

--What About Inter-marriage?--

One of my responsibilities as a minister is to officiate at weddings. And this can be a rather simple matter insofar as the Unitarian fellowship, in common with numerous religious bodies, places no restrictions upon the individual minister in the performance of such a service. As long as a couple have legal authorization to be married, I can marry them, ~~whichever~~ irrespective of whether they are rich or poor, tall or short, learned or ignorant, blonde or brunette, ~~black~~ or white, Jew or Gentile, divorced or first time married, baptized or not baptized. But ~~xxxx~~ ^{although} the matter can be simple, it ~~xxxx~~ is never without an element of personal concern. For one does not unite two individuals in marriage in a purely impersonal and mechanical fashion. One also wonders, along with the relatives and friends, whether the couple are well-suited to each other, and whether they have enough fundamental regard for each other so as to overcome the numerous problems and difficulties that are involved in any marriage. Even with all factors favorable, marriage is never a wholly smooth affair and the molehills of disagreement can sometimes ~~be~~ ~~turn~~ into mountains of conflict and dissension. And concern about the success of a marriage tends to heighten when there are pronounced differences between the individuals. Can the differences be resolved or can they be lived with in a mutually friendly fashion, or will they prove to be a major source of conflict and push the marriage onto the rocks? The area in which such concern perhaps reaches its highest point, within our particular culture, is that of mixed marriages. What about the marriage of individuals who belong to distinctive ethnic groups? Would you advise a Negro and a white to marry? And what about the marriage of individuals who have different religious persuasions? Would you advise a non-Catholic and a Catholic to marry? These are difficult questions, as anyone who has ever had to wreathe with them in any form, well knows. ^{cut} They allow for no single clear answer of either yes or no, because numerous factors enter into marriage, and the combination is always somewhat unique in each particular case. I have performed a good number of mixed marriages, and some I know have worked out with a considerable amount of happiness and success. On the other hand, the statistics of divorce are ample proof that marriages uncomplicated by differences of color and

religious conviction are not always successful and happy. No one therefore is justified in giving categorical advice that a particular ^{mixed} marriage will result in either success or failure. The most that one can perhaps rightfully do is to mention some of the facts that are rather well established and to indicate some of the problems and difficulties that may very likely be encountered and to dispel some of the illusions that initial romance may ~~weave~~ weave.

First of all the right of a person to choose his mate freely without outside interference would appear to be a fundamental right within a democratic society. A forced restriction of marriage within class, caste and nationality lines is something that smacks of authoritarian control and does violence to individual choice and feeling in an area where such choice and feeling are of paramount importance. Thus, there is a rather strong tradition within American society which has not only upheld but also applauded a love which cuts across class and nationality lines. The Cinderella theme and the Abie's Irish Rose theme have long been staples of American fiction, movies, and newspaper accounts and they have almost invariably been given sympathetic treatment in favor of the individual's right to their love and marriage. Moreover the right has been given a considerable amount of concrete underpinning by various factors operating in American society. The sheer mobility of the American population has made for a great increase in the number of contacts; the concentration of populations in cities and larger towns has made for a considerable amount of social mixing; the increased number of women working and earning has widened the range of possibility and choice in marriage; and industry has brought all kinds of people together, and education has not only made for social mixing but it has enabled a climb up the economic and cultural ladder. All these, coupled with generalized doctrines about the brotherhood of man and equality of rights regardless of color, creed or national origin, have steadily been breaking through the old patterns of separation and prejudice and have been making for an increase in the amount of intermarriage. As a result there are many marriages today that once might have been looked at askance in some quarters, but which now are commonplace and readily accepted. Thus the boss may marry his secretary

with no particular uproar except that of congratulations, and a Harvard graduate from Podunk whose father worked in the factory may marry a banker's daughter, and the children of Anglo-saxon descent may marry those of Italian, Polish French, German, or Russian descent. The antagonism that once existed against some types of nationality intermarriage, ~~the~~ Irish and Italian~~s~~ for example, has largely been dissipated and the second and third generations have given less and less attention to marriage within nationality lines. And the public by and large has little concern about this kind of intermarriage.

When it comes to what is loosely but commonly referred to as racial intermarriage, the situation is a good deal more complex and is still loaded with some very real difficulties. On the one hand we have always had a certain amount of racial intermarriage in the United States, although it has been minor in degree compared to the amount of racial mixture that has taken place outside of the marriage relationship. But from the very beginning there was some intermarriage between whites and Indians and Negroes, and this coupled with the much greater amount of added racial mixture, has left us a very mixed people indeed. Herskovits, for example, has estimated that about eight per cent of American Negroes have some white or Indian blood, or both. And the intermarriage and mixing still continues. In the United States it is ~~supported~~ ^{advanced} in some measure by the same factors that have made for greater ease and amount of marriage across economic and nationality lines. And beyond this internal development, there has been the additional factor, particularly within recent years, of many Americans traveling through out the world and getting married to such diverse peoples as Japanese, Eskimoes, and South American Indians. This is no difficult matter, as anyone knows who has spent some time among other peoples, and ^{as} has been amply demonstrated by the number of American servicemen who have married natives of almost every part of the world. Away from home one can rather quickly drop the home variety of racial prejudice and one may feel an affection for a person of different ethnic stock that is just as deep and sincere as it could be for anyone back home. As a matter of fact such differences as those of culture and shade of complexion may only add to the attraction and make the relationship all the more interesting. I have in mind

one friend, who when she finished college went off to South America and eventually married a native of Peru, who was a mixture of Indian and Spanish. At the time some who knew here were disparaging in their remarks about the marriage. But I visited with the couple and their son last summer and I found the husband to be neither a monstrosity nor a bum. He was no Greek god, but he was a better physical specimen than a good many white men I have seen. And far more important, he was a person of ~~xxxxx~~ culture and charm and of liberalism in his thinking. As for the boy, he was just about what anyone would expect to find in a normal healthy kid.

Along this line, there is a rather widespread notion that racial intermarriage and mixture is biologically harmful, producing offspring that are inferior to both parental stocks. This is a doctrine that is a rationalization for a policy of segregation and for occupational advantage and status superiority on the part of ~~xxx~~ whites, but it is without biological support. It is true that in a society in which racial mixture is taboo, and those who do mix are more likely to be the shiftless, or the neurotic, or the grossly sensual, that some of the offspring will not be an improvement over the parental stock. But this is no argument against racial intermarriage in itself being harmful, since the same result can and does occur among such parents when they breed within their own group. Moreover this is not just a matter of biological inheritance, it is also a matter of the kind of surroundings and guidance that the parents can provide for the offspring. Shiftless and neurotic parents, irrespective of whether they are white or a combination of some colors, are not likely to provide the best kind of guidance and atmosphere for the offspring, and it may very well be that some of the offspring from any such union will be social liabilities. And beyond this there is the larger social environment. If it is an environment in which the offspring of racial intermarriage are subject to contempt and discrimination, it is very likely that some of them will be made rebellious, aggressive, and treacherous, and that some of them will be no credit whatsoever to parents or society. But this is no indication that racial mixing by itself is harmful. It is only an indication that the state of society needs to be improved.

When a society, however, sanctions widespread intermarriage and when little if anything in the way of added handicaps are placed in the way of the offspring of such marriage, there is considerable evidence to support the conclusion that the offspring ~~mixtures~~ are likely to be a biological improvement upon the parent stocks and thereby can also become a very real social asset rather than a social liability. This is what we have come to know about the process of hybridization among other living things, where its tendency is to be a strengthener rather than a weakener of a strain. And the same appears to be the ~~same~~ result when the process operates among peoples. The children of the Maori-white marriages in New Zealand tend to combine the best features of both groups. And the descendants of the scrambled mixture of Polynesian, Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans, Puerto Ricans, and Europeans in the Hawaiian Islands have a higher fertility rate and are more robust than any separate group. Moreover, the mixture has reproduced some of the most handsome physical types, ~~the same as those found~~ with the result that instead of choosing one beauty queen there is usually a felt need of choosing a half dozen beauty queens who are representative of the various racial mixtures.

This is one side of the picture, and in such a place as Hawaii where it is pretty much the whole picture, there is little if anything in the way of a problem associated with the matter of racial intermarriage. Hawaii is probably the fullest and most successful example of what can be done in racial relations and racial intermarriage. Hawaii has never known a Ku Klux Klan or a Christian Front. It has never had a race riot. Men of all races address each other as "Master" and there is a basic respect for the worth of any man whether he be brown, yellow, or white. The one real threat to their development came from the white Americans when they began settling in the islands. They sought to impose policies of separation and discrimination that they had brought with them. And some undoubtedly still maintain a white superiority attitude. But such policies and attitudes were held at most by a very small minority group, and were resented by the great majority, and have been rather thoroughly repudiated by the younger generations of all races in Hawaii. Hawaiian boys and girls of the most varied racial and nationality backgrounds play and study and

dance and work together, and intermarriage between them is a common everyday occurrence without social stigma and with no social penalties placed upon the resulting off-spring.

Other countries have approximated in varying degree the attitude and outlook that are so prevalent in Hawaii. This is particularly true of Brazil and other Latin American countries, and it has likewise been true of the Soviet Union and of England and France. At the farthest extreme today is the Union of South Africa with its general policy of apartheid and its specific legislation which forbids the marriage of white with non-white. And somewhere in between these two extremes, but nearer the South African side of the picture than the Hawaiian, is the United States. Here we not only maintain a patchwork of prejudice and fallacious opinion about the whole subject of race, but in more than half of our states we have laws which prohibit the intermarriage of whites and Negroes and in some of these states the laws also forbid the intermarriage of whites and Mongolians and Indians of all types. Such legislation is ~~is~~ little more than a political gesture, satisfying to prejudiced white constituents who feel that there ought to be a law against race mixture. It prevents racial intermarriage in the southern and western states where such laws are mainly in force, but it does not prevent race mixture, which still goes on, and is forced in such states to be carried on in a wholly illicit racial relationship. The notion that legislation has appreciably stopped race mixture in this country is something like the notion that prohibition legislation would put a stop to drinking. In many instances those who have given vocal support to such legislation, have themselves contributed to the amount of race mixture. Such so-called "racial integrity" legislation should be wiped from the statute books. Not only is it even if it were theoretically valid, it largely futile, but still more it is hypocritical. At least those who are willing to assume the responsibilities of an above-board legal intermarriage relationship should have the right to do so.

But still we have such legislation, and more than that, in the states where there is no such legislation, there is still a varying range of feeling against racial intermarriage which may very well result in almost complete social ostracism for the couple involved. They may be ostracised not only the white group

but also by the other ethnic group. For it is common tendency among the members of any oppressed ~~xxxxxxx~~ group to view with some measure of suspicion anyone who can claim membership in the oppressing group and to consider as something of a traitor anyone who has seemingly gone over to the enemy. The result therefore is that those who enter into a racial intermarriage are almost invariably, within our present culture, pushed into a marginal position and into what can be a very lonely kind of existence.

Moreover, the children of such a marriage may very likely be made to suffer the burden of social ostracism. And this can be a severe emotional wrench to them and can result in grave personality disturbances. As mixed bloods and irrespective of the blend of the particular mixing, they will find themselves categorized as inferior and made to feel that they do not belong in the dominant group. At the same time, as mixed bloods, they cannot be fully accommodated members of the excluded racial group. For the children, this betwixt and between situation can be an even more painful and frustrating ~~xxxxxxxx~~ than it is for the parents, who at least have some adult understanding of what is happening and can try to compensate for it in some more or less rational and healthy fashion. Moreover the children are up against the problem of not only having to make some adjustment to the conflicting groups, in neither of which they can fully belong, but in making an adjustment to parents who personify ~~xxxx~~ the group conflict. The double heritage of such children, instead of being a double blessing, ~~xxxx~~ is very likely to be a division of loyalties and a source of confusion.

These, and all the many acts of segregation of and insult and rebuff that can and sometimes do enter into the racial intermarriage picture, are not in themselves sufficient to say that no couple should embark upon such a marriage. After all some couples have escaped from many of these possible consequences by leaving the country and taking up residence in some more ~~xxxx~~ racially congenial country such as Mexico or England or Hawaii. And some have found ~~some~~ protection in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of a large and mixed-population such as characterizes New York City. And others have fitted rather easily into small hamlets where a general atmosphere of tolerance and respect

has prevailed. I remember one Negro-white couple in my home town who were undoubtedly the objects of some curiosity, but who, as far as I know, were never treated with anything but respect and raised a family and lived out their lives in a very normal fashion. But such a solution is not available to everyone and not ^{always} so easily and fully attained. Therefore any two individuals who are contemplating racial intermarriage and are going to have to live with it on the American scene are well advised to look beyond their ~~initial~~ initial happiness in each other and their personal willingness to overcome personal differences of culture to the very possible consequences of strained relationships and even estrangement from parents and associates and social loneliness and ostracism for themselves and ~~the same~~ the same for their children with the added social weight of ~~being~~ the children having a very indeterminate ~~and~~ and very uncomplimentary position as half-breeds, with all the overtones of contempt that such a characterization still implies. The couple should well understand that all or any of these possibilities are very likely to add a considerable strain on the relationships ~~between~~ between themselves. Can they take them, and still be happy with each other? Can they be lonely, and still find sufficient compensating satisfactions for what they have done? Can they be more or less outcasts in a community and still build a ~~healthy~~ healthy family life? And beyond such considerations which should not be blinked, the couple should ~~realize~~ realize that the overcoming of the personal differences of culture between them is in itself a strain of adjustment that other couples starting from a ~~similar~~ somewhat similar cultural background do not have in the same degree. Even the cultural differences in the kind of food and how it is prepared, can be a cause of considerable friction. It is therefore highly advisable that other factors should be in their favor - relatively good health, both physical and mental, an ability to earn an income, and some maturity of understanding that can guard against gnawing bitterness and frustration. The final decision about getting married or not getting married should and must be made by the couple themselves. If both, knowing the possible cost, still think they can take it and still are convinced that they can make something worthwhile out of married life ~~together~~ and family life, then that

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as far as I can see is not only their choice but their right, and I can only wish them success. Beyond that, and without in any way wanting them to enter such a marriage as ~~xxxx~~ just deliberate martyrs for a cause, I can only believe that they are rendering a larger, even though unconscious service, to the country as a whole. For they make another break in the caste line of marriage, and that line must go if as a nation we are going to be able to sincerely say that we believe in a fair opportunity for all people in the pursuit of happiness. Marriage is considered an important part of happiness by many people, and if ~~xxxx~~ some believe they can attain the most happiness by marriage to those of different ethnic origin, then they should be given every fair chance to do so.

There is one other type of intermarriage that should be mentioned, and that is religious intermarriage. Such mixed marriages are on the increase today. In many of these the differences in religious outlook constitute no great ~~xxxxxxxx~~ conflict or irritation within the marriage. The partners may have only a nominal adherence to their respective churches and to their doctrines of these churches and even continuing as before with their own separate adherence they may live quite harmoniously without religious doctrine becoming an item of contention. Or ~~xxxxxxxx~~ the churches to which each of the partners formerly belonged may be so similar that either partner can rather easily transfer allegiance without any sense of sacrificing a fundamental position. Or the two partners may run into a snag about switching allegiance to the other's church, but out of the discussion they may ~~xxxxxxx~~ decide to ~~xxxx~~ join another church as a kind of compromise solution.

There are other situations however in which religious differences become a very real barrier to marriage, and if marriage does take place, may create a considerable ^{of} conflict between the marriage partners. There is Orthodox Judaism for example which does not allow mixed ^{religious} marriages at all. An orthodox Jew can only marry an outsider by one of two possible means; the Jew can become an apostate or the outsider can become religiously a Jew. Since Orthodox Judaism is a whole way of life, and a culture in itself, as well as a religious faith, the orthodox Jew is not likely at all to become an apostate, which for him would be a form of religious and social suicide. And on the other

ers ~~from~~ that followed when two Catholics are married. The ceremony usually cannot be held in the church before the altar. No banns are published. No nuptial mass is held. ~~There~~ ^{And} there is no blessing of the ring. ^{And} the conditions which are required for such a union are: 1) that the Catholic will be permitted and assured free exercise of his or her religion; 2) that all children born of the union, both boys and girls, will be brought up as Catholics; 3) that there will be no other form of marriage ceremony before or after; 4) that there will be obedience to the law of the Church in the prohibition of birth control and sterilization and divorce; and 5) that the Catholic promises to do "all that is possible to convert the non-Catholic."

The Roman Catholic Church does not exaggerate too much when it holds to the conviction that for a Catholic and a non-Catholic to live in a permanent state of matrimony is bound to make for an unstable marriage. For as Prof. John Kane, of the University of Notre Dame has frankly stated "differences may be glossed over and minimized in the courtship period, but they loom large in the intimate relationships of marriage. And some of the matters that may become serious ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ issues of irritation and conflict are the matter of birth control, the raising of any and all children as Catholics, the matter of parochial or public school, the degree and the manner in which the Catholic partner will do all that is possible to convert the non-Catholic, and the interpretation of current social and political events.

I have no argument with the right of the Catholic individual to remain a Catholic in marriage. But I have to have a considerable amount of disagreement ~~and~~ argument with the Roman Catholic Church which requires both the Catholic ^{without which the mixed marriage cannot take place} and the non-Catholic parties to sign the agreement, and makes the first condition of that agreement "that the Catholic party will be permitted and assured free exercise of his or her religion" and makes no condition that the non-Catholic party will likewise be permitted and assured free exercise of his or her religion. This on the face of it is a one-sided arrangement. And it is made completely lop-sided in the additional four conditions which implicitly at least deny to the non-Catholic the right to exercise his religious freedom. What about "that all children will be brought up Catholics?" Suppose the non-

Catholic partner who signed that agreement as much out of deep love for his or her wedding partner as out of any realization of what the conditions might eventually mean, is now sincerely convinced that for the children to be brought up Catholic and to be educated in the parochial schools is either inadequate or in many respects, a false and distorted picture of religion. Why should ~~he~~ ^{or she} ~~he~~ as a ~~xxxxx~~ ^{parent} of the children have the right to exercise his or her freedom of religion and to correct what he or she thinks is wrong, and to introduce other material. O^u take the prohibition about birth control? Suppose his religious views do not prohibit the use of birth control? Does he have a say in the matter? And what about the Catholic doing all that is possible to convert the non-Catholic? Does the non-Catholic have permission to do all possible to convert the Catholic?

Obviously the non-Catholic partner is not only being denied the right to exercise his religious freedom, but by implication his faith is held to be less worthy of respect than the faith of the Catholic partner which is advanced as the one true faith. This is scarcely a basis of equality in the relation of husband and wife, or a sound basis for the rearing and religious training of children.

In my opinion the Roman Catholic Church would do a great deal more for the stability and happiness of family life by eliminating this whole pre-nuptial agreement. Thereby Catholic and non-catholic in the mixed marriage could meet on a basis of equality, and could have a true meeting of minds and hearts on the matter of education of children and the numerous other matters that are of common interest and should be of shared concern. This would not only be fair to the non-Catholic, but likewise it would really be fair to Catholic partner in a mixed marriage. And it would introduce a democratic relationship into the marriage relationship where it most certainly should be.

Should a non-Catholic marry a Catholic? Well, that depends. Should a Jew marry a non-Jew? Well, that depends. Should a Negro marry a white? Well, that depends. but in all these instances, as in any case of planned marriage, it is always well to take a second long look.

ORDER OF SERVICE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1954, at 11 A.M.

Preludes: Christmas Pastorale Mendelssohn
March of the Three Kings Bizet

Hymn No. 46: Life Has Loveliness To Sell
(Dix) Sara Teasdale

Reading

Response

Aspiration

Organ Solo: In Dulce Jubilo J. S. Bach

Hymn No. 35: Bedeck Your Living With Good Hours
(Wer da Wonet) K. L. Patton

Offertory: Reverie in Notre Dame Boëllman

SERMON: "WHAT ABOUT INTERMARRIAGE?" Mr. Storm

Hymn No. 87: Man's Comradeship Is Very Wide
(Balerma) Florence Kiper

Closing Words

Postlude: Three Carols

Masters in This Hall
Greensleeves
Bring a Torch, Jeannette

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Organist: Ruth Schneewind Rye

ANNOUNCEMENTS

You are cordially invited to stay for the COFFEE HOUR after the service this morning. The Square Dance Group will be your hosts.

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SERMON SUBJECT: Sunday, January 2 - - - - -
"Do We Need A New Calendar?" Mr. Storm

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ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP: Sunday, Jan. 2, - - Topic:
"The Art of Working Together". Speaker: Henriette Saloshin, Associate Professor, School of Social Work, U. of M.

The subject discussed this morning was "Religious Education - Your Responsibility and Your Child's Opportunity".

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The ALLIANCE will not meet on Wednesday, Dec. 29.

This is the last week of the UNITED UNITARIAN APPEAL drive. If you haven't made a contribution and wish to do so, envelopes are available at the Literature Table.

The BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP is wide open. Even though you wish to drop in for only one session, you are very welcome. The following will be discussed next month: Jan. 10 - Sophocles: "King Oedipus", "Oedipus at Colonus", "Antigone"; Jan. 24 - P. Nowell Smith: "Ethics".

We most cordially welcome the visitors to our morning service. If you would like to be on the Church mailing list, you are invited to sign a Newcomer Card during the Coffee Hour today.