

A Christian Declaration ON RACE RELATIONS

OUR COMMISSION

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We are commissioned by the Holy Scriptures to witness to the Gospel's teaching that before God mankind is one.

Mankind is one because God called men into being by one act of creation: God made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth (Acts 17:26). God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:26).

Mankind is one because God saves men by one act of redemption: Christ has been lifted up, drawing all men to Himself (John 12:32) as members of one new humanity (Galatians 6:15). Christ has broken down all walls of separation (Ephesians 2:14) so that there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free (Galatians 3:28).

Mankind is one because God offers men membership in one fellowship of the reconciled: Men may now experience interdependence and a common life as members of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:4). Men may enjoy reconciliation with their brothers through membership in the household of God (Ephesians 2:19).

We are commissioned by the prophetic passages which have always guided this religious movement to witness that before God mankind is one.

"Walls of separation have been built up between the whites and the blacks. These walls of prejudice will tumble down when Christians obey the Word of God, which enjoins on them supreme love to their Maker and impartial love to their neighbors" (*Christian Service*; p. 217).

"Christ came to this earth with a message of mercy and forgiveness. He laid the foundation for a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God" (*Testimonies for the Church*, Volume VII, p. 225).

"In Christ Jesus we are one. By the utterance of one name, 'Our Father,' we are lifted to the same rank. We become members of the royal family,

children of the heavenly King. His principles of truth bind heart to heart, be they rich or poor, high or low" (*Review and Herald*, October 24, 1899).

"In our worship of God there will be no distinction between rich and poor, white and black. All prejudice will be melted away. When we approach God, it will be as one brotherhood" (*Review and Herald*, October 24, 1899).

OUR CONDITION

We recognize that from the beginning of history fear and hate, pride and suspicion, violence and oppression have set man against man, race against race, and brother against brother.

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We recognize that in our time and in our nation man's cruelty to his fellows has taken the particularly damaging form of racism, the practice of categorizing a person on the basis of his racial background alone.

We recognize that America's history includes a long record of injustice and violence that the white man has imposed on the black. Today we are reaping the bitter harvest of our past — a harvest of hate, suspicion, and renewed violence. Yet the same attitudes which led to the brutal oppression that our Adventist pioneers resisted in the 1850's and 1860's still persist in the minds of many Americans in the 1970's.

We recognize, further, that these attitudes are found not only outside the Church, in the world we seek to reach, but within the community of faith as well. In our own hearts are often found ignorance, mistrust, and condescension.

We recognize that prejudice, exploitation, and discrimination are sins. These sins both grind down the victim and scar the soul of the person guilty of them.

OUR CONFESSION

We confess our sins.

We confess that often we have been silent and insensitive when we might have uttered a prophetic witness.

We confess that often we have failed to display a reconciling and redemptive spirit when the opportunity has broken in upon us.

We confess that too often our religious organizations have not only fallen behind the Christian ideal but also behind some secular movements in opposing sinful injustice and oppression.

We confess our failure, and in prayer and penitence we pledge ourselves to work at all levels for the realization of the mind and life of Christ.

OUR COMMITMENT

In our teaching and preaching, we commit ourselves to specific tasks and goals intended to educate our membership in the area of human relations. We therefore urge:

1. That we seek to present more clearly the teachings of Scripture, trying in particular to correct misunderstandings about supposedly Biblical bases for discrimination.

2. That we prayerfully review the writings which record our beginnings as a movement, to inform ourselves of the courageous stands taken by our spiritual forefathers on racial issues.

3. That we help people to understand that differences among races serve to enhance unique cultural contributions and are in no way to be construed as indicators of inherent superiority or inferiority.

4. That we utilize available resources in coordinating seminars, workshops, and exchange programs aimed at bringing about understanding and interdependence among racial groups.

In our formation of institutional policies, we commit ourselves to specific tasks and goals in an attempt to foster racially inclusive practices. We therefore urge:

1. That each congregation of our Conference prayerfully adopt the following covenant: As a congregation under the Lordship of Christ and by the grace of God we declare that "In every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." Such a person of whatever color or national origin is therefore welcome to us as brother, guest, member, co-worker, or leader.

2. That each Conference-related institution prayerfully adopt the following covenant: As an institution under the Lordship of Christ and by the grace of God we declare that in our personnel and admission policies and in our programs of service we will give consideration to all persons without regard to color or race.

In our individual and corporate life we thus commit ourselves to the "ministry of reconciliation" and pray:

1. That we may come to be free from prejudice, pride, condescension, paternalism, and scorn toward any group, whether it be racial, national, economic, or religious.

2. That we may learn to love every person as Christ loves.

3. That we may actively cooperate with God's healing, reconciling, and renewing work in the Church and among all men.