

God's World

New Textbooks Stress Race Issue

By DENNIS J. GEANEY, O.S.A.

Would you want your daughter to study from a Catholic grade school religion series which has pictures of Negroes and Whites playing together? It may cause your daughter to think about an interracial marriage. How would you feel if your third grader had a religion book that had a picture of Martin Luther King plastered on a page supported by words that made him a good guy?

There is a religion series that has won wide acclaim from Catholic educators across the country that dares to do these things. But, Benziger's "Word and Worship" series is in trouble in its first wide-spread test across the country. It is hard to believe, but there have been cases in which mothers have pasted other pictures over the faces of Negro children. Pressure is expected to continue to mount to remove the texts from the classroom.

The battle ground is shifting from open occupancy and fair employment to the religion classroom. The battle is between the parents and the teachers. The children are the pawns. It is a very healthy and hopeful sign for the Catholic schools which have been criticized for not leveling with their students on the gut issues of Christianity. If pastors, sisters, and lay teachers stand their ground and are not intimidated by the minority of vocal Birchite or prejudiced parents in the community, it will brighten the image of an institution that has served so well in the past.

In a democratic society we can have no objection to pressure groups. We welcome them because they help create a healthy society by forcing people to react to them, either by joining or opposing. In the case at hand, they force the teachers and administrators to show their hand and not pussy-foot on a major issue of Christianity. One may feel that the series should be judged on the totality of the theological content and its pedagogical methodology, and would disagree. The textbook battle must be fought on the battlefield of Christianity today.

The sixth grade book, for example, is entitled, "God's Saving Word." It develops our religious heritage through the Bible beginning with Abraham. The language is very clear and simple. It tells the story without talking down or preaching to the students. The last half of the book deals with the New Covenant which Jesus sealed with His blood. But sixth graders cannot be satisfied with a

historical Christianity. They must, through pictures, bright colors, and good art work, come to discover that Christ is alive today.

Even the use of color in religious books can set the Birchite off and cause him to see behind it all a Communist plot. Bright colors are symbols of warmth, light, and life. The Birchite's mentality wants everything to remind him of the past. He wants black on white. He acts out the death of God theology. The Birchites, like Marshal McLuhan and myself, hold, "the medium is the message." I agree with the Catholic Birchites that the colors and pictures in a book are of extreme importance. We teach most effectively by non-verbal symbols.

With the authors, Fathers Weber, Killgallon, and Sister Michael O'Shughnessy, I believe in a living God who acts in history. This is the message of the seventh grade book: "God's Saving History," or how man encounters God through Christ. This meeting of God and man is a rich framework for a year's work. We encounter God in people. Our Jewish doctor or our agnostic barber can be a medium of Christ's healing. Something said in our conversation with them can open up new vistas about life that can make us more open and loving in our relationships with each other. Every person we meet can be a minister of grace to us.

The Church or synagogue has always been a meeting place where God comes to confront man with His Word, but it is not the exclusive meeting place. This seventh grade develops the sacraments in this context of the People of God encountering Christ in the graces of signs or symbols we call sacraments.

The eighth grade book is the richest in color and contemporary pictures and, therefore, almost as suspect as the one with the picture of King. The table of contents reads like an outline of the Vatican Council's document on the Church. My feeling is that of George Bernard Shaw's comment on youth: "What a shame to waste it on the young!" Why could it not be used, first of all, for a text for the priests, nuns, and parents who cannot handle the Constitution of the Church in the kind of theological jargon it had to use to speak with precision for the whole church. Somehow the entire adult church should be exposed to "God's Saving Presence of the Benziger, Word and Worship Series."

Funeral Eulogy for Father Hall

On June 4, 1960, a man with a heart overflowing with joy walked from the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., a priest. As he walked to the arms of his family, he passed under an arch inscribed with these words: Faith is the assurance of things to be hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, Heb. 11, 1.

From that day even to this, he has embodied and proclaimed this phrase of faith with his whole life, in everything he did, in everything he said. Perhaps no other day has ever seen Father Charles Hall give this proclamation so clearly as he does on this one. He has, as was his way, set the theme, the atmosphere for this gathering.

Faith in a man propels him to people. He lives for them. He sacrifices and does so without concern for the cost. And it is just such a man who proclaims here the power of faith as the foundation for all living. Faith was the reason for Father Hall's love for people — for those habitually sleepless nights, for that bed which many times was hardly ever touched, for that room so filled with dozens of objects for touching men with the richness of God's gifts, for opening the eyes of youth, for influencing people of every age. It was faith that gave him his unique, tireless, persistent energy.

But the most beautiful part of his faith is what faith he today places in us. For he calls each of us here to see in depth the true meaning of this event. In it he tells us by the songs we sing, the joyful white that he wears, the Alleluias and the anthems of Easter, that this event does not indicate the end of life. It more correctly marks merely a change in his mode of living.

We have known him up to now, in his first assignment. (Since ordination he has had only one at St. Augustine High School in New Orleans.) Last Saturday, he began his second, the Beatific Vision of and with Christ, his Brother, for us. This ceremony simply but solemnly indicates the public proclamation of Charles' second assignment by his Lord and Brother.

I stand here this morning humbly representing everyone who has known Father Hall, particularly his fellow priests and religious. Our message is a simple one. It is specifically directed toward his gracious mother, his late beloved father, his brothers and sisters. It is simply, Mrs. Hall, a message of gratitude for what we owe to you, to his brother priests, these his dear friends.

You gave us your son to be our brother priest. But before you gave him, you fashioned his character, directed his heart, made him a man, and cushioned him against, but

This is the text of the sermon given by Josephite Father Richard Wagner at the funeral Mass for Father Charles Hall, first Negro to be ordained a priest from Rochester. Father Hall died March 25, 1967. His funeral was held at Immaculate Conception Church, Rochester, March 31. Principal celebrant of the Mass was Father George F. O'Dea, superior general of the Josephite Fathers, assisted by 12 other priests.

nevertheless directed him toward a world that needed him. We are grateful for what you did. You like another great mother shared your son with us. You let us see him, let us hear him, let us be influenced by him, even though it meant you didn't see him from one year to the next. You, as the selfish mother that you are, really gave him completely to us. Even in these last few months of his first assignment, you took for granted our need for him and acceded to his wishes to remain among us in the South. Like yourself, he never made a show of this. He just did it.

We want you to know that your Chuck, who became less than seven years ago, your Father Charles, that his spirit, which is so much yours, his love, all live on in every one of us. Our priesthood has been fashioned by his forever. We are greater men, we are deeper priests because his manhood and his priesthood have entered our lives. We are here today to silently let you know this. His priesthood lives on in us, his spirit, his love are so strong in us that we could in truth be called your sons. Another son 2,000 years ago gave his mother to his brother disciples as he began the redemption of the world.

We are certain that Father Charles has given you to us. Indeed, all of us this day receive you in a special way, draw you uniquely into each of our hearts. What you have done for our Josephite Community, the hundreds of boys at Saint Augustine High School and the

thousands in this community and elsewhere can never be measured. Through your son Charles your motherhood has become immeasurable. Please try to see and understand our groping words. Now let us go forth to continue his spirit and his life. Let us lift up our hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord.

Faith, indeed, is a marvelous thing. Through it God comes and events like this do not sadden but fill us with joy, are not occasions to slow but to quicken us. Faith is the rock foundation of a Christian. Today we have never made a show of this. He just did it.

And to you, Charles Hall, our brother priest, we are grateful to you for listening in faith to your mother and your brother Christ, for being the obedient, loyal, home-loving son you were. You really caught your mother's message. You really caught your saviour brother's also. And we have really caught them both through you. Most certainly, you have a rare Mother. She opened your eyes in birth and literally closed them in death. She stood by you as you began your first assignment and stood with you as you entered your second.

Charlie Hall, you proclaimed real well that inscription of faith on the Shrine of your ordination: Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, Heb. 11, 1. That is why we are all here today, to say with joy "Amen" to your first assignment on earth, and that's why we can come to say with equal joy "Alleluia" as you begin your second in eternity.

His Life, A Search For Remedy to Bias

Two of the many Josephites present for his funeral, Father Richard Wagner, also from Rochester, and Father Joseph Messina, both of whom were serving with Father Charles Hall in New Orleans, commented on his many insights concerning the Church, people, and society.

They said that he found it rather incongruous that people in his own home town would show such love and concern for those Negroes suffering in the South, but sanctimoniously would dismiss any responsibility for even the most vicious types of suffering in their midst.

"His experience of racial bias in the South gave him fresh appreciation of the hidden, vicious, and self-righteous discrimination which was present among so many of his fellow Rochesterians. This hurt him deeply," Father Wagner stated.

"The possibility of bringing about a real Christian attitude was the only pessimism he ever voiced. Prejudice—in Rochester

and in the South—was to him like a disease without a known remedy. However, his optimism was expressed in the giving of himself to find the remedy. And his unique humanness enabled him to enter into the lives of all he met, helping them to see their unconscious prejudices. He received great joy in helping others to come upon such insights.

"He used his energy to find a long-range answer through the well-rounded scientific and religious development of his students. He helped train and send to Ivy League colleges more Negro students than were sent by any other single school in the country.

"His death itself gave witness to his hope for a Christian solution. So many people, both in Rochester and in the South, were made to think on the meaning of this man's life and death and were given a new sense of dedication to build the Christian community he saw so clearly possible," Father Wagner concluded.

Go before us, man, to our God. We need you in this second assignment even more than we needed you in the first. Just don't stand waiting for us. Direct us, strengthen us, console us. Lead us on. Walk with us in peace and love, in hope and especially in faith. We're all right now. You have given us "the assurance of things to be hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." We have faith. We have caught the message. We believe. Alleluia, our brother, Alleluia!

A. J. McCARTHY

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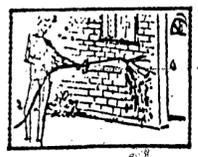
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CFM Seeks World Role

Mexico City — (NC) — The Christian Family Movement (CFM) is now aiming at becoming a world-wide ecumenical organization, according to a decision made at a meeting here of the coordinating committee of the CFM World Confederation.

A resolution adopted at the meeting called for efforts to include members from all Christian faiths in the confederation, which was created at a meeting in Caracas, Venezuela, last year.

The confederation currently groups Christian Family Movements in the United States, Canada, Australia, Spain, the English-speaking countries in Africa, Latin America, and

Mexico. Its membership totals 125,000.

Jose Alvarez Icaza of Mexico, president of the confederation, said here that efforts are underway to convert CFM into a true world body by drawing into it such movements in France, Italy, Great Britain and other countries. He said non-Catholic organizations will be invited to join.

Among prominent CFM leaders at the meeting was Patrick Crowley of Chicago, president of the Christian Family Movement in the United States.

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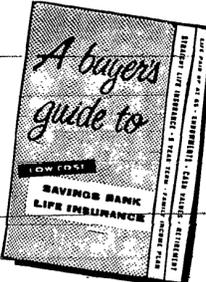
\$60 Million New Hospital

New York — (RNS) — As the nationwide Medicare program was being launched, the Brooklyn Catholic diocese announced a wide hospital building and expansion program to meet the expected increased needs for medical care.

Archbishop Bryan J. McEntegart, Bishop of Brooklyn, whose jurisdiction also includes Queens, said the diocese's \$60 million medical facilities development calls for construction of an \$8-million Medical Research Center and two new hospitals, and expansion of three others.

These will be collectively known as "The Catholic Medical Center of Brooklyn and Queens."

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