

80 Atlanta Pastors Sign Manifesto on Racial Beliefs*

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- A** THESE ARE DAYS of tremendous political and social tension throughout our entire world, but particularly in our nation and beloved Southland. The issues which we face are not simple, nor can they be resolved overnight. Because the questions which confront us are on so many respects moral and spiritual as well as political, it is appropriate and necessary that men who occupy places of responsibility in the churches should not be silent concerning their convictions.
- B** The signers of this statement are all ministers of the Gospel, but we speak also as citizens of Georgia and of the United States of America. We are all Southerners, either by birth or by choice, and speak as men who love the South, who seek to understand its problems, and who are vitally concerned for its welfare.
- C** In preparing this statement we have acted as individuals, and represent no one but ourselves. At the same time we believe that the sentiments which we express are shared by a multitude of our fellow citizens, who are deeply troubled by our present situation and who know that hatred, defiance and violence are not the answer to our problems, but who have been without a voice and have found no way to make their influence effective.
- D** IN PRESENTING our views for the consideration of others we can speak only in a spirit of deep humility and of penitence for our own failures. We cannot claim that the problem of racial relationships has been solved even in the churches which we serve, and we are conscious that our own example in the matter of brotherhood and neighborliness has been all too imperfect. We do not pretend to know all the answers.
- E** We are of one mind, however, in believing that Christian people have a special responsibility for the solution of our racial problems and that if, as Christians, we sincerely seek to understand and apply the teachings of our Lord and Master we shall assuredly find the answer.
- F** We do not believe that the South is more to blame for the difficulties which we face than are other areas of our nation. The presence of the Negro in America is the result of the infamous slave traffic-an evil for which the North was as much responsible as the South.

* The letters in the left margin are included for ease of discussion and did not appear in the original document. The capitalized words appearing at the beginning of each major section were in the original.

- G WE ARE ALSO conscious that racial injustice and violence are not confined to our section and that racial problems have by no means been solved anywhere in our nation. Two wrongs, however, do not make a right. The failures of others are not a justification for our own shortcomings, nor can their unjust criticisms excuse us for a failure to do our duty in the sight of God. Our one concern must be to know and to do that which is right.
- H We believe that the difficulties before us have been greatly increased by extreme attitudes and statements on both sides. The use of the word "integration" in connection with our schools and other areas of life has been unfortunate, since to many that term has become synonymous with amalgamation. We do not believe in the amalgamation of the races, nor do we feel that it is favored by right thinking members of either race.
- I We do believe that all Americans, whether black or white, have a right to the full privileges of first class citizenship. To suggest that a recognition of the rights of Negroes to the full privileges of American citizenship, and to such necessary contacts as might follow would inevitably result in intermarriage is to cast as serious and unjustified an aspersion upon the white race as upon the Negro race.
- J Believing as we do in the desirability of preserving the integrity of both races through the free choice of both, we would emphasize the following principles which we hold to be of basic importance for our thought and conduct:
1. **FREEDOM of speech must at all costs be preserved.** "Truth is mighty and will prevail." No minister, editor, teacher, state employee, business man or other citizen should be penalized for expressing himself freely, so long as he does so with regard to the rights of others. Any position which cannot stand upon its own merits and which can only be maintained by silencing all who hold contrary convictions, is a position which can not permanently endure.
 2. **AS AMERICANS and as Christians we have an obligation to obey the law.** This does not mean that all loyal citizens need approve the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court with reference to segregation in the public schools. Those who feel that this decision was in error have every right to work for an alteration in the decree, either through a further change in the Supreme Court's interpretation of the law, or through an amendment to the Constitution of the United States. It does mean that we have no right to defy the constituted authority in the government of our nation. Assuredly also it means that resorts to violence and to economic reprisals as a means to avoid the granting of legal rights to other citizens are never justified.

3. THE PUBLIC school system must not be destroyed. It is an institution essential to the preservation and development of our democracy. To sacrifice that system in order to avoid obedience to the decree of the Supreme Court would be to inflict tremendous loss upon multitudes of children, whose whole lives would be impoverished as a result of such action. It would also mean the economic, intellectual and cultural impoverishment of our section, and would be a blow to the welfare of our nation as a whole.

4. HATRED and scorn for those of another race, or for those who hold a position different from our own, can never be justified. It is only as we approach our problems in a spirit of mutual respect of charity, and of good will that we can hope to understand one another, and to find the way to a cooperative solution of our problems. God is no respecter of persons. Every human personality is precious in His sight. No policy which seeks to keep any man from developing fully every capacity of body, mind and of spirit can be justified in light of Scripture. This is the message of the Hebrew prophets as it is of Christ and His disciples. We shall solve our difficulties when we learn to walk in obedience to the Golden Rule: "Therefore, all things, whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them for this is the law and the prophets."

5. COMMUNICATION between responsible leaders of the races must be maintained. One of the tragedies of our present situation is found in the fact that there is so little real discussion of the issues except within the separate racial groups. Under such circumstances it is inevitable that misunderstandings will continue and that suspicion and distrust will be encouraged. One of the reasons that extreme measures have been so often proposed or adopted by groups within both races is found in the fact that those who are most concerned have seldom faced the issues in a free exchange of ideas. We believe that a willingness of the part of white leaders to talk with leaders of the Negro race, and to understand what those leaders are really seeking for their people is necessary and desirable. An expressed willingness on our part to recognize their needs, and to see that they are granted their full rights as American citizens, might lead to a cooperative approach to the problem which would provide equal rights and yet maintain the integrity of both races upon a basis of mutual esteem and of free choice rather than of force.

6. OUR DIFFICULTIES cannot be solved in our own strength or in human wisdom. It is appropriate, therefore, that we approach our task in a spirit of humility, of penitence, and of prayer. It is necessary that we pray earnestly and consistently that God will give us wisdom to understand His will: that He will grant us the courage and faith to follow the guidance of His spirit.

To such prayer and obedience we would dedicate ourselves and summon all men of good will.

Signers of Statement

These are the Atlanta ministers signing the declaration of beliefs on the racial problems in alphabetical order:

Charles L. Allen	Claud M. Haynes	Wilson Sneed
Wallace M. Alston	W.I. Howell	R.H. Stewart
Thomas Anderson	Herbert Hyde	Monroe F. Swilley Jr.
Raymond J. Ball	Bevel Jones	James W. Sosebee
Wade H. Boggs	Dow Kirkpatrick	W. Earl Strickland
Jack Bozeman	Robert E. Kribbs	Harry Tisdale
Lee Branham	Edward Lantz	Herman L. Turner
W.C. Budd	Robert E. Lee	L.F. VanLandingham
A.L. Burgreen	Fitzhugh M. Legerton	Wendell Wellman
Robert W. Burns	John Blix Lind	Albert Wells
C.W. Carpenter	Nat G. Long	Charles L. Widney
Randolph R. Claiborne Jr.	James D. Matthews	Allison Williams
Lamar Clements	Roy O. McClain	Eugene T. Wilson
Samuel T. Cobb	Harrison McMains	John Womack
E. Dudley Colhoun	W. Robert Mill	Milton L. Wood
Vance Daniel	Harold W. Minor Jr.	
Eugene Drinkard	Harry L. Mitcham	
Edward Driscoll	Walter Murphy	
L.B. Ellington	William E. Newton	
D.J. Evans	Stuart Oglesby	
Harry Fifield	Robert Ozment	
Emmett Floyd	Roy Pettway	
Austin Ford	J, Davison Philips	
J.T. Ford	Paul Renz	
Thomas A. Frye Jr.	J. McDowell Richards	
John Garber	Frank M. Ross	
Arthur Vann Gibson	E.D. Rudisill	
Victor A. Greene	Lester Rumble	
Joseph L. Griggs	Hugh Saussy Jr.	
Thomas Hagood	Charles F. Schwab	
Alfred Hardman	O. Norman Shands	
Dick H. Hall Jr.	Rembert Sisson	
	W. Thomas Smith	