

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE NEGRO IN THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH?

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Summary

THE BENIGN AND THE OMINOUS IN SUPREME VALUES

It is generally accepted that God controls man's behavior and in doing so provides a life-giving experience for man. If God is truth, social justice, moral righteousness, and creative personal life as revealed in Jesus and as supported by the continuing revelations of man's empirical and objective experiences then the adoration and praise and thanksgiving to God are natural to every man regardless of ethnic origin.

On the other hand, not all men understand God as being truth, social justice, and moral righteousness. Some men see God as a despot and their lives are characterized by despotic behavior. Other men see God, the supreme value in the universe, the reality above all realities, as a racist who favors only their ethnic group. The books of Ruth and Jonah and the story of the Good Samaritan were among the rebukes to Old and New Testament racists. A free man cannot adore the God of a despot. A Negro cannot praise the God of a white racist. To do so would mean death not life for each of them.

Racism has been the subtle power in the Episcopal Church for over 80 years. Episcopalians have given lip service to law and order, or as it is said in the Church, to "decency and order" but have been breaking the Summary of the Law, the moral law, consistently. And Episcopalians have rationalized and over-simplified their responsibility. Right human relations are the peculiar responsibility of the Church. The ethical and moral influence of the Church may pervade other agencies also responsible for right relations like the government, industry, the professional services, community organizations, courts of law, legislative bodies, educational institutions and literature and the arts; or, the Church may fail its mission.

THE NEGRO EPISCOPALIAN MUST ORGANIZE

Negro clergy and laity need an organized association or union. This has been demonstrated by the decades of fruitless efforts to achieve meaningful dialogue in the Church. Negroes occupy a dual position with respect to their local congregations and their position in the fabric of the Church outside their local congregations. Negro membership in the Church ranges in different dioceses from three to over ten Negroes per 100 communicants. In 46 diocesan structures there are 12,292 persons in decision and policy making positions. They represent the mainstream of diocesan life. If the Negro were 1 per cent of these decision makers there would be about 123 Negroes in the total number. Actually, the Negro is only .0086 or .9 per cent of the personnel engaged in such diocesan functions. He is even less visible in the General Convention and the Executive Council.

Negroes have demonstrated a maturity in their congregations, in spite of the communications gap, which merits the Negro's full participation in the mainstream of the Church's life. The sharp exclusion of the Negro from policy and decision making processes is apparently based solely on racism. The historical environment of Negro congregations supports this viewpoint. The factual examination of Negro congregations on the seven quantitative variables showing that the Negro is in a very stable position, supports this viewpoint.

The factual comparison of Negro and white congregations on the seven quantitative variables showing that Negro and white congregations are related in positive ways supports this viewpoint.

THE CHURCH HAS A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR A VIABLE M R I

The Church has a new opportunity for a Negro-white interaction which may be a new crusade for freedom. It involves the same moral values as the opportunity the Church rejected in 1883. One may speculate that thousands of Negro and white leaders in the Church are motivated by the same high Christian ideals and need only the means of working together.

The urban-crisis proposals offer such opportunities and means:

To include capable Negroes in the internal affairs of the Church in every phase of its work on the basis of their potentials.

To encourage local Negro and white congregations to jointly seek a sharper focus of their Christian Gospel emphases so that they may speak as a united front more pertinently to the ethical and moral problems of their local communities.

To use funds of local Negro and white congregations in their joint ventures and when necessary to supplement these funds from the diocese and the Executive Council.

To use expert help from a variety of specialists so that time, energy and enthusiasm may not be eroded by inaction and ineptness but conserved by the production of measurable results.

THERE ARE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEGRO-WHITE INTERACTION IN THE WHITE GHETTO

There are human resources, Negro and white Churchmen, as yet unchallenged and unused by the Church.

There is a new opportunity for the Church to extend its ecumenical relations toward indigenous Negro religious bodies.

There are new immoralities in the white community to be resolved. There are positive actions to be taken in white residential areas.

There is a need for a deeper appreciation of the Negro's contribution to American culture.

There are numerous needs from which Negro and white Episcopalians may select priorities on which they will interact and jointly seek to resolve.

There are very delicate and tactful ways in which Negro and white Episcopalians may work together to expose Negro "hard-core" job prospects and Negro public housing occupants to better ways of living not provided for by any formal procedure.

There are opportunities for predominantly white congregations to call Negro priests as rectors.

There are opportunities for white Episcopalians with fearless integrity to become communicants of predominantly Negro congregations.

THE CHURCH NEEDS A LIFE-CENTERED PROGRAM

The Church today cannot simply repeat the stories of the 8th and 7th Century B.C. prophets or rehearse the domestic life of Jesus or Paul or others. These have their value as they produce viable truth, or, as comparable situations in today's human relations may be identified with them. But beyond the

biblical truths there are thousands of domestic and overseas situations demanding Christian ethical and moral interpretations for which the message of the Bible is either too vague or non-existent. For example, there were many New Testament racial problems like the Judaizers' attack upon the missionary movement which were never clearly resolved. There were many others left open-ended. The best one may say is that Jesus depended upon his followers to give intelligent implementation to the general ethical love and self-respect which he taught.

In a few ways the Church has made very limited steps in the direction of setting up ethical and moral procedures which may assist in giving Christian interpretation to the problems of today. Among them are: The Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence Program, The Joint Urban Program, and the 1967 proposals about the urban-crisis, now known as the General Convention Special Program.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP OR INTERACTION IS NOT DEPENDENT UPON BUILDINGS

Being a Christian is not identifying with a thing like a building. It is identifying with an agape group. Why? Because the group is the incarnation of the life-giving relationship. It is a dynamic fellowship. It transcends racial differences. It is the Church. This fellowship of love is a shared and a sharing experience. It produces two related things upon which society places a value: 1) it implements in practical living situations the ethical love and self-respect Jesus taught; and, 2) it coordinates personal skills and interests. It may inspire great literature and art. Its life-giving power does not depend upon a constitution or a canon. It does not require officers. It does not depend on special days. Buildings and symbols may help but they are not mandatory. This is the ideal fellowship the Negro Episcopalian seeks. But the Negro is a realist. He knows he will not find such a fellowship with every Churchman, Negro or white. On the other hand, the Negro Episcopalian believes this dynamic fellowship will triumph over the double standards of racism in the institutional Church

APPENDIX A

A Declaration, by Priests who are Negroes, on the Personnel Policies and Practices of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America; Addressed to the Presiding Bishop, The Rt. Rev. John E. Hines, and to the Members of the House of Bishops, and to the Executive Council

We, who are priests of the Episcopal Church, are filled with anguish by an unrighteous and scandalous system that has been allowed to exist within the House of God. Throughout the history of the Christian Church, our faith has been glorified by men and women who have become saints because they were committed to the proposition of the oneness of all in the family of God. To have done less than give their all to confirm this universality and equality would, to them, have been scandalous.

Yet, today, at all levels of the Church's life—in neighborhood congregations, in diocesan committees and commissions, and in the organization of the national Church there can be seen a subtle and a well-nigh systematic exclusion of laity and clergy who are Negroes from the heart of the Church's life. The personal piety of so many communicants permits them to ignore the Christian social responsibilities of the Church. Could they be resurrected, our honored saints would be appalled by the fact that such distortions of the Body of Christ should exist at all. These beatified souls would be even more shocked by the fact that large numbers of our brethren are doubtless so immured from and accustomed to these conditions in the Household of God that they have permitted them to exist unchanged for so long a time.

In today's multi-racial and fractured world, the God-like inclusion of Negro men and women in all areas of the Church could be "living, holy and reasonable" testaments to the fact that *all men are reconciled* is the will of God. Is there any wonder that the widespread and systematic denial of participation by Negro men and women in all aspects of the life of the Church is a source of grievous pain not only to Negro priests in the Episcopal Church, but also to many of the faithful throughout the world?

A partial recognition of the unholy nature of this exclusion is evidenced by the many "amiable" statements about the Church's becoming a truly open Church. However, no person committed deeply to the proposition that *true fulfillment for all mankind can come only at the Cross where all are one* could be other than grievously troubled by the deliberate or inadvertent exclusion of so many of the faithful from the House of God.

This grief, coupled with skepticism, has begun to increase among all Negro Churchmen, as well as among many others of the faithful who feel God's designs and desires are being thwarted within the Church. The dismay over inaction within the Church is deepened by the fact that many other major institutions in our culture appear to have made far more progress toward Christian ideals than has the Episcopal Church.

Finding this hard to reconcile, Negro Episcopal Churchmen and their sons and daughters are turning to other communions where they see fewer of such injustices.

What is the record within the Episcopal Church?

Here and there—but only with great rarity—"token" appointments of Negro priests and Negro laymen have been made to diocesan posts and to administrative or executive assignments in national offices. Bishops, with few exceptions, however, appear to have been notably stoutheaded in making new opportunities of ministry available to Negro clergy. Their talents are not being fully used on diocesan or cathedral staffs. Nor are they normally sponsored for any work other than that which is related to Negro congregations. And only with great infrequency have Negro priests been deemed eligible for posts in the Executive Council. For example, The Executive Council has grown from six Departments with a total of three Divisions in 1948 to the present eleven Departments composed of over twenty Divisions in 1967. Each Department is administered by a Director and each Division is administered by an Executive Secretary. This would make a total of some thirty persons in executive positions. But in nearly two decades since 1948 there have been only two Negro Executive Secretaries. One of them was the Executive Secretary of the now defunct division of "Racial Minorities." And no Negro has served as Director of a Department.

Or again, out of about seventy-eight professors and associate professors in twelve theological schools and seminaries of the Church in the United States there has been only one full-time professor in the last two decades.

Or again, in the Joint Urban Board of the Home Department where the problem of racial minorities looms like a threatening storm over the inner-city Church there are no Negroes.

The personnel problems in the Church have been more of a spiritual matter than a shortage of trained man-power. Trained and experienced Negroes have had to stand aside and see less qualified whites given opportunities to learn the responsibilities of significant positions because the Church lacked faith in God or the spiritual maturity to appoint or elect Negroes. The exclusion of the Negro layman from diocesan committees and commissions and from national conferences of the Church seems equally systematic and tragic.

The real meaning of Christian evangelism, it has been said, is one hungry man telling another hungry man where the Bread of Life is to be found. A priest's vocation is to assist the Church in continuing the Incarnation unto his own time. His integrity is intimately linked with the consecration of the holy bread and wine of the Eucharist. How can the Negro priest tell the people of his own generation and within his own Church where the Bread of Life is to be found in the *limitless Kingdom of God* when he is himself so severely *limited by the Episcopal Church* in the offering of his holy gifts and talents as a servant of our Saviour? Up to now, the Negro priest has been made to feel unworthy to offer unto Him any sacrifice except in all Negro or predominantly Negro circumstances.

He has been made to feel the sting of being cut off from the blessed company of all God's faithful people. He has been made to feel the chagrin of an "invisible people" within the Body of Christ as it is found in the Episcopal Church. And thus, we are compelled to ask if this is to be the cost of our discipleship as clergy and laity of the Episcopal Church.

God's boundless province can be reflected by the Church not only by fully opening its doors to all, but also by doing all things possible to rectify the inglorious past.

So, weighed down as we are by our own disappointment and by the growing disenchantment of those to whom we minister, we do strongly and respectfully urge the Presiding Bishop and the Executive Council to arrange a series of meetings as early as possible in 1967 between a representative group of Bishops of the Church and a representative group of Negro clergy of the Church so that the issues which are stated in this Declaration may begin to get the kind of careful and factual examination they deserve. This should be done with the view that the Presiding Bishop and the Executive Council will make specific recommendations on these matters to the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies of the 1967 General Convention.

The issues are:

1. The doubt that is cast upon the integrity of the whole Church, when it accepts Negroes or anyone as postulants for the sacred ministry only if their work is to be in a limited area in contrast to the God-desired areas where there are no bounds;
2. The use of one set of criteria by the Bishops in missions and by vestries in parishes for the placement of Negro clergy and of another set of criteria for the placement of white clergy;
3. The use of one set of criteria by Bishops and Diocesan Committees for the placement of Negro men of God in diocesan and national Church positions, and of another set of criteria for the placement of white clergy;
4. The exclusion of Christian scholars from the faculties of seminaries and private schools of the Church solely because of race. There should be the same criteria and intensive searching of our schools in seeking out Negroes for available faculty positions as is exercised in seeking out white persons for faculty positions; and,
5. The pursuit of creative means to compensate for the grievous injustices of the past. And the setting a course of Christian action implementing our noblest resolutions concerning the total integration of racial minorities in the Church.

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