

TIM CURTIS

# Aquinas Columnist Completes 'Black and White'

I'd like to leave Louvain for this one article and talk about something that is very important to me and quite serious for all. In the first article I wrote for the AQUINAS, I noted that unlike the racial differences here in Belgium, the Black and the White in the U.S. speak the same language: yet, they still seem to lose something in the translation. Just by coincidence, Joe McDonald's article, "Black and White," appeared in the same edition.

Mr. McDonald's article was very well written, and I agree with some of the things he said. However, in my opinion, the article was incomplete. At least, as far as his article truly reaching black people, it was incomplete. Maybe it wasn't meant to go that far, but I hope it was. Mr. McDonald seems to be in favor of integration, but his style of integration and my own are not the same. They are only parallel, with his side still seeming dominant.

A man by the name of Tolstoy once wrote that the "endless variety of men's minds prevents a truth from ever appearing the same to any two persons." In his article, Mr. McDonald gave what he considers a truth: "However important Black Studies are, there is no Afro-American Literature worth speaking of." I admit that this may be true, but from whose viewpoint? Here's another truth: A report that U.S. Blacks rank on the average 15 IQ points below U.S. Whites in intelligence was made recently by Dr. Arthur Jensen, University of California education psychologist. This is also true, but the comparison is made according to whose standards and whose valid situations? As Tolstoy pointed out, truth can be quite relative in certain areas. One such area is religion. Another area is the dealing with two distinct races.

Dr. Jensen's findings, especially when used to show that there are genetic differences between the two races which help to justify what the White did to the Black in the first place, and Mr. McDonald's statement are examples of white attitudes. They are not white racist attitudes; they are just white attitudes. They are white views on a black situation, taking the black situation and judging it by their own white standards. This is quite a natural process. But at times, what they fail to take into consideration are the black attitudes to the same black situation. Since it is a black situation to begin with, I consider the black attitude to be at least just as valid.

If Mr. McDonald had taken into consideration the black side in this matter, I doubt if he would have said that black literature was not worth speaking of. He might've said that he disliked it, that he didn't care

much for it, or that it was not as yet worth speaking of from a white point of view. But he would have recognized at least its potentialities. It's true that such black writers as Frank Yerby, Leroi Jones, James Baldwin, and, of late, Eldridge Cleaver have not reached the white-dictated standards accorded such writers as Hemingway, Melville, or Capote. But black people read and enjoy these black writers, and consider their



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works worthwhile. According to black standards, they are the best we have. So, they should at least be respected by white critics for that fact. And I think it would be totally unfair even from a white viewpoint to compare these black writers to their white counterparts. Whereas white writers have worked on that art for a good period of time, black writers are just beginning to come into their own. During the period of slavery, it was hard enough finding an educated black person, no less one who could write a novel.

Black people of the non-radical variety desire to have their black standards at least on the same level as those of the white, particularly in the areas that directly pertain to the black people themselves. And when there is a conflict of white and black opinion in such areas, we want our opinions to have just as much weight as the white ones, if not more. In such cases, if both sides consider their stands as being valid, I think it would be better for an impasse to result. Being Black, I would consider my opinion right since what is being discussed is a black situation. But I also realize that there could be white differences of opinion just as valid for the White who puts them forth. For example, Mr. McDonald says that the racial issue is not so important that it should inhibit anyone's relaxation. I would have to disagree. Being

Black, I find that issue kind of hard to forget, and it underlines my relaxation. So, this is a difference of opinion. But it would be senseless for either side to call the other wrong. For after they start calling each other wrong, they start racial name-calling. And soon after the racial name-calling, all hell could break loose. So, why bother? It would be better to keep the black-white Janus and work on it from there, than to jump back twenty spaces because someone lost his head. Of course, to accomplish this, as many people as possible on both sides will have to keep a cool head in order to offset those who don't. That is the only way that integration as a lot of young black people envision it can start. An integration, as a close friend of mine from the University of Dayton writes me, "on an equal basis, where one can recognize the other for his whiteness or his blackness. One day that recognition won't be necessary, but right now it is." It has to be this way now because of the newly developing Black Identity. This is not an advocacy of the old white segregationist or the new black separatist idea of separate but equal. To me, it is the idea of separate and equal. There is a linkage of the two terms, not a breakage. The linkage is necessary so that one day it will become unnecessary. They will become one—equal. However, there is a long way to go yet before that last step arrives. The immense lack of real communication between the two races is quite evident today.

But, as I read Mr. McDonald's article, he doesn't seem ready to accept the separate and equal stage, a stage which I consider to be only the beginning of true integration. Throughout his article runs the image of the "Great White Father," an image which black people today are trying to shake off. A black person dislikes the tone of a white person who thinks himself an authority on black likes and dislikes, telling the black people what they should be proud of or not proud of; what they should deny or not deny; what they should prefer to eat or not eat. The black person himself can think and put things in perspective (especially one who is receiving his education in a Jesuit Univer-

sity). He doesn't need any outside help of that sort on matters pertaining to his own race. Everyone has a right to their own opinion, but they need not sound dictatorial about it, especially on such a sacred matter as race. Only when the image of white paternity (even if it wasn't meant to be understood as such) is completely done away with can integration on a truly equal basis begin. And this integration must start immediately. As James Baldwin says at the end of his book, *The Fire Next Time*, "If we—and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others—do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, re-

created from the Bible in song by a slave is upon us: 'God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time!'

P. S. (To be printed if there is enough space, not just in this newspaper, but in people's heads). The reasoning used in the above article (though I don't necessarily want it so) can be applied to other areas of common interest, be they University problems, religious problems, political problems, or whatever. This may sound too philosophical or too corny to some hard-nosed administrators, faculty members, and students, but the word "love" has a far wider significance than just its application to sex and marriage. It means an acceptance of people as they are, and not how you'd want them to be. That's the only way stable changes can ever get under way. One can be liberal-minded and still not open-minded.

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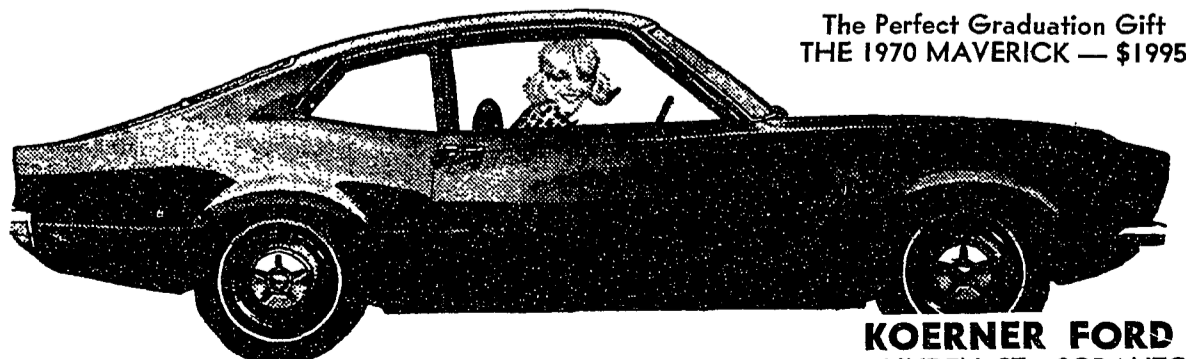
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