

ADVICE FOR LIVING

BY THE REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING



Question: *Why did God make Jesus white, when the majority of peoples in the world are non-white?*

Answer: The color of Jesus' skin is of little or no consequence. The whiteness or blackness of one's skin is a biological quality which has nothing to do with the intrinsic value of the personality. The significance of Jesus lay, not in His color, but in His unique God-consciousness and His willingness to surrender His will to God's will. He was the Son of God, not because of His external biological make-up, but because of His internal spiritual commitment. He would have been no more significant if His skin had been black. He is no less significant because His skin was white.

Question: *Our family has had more than its share of pain and trouble. Does God send pain and anguish to punish us for our sins and the sins of our fathers?*

Answer: You are really raising the question, "Why do men suffer?" It is often true that we suffer because of sins we consciously or unconsciously commit. There are moral laws of the universe just as abiding as the physical laws, and when we disobey these moral laws we suffer tragic consequences. It is also true that the interrelatedness of human life often necessitates our suffering for the sins of our forefathers. We must admit, however, that we are often the victims of pain and suffering that cannot be explained by sins committed by ourselves or our forefathers. We must admit that there is some mystery surrounding God's being. There are certain things that happen in our lives and in the life of the universe that we just can't explain in rational terms. You must live by the faith that all suffering has some purpose which the finite mind of man can never comprehend.

Question: *My husband follows the horses closely. He says that it is legally right to gamble, but I say it is morally wrong. Is it possible to reconcile our conflicting viewpoints?*

Answer: Your husband is correct in saying that gambling is often legally right. You, however, are correct in saying that gambling is morally wrong. One should live by the principle that he will not take from society without giving to it. The orderly existence of society is dependent upon this type of reciprocity. Gambling is based on the principle of taking from society without giving anything in return. It is really getting something for nothing. Powerful, organized gambling makes for a breakdown in the structure of social life and a breakdown in the moral principles of any society. You should seek to get this idea over to your husband by patiently explaining the moral issues involved. You should make it clear to him that a thing may be legally right and morally wrong.

Question: *How do you reconcile Paul's statements on obeying duly-constituted authorities, Romans 13:1-7, with the Negro's campaign of passive resistance in the South?*

Answer: Like many Biblical affirmations, the words of the Apostle Paul must be interpreted in terms of the historical setting and psychological mood of the age in which they were written. The Apostle Paul—along with all of the early Christians—believed that the world was coming to an end in a few days. Feeling that the time was not long the Apostle Paul urged men to concentrate on preparing themselves for the new age rather than changing external conditions. It was this belief in the coming new age and the second coming of Christ which conditioned a great deal of Paul's thinking. Early Christianity was far from accepting the existing social order as satisfactory, but it was conscious of no mission to change it for the better. It taught its adherence neither to conform to the external framework of their time, nor to seek directly to alter it, but to live within it a life rooted in a totally different order. Today we live in a new age, with a different theological emphasis; consequently we have both a moral and religious justification for passively resisting evil conditions within the social order.

Question: *I believe in integration and work for it with all my heart, but I am unable to reconcile my feelings on this point with continued support of the United Negro College Fund. Am I wrong?*

Answer: I feel that you are wrong in your feeling concerning the United Negro College Fund. There is no contradiction in believing in integration and supporting the United Negro College Fund. You must remember that although Negro colleges are by and large segregated institutions, they are not segregating institutions. If these colleges are properly supported they will survive in an integrated society. Many of these colleges already have white students. It is not true to feel that as soon as integration becomes a thoroughgoing reality the so-called Negro private colleges will close down. In supporting these Negro colleges we are only seeking to make sure that the quality and caliber of these schools are of such nature that they will be appealing to all people.

Question: *I'm confused. I hear some men of God argue persuasively in favor of segregation and then others say it's sinful. I would like to know once and for all, with no ifs, ands and buts, can a man be a Christian and a staunch segregationist, too?*

Answer: I do not feel that a man can be a Christian and a staunch segregationist simultaneously. All men, created alike in the image of God, are inseparately bound together. This is at the very heart of the Christian Gospel. This broad universalism standing at the center of the Christian Gospel makes segregation morally evil. Racial segregation is a blatant denial of the unity which we have in Christ. There is not a single passage in the Bible—properly interpreted—that can be used as an argument for segregation. Segregation is utterly unchristian. It substitutes the person-thing relationship for the person-to-person relationship.

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