

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-desired 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 be 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 faith 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 compounded 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 this 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 slothful 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 administrated 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 continue 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 hierarchy 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.