

TOWARDS THE SECOND
ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
1954

Ecumenical

Studies

FAITH AND ORDER

Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches

EVANGELISM

The Mission of the Church to those Outside Her Life

SOCIAL QUESTIONS

The Responsible Society in a World Perspective

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Christians in the Struggle for World Community

INTER-GROUP RELATIONS

The Church Amid Racial and Ethnic Tensions

THE LAITY

The Christian in His Vocation

A PREPARATORY QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE
ASSEMBLY TOPIC:
INTERGROUP RELATIONS



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of Churches, 17 Route de Malagnou, Geneva

A PREPARATORY QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE ASSEMBLY TOPIC

INTERGROUP RELATIONS: THE CHURCH AMID RACIAL AND ETHNIC TENSIONS

The section on Race at the Second Assembly should deal with the general question: How can the Church contribute to the correction of racial prejudice and injustice? To phrase the general question of the section in this fashion is to distinguish its task from the task simply of defining a Christian position on race. Moreover, this question directs the attention of the Assembly to what can concretely be done in reference to this problem.

INTRODUCTION

THE ASSEMBLY THEMES.

The main theme of the Second Assembly is to deal with the Christian hope. In addition, there are six subsidiary topics for consideration at the Assembly, as follows:

FAITH AND ORDER

— Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches

EVANGELISM

— The Mission of the Church to those Outside Her Life

SOCIAL QUESTIONS

— The Responsible Society in a World Perspective

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PREPARATION.

As part of the preparatory material for each of the subsidiary topics to be considered at the Second Assembly in 1954, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches has decided that there should be a factual survey, the purpose of which is to provide the delegates to the Assembly with reliable background information about "what the churches are actually doing and thinking" in these various fields.

It is intended that these surveys should, in a space of about 50 printed pages, present a global picture of significant trends of thought, achievements, deficiencies and difficulties in the work of the churches on each topic. In co-operation with the Study Department Committee as the coordinating body, the preparatory Commissions which have been set up for these topics are charged with the responsibility for compiling the surveys.

These few pages attempt to indicate the kind of information which is needed for the factual survey to be prepared by the Commission concerned with the topic "Inter-Group Relations."

DEFINITION OF THE SUBJECT.

The subject of racial and ethnic tension has been defined by the Executive Committee of the World Council as follows:

"The Section on Race at the Second Assembly should deal with the general question: 'How can the Church contribute to the correction of racial prejudice and injustice?' To phrase the general question of the section in this fashion is to distinguish its task from the task simply of defining a Christian position on race, or of analysing the race problem sociologically, although both of these will be involved. Moreover, this question directs the attention of the Assembly to what can concretely be done in reference to this problem.

Under this general head, at least the following areas should be dealt with:

1. How can the message of the Gospel be presented so as to affect the deep springs of race prejudice?
2. How should the Christian Church deal with race within its own membership? What import should the Churches attach to questions affecting racial and ethnic homogeneity within the Churches? How can the Church — in the congregation, in the nation, and in the world — so exemplify Christian conviction concerning race as to contribute toward the alleviation of injustice?
3. How may the Christian community utilize and cooperate with government and other secular agencies in the alleviation of racial injustice?

It will be noted that each of these questions will involve both analysis and solution.

(The term "race" is used in this statement primarily with reference to color and ethnic origin. It is not, however, intended to bring within the scope of this Commission the question of anti-Semitism, which, while including ethnic factors, involves other and broader issues. Particular discussion of the Jewish question, in its several bearings, belongs to a different section of the Assembly's work.)

THE PRESENT QUESTIONNAIRE.

It is hoped that full answers will be provided to the questions which follow in order that the preparatory document for the Assembly will rest upon the broadest possible factual basis.

Replies to the questionnaire should be sent to the Secretary of the Commission:

REV. ROBERT S. BILHEIMER

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

156 Fifth Avenue

New York 10, New York

A SURVEY OF THE CHURCHES AMID RACIAL AND ETHNIC TENSIONS

The following questions are addressed to correspondents in an effort to ascertain from the various countries: (a) what the churches have been saying; (b) what the churches have been teaching their own constituencies; (c) what the churches have been doing in their communities; and (d) what is the practice of the churches in their own life and organization.

The four major headings classifying the questions are intended to help correspondents in soliciting assistance from others. Correspondents should feel free to transfer the questions from one heading to another as may be desirable to facilitate their providing the answers. It is earnestly hoped, however, that answers to all the questions will be provided.

It is assumed that correspondents will be able to assign Parts I and II to others, perhaps to interested and competent individuals associated with government, with universities, or with research agencies. Colleagues in the churches should be able to help with Part III. The correspondent is requested to answer Part IV.

I. DOCUMENTS

- A. Officially adopted, approved, or authorized pronouncements or statements of position on questions of race or race relations by the chief national governing bodies or official boards or agencies of the several churches during the last 15 years.
- B. Samples of educational materials relating to race relations used by the churches, including materials produced by the churches and those used by the churches but obtained from other sources.
- C. List, description, and addresses of national or regional agencies or commissions of the churches charged with responsibility for helping to improve race relations.
- D. Samples of books, pamphlets, articles in periodicals, commission reports, and other documents that have influenced the constituencies of the churches during the last 5 years concerning race, regardless of the nature of the influence.

II. FACTS FROM RELIABLE SOURCES, GOVERNMENTAL OR OTHER

- A. Census statistics of racial composition of the nation.
- B. Geographical distribution of races within the nation.
- C. Political parties or alignments of racial groups.

D. In what ways in the community pattern is segregation practiced? At what points is it sanctioned by

1. Law?
2. Customary imposition by the majority racial group?
3. Majority and minority traditional agreement?

E. Is classification by "race" determined by color, national origin, ethnic identification, or a combination of these factors?

III. OBJECTIVE JUDGMENTS REQUESTED FROM CORRESPONDENTS

A. A brief (1) enumeration and (2) definition of the issues or problems of race on which church members are both disturbed and divided.

B. A brief (1) enumeration and (2) definition of the issues and problems of race which create tension between the churches and the community

C. What legislative measures dealing with racial matters have been officially supported or opposed by the churches during the last 10 years?

D. With what national non-church agencies do the churches cooperate in matters of race?

E. What community agencies seeking to improve race relations rely in large measure on the constituencies of the churches for moral or financial support?

F. What are the major aspects of tension between or among the races in your country?

G. What are the practices of the churches in your country (noting outstanding differences among them) with regard to race relations in

1. Participation in public worship?

2. Membership in the church?

3. Membership in youth groups?

4. Participation in church social events?

5. Employment in staffs of Church owned or controlled

a. Educational institutions?

b. Hospitals?

c. Welfare agencies?

d. Church organization offices?

6. Availability to different races of the services rendered by church owned or controlled

a. Educational institutions?

b. Hospitals?

c. Welfare agencies?

7. Attendance at church assemblies and conferences, — noting official regulations and customary practice in regard to attendance at meetings, living accommodations, eating arrangements, etc.?

IV. OPINIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS REQUESTED FROM CORRESPONDENTS

A. What do you regard as the most urgent problems of race with which the churches of your country are confronted?

B. Who are some of the leading recognized authorities in your country on race relations in the field of

1. Theology
2. History
3. Politics
4. Anthropology
5. Sociology
6. Economics
7. Psychology
8. Education
9. Health and welfare
10. Ethnology
11. Ecology

(Indicate which of the above are Christians.)

C. What emphasis do you believe the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches should make in regard to race relations in order to be most helpful to the churches of your country?

D. In your opinion is the national mood within which race problems are considered

1. Authoritarian?
2. Democratic?
3. Laissez-faire?

E. In what ways does the alleviation of the problem of race in your country depend upon its alleviation in the world scene?

F. What questions in this outline are either (1) unreasonable or (2) irrelevant in your opinion?

G. What other observations or opinions do you wish to offer to give a sound and reliable report on the churches and the race problem in your country?

H. If you were asked (even though your experience may be quite limited) to give suggestions to a minister of a local church who is confronted with this problem for the first time in his experience, what chief counsel would you give him?

Attendance at church assemblies and conferences, — noting official regulations and customary practice in regard to attendance at meetings, living accommodations, eating arrangements, etc.

2. Customary imposition by the majority racial group

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