



THE CHURCH SPEAKS ON RACE

*Official statements
of the
Episcopal Church
and the
Anglican Communion.
1940-1958*

The Church Speaks on Race

draws together recent statements on race of the General Convention and the Lambeth Conference, as well as materials from other sources which speak with the authority of law or high moral persuasiveness to members of the Episcopal Church. It will may serve not only as a basis for individual churchmen to re-examine their own convictions about race and the problems of discrimination and segregation facing Americans today, but as a background for study by parishes and community groups anxious to give positive Christian leadership beset with tension and recrimination. Christians have a special obligation to give such leadership, for as the recent Lambeth Conference put it, "it is one of the primary tasks of the Church not so much to resolve tensions, as by the power of Christ through whom man is reconciled to God . . . to reconcile man to man, and race to race. In Christ the Church is to transform all tensions from being fruitful for evil to being fruitful for good."

The Book of Common Prayer

provides for the worship of the Church and articulates its basic faith as received from Holy Scripture. Typical of the concern which this book of worship directs that Churchmen should show to all men is the response to the question What is my duty toward my neighbor? in The Offices of Instruction:

My duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me: to love, honour, and succour my father and mother: to honour and obey the civil authority: to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters: to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters: to hurt nobody by word or deed: to be true and just in all my dealings: to bear no malice nor hatred in my heart: to keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering: to keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity: not to covet

nor desire other men's goods; but to learn and labor truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me.

The Constitution & Canons

of the Church are binding upon the communicants, congregations, and dioceses of the Episcopal Church. The Canon is clear on the right of communicants to transfer to another charge regardless of race or color:

CANON 16, SECTION 1.a A communicant or baptized member in good standing removing from one parish or congregation to another shall be entitled to receive and shall procure from the rector or minister of that parish or congregation of his or her last enrollment, or if there be no rector or minister, from one of the wardens, a certificate addressed to the rector or minister of the parish or congregation to which the removal is desired, stating that he or she is duly registered or enrolled as a communicant or baptized member in the parish or congregation from which he or she desires to be transferred, and the rector or minister or warden of the parish or congregation to which such communicant or baptized member may remove shall enroll him or her as a communicant or baptized member when such certificate is presented.

General Convention

Under the Constitution and Canons of the Church the government of the Episcopal Church resides in the General Convention. In this bicameral legislature, each diocese is represented in the House of Bishops by its episcopate and in the House of Deputies by its clerical and lay delegates. Resolutions adopted by General Convention are authoritative for every diocese.

1952

IN 1952, stating that "we believe that the nature and destiny of man by virtue of his creation, redemption, and calling, and man's activities in family, State, and culture establish limits beyond

which a government cannot with impunity go," AND "that respect for an observance of human rights constitutes an essential cornerstone for building a world society where peace and justice can prevail; and the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in many parts of the world both degrade man and jeopardize world peace," *the Convention resolved that its members:*

Encourage and support full participation by the United States in international action through the United Nations to the end that observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all men may be promoted, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

Use every reasonable means to overcome long-standing discriminatory practices in our own land, and, particularly in these days when we seek to oppose the threat of totalitarianism from without, to guard against our own use of the methods which we condemn in others.

The same General Convention stated that:

Almost every country today, including the United States, is guilty in greater or less degree of mass racial or color discrimination (and resolved) that we consistently oppose and combat discrimination based on color or race in every form, both within the Church and without, in this country and internationally.

The Convention also resolved that:

This Convention affirm its conviction that no branch of the Christian Church should rest content while any injustices in racial relations obtain in parishes, schools, and agencies under her control or in association with her; and that it urge every member of the Church to labor unceasingly for the elimination of such injustices.

1955

To all the clergy and people of this Church that they accept and support this ruling of the Supreme Court, and, that by opening channels of Christian conference and communication between the races concerned in each diocese and community, they anticipate constructively the local implementation of this ruling as the law of the land, and further that we make our own the statement of the Anglican Congress that "in the work of the Church we should welcome people of any race at any service

conducted by a priest or layman of any ethnic origin, and bring them into the full fellowship of the congregation and its organization."

1958

RESOLVED That the 59th General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church takes note of the bombing of the temple of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation of Atlanta, Ga., and expresses its regret and sorrow to the members of its congregation.

All acts of violence and irresponsible and wanton destruction are abhorrent and totally indefensible in the eyes of Christ and His Church.

WHEREAS, The Church has generally taught as part of the Christian ethic, the obligation of Christians to obey the Civil Law under which they live; and

Whereas, It has generally been clear that the right of civil disobedience and of revolution should be undertaken by Christians only for the gravest reasons of conscience and as a last resort; and

Whereas, The Constitution of the United States is the supreme law of this land; and

Whereas, The Supreme Court is the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution; and

Whereas, Those who are in disagreement with Federal and Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution have the legal recourse of amendment of the Constitution; therefore be it

Resolved, That this Church call upon its members to face seriously their obligation to conform to Federal and Supreme Court Orders in regard to giving to all students equal access to our public schools.

WHEREAS, We believe in the natural dignity and value of every man, of whatever color or race, as created in the image of God and as one for whom Christ died, that discrimination by reason of color or race between men has as its root human sin; that the Church must confess its own sin in this area; and

Whereas, We acknowledge that there are no easy answers to the problems created by the effort to apply these convictions to special and local situations, particularly in times of cultural and

social change, and that the composite thoughts of Churchmen in conference or convention may or may not be the will of God because we all stand under the judgment of God and not finally under the judgments of fallible men; and also that, despite honest differences of opinion, we are bound together, through our union in Christ and His fellowship of love, to seek God's will; therefore be it

Resolved, That we call first upon our fellow Churchmen by God's grace to cleanse themselves of all spirit of racial discrimination; and then upon all persons, especially the members of our Church, to work together, in charity and forbearance, towards the establishment, without racial discrimination, of full opportunities in fields such as education, housing, employment and public accommodations.

National Council

Between Conventions, the work of the National Church is carried on by the National Council. Statements by this Council are for the guidance of the General Church.

1943

WITH the formation of the Bi-racial Committee, a set of Guiding Principles was adopted for the use of the Episcopal Church. Listed in condensed form, they are:

1. Fellowship is essential to Christian worship.
2. Fellowship is essential in Church administration.
3. High standards must be maintained in every area of the Church's work for all persons.
4. Desegregation must be the goal for all church institutions and agencies.
5. It is both the function and the task of the Church to set spiritual and moral goals for society, and to bear witness to their validity by the witness of her own life.

1954

In its resolution in regard to race relations, National Council commended Some Guiding Principles to the Church. In brief they are:

1. All races are responsible for seeking and applying a Christian solution to their mutual problems, regardless of initial responsibility.

2. Leaders of all races are concerned and have a vital and necessary contribution to make. . . . Responsible and representative leaders of all races should be included from the outset in the councils which seek to effect desegregation.

3. Individual churchmen have an obligation to seek constructive contacts and to create and utilize channels for discussion and co-operation in the community.

4. Every Churchman is clearly called to work unceasingly to create and foster genuine Christian fellowship between races in his own congregation and church school, in hospitals, homes, and institutions, and in every aspect of the Church's life.

5. Parents have a special opportunity and responsibility to set an example for their children...

6. Each Episcopal Church can give vital leadership by making it clear that all Churchmen are invited into full life and fellowship of the Church, including its services of worship, parish organizations, diocesan activities, church-sponsored schools and institutions. Each parish and mission has a primary responsibility for this leadership.

7. Each parish church and mission faces its old obligation with new force and urgency . . . to seek diligently for every unchurched person in its neighborhood, to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to such persons, and to welcome them into the fellowship of that church or mission.

1956

WITH the statement that "much is lost in seeking answers to problems of human relations when committees are not representative of all races and attitudes on both sides of the question involved," National Council in 1956 adopted a resolution recommending "that the dioceses of the Church be encouraged to create inter-racial committees to consider problems of human relations on the community, congregational, and diocesan levels."

Pastoral Letters

The House of Bishops at its meetings may issue Pastoral Letters which by Canon must be read to every congregation in the Church on some occasion of public worship on the Lord's Day within thirty days after the clergyman receives his copy. Such Pastoral Letters are for the guidance and general edification of the Church. Pertinent excerpts from the Pastoral Letters follow:

1940

THE Christian Gospel proclaims the eternal worth and dignity of every human soul. . . . The Gospel, by its very nature, abhors all regimentation, all totalitarian schemes of mass control, all claims of class or racial superiority, and all economic injustices, because they deny the sacredness of human personality.

The Church must stand boldly for freedom of conscience, of speech and of worship. In the Christian religion is found for all men everywhere, the hope of social progress, the conquest of poverty, disease and of every condition that makes for moral failure and degradation. . . .

1943

OUR Church must prepare . . . to witness to a warsick world . . . by confessing now her corporate sins which are grievous and, in part, responsible for the darkness that covers the earth . . . class distinctions that are anything but brotherly and racial discriminations that are anything but just. These are some of the things that have crept into the life of our day. We confess that they are sin, trusting that He who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins. . . .

1945

BUT no international union can be effective for lasting peace unless it is based on eternal principles of justice and infused with a spirit of mutual trust and goodwill. . . . It is impossible to abolish the differences between nations, races, and individuals. These differences without a principle of unity are chaos; but these differences animated by the Spirit of Christ, are richness. . . .

1946

WHILE opposing resolutely injustice to minorities, we must strive to give a positive demonstration personally, and by groups, to the fact that Christians, at least, act toward all men as brothers under the one heavenly father. . . .

1955

WE are summoned as Christians to recognize the judgments of God, which are the disclosures of the contradictions between our human ways and His design for His people. . . . Before God and men we can make no case for contempt and assumptions of racial superiority. . . . For these there is no answer but repentance. . . .

1956

WE can remember that our own racial divisions and misunderstandings at home are part of the same sad story of division which we see on the international scene.

Since the world is one, what we do at home with our divisions and misunderstandings is reflected for our own good or ill among the nations of the earth. It is the will of God that every member of the Church exercise his reconciling ministry in the community in which he lives, that every member seek to create fellowship by breaking down the barriers and suspicions that divide us. . . .

1958

WE write to you on the subject of unity and reconciliation . . . with a great sense of urgency, not to tell you what to do in your specific situations, but rather to share with you five great truths that will help us all act more truly wherever we may be.

The first point dealt with the need for meeting between representatives of groups between which there is conflict and tension.

Our own Episcopal Church has within its fellowship rich and poor, white and Negro, Orientals, Indians, and Latin Americans. Meet and know your brethren in Christ.

The second truth, the Sacredness of Law, dealt with the Biblical doctrine of the authority of secular power.

(The Law) restrains our selfishness and wildness, and, while it cannot change our hearts, it does provide the indispensable outer framework for our unity.

The third truth was the active Judgment of God on our divisions.

God's judgment is the response of a just God to the offenses of mankind against His living will. . . .

We must remember that the majority of mankind belong to the colored races, and that the American racial problem is discussed the world over. . . . If America continues to lose friends as others become convinced that we do not mean what we say about justice and equality, the reason will be obvious. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. These judgments are the plain cost we pay in God's universe for not practicing what we preach, and for not being ready to grant to others the opportunity and equality we cherish for ourselves.

The fourth point dealt with our Christian duty to think rationally and not emotionally about issues that divide men.

If we build on emotion, the end is conflict. . . .

The final truth had to do with our Christian commitment as members of God's Church to the redeeming and reconciling love of Christ and fellowship in the Holy Spirit:

This Spirit raises us above self to see God's will and plan for all men. It is the Spirit of humility, of inclusiveness, and of love ever warring against our hard hearts.

The Bishops concluded this Letter by saying:

If we suffer in that endeavor, count it always a privilege to suffer for God and His truth. Care for your souls, brethren, amid the passions and prejudices of our day, and remember that truth alone is strong.

Lambeth Conference

Every ten years the Bishops of the Anglican Communion at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury meet at Lambeth Palace for conference on matters of common concern. In the Anglican Church this Conference is of paramount influence in matters

of faith and doctrine. The results of the Lambeth Conference are not binding on any of the independent Churches represented, but are rather for their guidance.

1948

THE Conference is convinced that discrimination between men on the grounds of race alone is inconsistent with the principles of Christ's religion. We urge that in every land men of every race should be encouraged to develop in accordance with their abilities; and that this involves fairness of opportunity in trades and professions, in facilities for travelling and in the provision of housing, in education at all stages, and in schemes of social welfare. Every Churchman should be assured of a cordial welcome in any church of our Communion, and no one should be ineligible for any position in the Church by reason of his race or color.—*Resolution #43*

1958

THE Conference affirms its belief in the natural dignity and value of every man, of whatever color or race, as created in the image of God. In the light of this belief the Conference affirms that neither race nor color is in itself a barrier to any aspect of that life in family and community for which God created all men. It therefore condemns discrimination of any kind on the grounds of race or color alone.

The Conference would urge that in multi-racial societies members of all races shall be allowed:

A fair and just share in the government of their country;

A fair and just share in the control, development and rewards of the natural resources of their country, including advancement to the highest level of attainment;

The right to associate freely in worship, in education, in industry, in recreation, and in all other departments of the common life.—*Resolution #110*

See also Lambeth Conference Report #4, Sec. 2, pp. 128-130.

Anglican Congress

At intervals midway between each Lambeth Conference, an Anglican Congress is held (of which the one in 1954 was the first). Bishops, priests, and laymen serving as delegates to this meeting represent all the Churches in the Anglican Communion. The resolutions of the Anglican Congress are not binding but are rather for the guidance of the independent Churches represented.

WE reaffirm the statement on race relations of the Lambeth Conference of 1948, and are penitent for our failure to put it into full effect. We urge members of the Church to continue to witness strongly and wisely against all forms of discrimination, to work in each land for justice in racial relations, and to teach the full implications of our faith with regard to race. Those living in multi-racial areas must put Christian principles into practice by improving social relations between people of different color. In the work of the Church we should welcome people of any race at any service conducted by a priest or layman of any ethnic origin, and bring them into the full fellowship of the congregation and its organizations.

Full texts of the statements and resolutions quoted are to be found in the reports and annals of the authorities quoted. They may be obtained from the minister of any congregation, the diocesan office or from The National Council, 281 Park Avenue South, New York 10, N.Y.

Additional statements, resolutions, and examples regarding the Church's policy in regard to race relations can be found in the pamphlet Bridge Building in Race Relations, (The National Council, 50 cents).

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

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