse attracting people to members of other so-called races. If all this is true then why lament and bewail the existence of mulattoes as though it were a terrible evil and tragedy.

Many seem agreed that the ultimate solution of our American race problem will come through natural miscagenation as has happened in similar cases throughout the ages in all parts of the world. If so wouldn't more miscagenation of a legitimate kind be better than less? or do we really want this problem to be solved? It is jeopardizing the salvation of millions! If we cannot encourage its natural solution through miscegenation we at least shouldn't get all worried and unreasonably excited about it as though it were a terrible evil.

That is one reason, scientific or theological, and not based merely on social convention and prevalent prejudice which are wrong,

fer frowning on miscegenation! Nature doesn't frown on it. God, the Author of nature and the natural law doesn't frown on it. The Church goes so far as to sacramentally bless it. Who are we with our little emotional thinkers, which we call our minds, to stand up and in a cock-sure ganner condemn miscegenation!

The Jesuits should more anxiously frown upon and worry about marriages involving mixed religion than mixed race. Such are forbidden by the Church. Yet how many of us without a qualm seek a dispensation and assist at such marriages, which even then the Church will not allow us to bless, whereas we would some of us raise our hands in holy horror if we were asked to solemnize a marriage between two members of the damned Alsata, one black and the other white. Nearly every day socially prominent and wealthy Catholic parents with the cooperation of their pastors allow their daughters to marry unbaptized and even irreligious men who are not heirs to heaven nor fit to be fathers of Catholic children, but would gasp in dismay if one of their daughters were even to hint at marrying a black man who as a Catholic is crowned prince to God's very throne. Should the standards of an unbelieving world govern our attitude in this matter, or should we be governed by the standards of our faith? Our Rule tells us that we should despise the things that the world seeks and loves, and desire and love what the world despises.

These who condemn miscegenation condemn social intermingling between the so-called races. They fear that such intermingling will lead to the ultimate in social recognition, namely inter-marriage. In Holy Communion God grants a social recognition to His child, irrespective of race, more intimate than the social union between husband and wife. And God's criterion for social recognition is infinitely more exacting than that of the greatest earthly potentate. Yet His only criterion is that the individual be in the state of grace and

a member of the mystical Body of His Son because this gives him a dignity and excellence greater than that conferred by wealth or social position. Is it not laughable for us to withhold our miserable little social recognition and the accompanying amenities from one to whom the God of infinite majesty and splendor grants it to the extreme even of a most intimate union in the Sacrament of His love? May this not explain why in countries of a truly Catholic faith and culture we find the least social discrimination on the score of race and the most miscegenation of a legitimate nature?

To conclude these reflections, I remember how personally delighted I was a few years ago when I thought I had discovered some Negro blood-relatives in Detroit by the name of Markoe. I proved with certainty that they were descendants of former Markeo family slaves (which I admit with shame the family used to own unjustly) and I regretted that I could not prove the probable fact that they were legitimate blood-relatives. I didn't dare hope for what would have pleased and tickled me much more, namely that in my own veins was some of their Negro blood. Suppose I could have proved this last point, would it have meant that I was any less a man, less a Catholic, less a Jesuit, or any less an heir to heaven? Would my fellow-Jesuits have no longer dined with me? The fact of the matter is that millions of Americans have Negro blood in their veins without even knowing it. Why should our thinking on this subject be like that of little ignorant children simply because that is the vogue among American white people in general? I am not advising that we imprudently and publicly encourage miscegenation. I am simply urging that as Jesuits we get rid of our childish, emotional, and irrational thinking and feeling on the subject and keep our feet on the solid ground of scientific fact and faith. We should consider it poor form to express emotional apprehension about miscegenation before a supposedly intelligent Jesuit audience.

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Let us make our future I.S.O. meetings concerning race relations more intelligent, practical, and profitable!