

Mrs. Robert M. Bogdasarian

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Dear Archbishop Calfayan,

Enclosed is a copy of a talk I gave to the Sunday School on Sept 29th. The subject is one on which I feel quite strongly that all churches, including our own, should take a stand. It is only fair to say, however, that one or two people objected - and said that no integration should take place & that all colored people should be kept in their place.

I hope that you will be

able to take some action
in this matter so that foreign
countries will not continue
to have such a bad impression
of America.

Sincerely

Carl Bogdasarian

September 28, 1957

The integration problems currently at hand in Little Rock are but the visible portion of a nasty situation that has existed in this country since the Civil War, and perhaps even before that. We are reaping the rewards of our failures and mistakes at that time. We will, in the future reap further such rewards, if proper leadership and handling of this situation does not develop -- and soon.

The President's use of force in the case at this time is valuable to a certain extent to show the world as well as our own people that the laws of this land and the principles of our Constitution are to be upheld. However, all the force in the world will not correct the situation permanently, for the situation arises in the minds and hearts of people. Force can make them accept the situation for as long as the force is continued, but it cannot make them like it, nor can it make them accept the basic moral precepts that lie behind the law and its enforcement. It is doubtful if the use of force can make the bigoted public continue the integration proceedings justly and fairly once the national forces have been withdrawn.

What is needed is a change in the attitude of this section of the public, and perhaps, additionally, in the attitude of the colored people who are struggling with integration procedures. This change can be accomplished in two ways. One is through the leadership of the Churches of the country; the other is by the force of public opinion expressed through the media of communication, such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television - and through personal conversations.

Any Church which does not immediately take up this challenge to Christian principles - indeed to the most basic and simple humanitarian principles, can consider that it has failed. Any minister who does not face up to the fact that this problem reflects directly on the Christian teachings or lack of them in our churches, had better re-examine his conscience to see whether he is truly fitted to be a minister. Although the separation of Church and State is clearly stated in our Constitution, yet just as clearly our nation was founded upon Christian principles and its founders looked to God for succor and maintenance. "One nation, under God..."

When one segment of the population attempts to set aside this dependence of our national laws on Divine Law, or, if you like simply humanitarian ethical concepts, it is time for the Churches to reassert the essential interdependence.

It should be pointed out again and again that all mankind, all races are God's Creation, and, as such, enjoy equality before Him, and before each other. It should be pointed out that every species or type of plant or animal shows the greatest variation in size, shape and coloration, but that rarely if ever does any group show hostility toward another group of the same species on account of these unimportant differences. The Chihuahua and the Saint Bernard do not dislike each other automatically. This has been left to Homo Sapiens - adult branch. Which one of you would plant a garden containing only white flowers? God apparently enjoys variety, too - He made enough of it.

It should be pointed out that both of the main religions in America - The Christian and the Jewish are based upon respect for human personality and respect for God. The Jew relies upon the knowledge and practice of the will of God through the observance of the Mosaic Law to win salvation. The Christian religion is based more specifically upon Love. Love of God and Love of neighbor. If the Churches fail to point out the necessity of love and charity and mutual respect in human relations, they are failing in their main duty. The entire body of Christian teaching is very clear and specific on this point. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" - "Love casteth out Fear" and so on. Perhaps, in this situation,

this 'Love' should be clearly defined. It is not the love of man for woman, or even the love that exists within a family. Rather it is a feeling of charity, tolerance and mutual respect. It goes beyond live and let live - it is perhaps "live and help." ~~It does not imply~~ It does not imply an intimate relationship, only a courteous, kind and helpful one, such as might be extended or should be extended to any stranger of one's own color, class or belief.

Of course, this idea has not ever been perfectly carried out, even in small groups such as the one here present - or within the limits of this city. But the Little Rock troubles are a flaming cross that illumines our wide-spread spiritual lack in a new light, and at the same time furnishes us, as a Nation, a starting point for our much needed spiritual discipline. From this starting point, the nation's Churches must lead the way.

Besides the efforts on the part of the churches, further efforts are called for from the more materialistic or practical side of our society. And this for several reasons. Firstly, shame has been heaped upon us before all the world. Secondly, our international relationships have been jeopardized. I think we sometimes fail to realize that we are among the few countries where discrimination on account of color is carried to such an extent. I cannot think of another country in this hemisphere that has this reaction. South Africa is the only other flagrant example that comes to mind at the moment. There are, of course, other discriminations being practised because of creed, as in India and Pakistan, the late German Reich, and some others, and the political persecutions of Hungary, Poland and Russia and China, and various religious persecutions everywhere. But this nation is one which has supported strong measures in the United Nations to attempt to put an end to these various discriminations. Double, then, is our shame, and double the glee with which our potential enemies see our discomfiture. Our dirty linen has been hung out for all the world to see - and the best thing for us to do is to get busy and wash it, as soon as possible and as white as possible. It will be necessary for the main body of public of the United States to repudiate the actions of this loud minority and do it publicly, for us to regain part of what we have lost. This is not simply a matter of spiritual comfort to us. This contempt in which we are held may well have the most adverse effects on our military and economic programs, and on the current 'Cold War'. We are attempting to win friends all over the world - in countries where dark skins or yellow skins are the rule and not the exception. These people will certainly be less ready to accept our economic aid, to release bases for our use, or to form alliances with our country, knowing that we have held a race similar perhaps to theirs in this light; where we have denied their human rights to education, advancement and the pursuit of happiness. They will repay contempt with contempt, treachery with treachery. We have hurt ourselves immensely.

Most of you will have a clear recollection of the waves of propaganda that were generated by Herr Himmler during the second World War. You are aware that propaganda such as the Voice of America is being, or perhaps I should say, was being used to great advantage in the present Cold War. Propaganda has been used for years by our national politicians who can make or break even a national figure or program by its uses. Our national advertizers, such as General Motors, Revlon, Lucky Strike, Piel's Beer - to name but a few, create desires and modes of thought by propaganda's subtle methods. They have done this, almost always, for limited gains - power, money and so forth. How much better if these propaganda geniuses could turn to the correction of this grave national problem. I'll bet you that they could have the entire country believing that they never thought of such hideous activities inside of a month - and what's more, acting in conformity with this new attitude. And what an elevating

change it would be for them - the advertisers and the agencies - to work on a program for the common good, as a public service, instead of, as usually happens, working for the sales of something of doubtful value or benefit, or the elevation of a particular party or personage to power.

Not all of the segregationists can be reached or converted by such methods, of course. But enough can be reached, and enough aroused public opinion aired, to show the world, and incidentally, the negro people that all Americans do not condone such activities as the Klu Klux Klan and agitators from outside the involved community, spitting in colored children's faces, burning their homes and killing colored adults, any more than we condone the crimes of colored people.

One of the worst things about the whole mess is the fact that so many of the Southern children and tee-agers are embroiled in this fight. Children are the most idealistic, unprejudiced and justice-loving group going, when left to themselves. It is generally the adults who are all for the status-quo, for the segregation, the false security that such practices give. Children are usually willing to depart from conventions and the conservative - and generally speaking, in the direction of more justice - more freedom. To see this group being used by their parents, being put in the shameful position of mistreating others of their own age without first giving them a chance to prove themselves, it is one of the worst aspects of the whole case. Parents who would use their own children thus, who would deliberately prejudice their own children and bigot them, are beneath contempt. The weight of public opinion must be brought into action where these children can see the other viewpoint, where the facts of the case can be presented to them so that they will have a chance to form a more unbiased judgement.

Now, then, what can we do about it? First of all, we must realize that vocal public opinion on the side of justice is an immediate necessity. This is not a problem confined to the deep south. It has cropped up as near to us as Levittown, Pa. We have had people speak in favor of segregation in our own community. And we must remember not to condemn the entire South out of hand. Many communities have adopted integration practices quietly and successfully. It can be done by people of good will. We must all discuss our views with relatives, friends and persons of public influence. We should write to the President directly, asking his leadership on the spiritual aspect of this matter, as well as the political. We should write our Congressmen and our State Legislators. The Congressmen should be asked to introduce resolutions condemning the interference with the Federal Law, and more particularly, condemning the inhuman and UnChristian practices being carried out. We should flood the newspapers with letters to the Editor, expressing our shame and outrage - which we will bear as well as those who have actually done the deeds. We should write letters to our favorite magazines and also to our radio and TV stations asking them to take editorial stands on the subject - and not just wait and seeones either. We should write to the larger papers like the Times and Tribune who have world-wide distribution, so that all the world can know our feelings on the matter. We should write our friends and relatives and ask them to express themselves, too. We should encourage our various clubs and other organizations to pass resolutions condemning race violence and unChristian practices. We, here, we few can do a great deal if we will overcome our laziness and fear of looking ridiculous in writing about great national problems. Every citizen has the right, indeed the obligation, to express his opinion on National matters especially in cases like this when the conduct of the affair reflects directly on each of us - so let your voice be heard!

Carol Bogdasarian