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The white Christian churches' responses to the Black manifesto

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THE WHITE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES' RESPONSES
TO THE BLACK MANIFESTO

A THESIS

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Religion
The University of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religion (Social Ethics)

by

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May, 1973

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The major denominations in America attempted to confront the important social issues of the 1960's. When met with the practicality of acting upon some of the more controversial social problems, however, some churches made only partial commitments. During the civil rights movement, some white churches developed laissez-faire attitudes toward the dignity and justice of the black man.¹ When met with the challenge of carrying out the gospel message of love and justice, prominent churchmen often theologized rather than actualized their beliefs. Quite often white Christian churches advised black members to be patient and to listen to the words of the scriptures: "The first shall be last and the last first."²

One of the modern crusaders who most strenuously objected to this approach illustrated above was James Forman, a militant Black Power advocate, who sought to call attention to his people's economic plight in a dramatic way. Prophetic

¹Louis Lomax, The Negro Revolt (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1962), pp. 42-54. Cf. James H. Cone, "The White Church and Black Power," Black Theology and Black Power (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), pp. 62-90.

²Mark 10:31. All quotations from the Bible will be from The Jerusalem Bible. (New York: Published by Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966).

to some, ludicrous to others, Mr. Forman demanded that all white Christian churches make "reparations" to black people, that a financial restitution be made immediately for past wrongs, and, that, if necessary, blacks disrupt religious services to dramatize the importance of their demands.³

Forman himself took the lead and disrupted several worship services. The most famous, perhaps, was the interruption of the communion service at Riverside Church, an affluent interdenominational church in New York City. On May 4, 1969, Forman and his followers from the National Black Economic Development Conference (NBEDC) confronted the senior minister, Dr. Ernest Campbell, in the chancel of the Church and began reading their document of protest to the congregation. When violence seemed imminent, Dr. Campbell and most of his congregation walked out of the church and the service came to an abrupt halt.⁴ Forman and his group remained. He read a list of demands which had been made one week earlier at the National Black Economic Development Conference in Detroit, Michigan. The then little-known document, which would eventually stir some Christian churches to serious reflection about racism in the United States, called upon all white Christian churches to repay blacks for more than 300

³John Lovelace, "The Black Manifesto A Special Christian Advocate Newsfeature," Christian Advocate, July 10, 1969, pp. 3-23.

⁴Based on written correspondence between Dr. Ernest Campbell, senior minister of The Riverside Church, and the writer, March 8, 1972.

years of damage done through slavery. The Manifesto indirectly called upon all white Christian churches to respond.⁵

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this thesis is to describe, classify, and analyze the formal responses that the white Christian churches made to Mr. Forman and the Black Manifesto. Such a problem encompasses a consideration of the following questions: What responses did the churches give? What patterns developed within the responses? Why did the churches respond in the manner they did?

Delimitations

The thesis is limited to a consideration of the white Christian churches that Mr. Forman and his representatives formally challenged, the National Council of Churches, and the major white churches that officially replied to Forman.

The thesis is also limited in that it does not include the responses of the Jewish community, the Orthodox Churches, or the personal reactions of leading church spokesmen, or the clear and fiery replies of the black churches.

Finally, the thesis is limited to a description, classification, and analysis of the formal responses to the Black Manifesto. It does not include an analysis or discussion

⁵Leon Howell and Robert Lecky, "Reparation Now?," Christianity and Crisis, May 26, 1969, p. 141.

of the text of the Manifesto per se.

DEFINITIONS

White Christian Churches

The churches included in this category include the major white Protestant denominations, Roman Catholic representation, and the National Council of Churches, all of whom formally and officially responded to James Forman's demands.

These religious bodies are: The Episcopalian Church, the National Council of Churches, The Lutheran Church in America; the Roman Catholic Archdioceses of New York, St. Louis, and Chicago; the United Presbyterian Church of America; the American Baptist Convention; the United Methodist Church; the United Church of Christ; and the Reformed Church in America.

THE METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Four chapters follow this introduction. Chapter two will consider the necessary background information: the growth of black self-determination, the emergence of James Forman and the Black Economic Development Conference, the importance and need of the churches to respond to the demands of the Manifesto and a summary of the Manifesto. Chapter three will discuss the churches' responses and what led to each official or formal response; the chapter will also include a brief evolutionary process within the responses of each church body. Chapter four will offer two definite

patterns that were seen to develop within the churches' responses, an analysis of the responses, and some points of further study. The last chapter is basically a summary and sets forth the conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND OF THE MANIFESTO

The last chapter dealt with the general approach to the problem of this thesis and some of the limitations. Chapter two will demonstrate the need for a Black Economic Development Conference (BEDC), after white society's attempts to remedy the black dilemma. It will also show the emergence of James Forman and the Manifesto, and why there was a need for the white Christian churches to respond to both.

GROWTH OF BLACK SELF-DETERMINATION

Black America in the 1960's

After Martin Luther King's non-violent leadership during the 1950's, America witnessed an altogether different mood within the black community in the 1960's.

For the black ninth of the nation, the 1960's were a time of revolution--a decade of triumph as sweet and defeat as bitter as any in the Negro's long and tragic passage in white America. There was a glow of innocence about its beginnings, in the sit-ins and the Freedom Rides and the choruses of black children and white singing "We Shall Overcome" as if they believed they really might. But a taste of ashes soured in the fires of Watts and Newark and Detroit; it had witnessed the arrival of a new generation of Negro militants who preached separation and armed for war; it had been examined by a Presidential commission, mostly white and moderate to a fault, and advised that we are after all a racist society. And suddenly the Second Reconstruction of relations between the races in America seemed imminent peril of ending as the

First had, with the exhaustion of the white man's will even to carry on the attempt. The two America's were separate and alien when the decade of the 1960's began. They were farther apart still when it ended.¹

Within the structure of American social, political, and religious life, Martin Luther King had achieved, in a non-violent manner, a certain sense of dignity and respect for the black person; his mission involved liberation for black humanity through a type of redemptive love. His very last words bespoke a hope for complete liberation, for abolishment of all forms of white racism.² Ironically, his violent death sparked an even greater American division between black and white. Yet before his assassination and death in 1968, there was a struggle for leadership within the black community. His death left a "kaleidoscopic jumble of leaders who materialized, burned brightly for a season and flamed out almost as quickly as they had appeared."³ Among the "new" leaders there were: Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, and Bobby Seale. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panthers became more than just civil rights groups; they became platforms for various leaders to megaphone their messages: moderate, liberal, revolutionary, para-military.

¹Peter Goldman, Report from Black America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), p. 17.

²Martin Luther King, "A View From The Mountain Top," Renewal, April, 1969, pp. 3-4.

³Goldman, op. cit., p. 19.

In the later 1960's the nation witnessed the rise of black determination through verbal insistence, through bullets and bombs to overcome a racism that kept black freedom retarded.⁴

Yet, the late 1960's was a time of hope for the basic freedoms and rights in the field of economics. To a number of "new" blacks the condition of blacks would improve when the black man determined his own destiny, financially; when the black person developed his own economic power base and severed himself from white control. Thus, for many "new" blacks economic improvement was inversely proportionate to the growth of black self-determination.⁵

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL
BLACK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

The Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization-IFCO

One of the religious structures concerned with the improvement of the black economy was the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization-IFCO. This organization was an attempt upon the part of the major religious denominations to fund local community organizations committed to self-determination and self-help programs. Member denominations paid \$1,000 membership fee and were supposed to continue to contribute large sums of money, but many denominations' support

⁴Ibid.

⁵Anonymous, "A Message to the Churches from Oakland," Renewal, October-November, 1970, pp. 19-20.

ceased after payment of the initial fee.⁶ It was the IFCO that launched the plan for the eventual crystallization of the National Black Economic Development Conference between April 25-27, 1969. The organization's plans called for a coming-together of a cross section of black leaders to map out strategies for a more black-directed type of community development. Such a meeting was considered of the greatest importance.

The need for such a gathering, as well as the results must be seen in relation to social realities becoming clear in the months between September 1967 and April 1969. Among these was decreasing hope in the promise given by the government's war on poverty. The relative failure of the poverty programs to provide adequate correctives to unemployment, health, educational needs and poor housing was widely recognized before the presidential year of 1968. The government had stood as the source of legal impetus and funds for social improvement in civil rights and religious thrusts. Would it make appropriation commensurate with the needs?⁷

The future of social issues, poverty alleviation, and minority justice depended upon the Federal administration and the President's response to the problem of black self-determination. The problem of black economic progress was chiefly whether the black community could believe that the Federal government or the President was sincere about financial support and economic relief for blacks. 1967 had already

⁶Lucius Walker, "IFCO and the Crisis of American Society," in Black Manifesto, (eds.) Robert Lecky and Elliott Wright (New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1969), pp. 133-139.

⁷R. Lecky and E. Wright (eds.), "Reparations Now? An Introduction," Black Manifesto (New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1969), pp. 8-9.

marked the release of the Kerner Commission Report. However, even a year later in 1968 there was no serious effort to implement its recommendations. It soon became apparent that Federal programs of economic development for blacks were not likely to become national priorities. Thus, the continued economic superiority of the white man made the plight of the black man bleak.⁸

As the year 1969 began, the conditions of black Americans were largely dependent upon the willingness of a white-dominated economy to share its economic power with the blacks. A black economic base, which called for a greater participation in determining their own destinies, became a number one priority for the "new" blacks. Another priority was an economy devoid of free gifts from the same white man who had oppressed black people and their ancestors for years.⁹

It was mostly out of a sense of frustration at the failure of the white economic power structure to change, that the Reverend Lucius Walker, a black American Baptist clergyman and director of IFCO, invited interested blacks of various philosophies to travel to Detroit. The meeting, called the National Black Economic Development Conference, met at Wayne University on April 25, 1969. The meeting had no pre-conceived agenda or no conception of a permanent Black Economic

⁸Arnold Schuchter, Reparations: The Black Manifesto and Its Challenge to White America (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970), pp. xi-xx.

⁹Ibid.

Development Conference; nor did any one arrive with a written manifesto in his hands. The meeting was intended for, planned by, and involved with blacks only in an effort to influence the economic fate and to encourage self-determination of black people in a predominately white society.¹⁰

White pledges, white power and white plans for blacks were left outside. The conference received a 'bad press', no doubt partly because white journalists were also excluded. Except in black papers, the Black Manifesto itself was hardly reported when it was released, and was practically ignored by the large eastern dailies which control much of the nation's informational flow.¹¹

Throughout the conference, the black speakers and participants agreed on several points. As Lucius Walker himself stated later at his denomination's Convention, the meeting of the NBEDC was unanimous on such points as:

The irrelevance of black capitalism as a political slogan, which is intended to further co-opt and compromise the black community, the dysfunction of capitalist interest in contributing to the genuine liberation of the black community, and thirdly, an impatience with piecemeal programmatic projects for the economic development of the black community. There were repeated calls for comprehensive programs that would have addressed themselves to total control of black communities by black people.¹²

These main points showed themselves in many of the conference workshops and caucus resolutions and were repeated very emphatically and dramatically in a document presented by James

¹⁰Lecky and Wright, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Lucius Walker, op. cit., p. 137.

Forman on the last day of the conference.

THE EMERGENCE OF JAMES FORMAN

Zeitgeist¹³

In the fall of 1961 Forman left his job and career to assume a position with SNCC at \$60 a week; he was convinced of the critical need for social reform in black society. He had had experience in the Civil Rights movement. He was a leader with Jesse Jackson; stood behind Martin Luther King at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and later that same year became International Affairs Director for SNCC.¹⁴ The former Chicago school teacher, promising novelist, anti-religionist, Black Power advocate, James Forman was in the right place at the right time. For until the Black Economic Development Conference in Detroit, Forman had remained in the background, while the Rap Browns and Stokely Carmichaels spoke. On the closing day of the NBEDC meeting, April 27, 1969, James Forman presented the assembly with a document which would catapult him and his cause into national prominence. The document was called "The Black Manifesto."¹⁵

The introduction of the Manifesto was authored by

¹³Spirit of the Times - A further explanation of this word is contained in What Manner of Man by Lerone Bennett (New York: Pocket Books, 1965), p. 45.

¹⁴Religious News Service dispatch as quoted in Tempo, June 1, 1969, p. 3.

¹⁵The Black Manifesto by James Forman, first published in Renewal magazine is reprinted in Appendix 1.

Mr. Forman and was entitled: "Total Control of Black Communities--The Only Solution to the Black Economic Development." The second half of the document contained the list of demands and the call for \$500,000,000 from all "white racist churches and synagogues."¹⁶

Forman took the convention by surprise and brought the Manifesto to the convention floor for a vote. He won approval after a full and lively discussion. By a vote of 187 to 63, with a majority of the more than 500 delegates abstaining, the Manifesto became the official document of the conference. ¹⁷

Mr. Forman became the chief spokesman for the Manifesto and the leader for the United Black Appeal, an idea for fund raising for the black community that had originated a year earlier with IFCO. He became at once the symbol for the economically-deprived black man and the leader of the BEDC, although not its president.¹⁸

The events that followed the Detroit meeting marked Forman's emergence from relative obscurity to national prominence as a black spokesman. The actual authorship of programs and tactics in the Manifesto is unclear and matters little.

¹⁶James Forman, The Black Manifesto: Introduction: Total Control as the only Solution to the Economic Problems of Black People. As quoted in the Appendix, pp. 95-102.

¹⁷Ecumenical Press Service dispatch, "Black Economic Conference Demands \$500 Million 'Reparations' from Churches," May 8, 1969, pp. 2-3.

¹⁸Ibid.

Forman had written the preamble to the Manifesto and certainly had an influence on the main text.¹⁹

SUMMARY OF THE MANIFESTO

The Introduction-Total Control-the Only Solution

The Black Manifesto is "addressed to the white Christian Churches and the Synagogues in the United States of America and to all other racist institutions."²⁰ The document is a two-part declaration. The first part consists of introductory remarks by Forman followed by the Manifesto and its demands.

The only solution to the economic problems of black people is to separate themselves from any schemes of black capitalism and to take complete control of the economic scene. Those who participate in black capitalism are "black power pimps and fraudulent leaders."²¹ Other highlights of the introduction include the following:

1. Blacks are African people and must aid fellow brothers and sisters in Africa, a country exploited by the capitalistic, imperialistic government of the United States.
2. No oppressed people ever achieved freedom until they were willing to fight, using any means at their disposal.
3. Black people in the United States are the most

¹⁹Schuchter, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁰Forman, op. cit., p. 1.

²¹Ibid.

oppressed group; they have suffered the most from racism and exploitation, cultural degradation and lack of political power.

4. The oppressed will make the revolution an exercise of their black humanity.

5. Blacks must be concerned with the total conditions of all black people in the world.

6. Blacks must create a society where the total means of production are taken from the rich, the exploiters, other racists and placed into the hands of the state for the welfare of all people. This, according to Forman, is what he meant by "total control."

7. Blacks must assume leadership inside the United States to protect their self-interests.

8. Blacks must build a socialistic society within the United States, led by black people, not in a nation where there is a black nation.

9. Racism is so perverted that only violence and an armed, black-controlled government will insure the end of racism in this country.

10. Blacks should seize power where ever they are.²²

The Manifesto: Demands and Recommendations

The second part of the document contained the reflective demands and admonitions to the white and black worlds.

²²Ibid., pp. 2-8.

The highlights of the second part of the document:

1. A demand from the white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues of reparations of \$500,000,000, since they are part of the system of capitalism.
2. Black people in America are worth a minimum of \$15.
3. The money will be spent in the following way:
 - a. Establishment of a southern land bank to help black brothers and sisters to leave the United States because of racist pressure (\$200,000,000).
 - b. Establishment of 4 major publishing and printing industries in the United States (\$40,000,000).
 - c. Establishment of research skills center (\$30,000,000).
 - d. Establishment of TV networks to provide an alternative to current racist propaganda (\$10,000,000 each).
 - e. Establishment of a training center in mass communication skills (\$20,000,000).
 - f. Assistance to National Welfare Rights Organization (\$10,000,000).
 - g. Establishment of a National Black Labor Strike and Defense Fund (\$20,000,000).
 - h. Establishment of the International Black Appeal (IBA) (\$20,000,000); this will involve

the task of making more capital for businesses in the United States and in Africa; the IBA will be headed by James Forman.

- i. Establishment of a black university in the South (\$130,000,000).
- j. IFCO will allocate all unused funds.

4. To win their demands blacks must have massive support, therefore:

- a. All black people should consider themselves members of the NBEDC.
- b. Black people should act boldly when confronting the white oppressors.
- c. Blacks should urge others toward total disruption of selected church-sponsored agencies and stage sit-in demonstrations by all delegates and members of the NBEDC.
- d. Blacks must find whites who will take orders from blacks to implement the demands of the Manifesto.
- e. White members of churches must practice patience, tolerance, and non-violence in responding to the demand for reparations and disruptions to church and synagogue operations.
- f. Blacks must be willing to fight the church establishment and, if necessary, declare war on the white Christian churches and use whatever

means necessary to achieve success.

5. Finally, blacks must use force to get their demands, since the military and the church are working hand in hand, and since Christianity was used to help enslave black people.²³

THE NEED FOR A RESPONSE

The White Christian Churches and the Manifesto

The Kerner Commission Report of 1967 stated that within the United States unemployment, educational and economic poverty, poor housing, exploitation of blacks had been caused by white racism, "that white institutions had created the trouble, maintained it and condoned it."²⁴ Considered a moderate approach at the time, the report put the blame for urban problems on the white man.²⁵

In April of 1969, Forman and the writers of the Black Manifesto reiterated the conclusions of the Kerner Report and added that the churches have been sustained by the military might of the colonizers, that black people were enslaved by Christianity, that white institutions, in particular white churches, should repay black society in the amount of \$500,000,000, and that white Christian churches were participants in the continuing presence of injustice inside the

²³Ibid., pp. 8-16.

²⁴U. S. Riot Commission Report; Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), pp. 203-206.

²⁵Ibid.

United States. In essence, the Black Manifesto charged that the members of white Christian churches were guilty of being racist and, if they were truly interested in correcting the injustice of black poverty and oppression, churches should begin to actualize and not merely theologize their beliefs about social problems.²⁶

The Manifesto challenged the religious bodies to act; and demanded financial reciprocation and a call to action upon the gospel message, the working out of the law and love of Christ. Almost all of the white Christian churches responded to the Manifesto. To remain silent to Forman's demands and accusations could have been misconstrued as a sign of not caring. It seemed that the churches formally challenged by Forman did care. The fact remained that when asked to help the oppressed, when told they had sinned, the churches of Christ did respond.²⁷

In summary, the Manifesto developed out of a concern expressed by the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) for a renewed awareness of black dignity and pride, and economic self-determination. James Forman emerged as the major spokesman for the BEDC and the United Black Appeal. At the Detroit meeting of the National Black Economic Development Conference (NBEDC), he presented the Black Manifesto. The Manifesto was approved and adopted by

²⁶Forman, op. cit., p. 18.

²⁷Religious News Service dispatch as quoted in Tempo, June 1, 1969, pp. 3-9.

a slim margin with a substantial majority abstaining; it contained urgent demands and questions for the churches based upon the gospel message of love and justice.

The responses and descriptions given to Forman's demands and to the Manifesto will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESPONSES TO THE MANIFESTO

Chapter 2 described the background of the Manifesto, the growth of black self-determination, and the development of an economic conference. The reader was helped to understand the central character of the Manifesto, James Forman's action, and the demands of the Manifesto and the ramifications of the need for a response by each church body that was formally challenged. Chapter 3 will describe the formal responses of the nine religious bodies.

FORMAL RESPONSES

The Evolutional Development of the Responses

Most of the responses of the churches to the Black Manifesto needed the approval of church executive boards, the statement of a cardinal of a church, the meeting of a synod or convention of a church body. By the time the formal or official response was made to the Manifesto, the replies had been altered and brought through a type of developmental change.¹ What follows now are the nine responses from the church bodies that Forman and his group formally challenged.

¹Gayraud Wilmore, "The Black Manifesto Revisited," Christian Century, April, 1971, pp. 452-453.

The Episcopal Church

The first official challenge to the churches was given to the Episcopal Church by James Forman on May 1, 1969, in New York. IFCO director Lucius Walker and Forman led a delegation of twenty-five NBEDC members to meet Bishop Stephen F. Bayne and Bishop J. Brooke Mosley at the headquarters of the Episcopal Church. At this meeting Forman presented the entire ~~Black Manifesto to the bishops.~~ Later at a joint news conference held at the Center, Bishop Bayne commented: "The Church is dependent on voluntary contributions. And this kind of confrontation tactic of Forman's will accomplish nothing."² However, the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, John E. Hines, was out of the country at the time so Forman agreed to meet with him at a later date.

When Forman and Hines met on May 13, 1969, Forman demanded from the Episcopal Church, as its share of the \$500,000,000 in reparations: 1) a contribution of \$60 million to IFCO for the NBEDC 2) an annual donation of 60% of the profits of all church assets 3) a complete listing of all assets of the Episcopal Church in all dioceses in the United States.³

After an Executive Council meeting Bishop Hines characterized the language and basic philosophy of the Manifesto as

²Judy Mathe Foley, "Dealing with a Manifesto," The Episcopalian, July, 1969, p. 11.

³Ibid. Cf., also The Witness, "Demands of the Manifesto," June 12, 1969, p. 3.

. . . calculatedly revolutionary, Marxist, inflammatory and anti-Semitic and anti-Christian-establishment, violent, and destructive of any democratic process--so as to shock, challenge, frighten, and, if possible, overwhelm the institutions to which it is directed. It was not surprising, then, that throughout the white establishment the immediate response was, with few exceptions, one of outrage, furious hostility and disbelief.⁴

However, Bishop Hines further stated that although there was no commitment of his Church made to Mr. Forman or the demands of the Manifesto, the programmatic aspects of the document represented needs to which his church's program was directed:

For those of this Church who could get past the revolutionary rhetoric of the Manifesto, the program would speak meaningfully and perhaps persuasively. . . . This may be the moment for the Church to redouble her efforts, cut back on all non-essential spending for fabric and furbishings, and ask for emergency money--outside the budget--to provide seed money for poverty areas. We should consider a fund of \$10 million over the next five years throughout the Church to increase and deepen this Church's response to the clearly delineated needs of suffering and oppressed people.⁵

Bishop Hines appointed a committee to frame a response. The Manifesto response committee reported to the Executive Council and although the Council recognized the continuing poverty and injustice and racism that was inherent in our society, it did not accept the Manifesto as it was presented.⁶ The official response of the committee was:

⁴Ibid.

⁵Foley, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

⁶"The Key Resolutions," The Episcopalian, October, 1969, p. 7.

We are determined that this Church, in consultation with the Union of Black Clergy and Laymen in the Episcopal Church as well as with representatives of the poor, both within and without the Church, will mount further strategic attacks upon poverty and injustice which will call for great sacrifices. . . . The crisis is not primarily one of money but of human spirit and of how men deal with one another.⁷

After much discussion by the Executive Council, it was voted not to accept the document which demanded \$60 million from the Episcopal Church in the United States.

During the week of August 30-September 5, at Special Convention II at Notre Dame University, the Episcopal Church formally replied to the demands of the Manifesto. During this convention a spirit of open debate was mixed with a degree of anxiousness. The atmosphere appeared calm on the first day. However, on Sunday evening, August 31, the well-prepared plans and agenda took a somewhat unannounced turn. A group of blacks led by Muhammed Kenyatta of the NBEDC took over the meeting. The black members asked for immediate action by the Church's national governing body on race relations; they wanted a response to the Manifesto.⁸

A response was given in a formally adopted two-part resolution. Special Convention II (later called South Bend/69) made it clear to the membership that the Episcopal Church, under the direction of its Executive Council, rejected the revolutionary and "frenetic ideology" of the Manifesto. In

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

its brief resolution South Bend/69 stated:

1. Resolved, That this church reaffirm its commitment to the principle of self-determination for minority groups, as they attempt to organize the communities which they represent, and to the principle that it is the role of the Church to support programs which such groups themselves initiated, in accordance with the original criteria for the funding of such programs established by the General Convention of 1967; and be it further

2. Resolved, That this Church, while rejecting much of the ideology of the 'Black Manifesto', recognize that the BEDC is a movement which is an expression of self-determination for the organizing of the black community in America.⁹

The National Council of Churches (NCC)

Mr. Forman appeared before the General Board of the National Council of Churches on May 2, 1969. The Board said that it had not had enough time to study the Forman's proposals and referred them to a special meeting of its Executive Committee on June 23, 1969. In the meantime the General Board did adopt the following response to Mr. Forman:

The General Board of the National Council of Churches records its deep appreciation to Mr. James Forman for his presentation of and explanation concerning the Black Manifesto and shares the aspirations of the black people of the country from which it sprang.

The General Board, having been confronted with the Black Manifesto only a few hours before

⁹Ibid. For full and detailed coverage, the reader would profit immensely by reading the Special Convention II reports. The Convention is recorded in detail and with differing viewpoints best in The Living Church, July-December of 1969; and The Episcopalian, May-December, 1969. These periodicals provide interesting reading and contain the official resolutions about the Manifesto adopted during South Bend/69.

adjournment, deeply regrets that it has been unable to arrive at a decision which could be both immediately substantive and responsible.

However, the Board urges that the communions give serious study to the Manifesto, expecting that each communion will act on the matter in its own way.

The Board receives the Manifesto and refers it to the General Secretary with instructions to report to the Executive Committee of the General Board at its special meeting, scheduled to be held June 23, the most appropriate course of action that the Council should take on this important matter, authorizing the Executive Committee to act on behalf of the General Board.¹⁰

On June 23, 1969, the twenty-five member Executive Committee of the National Council of Churches (NCC) met to cope with the challenge presented by Forman and the demands of the Black Manifesto. Of the twenty-five members, twenty-two came to the special session. The members stated that they tried to respond in a way that was consistent with the Law of the Lord and the Gospel of Christ. In their formal statement they said:

Cognizant of the great injustices done to the black and the brown man by Christian white men throughout the entire history of our country. . . . We declare that we have no right under God to refuse to listen to any demand presented to us, whatever may be our initial reaction to the form it takes. The physical, psychological and spiritual distance which separates white churchmen from the ghetto. . . . The increasing gap between white liberals and the new black movements, the recent appearance of black caucuses within most of the larger communions, the threat to integration as a clear and unquestionable objective, and the continuing evidence of white racism as a major component of our present-day culture make it imperative that white churchmen in the name of Christ open every possible door and make every

¹⁰"NCC's General Board Meets Again," Tempo, June 1, 1969, p. 10.

attempt to listen.

But openness alone is not enough. There must be penitence and a readiness to make recompense. Remembering that if our brother has anything against us nothing we do is acceptable before the altar of God until first we be reconciled to our brother, we here solemnly commit ourselves to the removal of racial discrimination and human greed. We confess that we have no right to appear before the altar of God so long as this priority has not taken possession of us or in any moment of time when we have renounced it.¹¹

In another session held in Indianapolis on September 11 and 12, 1969, the General Board of the NCC met and responded to the Black Manifesto by urging member communions to raise an immediate sum of \$500,000 to meet needs of black clergy groups and put plans into motion to make available tens of millions of dollars for minority development.¹² This action came after an emotion-packed afternoon session on the first day, after an alternative proposal was defeated which included an independent response to the Manifesto's language. The introduction was similar to the response made by the NCC's Executive Board and added the following:

The NCC, aware of the grievances of the black people of this nation, while rejecting the ideology of the Black Manifesto, acknowledges the Black Economic Development Conference as a programmatic expression of the aspirations of black churchmen. The Black Economic Development Conference is a new agency among those agencies in the Black community directed toward the achievement

¹¹"NCC's General Board Responds to the Black Manifesto," Tempo, October 1, 1969, p. 4.

¹²Dorothy Rensenbrink, "Two Crowded Days in Indianapolis," Tempo, October 1, 1969, p. 3.

of economic justice for the deprived peoples of this land.¹³

It was in the light of this statement that the General Board adopted the following at its September 11 meeting:

1. a recommendation to the member communions for funding the five regional conferences for black churchmen

2. the NCC will ask for \$500,000 from its member communions to be utilized by the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization and the National Committee of Black Churchmen

3. the NCC called for a response from local, national, and state governments for the present racial crisis

4. the NCC urged member denominations to provide financial support to the National Committee of Black Churchmen to hold a series of regional conferences

5. the NCC pledged its determination to meet with representatives of the Black Economic Development Conference and other minority groups and assigned a special committee of 16 to coordinate the matter.¹⁴

Between November 30 and December 4, 1969, the NCC held its General Assembly in Detroit. The Assembly welcomed, adopted, endorsed, and passed resolutions regarding issues ranging from the alleged civilian massacres in Vietnam to broader representation for youth, women, and lay people, overpopulation, and peaceful dissent of the Vietnam War. There were no resolutions dealing with racial justice as it affects black Americans. And although James Forman made his presence known, there was

¹³"NCC's General Board Meets Again," op. cit., pp. 4, 11.

¹⁴Ibid.

no reference or resolution adopted concerning the Black Manifesto.¹⁵

Lutheran Church in America

On May 6 James Forman tacked the NBEDC's "Statement to the Lutheran Church in America" on the doors of the church house on Madison Avenue in New York City. There were seven basic demands:

1. We demand that the Lutheran Church in America support the Black Manifesto of the NBEDC.
2. \$50,000,000 in direct reparation.
3. A list of all church assets, business income, stock and real-estate investments.
4. 60% of the profits from these assets will be given to NBEDC.
5. The Lutheran Church must respond to the Mayor of New York for his racist attack upon our behaviour at Riverside Church, Sunday, May 4, 1969.¹⁶
6. The Lutheran Church must pressure all racist Christian churches to meet the demands of the NBEDC.
7. The Lutheran Church must disseminate to all white Christians and Jews in the United States the statement prepared by the black brethren who support the Black Manifesto, but whose message was never published in the racist white papers of this country.¹⁷

President Robert J. Marshall of the Lutheran Church in America

¹⁵"Images and Capsules: Detroit at a Glance," Tempo, December 15, 1969--January 1, 1970, p. 4.

¹⁶The mayor of New York City, John Lindsay, called the behaviour of James Forman and his followers shocking, New York Times, May 5, 1969, pp. 1, 37.

¹⁷This summary was based upon "The Editor's Ambo; Reparations for Blacks: toward thought and action," Lutheran Forum, July-August, 1969, pp. 17-18.

listened to the reading of the seven demands and then refused to comment or enter into the controversy. The Church Council, the executive group of the American Lutheran Church, however, rejected the Manifesto and, in particular, the "strong, seditious language of the document which demanded \$500 million in reparations from U. S. churches and synagogues."¹⁸ The American Lutheran Church Council said that the demands for reparations had arisen because of "anguish and frustration in a segment of our society but added that portions of the document were inflammatory, filled with hate and must be repudiated."¹⁹

However, any further response from the Lutheran Church in America to Forman's demands would have to be deferred until the entire Executive Council's regular meeting in October. In the interim President Marshall asked the Board of Social Ministry to appoint a blue-ribbon committee to study the demands and recommend a response.

In October the American Lutheran Church replied to the Manifesto demands. When the Executive Council met that month, the answer became clear. The Lutheran Church in America's answer to the BEDC was one of rejection. A short description of the meeting of the Council in New York has been recorded:

¹⁸"Churches Reject 'Seditious' Theme of Black Manifesto," The Lutheran, August 28, 1969, p. 26.

¹⁹"ICA Ill. Synod Takes Stand," The Lutheran, July 16, 1969, p. 23.

The Executive Council of the 3.3 million-member Lutheran Church in America has termed the 'political philosophy' of the Black Manifesto 'unacceptable.'

Meeting for the first time since James Forman posted the Black Manifesto on the doors of the LCA headquarters here last May, the group said LCA funds ought not to be given to the BEDC-or any other organization-whose goals, purposes or tactics are incompatible with the Poverty and Race Relations social statements of the LCA. . . .

The council rejected the concept of reparations by saying theologians understand the word one way, sociologists another, governments yet another.

Each LCA board, commission and auxiliary was asked to examine specific aspects of its work and report proposals for implementation to the denomination's Coordinating Committee on Race.²⁰

The Executive Council of the LCA did propose to give serious consideration in developing the financial program of the Church to courses of action relating to social need and directed each board, commission, and auxiliary of the church body to examine specific aspects of its work to determine how these could best be used to promote human dignity and equality of opportunity.²¹

One course of action that the LCA urged upon the constituent units of the LCA was that "measures be taken to counteract America's basic mistrust of black people's capacity

²⁰Glen Stone, "The Sounds of Silence," Lutheran Forum, December, 1969, p. 12.

²¹This statement is based upon written and verbal correspondence between Donald E. Trued, Assistant to the Secretary of the Lutheran Church in America, on February 28, 1973; and the Executive Council Minutes, Fourth Biennium--5th Meeting, dated October 16-17, 1969, p. 493.

for leadership as evidenced in the lack of autonomy of the black community."²² Another measure taken by the council was a resolution asking congregations within the Lutheran community to discuss with openness the concern of reparations and to express good faith through support of their Priorities Program, Project Equality, and all inner city ministries.

The Illinois Synod of the LCA adopted a response to the Manifesto that was typical of most other Lutheran groups in rejecting the black demands.

The Black Manifesto speaks to us out of the gulf that separates rich from poor, powerful from powerless, black from white. . . . Our conscience cannot let this voice go unheeded. We must recognize that unless the church and the white community respond, our nation and society will be in danger of blowing up in our faces. We must acknowledge the challenge to the church--an imperative that we examine, judge, and reform our political, social and economic systems. We do this without endorsing the philosophies or the tactics of the manifesto.²³

The Roman Catholic Church (Archdiocese of New York)

On May 9, 1969, in a downpour of rain, Mr. Forman and another NBEDC member sought a meeting with Terence Cardinal Cooke at the New York Archdiocese chancery office. Cardinal Cooke was out of town, but Forman presented the BEDC's demands to the members of the Cardinal's staff regarding the Catholic Church. He quoted from Doctor Eugene Carson Blake and Alfred Balk:

²²Stone, loc. cit.

²³"LCA Ill. Synod Takes Stand," loc. cit.

1. Every year religious organizations gather about \$5 billion in contributions. The value of their visible assets has been estimated at \$79.5 billion--almost double the combined assets of the country's five largest industrial corporations.

2. Of this treasure, approximately \$44.5 billion worth is held by the Roman Catholic Church.

3. The Catholic Church must be the biggest corporation in the United States. They have a branch office in almost every neighborhood. Their assets and real estate holdings must exceed those of Standard Oil, AT & T, and U.S. Steel combined. Their roster of dues-paying members must be second only to the tax rolls of the U.S. government.²⁴

4. When one remembers that churches pay no inheritance tax (churches do not die), that churches may own and operate business and be exempt from the 52% corporate income tax, and that real property used for church purposes is tax exempt, it is not unreasonable to prophesy that with reasonably prudent management, the churches ought to be able to control the whole economy of the nation within the predictable future.²⁵

The latter part of the written statement contained the demands:

1. That the Catholic Church in the United States give the BEDC a list of all assets, unrelated business income, stock, and real-estate investments, pensions, retirements, and investment funds.

2. \$200 million to establish a southern land bank, as outlined in the Manifesto.

²⁴ Alfred Balk, The Religion Business, p. 8, John Knox Press, as quoted in Lecky and Wright, eds., Black Manifesto (New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1969), p. 144.

²⁵ Doctor Eugene Carson Blake as quoted in Lecky and Wright, eds., Black Manifesto (New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1969), p. 145.

3. That the Catholic Church in the United States support the Black Manifesto and use its power and influence "to pressure all white racist Christian churches and Jewish synagogues to meet the demands of the NBEDC for reparations due to the role of the Christian and Jewish religions in exploiting black people in this country."²⁶

The Archdiocese issued an unsigned, four-page statement on May 21, 1969, rejecting the concept of reparations and denouncing the Manifesto as closely joined to political concepts which were completely contrary to "the American way of life," but at the same time stating that the Church was deeply concerned for its black brothers and sisters. Part of the statement said:

The recent public statements by Mr. James Forman of the NBEDC have caused all of us to reflect deeply upon some of the frustrations and aspirations of the black people. It is regrettable that in the Black Manifesto these concerns are closely joined to political concepts which are completely contrary to our American way of life. On this basis, in addition to the manner of presentation and other substantive considerations, we do not endorse the Black Manifesto or its demands. . . . The Church's concern for the poor is practical. Catholic Charities, through its 203 social welfare agencies, provides a variety of services to the needy and disadvantaged, regardless of race or religion. These services, related to health, family welfare, child care, and youth activities, involved last year a cash expenditure of \$5,764,000 donated by the people of the Archdiocese of New York.

²⁶James Forman, "BEDC Demands Presented to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York," quoted in Appendix 5, Lecky and Wright, Ibid.

. . . . Last year the amount spent by the archdiocese to meet the deficit for the cost of the education of inner-city children was \$1,279,000. This figure was added to all the direct expenditures of local parishes and individuals.

. . . . 'Reparations' and 'collective guilt' are highly controversial concepts. Nevertheless, it is clear that a good society has the responsibility to develop equitable and adequate political, social, and economic opportunities for all its people. In the light of history, there is a particular responsibility toward the black people. In this area, the Church has made persevering efforts to form consciences, to change attitudes and to promote effective legislation. Much more remains to be done; we shall continue to work with all Church members toward the achievement of these ends.

The Church's deep concern stems from the very heart of the message of Jesus, most recently reaffirmed in the words of the Second Vatican Council: 'the right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone' (Pastoral Constitution on Church in Modern World, n. 69).²⁷

The Roman Catholic Church of New York did not meet any of the demands of Mr. Forman, nor did any other Roman Catholic archdiocese or diocese in the United States. And only two other archdioceses were directly involved: St. Louis and Chicago. In the capitol of Missouri, on June 11, Cardinal J. J. Carberry had warned against "planned interference with church services" or a series of protests that would take on various forms of uniqueness, like spitting in the communion cup. Cardinal Carberry rejected what he called the blackmail

²⁷"Response of the Archdiocese, May 21, 1969," as quoted in Appendix 5, Ibid.; also based upon written communication between Cardinal Cooke's secretary, Monsignor Eugene Clark, and the writer, March 13, 1972.

demands of the Manifesto and declared that the archdiocese "would not condone planned church interruptions or tolerate blasphemous threats against the Sacrament of Communion."²⁸

In Chicago on May 18 Herman Holmes of the BEDC made the Manifesto known to John Cardinal Cody's staff; the Archdiocese was asked for \$5 to \$7 million, but there was no response from the Cardinal or his staff.²⁹

The United Presyterian Church in U. S. A.

On May 15, 1969, James Forman addressed the Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church. He demanded \$80 million for the IFCO as the United Presbyterian share in implementing the Black Manifesto; 60% of the income from the stocks, bonds, and other investments; proceeds from denominational investments in South Africa, and extensive land holdings in Southern states.³⁰

The Assembly had invited Forman to speak. It set up a committee and appointed Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. as chairman of Division of Church and Race Board of National Missions, United Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. (UPCUSA). The committee wrote a lengthy response to the demands of the

²⁸Lecky and Wright, "A Chronology," op. cit., p. 166.

²⁹Ibid., p. 160. Also based on a telephone conversation between John Cardinal Cody of Chicago and the writer, April 3, 1973.

³⁰Early Tracy, "Betty Thompson Chronicles the Black Manifesto Debate," Ecumenical Press Service, July 10, 1969, p. 14.

Manifesto. However, it was through the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Reverend George E. Sweazey, that a response was made by way of a letter to pastors and members of the UPCUSA, since no commitment was made at the General Assembly in San Antonio. The Reverend Sweazey stated that there was much publicity made of Mr. Forman's speaking to the Assembly at San Antonio, but that the Assembly did not adopt any authorization of any demand made by Forman. He further stated that the Assembly was sympathetic to the cause of the black man and of abolishing poverty and racism, and promised prayers and faithfulness. In particular to the content of the Manifesto, the letter stated:

We believe that we must do the authors of the Black Manifesto the courtesy of assuming that they meant what the words say. When we do that we must and we do reject much that is in the document: its Marxist ideology; its rejection of the church; its calls for violence and for the overthrow of our government; its design for interfering with services of worship and the taking over of church property; and its threatening demand for so-called reparations. These are all out of harmony with our Christian understanding of life, particularly as expressed in the Confession of 1967: 'The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church's mission. The church follows this pattern in the form of its life and in the method of its action.' (Par. 9.32, 9.33)

Nevertheless, the very existence of the Black Manifesto adds to the frightful evidence of intolerable inequities in American society and reveals the bitterness of those who despair of our affluent nation to correct the worsening plight of the poor makes the current crisis daily more explosive. As citizens, we are all required to set new standards in government, in business, and in human relations. As Christians, we shall respond not out of fear or in answer to pressure

but out of love and in obedience to our Lord.³¹

In a more official response by the UPUSA the General Assembly referred to responding positively to the Kerner Report, that the crisis of racial injustice was increasing sharply, that society was inhumane to poor people's needs, that whites were complacent, and that Forman like all prophets was disturbing. As the official statement declared:

We do not agree with all their methods ~~[brown and black minorities] ideas and programs.~~ Our concern is to hear through their pleas the call of Christ, and where possible to identify with them in their hope and to work with them toward a more human future for all men. We do this not from fear but from love. To do less is to reject the Lord.

The 181st General Assembly reaffirms its basic position and rejects the concept of two societies within our nation and recommits itself to work for one society with many diverse parts functioning as one people under God with mutual respect for one another; rejects the use of violence in any form and recommits itself to the non-violent solution to the problems of the nation and the world; rejects the idea of the violent overthrow of our government and reaffirms its faith in the democratic process of government while acknowledging its imperfections.

In this light the 181st General Assembly has accelerated existing programs and takes new steps toward securing these ends, such as: land loans and grants for economic development, and a new fund to be used in depressed areas and among depressed peoples.

Let it be clear that it is our intention, by the carrying out of these programs, that we set in motion the means whereby these friends will assume control of their own lives in their own communities in their own way. Indeed, to aid to the extent of the church's capabilities--the full

³¹George Sweazey, "A Letter from the Moderator About the General Assembly," Presbyterian Life, June 15, 1969, p. 5.

establishment of human dignity.³²

The General Assembly did vote to conduct a campaign to raise \$50 million for the poor, give some church-owned lands in New Mexico to Mexican-Americans, and give \$100,000 to IFCO.³³

In a letter mailed May 21, 1969, to Presbyterians around the country, moderator of the Assembly Sweazey offered a summation of the meeting plus these words:

The General Council, therefore, assigned time on the docket to hear James Forman, the militant leader of the new National Black Economic Development Conference. This invitation in no way implied any approval of Mr. Forman's program and methods or of the mover. This manifesto obviously contains much that is impossible and much to which our church must be unalterably opposed. But James Forman is at the present time the most disturbing critic of the churches from the extreme militant point of view. We needed to hear him, to listen thoughtfully to him, to try to understand what he represents. . . . His [Forman's] coming makes it possible that some will understand the most creative actions of the Assembly as occasioned by the demands of the Black Manifesto or as taken hastily in fear. The fact is that no church money is being put into funds which are under the control of Mr. Forman's group. The Assembly did what it did through its own channels and in its own way.³⁴

The American Baptist Convention

James Forman made an appearance at the American Baptist

³²Official Statement of Response by the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., San Antonio, Texas, May 21, 1969, quoted in Tempo, June 1, 1969 pp. 8-9.

³³Kay Longcope, "UPCUSA at San Antonio: A Denomination Responds," Tempo, June 1, 1969, p. 8.

³⁴Sweazey, loc. cit.

Convention gathering in Seattle, Washington, on May 17, 1969. He appeared before the annual meeting and demanded \$60 million and 60% of the Convention's income from investments.

Dr. Thomas Kilgore, Jr., president of the Convention, stated that the original figure of \$500 million demanded by Forman in the Manifesto was not an unrealistic figure, but that he did not agree with Mr. Forman's tactics and the word "reparations" was the wrong word to use. However, in substance Kilgore agreed with the demands which Forman was making.

The Convention did not vote any money for Mr. Forman, although the Seattle meeting did try to come to grips with the specific proposals made by Forman.³⁵

The Executive Committee of the General Council grappled with the demands of Mr. Forman and the demands of their own consciences. They saw the language of the Manifesto as offensive; the Executive Committee rejected the violent ideology, affirmed its belief that all men were created equal before God, declared that white society has created two separate systems and structures, made it clear that "reparations" to Baptists carried the interpretations of atonement.³⁶

³⁵Based upon written correspondence between Kathleen Singer, Administrative Assistant to the General Secretary of the American Baptist Convention, and the writer, September 5, 1972. Enclosed within the letter was a two-page statement by the Executive Committee of the General Council, which is the governing body of this religious denomination. The enclosure was dated June 13, 1969, and was prefaced by Edwin Tuller, General Secretary of the American Baptist Convention.

³⁶Ibid.

The Executive Committee of the General Council of the American Baptist Convention also made it clear that all Baptists should make a commitment to God and Jesus Christ to rid our society of inequities. They pledged themselves as:

. . . . reconciling agents in the freeing of the vast resources of this country, both spiritual and material, toward correcting the inequities perpetrated on the non-white peoples of this land by white dominated social, political, and economic structures.³⁷

It was clear that Baptists must confess to a sense of guilt for having destroyed the equality of men. The Executive Committee referred to the wide-spread, deep-rooted racism among American Baptists as among all Americans. As the Executive Committee stated in its letter to the American Baptist Constituency:

We would do well to recognize in the present challenge of black leadership an opportunity to begin to replace guilt and hostility with freedom and peace, not as shibboleths applied to a system, but as mature insights in our own very soul.³⁸

Further, this Executive Committee recommended to its Constituency that the ideology and rhetoric of the Black Manifesto be rejected, while suggesting that all Christians ought to give thanks to God for Forman's call to repentance, restoration and reconciliation; it also considered re-evaluation

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

of long-standing programs and priorities in the fields of education, community development, and investment. The Executive Committee called upon all American Baptist churches to give first priority to material and spiritual resources that would help eliminate racial injustice. Finally, the Executive Committee summed up the Church's role:

This country is engaged in a great struggle, a struggle for freedom in the truest sense of that word. The church has a unique role to play in this confrontation. We must maintain our own integrity as a free institution in society; no people can ever gain their freedom at the expense of the freedom of others. But the democratic processes of this nation must be made to work, and this can only happen if we make an immediate commitment to establish a new equality of all people.³⁹

The United Methodist Church

Supporters of James Forman held a sit-in in the offices of the United Methodist Board of Missions on May 21, 1969, in New York City. They agreed to hold a special meeting of its Executive Committee on May 26 to consider the black demands of the Manifesto. The demands were similar to those presented to other church bodies. Those members of the Board who met in the Interchurch Center in New York City on May 21, 1969, asked that the Board allow the BEDC \$750,000 in the next fiscal year, grant the BEDC 60% of its annual income from investments, and raise over \$1 million for specified causes.⁴⁰

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Tracy, op. cit., p. 14.

Even before Mr. Forman presented the Manifesto document in Detroit, April, 1969, the United Methodist Church had been working on a series of programs for racial equality. The Black Methodists for Church Renewal had already shown its strength as a well-coordinated caucus successful in a number of program thrusts during the 1968 General Conference of the United Methodist Church.⁴¹

On May 26 the Executive Committee of the Board of Missions met and rejected the BEDC demands. The Board proposed its own program of a possible \$1.3 million for economic empowerment for blacks to be controlled by six black bishops and black personnel. The Executive Committee of the Board of Missions voted to give \$300,000 immediately and to seek another \$1 million when the full Board met in Boston in October. All the money was to be spent for economic empowerment of black people.⁴²

However, a wider-based United Methodist response to the demands of the Manifesto began developing from a meeting of officers and executives of several General Boards and Agencies in June in Washington, D. C. The leaders were summoned by the Commission on Religion and Race and adopted a statement acknowledging that the Manifesto and the NBEDC have "become subjects of concern. . . . and the Manifesto both in its

⁴¹This statement is based on information in the Journal of the Second Annual Meeting of the Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church, October 23-31, 1969, Appendix F "Racism and Minority Empowerment," pp. 70-71.

⁴²"A Chronology of the Racial Crisis and Some Responses," Daily Christian Advocate, April 23, 1970, p. 168.

ideology and its economic dimensions raises issues that expose us to new responsibilities to understand the crises in our nation."⁴³ Specifically, the leaders' statement:

1. Urged all United Methodist boards and agencies to reorder priorities so substantial funds and resources may be made available for economic and community development under leadership of black people.

2. Called on the Council of Bishops to call a special session at the earliest possible date to lead the church in a meaningful understanding of and response to implications of the Black Manifesto.

3. Recommended that the Program Council, in co-operation with the Board of Missions, the Board of Christian Social Concerns, and the Commission on Race and Religion, assemble a statement of facts regarding the Black Manifesto, the IFCO that the material may be distributed church-wide, and that the Program Council promote study and discussion of the material in every local church.

4. Urged local churches and annual conferences to reorder their financial and program priorities in all meeting agendas so that these issues may be dealt with this summer.

We take this action in keeping with the actions of the General Conference of 1968 and expect this response to be made through structures and programs of the United Methodist Church.⁴⁴

On October 23-27, 1969, the Board of Missions met in Boston, Massachusetts, and decided to allocate \$1.3 million to alleviate the U. S. racial crisis; it earmarked \$300,000 to the IFCO. \$550,000 was to be given to five Methodist-sponsored black colleges in the South: Rust, Clark, Paine, Houston-Tillotson, and Bennett. A special program on

⁴³John Lovelace, "The Black Manifesto, A Special Christian Advocate Newsfeature," The Christian Advocate, July 10, 1969, p. 3.

⁴⁴Ibid.

racism of the World Council of Churches was given \$100,000 and \$50,000 went to the National Committee of Black Churchmen, and \$25,000 to the Black Methodists for Church Renewal; the Women's Division also voted to give \$20,000 to the Black Methodists for Church Renewal.⁴⁵

The Board also voted to join the Board of Education in seeking to raise \$2 million for 13 Methodist black colleges. Other major actions included: 1) approving a program for furloughed missionaries to orient them to the black revolution, 2) adoption of a \$1 million program to train and employ black community developers as assistants to black pastors to relate churches more closely to their neighborhoods.⁴⁶

In a report on Racism and Minority Empowerment, the Board made these final comments:

The history of the American experiment reveals that most minority groups have had to achieve power in order to gain initial equality of opportunity. This opportunity, once realized, has provided the threshold from which such groups have gone on to the achievement of wider participation in society. The current emphasis on empowerment, self-reliance, and separatism may be seen as a temporary but essential element in facilitating further minority group participation. Separatism is not a goal in this instance but a phase in a process of moving toward a fuller community.

The tasks which emerge for the Church in this situation are twofold: first, we should support the processes by means of which minority groups achieve the power to create a place of dignity in the community; and secondly, we need a goal toward which a truly pluralistic society can move. It is not

⁴⁵"Mission and Reconciliation: Information for Delegates," Daily Christian Advocate, April 23, 1970, p. 167.

⁴⁶Ibid.

sufficient for the Church to reject separatism, a concept quickly embraced by both white racists and black nationalists. We must show a better way.⁴⁷

The United Church of Christ

On June 3, 1969, demands of the Manifesto were made known to the United Church of Christ (UCC). The demands included \$130 million for a black university, a UCC-related Tougaloo College, Mississippi, and \$10 million for Black Appeal. President Ben Mohr Herbster had no response. On June 11, 1969, Forman and his followers came to the 16th-floor of the Interchurch Center, the UCC's Board of World Ministries, and occupied the offices, took over use of the equipment on behalf of the NBEDC. The UCC staff members were allowed on the floor and during the two days of occupation, the UCC shared information with the occupiers about the nature and scope of the board's work in Rhodesia, South Africa, and Asia. The occupation was disciplined, non-violent, and constructive.⁴⁸

On June 13, 1969, Forman and his people were asked to leave the premises. He did so with the knowledge that the UCC would take his demands seriously.⁴⁹ The UCC would answer Forman more formally and concretely during their General Synod 12 days later.

On that first day of the Synod of the UCC, James Forman

⁴⁷Journal of the Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church, loc. cit.

⁴⁸Tracy, op. cit. p. 15.

⁴⁹Ibid.

spoke to the assembled delegates. After an introduction by Edwin R. Edmonds, chairman of the United Church Ministers for Racial and Social Justice, Forman, described by Edmonds as the "distinguished prophet of our time," expressed his appreciation on behalf of the NBEDC for the opportunity to speak. Forman also made it clear that the spirit of capitalism is contrary to the spirit of Christianity and asked the assembled to comply with the first nine demands of the Manifesto. He also stated that the UCC, a two-million member Church, should pay \$140 million in "reparations" to underwrite such projects as: black printing presses, a black university, black radio and TV networks, and a Southern land bank for cooperative farms.⁵⁰

The Synod reacted to his demands and to his challenge. A group of UCC members sparked by Albert Cleage led a movement of positive response to the Manifesto.⁵¹ Forman had polarized the delegates. And when 120 whites and blacks took over the platform and rearranged the black letters of the massive backdrop on stage to read Untied Church of Christ, the Synod recessed while the Executive Council brought about a compromise. The compromise consisted in: making the UCC Committee for Racial Justice a permanent church commission with a voting majority of black churchmen with a budget in excess of \$500,000

⁵⁰James Huffman, "Black Threats Move United Church of Christ," Christianity Today, July 18, 1969, p. 36.

⁵¹Ibid.

a year, initial informational studies by appropriate agencies about UCC's cooperation in the establishment of a black university, establishing a southern land bank and black publishing and printing industries, initiating a new decision-making process for investment policies in which black members of the UCC be given a share of responsibility, and finally, urging that all denominational funds be withdrawn from financial institutions doing business with South Africa.⁵²

However, President Ben Herbster on June 26, 1969, stated to the General Synod:

I think a word may be in place here concerning the Manifesto of the National Black Economic Development Conference. I want it to be clearly understood that I will have no truck with the basic philosophy that is behind this Manifesto. The Administrative Committee has expressed its judgment very cogently in a letter to Mr. Forman and I agree with that judgment:

While we share your concern for racial and social justice, we do not share the ideology expressed in your introduction to the Black Manifesto given at the meeting of the NBEDC in Detroit. The statement which anticipates 'revolution which will be an armed confrontation and long years of sustained guerilla warfare inside this country' is offensive to a Church committed to human brotherhood.

The United Church of Christ will continue to commit financial support and leadership to programs directed to the realization of justice and freedom for all people. As in the past, these resources will be channelled through the agencies of the Church.

Therefore, the Administrative Committee on behalf of the United Church of Christ, declines to meet the demands you make upon it.

⁵²Telfer Mook, "Forman at 475: What Happened and What's Ahead," United Church Herald, September, 1969, pp. 34-35.

You and I must not allow any irritation of our own blind us to the fact that the religious bodies in America, the Christian church in America, and the United Church of Christ need to do much more concerning the crisis than what we are doing. We must never lose sight of the fact that after James Forman and the 'Manifesto' are long forgotten we are going to have this problem with us: the problem of inequality, of injustice, of unequal opportunity. This is the important thing and to this the Church must address itself.⁵³

On the closing day of the General Synod, President-elect Robert V. Moss, Jr. spoke to the closing session of his satisfaction with the progress the Synod made in the fields of Vietnam, amnesty, and the black man. He remarked that the Synod had made a significant effort and start toward giving black men power within the UCC, and toward giving black self-determination.⁵⁴ He proposed a day of reconciliation and ended by quoting Matthew 5:23,24:

If you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar and go at once to make peace with your brother; then come back and offer your gift to God.

The Reformed Church in America

The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) met in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on June 6, 1969. James

⁵³"Interrobangs," an address by President Ben Herbster, June 26, 1969, quoted in the Minutes of the Seventh General Synod, United Church of Christ, Boston, Massachusetts, June 25-July 2, 1969, pp. 193-194.

⁵⁴"The President-Elect's Address to the Closing Session--The Rev. V. Moss, Jr.," July 2, 1969, Minutes of the Seventh General Synod, United Church of Christ, June 25-July 2, 1969, pp. 253-254.

Forman was there to address the gathering and explained to RCA the demands of the NBEDC. He gave reasons and justifications for the demands of the Manifesto and listed some of the projects that would be established through the financial demands. Some of the demands were already made known to other church bodies, but there were some additions. He demanded:

1. That Southern land banks be cooperatively owned.
2. That four major publishing houses inside the United States be located in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Detroit, and New York City.
3. That there be black-controlled TV stations.
4. That a research skill center be formed for blacks.
5. That a school for community involvement be started to train blacks in TV and radio repair.
6. That \$10 million be made available to work with recipients' rights.
7. That \$20 million be established for a National Black Labor Strike and Defense Fund.
8. That a United Black Appeal be formed.
9. That a black university be established.⁵⁵

Mr. Forman also spoke of the press conference that had been held earlier at the Church's headquarters in the Interchurch Center at 475 Riverside, New York City, and of the three demands made of the Reformed Church at that time:

1. To implement the demands of the Manifesto which calls for the creation of four major publishing houses inside the United States.
2. To demonstrate good faith in its intentions to help in the implementation of the demands of the Manifesto.
3. A list of assets, real-estate holdings, unrelated business items, pension funds and Southern investment policies, and negotiation of what should be donated to the conference.⁵⁶

⁵⁵"Report on Response to the Black Manifesto," from Minutes of the 1969 General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, p. 98.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 99.

There was a referral of Forman's demands to the Committee of Reference, who in turn appointed an Ad Hoc Committee which included some members of the General Synod Executive Committee, and some members of the Standing Committee on the General Program Council, and some black delegates. The report of this Ad Hoc Committee brought this response:

It is a fact of history that the times of greatest human progress have been the times of greatest upheaval. We have in these more recent days been made more aware than ever before that we are in the midst of a period of cataclysmic upheaval when we are being shaken to the very foundations and our Christian faith.

The appearance before this General Synod of Mr. James Forman and some of his associates of the National Black Economic Development Conference, the liberation of our denominational headquarters, the private conversations some of our people have had with him, have brought us to a new and far deeper understanding of the suffering and denial of manhood that vast members of our citizens have experienced.⁵⁷

The rest of the response contained thanks to Mr. Forman for making God's will known through the white-black confrontation of justice, thanking God for His unexpected manners of speaking to the Reformed Church in America, asking for reconciliation with one's brothers, seeing their black brothers in Christ in a deeper light, opening new avenues which made the Reformed Church in America aware of the plight of the black man in America, and finally, for sending blacks to the General Synod so that the members of the Reformed Church in America

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 99-100.

could love them.⁵⁸

The Ad Hoc Committee made several "confessions" in connection with the response to Forman's demands: 1) a false pride in their relationships with God and their relationships with their brothers, 2) ineptness to carry out practical responses to grave injustices, 3) the wrong use of economics, 4) feeling too secure and comfortable while blacks had been denied identity, 5) trust in their own programs more than the people; manipulating people to push forward their own program, 6) that as regards racism they were sinners.⁵⁹

Finally, the Ad Hoc Committee made the following observations, recommendations, and decisions at the end of the report:

We reject Mr. Forman's ideology, plans, and tactics with the projected use of force, treading on the rights of other peoples with respect to the dignity of the individual or other organizations. Such statements and behaviour on the part of the NBEDC are evident that its members desire to use themselves and their goals the very methods which they condemn the white community for having used. Having awakened to the injustices we have helped to shape, we deplore such methods no matter who uses them.

While we firmly disagree with the ideology Mr. Forman espouses, as well as his tactics, we do recognize that the injustices to which he points are real. We Christians have power; this Mr. Forman has amply demonstrated. We must individually and collectively take concrete action to help resolve injustices so that the Black Man can stand up and affirm in truth, 'I, too, am a man!', sharing fully in his own self-determination even as do we.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 100.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 101.

Having expressed our gratitude to God for what He has done and having tried to express honestly our sin, this confrontation has made us see that the central issue in self-determination is the power to make the decisions which affect one's own life. Within the Church, decision-making structures are so dominated by the presence, attitudes, values and traditions of the white people, that only by a planned restructure can minority groups have the ability to make decisions vital to their own communities, and the congregations to which they belong. A variation on this theme is the question of how black persons in ecclesiastical authority are chosen. Presbyterian church government calls for persons to elect their own representatives. Our hope and intention is that a portion of the denominational trusteeship be placed directly under the stewardship of our black brothers within the Reformed Church in America.⁶⁰

Then, the Ad Hoc. Committee sent 12 recommendations for the General Synod's adoption and approval concerning the ramifications of the Manifesto's demands. Five of the more important ones were:

1. That the General Synod re-affirm its urban priority as expressed in the Action of General Synod, 1968, and extend it to the total program of the Church with special focus on race relations and ministry with minorities, and that this General Synod instruct each unit to report on implementation of this priority to the General Synod of 1970.
2. That the General Synod immediately create a special fund of \$100,000 to be disbursed according to the decisions of the Black Council for the Program of General Synod, and that this be referred to the GSEC for source of funds. (Recommendation #4)
3. That in both new and current program activity relating to minority groups every effort be made to transfer the power of decisions to minority groups. (Recommendation #6)
4. We note that the Interchurch Center is located in close proximity to some of the ghettos of New York City. It therefore should be a center of direct ministry as well as a center for directing ministries elsewhere. For example, the building contains much valuable

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 101-102.

equipment which could be useful for those ghetto neighbors who choose to acquire operating skills which would be useful in obtaining employment. (Recommendation #7)

5. That the General Program Council be instructed to proceed immediately to develop guidelines for local church action and to develop such further interpretative task forces as may be deemed feasible. (Recommendation #12)⁶¹

The Ad Hoc Committee urged the adoption of all 12 recommendations and added that the recommendations proposed would also need action as well as verbal approval. The entire document and the 12 recommendations of the Committee was adopted without one dissenting vote.⁶²

In summary, the responses from the eight denominations and the NCC to the demands of the Black Manifesto could be described as follows:

1. The Episcopal Church Negative
2. The National Council of Churches Negative
3. The Lutheran Church in America Negative
4. The Roman Catholic Church Negative
(The Archdioceses of New York,
Chicago, and St. Louis)
5. The United Presbyterian Church in
the U. S. A. Negative
6. The American Baptist Convention Negative
7. The United Methodist Church Positive
8. The United Church Christ Negative
9. The Reformed Church in America Negative

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 102-104.

⁶²Ibid., p. 104.

The explanation of the classifications "positive" and "negative" will be examined in the next chapter, as well as the reasons for the responses made by those specific denominations discussed.

CHAPTER 4

A CLASSIFICATION AND AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHURCHES' RESPONSES TO THE MANIFESTO

Chapter 3 described the churches' responses to the Manifesto. The religious groups challenged by Forman were representative of white Christians in the United States. Chapter 4 will set forth an analysis by classifying the responses and by evaluating each type of response. The chapter will conclude with a brief statement suggesting points for further study.

The churches' responses to the Manifesto may be classified as negative and positive. They were identified as negative because of linguistic and ideological disapproval. They were identified as positive because of a constructive approach.

NEGATIVE RESPONSES

Shortly after the Manifesto was made public to the white press (not previously represented at the Conference), it was stated by Stephen Rose:

As a nation we have never adequately made recompense to blacks for the years of slavery and degradation. Nor has white society been willing to recognize and repair the damage it is doing to blacks in the cities. And it is precisely the missionary task of the church-as a leaven-to

do what the society leaves undone, not in order to become a substitute for the Government, but rather to symbolize the way ahead for the world.¹

One of the tasks facing the churches during the 1960's was the establishment of racial justice. And several questions were being asked of the churches by Mr. Forman and other socially conscious blacks: Would white churches act more than they theologize? Would white churches admit their guilt in racism? Would white churches and their members be willing to make restitution to the black community for past wrongs? This last question was at the very core of the Black Manifesto. Most churches formally challenged by Forman and the Manifesto responded negatively to this question. Whether conscious or unconscious, the negative attitude was worded in such a way as "to give reasons for not listening to those who believe they have a just grievance."²

The negative responses of the white Christian churches may be considered from two perspectives: linguistics, and ideology. Some churches balked at the fiery language, while others showed their displeasure with the "un-American," "demonic," and "Marxist philosophy."

Linguistics

The Episcopal Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Roman Catholic Church (the Archdiocese of New York)

¹Stephen Rose, "Reparation Now!" Renewal, June, 1969, p. 14.

²Walter Stuhr, "Confrontation! New Tactics Pose New Problems for Churches," The Lutheran, June 18, 1969, p. 12.

serve as good examples of those churches which rejected the Manifesto upon the grounds of linguistics.

The Episcopal Church. In its special meeting called South Bend/69, the Episcopal Church reaffirmed its commitment to the principle of self-determination for minority groups. The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, John Hines, probably best described the rejection of the Manifesto by the Convention. The Convention rejected the Manifesto because its language was Marxist, violent, un-democratic, frenetic, revolutionary, anti-Semitic, anti-Christian, and destructive.³

The Lutheran Church in America. The Lutheran Church in America objected to the Manifesto, its demands, and in particular its language. The Executive Committee of the Church proposed to develop financial and social programs to benefit blacks and determined to promote human dignity and equal opportunity. However, the Lutheran Church in America rejected the demands because the language was "seditious," inflamed, and filled with hate.⁴

³Taken from Comment, Christian Advocate, June 12, 1969, p. 2-7. Cf. also the "The Key Resolutions," The Episcopalian, October, 1969, p. 7.

⁴"Churches Reject 'Seditious' Theme of Black Manifesto," The Lutheran, August 28, 1969, p. 26.

The Roman Catholic Church (the Archdiocese of New York). The staff of Cardinal Cooke of New York responded to Mr. Forman's demands in an unsigned letter. The letter explained that the Archdiocese already had "donated" \$5,764,000 to the disadvantaged of New York and that the Church was deeply concerned with "some of the aspirations of the black people."⁵ The letter concluded with a reference to the Second Vatican Council's position on social justice, recalling that everyone has a right to earthly goods sufficient for one's family.⁶ But the Archdiocese could not accept the word "reparations" nor the belief that the Roman Catholic Church had to make any financial recompense. According to the staff of Cardinal Cooke, the word "reparations" was very controversial due to its connection with collective guilt. Finally, the Archdiocese believed that the rhetoric of the Manifesto was Marxist and contrary to the "American way of life."⁷

In addition to these negative linguistic responses, there were also negative ideological responses which are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Ideology-Strategy and the Manifesto

Five religious bodies reacted negatively to the demands of the Manifesto because of its ideology: its

⁵"Response of the Archdiocese, May 21, 1969," as quoted in Appendix 5 of Lecky and Wright, eds., Black Manifesto (New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1969), pp. 144-145.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

Marxist philosophy; its rejection of the church; its basic call for violence and for the overthrow of the government of the United States; and its threatening demands for reparations. These bodies were: The National Council of Churches (NCC), the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the American Baptist Convention, the United Church of Christ, and the Reformed Church in America.

The National Council of Churches (NCC). Although the General Board of the NCC recommended giving \$500,000 to the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization and the National Committee of Black Churchmen, it stated that it was aware of the grievances of black people, but rejected the ideology of the Manifesto. The NCC also pledged its support to bring about self-determination powers for blacks at a General Board meeting in September. But when the General Assembly of the NCC met in November at Detroit, there was no mention of any resolution concerning racial justice as it affects black Americans, much less the issue of reparations to blacks. The rejection of the Manifesto because of its ideology did not change.⁸

The United Presbyterian Church in U.S.A. The General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in U.S.A.

⁸"NCC's General Board Meets Again," Tempo, June 1, 1969, p. 10.

did not adopt any authorization of any demand made by Forman. It was sympathetic to the cause of the black man and to the necessity of abolishing poverty and racism; it promised prayers and faithfulness, but it rejected the Marxist ideology and the violent philosophy contained in the Manifesto's Introduction, especially the reference to the overthrow of the American government. The United Presbyterians also stated that this type of philosophy was contrary to their Christian understanding of life.⁹

The more official response by the United Presbyterians was the General Assembly report that made it clear the church would not respond out of fear or in answer to pressure but out of love and in obedience to our Lord. The Reverend George Sweazey, the Moderator of the General Assembly, summed up the United Presbyterian Church's main objection to the Manifesto when he said that the revolutionary document contained much philosophy that was impossible and much to which his church had to be unalterably opposed.¹⁰

The American Baptist Convention. When James Forman presented his demand for \$60 million and for 60% of the Convention's income from investments, Dr. Thomas Kilgore, Jr.,

⁹George Sweazey, "A Letter from the Moderator About the General Assembly," Presbyterian Life, June 15, 1969, p. 5.

¹⁰Ibid.

president of the Convention, remarked that he did not think that Forman's figure was unrealistic and did not disagree with the demands which Forman was postulating. Yet the Convention did not vote any money for the Black Economic Development Conference (BEDC), and considered the Manifesto's language as offensive and its ideology as violent. The recommendation made by the American Baptist Convention to its Constituency was that the ideology must be rejected. It also interestingly stated:

We must maintain our own integrity as a free institution in society; no people can ever gain their freedom at the expense of the freedom of others. But the democratic processes of this nation must be made to work, and this can only happen if we make an immediate commitment to establish a new equality of all people.¹¹

The United Church of Christ. The United Church of Christ tried to understand the demands of the Manifesto, the supporters of Forman and the leaders of the BEDC, when the BEDC group occupied the headquarters at 475 Riverside, New York City, on June 3, 1969. Although the "take over" was disciplined, non-violent, and constructive, the General Synod of the Church and the Administrative Committee's recommendation prevailed:

¹¹Based upon a two-page statement by the Executive Committee of the General Council of the American Baptist Convention, June 13, 1969.

While we share your concern for racial and social justice, we do not share the ideology expressed in your introduction to the Black Manifesto. . . . The statement, which anticipates 'revolution which will be an armed confrontation and long years of sustained guerilla warfare inside this country' is offensive to a Church committed to human brotherhood.¹²

The Reformed Church in America. The Reformed Church in America confessed to its sins of racism through "internal confessions," but external help was not given to the BEDC because the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Synod of the RCA rejected the plans, tactics, and ideology of Forman. The Committee was particularly disturbed by the projected use of force, "treading on the rights of other peoples' dignities."¹³ The Committee objected to the means in reaching the goals that Forman proposed.

The linguistic implications of the Manifesto were stumbling blocks for these three churches. Attention in the analysis is now given to an evaluation of the rationale of the negative linguistic responses.

Evaluation of the Rationale

Linguistics. If discussions about the demands of the Manifesto were to take place, it was thought to be

¹²"Interrobangs," An Address by President Ben Herbster, June 26, 1969, quoted in the Minutes of the Seventh General Synod, United Church of Christ, Boston, Mass., June 25-July 2, 1969, pp. 193-194.

¹³"Report on Response to the Black Manifesto," from Minutes of the 1969 General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, pp. 101-102.

imperative that the primary debate revolve around the principle of reparations. Yet one of the first reactions by churches was the evasion of this demand and opposition to the strong "vocabulary" used in the Manifesto's Introduction. Some churches totally ignored the issue of reparations, objecting to the "unfit language," language that was described as "inflammatory," "Marxist," and "un-Christian." The need for churches to make financial compensation to blacks was not the basic issue for most of the churches who formally responded to Forman's Black Manifesto.

Among the immediate reactions by liberal church leaders has been a striking tendency to divorce the substance of the Black Manifesto's demands from its rhetoric. The substantive demand was for 'reparations' from the churches amounting to \$500 million to finance several specified programs for black self-determination The introduction, in particular, interpreted the objectives of the Manifesto in largely Marxist-Lenin terms and called, moreover, for 'total control' of the country by black leadership. This kind of language either had to be ignored or repudiated by responsible church leadership. Some leaders have been willing to treat rhetoric simply as an attention-getting device or as an extreme position taken by Forman in order to make later compromise seem more reasonable. Possibly this was Forman's intention.¹⁴

The Episcopal, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic Churches avoided the issue by merely not facing it. Mrs. Martin Luther King warned leaders about such a mistake.

¹⁴Phillip Wogaman, "Testing the Rhetoric of the Black Manifesto," Christian Advocate, September 4, 1969, p. 9.

'Do not evade the issue raised by Mr. Forman's Black Manifesto by concentrating on the provocative method of introducing the subject.' Mrs. King asked churchmen to hear these demands and 'do profound thinking on the subject of poverty and white racism before hostility submerges rational dialogue and with it creative solution.' This is wise counsel from the widow of a man who warned us many times in the past that white Americans would one day pay heavily for their failure to respond to the oppression of black Americans. This affluent nation and the churches who have prospered within it are clearly guilty of holding back the aspirations of black men.¹⁵

No matter how irritated or repelled these three churches were concerning the language of the Manifesto, the fundamental question of reparations was left unanswered. It would appear that the Churches missed the point of the Manifesto, hoping to focus attention on a secondary issue.

The Episcopal Church, for example, made the reparations issue secondary by taking the rhetoric of the Manifesto literally. The rhetoric of the Manifesto was not to be taken literally; it was the "talk of the times," and the linguistics was used to strengthen the principal aim of the Manifesto--to acquire more economic power for the black man.¹⁶

¹⁵Taken from "Comment," Christian Advocate, June 12, 1969, p. 2.

¹⁶Based upon a report sent to the writer by UPCUSA, "The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto," by Gayraud S. Wilmore, June 22, 1969, pp. 9-10.

There is a jargon, a rhetoric that belongs to radical political organizations like SDS and to the new black nationalist movements (as well as to the NAACP). This is not to imply that these groups do not sometimes communicate substantive ideas by means of rhetoric. It is rather to say that mature observers of public affairs who are familiar with the dynamics of popular movements, whether the National Liberation Front or the Billy Graham Crusade, learn how to detect and evaluate rhetoric. One does not assume that 'bringing the nation to its knees' anymore proves that there is a predisposition to armed revolution than 'regardless of race or creed' or 'law and order' proves that there is a predisposition to justice and democracy.¹⁷

Providing seed money to poverty areas and considering a \$10 million fund for the oppressed was a most commendable deed of the Episcopal Church, but the church was left responding negatively to the demands of the Manifesto because the rhetoric was misunderstood.

The Roman Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of New York also misunderstood or misinterpreted the language of the Manifesto. This segment of the Roman Church also evaded the issue by listing its financial contributions of the past. Disappointedly a representative part of the largest single body of Christians in the United States did not talk with Forman, did not believe the issue of reparations was applicable to its church, did not take any action to make black self-determination possible, did not make every possible effort to secure social

¹⁷Wilmore, op. cit., p. 14.

justice and true equity for all men, because this religious body did not see beyond the language of the Manifesto.¹⁸

The Lutheran Church in America charged that the Manifesto was filled with "seditious" language. Such a charge was a distraction from the real issue of reparations. For some individual Lutherans, in unofficial positions, the path of evasion was ironic, because Luther himself believed that the Christian was truly contrite "when he sought and loved to pay penalties for his sins," that there must be an outward show and an inward repentance within the truly repentant Christian. Thus the editor of the Lutheran Forum stressed several inconsistencies about refusal to speak to the point:

The refusal of churchmen throughout the ages to come to grips with the radical demands of the Gospel has often resulted in the hawking of cheap grace. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer defined it, 'Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without repentance.' . . .

During the current dilemma confronting the Church, Christians seem to be following the course marked out by the medieval indulgence system: the path of evasion. In the Black Manifesto demands for reparation, the church is facing its share of the guilt for the inequities of our fathers three and four generations ago, and for our own inequities. Are we repentant enough of our complicity in racism and exploitation, whether active or passive, to acknowledge our guilt before God and make amends to our injured brothers?¹⁹

¹⁸Lecky and Wright, eds., op. cit., p. 144.

¹⁹Editor's Ambo, "Reformation, Repentance, and Reparations," Lutheran Forum, October, 1969, pp. 14-15.

For Lutherans, and other religious bodies, the rhetoric of the Manifesto, the rhetoric of reparations, caught many off guard and defensive, because the Gospel's call to repentance and faith active in love was frighteningly similar to the call of the Manifesto's demands.

The hang-up for Lutherans centers on the idea of reparations itself. We have twisted our evangelical theology of free grace, forgiveness of sins and Christ alone to the exclusion of corporate responsibility, true contrition and amendment of life. Hence we have been caught off guard by the rhetoric of reparations. . . . Reparations, then, are signs of repentance and avenues toward reconciliation among men. To heal injuries, to make amends, to repay debts, show that contrition and repentance have been real. Consequently, the payment of reparations implies a prior confession of guilt, an acknowledgment of responsibility, an admission of wrongdoing and complicity in evil. The fact of the matter is that Black people have been wronged; this has been done often with encouragement and participation, active or passive of White Christians--- who have also benefitted financially from the long oppression of the Blacks. Payment of reparations is one means of healing the damage that has been done to them, inasmuch as we have already through Christ been offered forgiveness for these sins. Evasion, nitpicking and indignation come easy to our churches and our people when confronted with what seem like arrogant and unjustified demands of outsiders. How refreshing it would be if, for a change, we took the Bible seriously and responded corporately in non-defensive, open-hearted ways to people who post their theses on our doors.²⁰

Whose side were the churches on? Did they want to take sides? For the rhetoric of the Manifesto was not essential to the programmatic aspect of it. The language of the black militants should not have distracted churches

²⁰Editor's Ambo, "The Sounds of Silence," Lutheran Forum, December, 1969.

from the important and real issue of reparations. But-- it did. Other churches were distracted from the Manifesto by its implicit ideological manifestations. Our analysis now turns to an evaluation of these responses.

Ideology. Mrs. Martin Luther King had admonished churches not to evade the issue of reparations "by concentrating on the provocative method of introducing the subject."²¹ Leon Watts further warned that the real issue of the Manifesto was neither the revolutionary language, nor the tactics, nor the politics of confrontation; "for that has been the way of things in our land from the very beginning."²² The real issue was whether or not the white Christian churches would accept the blame for their sins and repay blacks for the wrongs done.²³

The legitimacy of the demands for reparations was clear and accepted by some churches. In doing so the churches had to share the responsibility for abuse of minority groups in the United States. The issue was not past slavery, the issue was that our society was an oppressor of the poor, especially the blacks. White

²¹Taken from "Comment," Christian Advocate, loc. cit.

²²Leon Watts, "From Reparation to Reconciliation," Renewal, June, 1969, p. 14.

²³Ibid.

Churches have participated in that oppression through the financial rewards of the capitalistic system. What the black militants demanded from the churches was at the very least that they understand the depth of their involvement in the nation's oppression and begin to change the system for the benefit of the black community.²⁴

The issue has to do with the fact that our society is, quite simply, an oppressor of its poor, especially the blacks; the oppressive patterns established in the era of slavery still obtain in regard to the majority of blacks today. And the white churches, since they give religious succor to those who benefit economically from our country's racially prejudicial social and economic structure, cannot escape involvement and guilt--especially since they have an enormous piece of the capitalistic action in the form of endowments and investments.²⁵

The religious bodies involved in this particular negative ideology grouping--the National Council of Churches, the United Church of Christ, the United Presbyterian Church, the American Baptist Convention, and the Reformed Church in America--did more conscience-probing than the previous churches--the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Roman Catholic Church (the Archdiocese of New York). After considerable thought most of the churches in this grouping said "no" to the demands of the Manifesto and "no" to the means the Manifesto recommended to achieve its goals.

²⁴Ronald Goetz, "Black Manifesto: The Great White Hope," The Christian Century, June 18, 1969, p. 832.

²⁵Ibid.

Much of the churches' objection focused around these ideas from the Manifesto's Introduction: 1) blacks must create a society where the total means of production are taken from the rich, the exploiters, other racists and placed into the hands of the state for the welfare of all people. 2) Blacks must build a socialistic society within the United States, which is led and controlled by black people, not a separate black nation. 3) Blacks must bring about this socialistic society by seizing power wherever they are, and by whatever means possible.²⁶

The Churches misunderstood the Black Power ideology, however, and therefore rejected the demands.

But the Black Power ideology is not in all respects identical with the rhetoric of the introduction to the Black Manifesto. What the Manifesto contains is the programmatic apparatus for a Black Power Movement—a way for black people, through pride and unity among themselves, to control their own communities and present an irrevocable countervailing power to those who presently dominate them from the outside. It also makes clear that American blacks are inseparately related to oppressed peoples all over the world who are struggling for freedom and self-determination. The ideology and the program goals are a consistent whole, reflecting this understanding of the nature of black power.

When this essential unity of intention is clearly understood, then and only then can the churches measure the extent to which they can endorse the programs without necessarily embracing the more extreme parts of the ideology and tactics of the preamble.²⁷

²⁶James Forman, The Black Manifesto--Introduction, Appendix 1, pp. 5-7.

²⁷Gayraud Wilmore, op. cit., p. 13.

The churches also rejected these ideas of the Manifesto partly because of the American churches' close ties with capitalism and democracy, a closeness of political philosophy that might be questionable when considering economic justice. Christianity, a religion based upon love and justice, should remain above all political ideologies.

We cannot demonize Marxism and sacralize Capitalism. Our Christians of the Third World remind us that much of the prosperity of our nation has been at the expense of other nations. They point to the demonic elements of our political and economic system which allows huge expenditures for space exploration, the military, and even agricultural non-production while millions of citizens live in poverty and hunger. While these Christian brothers also recognize the demonic elements of the Marxist ideology, many perceive in it one legitimate strategy for the renewal and humanization of social, economic and political structures.²⁸

It seemed evident, then, that before admitting to the guilt of complicity in racism, before meeting the demands of the Manifesto for reparations, the Christian churches should have disavowed their philosophical and ideological identification and relation with "the American way."

The responsibilities of the American religious establishment are clear. It must divorce itself from the faith of Americanism. It must hear the word: Go sell all that you have and give to the poor. It must divest itself of its fortunes on

²⁸T. G. Benjamin, "Response to the Message of the General Board Concerning the Manifesto," A mimeographed publication, Bread and Wine, Disciples of Christ Mission and Renewal publication, 1969.

behalf of mission and ministry. Until it is ready to face the harsh realities of mission and ministry, the religious establishment will continue to ask the tired, inane questions of 'What can we do? How can we help? What is our role?' which simply means 'We enjoy our present comfortable status and support and do not wish to disturb them in any way.'²⁹

The blacks of the BEDC were looking beyond the temporary demands of the Manifesto; they were asking that a religion of love and justice live up to its creed. They were demanding much more than an economic program; they were reminding us of the ominous command of the prophet Amos:

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.³⁰

The churches should not have objected to the Manifesto's ideology; the blacks should have objected to the "American" churches ideology. For the American churches had been challenged to "put their money where their mouths were," and to discover where their treasures and their hearts were, and the ideology of the Manifesto pointed an accusing finger at the wealth of the religious establishment. With all its verbalism and good will toward the blacks, this writer is not convinced that the

²⁹Goetz, op. cit., p. 833.

³⁰Amos 5: 21-24, The Bible of Jerusalem.

churches successfully "explained away" their ideological objections to the Manifesto.

Jesus told the rich young man to sell all he had and follow him. Jesus also said that 'if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well.' Such commands are not intended as absolute laws, but they do reveal the quality of stewardship and sacrifice that Jesus requires. . . . We have been challenged to sell our holdings and to speak to the impoverished by deeds. . . . The Black Manifesto's demand, if not its Marxist ideology, should be taken literally and should be allowed to do its traumatizing but necessary work on the white body of the established church. If it is permitted to do so, it will reach beyond the blacks to all the poor. Five-hundred million dollars should be but the beginning. Here is a chance for the white church to become Christian in the New Testament sense--a chance that may never come again.³¹

But not all responses to the Manifesto were negative. The Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church heard Mr. Forman's demands and responded in a positive and constructive way.

THE POSITIVE RESPONSE

The positive response to the demands of the Manifesto reflected an attitude that was ready to "receive the truth from whatever source truth may come."³² The next step was to sit down with the confronters and sort out the truth from rhetoric, and the possible from the impossible.

³¹Goetz, loc. cit.

³²Stuhr, op. cit., p. 13.

Finally, "action must follow conversation. . . . The test is in whether or not we see the emergency presented as our emergency and the responsibility for acting as our responsibility."³³ The positive attitude also had to answer the question that so many churches tried to evade: Will you make restitution to blacks for past wrongs?

The Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church

The Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church made a remarkable effort to respond positively. The Executive Committee of the Board of Missions refused the BEDC's demands and proposed a program of a possible \$1.3 million for economic empowerment for blacks to be controlled by blacks. The Executive Committee of the Board of Missions gave \$300,000 immediately and sought another \$1 million when the full Board met in Boston in October. All the money was to be spent for black economic power. When the Board of Missions met for its meeting on October 23-27, 1969, it decided to allocate \$1.3 million to alleviate the U.S. racial crisis and earmarked \$300,000 to the IFCO. Further, in a report on Racism and Minority Empowerment, the Board made the comment:

We must support the processes by means of which minority groups achieve the power to create a place of dignity in the community;

³³Ibid.

and secondly, we need a goal toward which a truly pluralistic society can move.³⁴

Many of the churches had the same opportunities to respond in an effective manner. We now focus our attention on an assessment of one such response.

Evaluation of the Rationale

Many of the churches challenged by Forman and the Manifesto had the opportunity to actualize and not theologize their beliefs, to give blacks self-determination as proposed throughout the demands of the Manifesto. Some churches gave financial aid to white-controlled groups for urban renewal and poverty alleviation. The response of the Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church, although not perfect, was the most positive of any other church. On May 21, 1969, the Executive Committee met with Forman's sit-in demonstrators and listened to the demands. On May 26, 1969, its Executive Committee met and took the demands under consideration, immediately issued an answer to the demands of the Manifesto which resulted in financial help for black self-determination. The Board of Missions acted more than it verbalized; it saw what had to be done and did it, with concern and open-mindedness. It had prepared itself for the necessary

³⁴Journal of the Second Annual Meeting Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church, October 23-31, 1969, Appendix F, "Racism and Minority Empowerment," pp. 70-71.

understanding of the needs of the black man through the General Conference of 1968 and through the freedom given to the Black Methodists for Church Renewal. The Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church undertook with enthusiasm its commitment to the goals of the Black Power movement. Perhaps the Board of Missions reflects best what Dr. Ernest Campbell of the Riverside Church told his parishioners after his first encounter with Forman and his followers:

The Christian church has taught that restitution is an essential part of penitence. You don't simply say, 'I'm sorry to a man you've robbed.' You return what you stole or your apology takes on a hollow ring.³⁵

The Methodist's Board of Missions sought to act in a constructive Christian manner to prove that all white Christian churches with consciences must repay the oppressed minorities "whatever reasonable portion can be calculated from the benefits which have accrued to them through slavery and black subjugation."³⁶

In summary, the responses of the churches were both negative and positive. The terms "negative" and "positive" were not absolutes but tendencies toward one response or the other. The negative response found reasons for not listening--those reasons representing misunderstandings regarding the rhetoric of the

³⁵Wilmore, op. cit., p. 6.

³⁶Leon Howell and Robert Lecky, "Reparation Now," Christianity and Crisis, May 26, 1969, p. 141.

Manifesto and the Black Power ideology. These misunderstandings were coupled with the churches' persistent attachment to the "American way," the demonizing of Marxism, and the sacralizing of Capitalism. The blacks of the BEDC were looking for Christian justice through improved economic self-determinant powers. Other than one positive response the churches did not grant the blacks economic recompense for past injuries.

General related issues have been raised as a result of this study of the Black Manifesto and the churches' responses. These issues will now be considered.

POINTS FOR FURTHER STUDY

(1) The Black Manifesto dramatically raised the issue of the churches' affluence and the loss of control over expenditures as well as decision-making and priority-establishing powers. It is evident that these powers are not vested with the black community. In examining the Manifesto's ideology in comparison with the American church "ideology" it is clear that the churches are involved in the capitalistic system. A further study should be made of the degree of involvement of white Christian churches in American capitalism.

(2) It was stated in this study that Christianity should remain above all ideologies. But if allied with an economic philosophy, Christianity might be more authentic

under a socialistic system. A future investigation might explore the relationship between Christianity and socialism.

(3) This study described the responses of several white denominations to the Black Manifesto. Another study might investigate the reactions and responses of the Black Church to the Manifesto.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study began with the understanding that the churches in the 1960's had attempted to confront some of the important social issues of the time. There were many problems facing the churches at that time, but one persistent problem was social justice, especially for the blacks of this nation.

The 1960's witnessed the advent and departure of urban crises like Watts, Newark, Detroit, and the assassinations of President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, and Malcolm X. It was a time of dimmed hopes for the oppressed and the blacks.

During the first part of the 1960's blacks experienced the search for identity, a changing of black leadership from the established moderates to the Black Power advocates. And the latter half of the decade saw other black militants, militants that proposed America take another look at itself and live up to its words and suggestions for black survival in studies like the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission Report) and the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence.

However despair turned into frustration when these reports were not implemented. The second half of the decade also saw blacks try to change the balance of power through the legislative process. Success was minimal, and distrust for the system heightened among blacks.

Realizing a deeper frustration and the lack of economic power, Lucius Walker, a black American Baptist clergyman and director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), summoned interested blacks of various philosophies to come to Detroit to take part in a National Black Economic Development Conference on April 25, 1969. The Conference indicated that blacks were agreed upon their condition of powerlessness but were unable to reach a common agreement regarding the means of overcoming the condition. On the last night of the Conference a militant and anti-religious blackman, James Forman, introduced and successfully achieved the passage of the Black Manifesto. As former international affairs director of SNCC, he emerged as the man of the moment and gathered an impressive list of people on the steering committee of the Black Manifesto. The names of moderate but socially-conscious men included Julian Bond and Vincent Harding.

In his Introduction to the Manifesto Forman asked for a change of American policy, a break from the capitalistic, racist system that primarily benefitted rich whites, and a move toward a socialistic program to help the oppressed,

the poor, and the blacks. The language of the Introduction was, indeed, tough but clear.

The second half of the Manifesto outlined a thorough program for black economic power within the United States, based upon the demand of \$500,000,000 reparations for past wrongs imposed upon blacks through slavery and exploitation by whites throughout the world. The money was not demanded from business firms, insurance companies, or wealthy millionaires, but from all white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, since they had participated in the capitalistic action and should show an example to a secular world.

The underlying question throughout the entire Manifesto was whether the white Christian churches would make financial restitution to blacks for the wrongs and racist actions of the past. Would churches give \$500,000,000 to help blacks begin to determine their own destinies?

At the beginning of this study the statement of the problem posited three questions: 1) What were the responses of the white Christian churches? 2) What patterns developed within the responses? 3) Why did the churches respond in the manner they did? The answer to these questions and the basic question of reparations was formulated thusly:

1) After describing the important background for the responses, the developmental-evolutional dimensions of the church responses were discussed.

2) Each church was then classified according to a negative or positive grouping or tendency.

3) It was found that three churches tended toward a negative-linguistic response. Four churches and one church body tended toward a negative-ideological response.

4) One church seemed to lean more toward the positive response than any of the other churches.

5) Finally the rationale for each type of response was examined. The churches in the negative linguistic response basically evaded the issue of reparations and dwelt on the provocative method of introducing the subject, and misunderstood the rhetoric of the Manifesto, which was couched in Black Power language. The churches categorized in the negative ideological response claimed one political philosophy as theirs--American capitalism--and seemed to forget their sense of Christian social justice by misinterpreting the Black Power rhetoric involved in the description of the Manifesto's ideology. The churches also ignored the fact that Christianity should remain above all political ideologies. Lastly, the positive response drew from its church leaders a concern and awareness that prompted immediate financial commitment to their obligation of restitution.

Within the evaluation of all three rationales basic questions were posited because we who call ourselves Christians must deal with our own consciences: Whose side

should the churches be on? Where should the symbol of justice and love stand? With the poor and the oppressed or with those who richly benefit from an American capitalistic system? Are churches programmed to want goods and services rather than justice and liberation? We have concluded from the study that the churches should have championed the cause of the poor and the oppressed and all those thirsting for justice and freedom.

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APPENDIX 1

THE BLACK MANIFESTO*

To the White Christian Churches and the Synagogues in the United States of America and to All Other Racist Institutions:

~~INTRODUCTION: TOTAL CONTROL~~

AS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF BLACK PEOPLE

Brothers and Sisters:

We have come from all over the country burning with anger and despair not only with the miserable economic plight of our people but fully aware that the racism on which the Western World was built dominates our lives. There can be no separation of the problems of racism from the problems of our economic, political, and cultural degradation. To any black man, this is clear.

But there are still some of our people who are clinging to the rhetoric of the Negro, and we must separate ourselves from these Negroes who go around the country promoting all types of schemes for black capitalism.

Ironically, some of the most militant Black

*This document was presented by James Forman to the National Black Economic Development Conference in Detroit, Michigan, and adopted on April 26, 1969.

Nationalists, as they call themselves, have been the first to jump on the bandwagon of black capitalism. They are pimps, black power pimps and fraudulent leaders, and the people must be educated to understand that any black man or Negro who is advocating a perpetuation of capitalism inside the United States is in fact seeking not only his ultimate destruction and death but is contributing to the continuous exploitation of black people all around the world. For it is the power of the United States Government, this racist, imperialist government, that is choking the life of all people around the world.

We are an African people. We sit back and watch the Jews in this country make Israel a powerful conservative state in the Middle East, but we are not concerned actively about the plight of our brothers in Africa. We are the most advanced technological group of black people in the world, and there are many skills that could be offered to Africa. At the same time, it must be publicly stated that many African leaders are in disarray themselves, having been duped into following the lines as laid out by the western imperialist governments. Africans themselves succumbed to and are victims of the power of the United States. For instance, during the summer of 1967, as the representatives of SNCC, Howard Moore and I traveled extensively in Tanzania and Zambia. We talked to high, very high, government officials. We told them there were many black people in the United States who were willing to come and work in Africa.

All these government officials, who were part of the leadership in their respective governments, said they wanted us to send as many skilled people as we could contact. But this program never came into fruition, and we do not know the exact reasons, for I assure you that we talked and were committed to making this a successful program. It is our guess that the United States put the squeeze on these countries, for such a program directed by SNCC would have been too dangerous to the international prestige of the United States. It is also possible that some of the wild statements by some black leader frightened the Africans.

In Africa today there is a great suspicion of black people in this country. This is a correct suspicion since most of the Negroes who have left the States for work in Africa usually work for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or the State Department. But the respect for us as a people continues to mount, and the day will come when we can return to our homeland as brothers and sisters. But we should not think of going back to Africa today, for we are located in a strategic position. We live inside the United States, which is the most barbaric country in the world, and we have a chance to help bring this government down.

Time is short, and we do not have much time and it is time we stop mincing words. Caution is fine, but no oppressed people ever gained their liberation until they were ready to fight, to use whatever means necessary, including the use of force and power of the gun to bring down the

colonizer.

We have heard the rhetoric, but we have not heard the rhetoric which says that black people in this country must understand that we are the vanguard force. We shall liberate all the people in the United States, and we will be instrumental in the liberation of colored people the world around. We must understand this point very clearly so that we are not trapped into diversionary and reactionary movements. Any class analysis of the United States shows very clearly that black people are the most oppressed group of people inside the United States. We have suffered the most from racism and exploitation, cultural degradation and lack of political power. It follows from the laws of revolution that the most oppressed will make the revolution, but we are not talking about just making the revolution. All the parties on the left who consider themselves revolutionary will say that blacks are the vanguard, but we are saying that not only are we the vanguard, but we must assume leadership, total control, and we must exercise the humanity which is inherent in us. We are the most humane people within the United States. We have suffered and we understand suffering. Our hearts go out to the Vietnamese, for we know what it is to suffer under the domination of racist America. Our hearts, our soul and all the compassion we can mount go out to our brothers in Africa, Santa Domingo, Latin America and Asia who are being tricked by the power structure of the United States which is dominating the world

today. These ruthless, barbaric men have systematically tried to kill all people and organizations opposed to its imperialism. We no longer can just get by with the use of the word capitalism to describe the United States, for it is an imperial power sending money, missionaries and the army throughout the world to protect this government and the few rich whites who control it. General Motors and all the major auto industries are operating in South Africa, yet the white dominated leadership of the United Auto Workers sees no relationship to the exploitation of the black people in South Africa and the exploitation of black people in the United States. If they understand it, they certainly do not put it into practice, which is the actual test. We as black people must be concerned with the total conditions of all black people in the world.

But while we talk of revolution, which will be an armed confrontation and long years of sustained guerilla warfare inside this country, we must also talk of the type of world we want to live in. We must commit ourselves to a society where the total means of production are taken from the rich and placed into the hands of the state for the welfare of all the people. This is what we mean when we say total control. And we mean that black people who have suffered the most from exploitation and racism must move to protect their black interest by assuming leadership inside of the United States of everything that exists. The time has ceased when we are second in command and the white boy

stands on top. This is especially true of the welfare agencies in this country, but it is not enough to say that a black man is on top. He must be committed to building the new society, to taking the wealth away from the rich people, such as General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, the DuPonts, the Rockefellers, the Mellons, and all the other rich white exploiters and racists who run this world.

Where do we begin? We have already started. We started the moment we were brought to this country. In fact, we started on the shores of Africa, for we have always resisted attempts to make us slaves, and now we must resist the attempts to make us capitalists. It is in the financial interest of the United States to make us capitalist, for this will be the same line as that of integration into the mainstream of American life. Therefore, brothers and sisters, there is no need to fall into the trap that we have to get an ideology. We HAVE an ideology. Our fight is against racism, capitalism and imperialism, and we are dedicated to building a socialist society inside the United States where the total means of production and distribution are in the hands of the State, and that must be led by black people, by revolutionary blacks who are concerned about the total humanity of this world. And, therefore, we obviously are different from some of those who seek a black nation in the United States, for there is no way for that nation to be viable if in fact the United States remains in the hands of white racists. Then too, let us deal with some arguments

that we should share power with whites. We say that there must be a revolutionary black vanguard, and that white people in this country must be willing to accept black leadership, for that is the only protection that black people have to protect ourselves from racism rising again in this country.

Racism in the United States is so pervasive in the mentality of whites that only an armed, well-disciplined, black-controlled government can insure the stamping out of racism in this country. And that is why we plead with black people not to be talking about a few crumbs, a few thousand dollars for this cooperative, or a thousand dollars which splits black people into fighting over the dollar. That is the intention of the government. We say . . . think in terms of total control of the United States. Prepare ourselves to seize state power. Do not hedge, for time is short, and all around the world the forces of liberation are directing their attacks against the United States. It is a powerful country, but that power is not greater than that of black people. We work the chief industries in this country, and we could cripple the economy while the brothers fought guerilla warfare in the streets. This will take some long range planning, but whether it happens in a thousand years is of no consequence. It cannot happen unless we start. How then is all of this related to this conference?

First of all, this conference is called by a set of religious people, Christians, who have been involved in the exploitation and rape of black people since the country was

founded. The missionary goes hand in hand with the power of the states. We must begin seizing power wherever we are, and we must say to the planners of this conference that you are no longer in charge. We the people who have assembled here thank you for getting us here, but we are going to assume power over the conference and determine from this moment on the direction which we want it to go. We are not saying that the conference was planned badly. The staff of the conference has worked hard and has done a magnificent job in bringing all of us together, and we must include them in the new membership which must surface from this point on. The conference is now the property of the people who are assembled here. This we proclaim as fact and not rhetoric, and there are demands that we are going to make and we insist that the planners of this conference help us implement them.

We maintain we have the revolutionary right to do this. We have the same rights, if you will, as the Christians had in going into Africa and raping our Motherland and bringing us away from our continent of peace and into this hostile and alien environment where we have been living in perpetual warfare since 1619.

Our seizure of power at this conference is based on a program, and our program is contained in the following Manifesto:

BLACK MANIFESTO

We the black people assembled in Detroit, Michigan, for the

National Black Economic Development Conference are fully aware that we have been forced to come together because racist white America has exploited our resources, our minds, our bodies, our labor. For centuries we have been forced to live as colonized people inside the United States, victimized by the most vicious, racist system in the world. We have helped to build the most industrialized country in the world.

We are therefore demanding of the white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, which are part and parcel of the system of capitalism, that they begin to pay reparations to black people in this country. We are demanding \$500,000,000 from the Christian white churches and the Jewish synagogues. This total comes to fifteen dollars per nigger. This is a low estimate, for we maintain there are probably more than 30,000,000 black people in this country. Fifteen dollars a nigger is not a large sum of money, and we know that the churches and synagogues have a tremendous wealth and its membership, white America, has profited and still exploits black people. We are also not unaware that the exploitation of colored peoples around the world is aided and abetted by the white Christian churches and synagogues. This demand for \$500,000,000 is not an idle resolution or empty words. Fifteen dollars for every black brother and sister in the United States is only a beginning of the reparations due us as people who have been exploited and degraded, brutalized, killed and persecuted. Underneath all of this exploitation, the racism of this country has produced a

psychological effect upon us that we are beginning to shake off. We are no longer afraid to demand our full rights as a people in this decadent society.

We are demanding \$500,000,000 to be spent in the following way:

(1) We call for the establishment of a southern land bank to help our brothers and sisters who have to leave their land because of racist pressure, and for people who want to establish cooperative farms but who have no funds. We have seen too many farmers evicted from their homes because they have dared to defy the white racism of this country. We need money for land. We must fight for massive sums of money for this southern land bank. We call for \$200,000,000 to implement this program.

(2) We call for the establishment of four major publishing and printing industries in the United States to be funded with ten million dollars each. These publishing houses are to be located in Detroit, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and New York. They will help to generate capital for further cooperative investments in the black community, provide jobs and an alternative to the white-dominated and controlled printing field.

(3) We call for the establishment of four of the most advanced scientific and futuristic audio-visual networks to be located in Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland and Washington, D.C. These TV networks will provide an alternative to the racist propaganda that fills the current television networks.

Each of these TV networks will be funded by ten million dollars each.

(4) We call for a research skills center which will provide research on the problems of black people. This center must be funded with no less than thirty million dollars.

(5) We call for the establishment of a training center for the teaching of skills in community organization, photography, movie making, television making and repair, radio building and repair and all other skills needed in communication. This training center shall be funded with no less than ten million dollars.

(6) We recognize the role of the National Welfare Rights Organization, and we intend to work with them. We call for ten million dollars to assist in the organization of welfare recipients. We want to organize welfare workers in this country so that they may demand more money from the government and better administration of the welfare system of this country.

(7) We call for \$20,000,000 to establish a National Black Labor Strike and Defense Fund. This is necessary for the protection of black workers and their families who are fighting racist working conditions in this country.

(8) We call for the establishment of the International Black Appeal (IBA). This International Black Appeal will be funded with no less than \$20,000,000. The IBA is charged with producing more capital for the establishment of cooperative businesses in the United States and in Africa, our

Motherland. The International Black Appeal is one of the most important demands that we are making, for we know that it can generate and raise funds throughout the United States and help our African brothers. The IBA is charged with three functions and shall be headed by James Forman:

- (a) Raising money for the program of the National Black Economic Development Conference
- (b) The development of cooperatives in African countries and support of African liberation movements.
- (c) Establishment of a Black Anti-Defamation League which will protect our African image.

(9) We call for the establishment of a black university to be founded with \$130,000,000, to be located in the South. Negotiations are presently under way with a southern university.

(10) We demand that IFCO allocate all unused funds in the planning budget to implement the demands of this conference.

In order to win our demands, we are aware that we will have to have massive support, therefore:

(1) We call upon all black people throughout the United States to consider themselves as members of the National Black Economic Development Conference and to act in unity to help force the racist white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues to implement these demands.

(2) We call upon all the concerned black people across

the country to contact black workers, black women, black students and the black unemployed, community groups, welfare organizations, teachers' organizations, church leaders and organizations, explaining how these demands are vital to the black community of the United States. Pressure by whatever means necessary should be applied to the white power structure. All black people should act boldly in confronting our white oppressors and demanding this modest reparation of fifteen dollars per black man.

(3) Delegates and members of the National Black Economic Development Conference are urged to call press conferences in the cities and to attempt to get as many black organizations as possible to support the demands of the conference. The quick use of the press in the local areas will heighten the tension, and these demands must be attempted to be won in a short period of time, although we are prepared for protracted and long-range struggle.

(4) We call for the total disruption of selected church-sponsored agencies operating anywhere in the United States and the world. Black workers, black women, black students and the black unemployed are encouraged to seize the offices, telephones, and printing apparatus of all church-sponsored agencies and to hold these in trusteeship until our demands are met.

(5) We call upon all delegates and members of the National Black Economic Development Conference to stage sit-in demonstrations at selected black and white churches.

This is not to be interpreted as a continuation of the sit-in movement of the early sixties, but we know that active confrontation inside white churches is possible and will strengthen the possibility of meeting our demands. Such confrontation can take the form of reading the Black Manifesto instead of a sermon, or passing it out to church members. The principle of self-defense should be applied if attacked.

(6) On May 4, 1969, or a date thereafter, depending upon local conditions, we call upon black people to commence the disruption of the racist churches and synagogues throughout the United States.

(7) We call upon IFCO to serve as a central staff to coordinate the mandate of the conference and to reproduce and distribute en masse literature, leaflets, news items, press releases and other material.

(8) We call upon all delegates to find within the white community those forces which will work under the leadership of blacks to implement these demands by whatever means necessary. By taking such actions, white Americans will demonstrate concretely that they are willing to fight the white skin privilege and the white supremacy and racism which has forced us as black people to make these demands.

(9) We call upon all white Christians and Jews to practice patience, tolerance, understanding and nonviolence as they have been encouraged, advised and demanded that we as black people should do throughout our entire enforced

slavery in the United States. The true test of their faith and belief in the Cross and the words of the prophets will certainly be put to a test as we seek legitimate and extremely modest reparations for our role in developing the industrial base of the western world throughour slave labor. But we are no longer slaves, we are men and women, proud of our African heritage, determined to have our dignity.

(10) We are so proud of our African heritage and realize concretely that our struggle is not only to make revolution in the United States but to protect our brothers and sisters in Africa and to help them rid themselves of racism, capitalism and imperialism by whatever means necessary, including armed struggle. We are and must be willing to fight the defamation of our African image wherever it rears its ugly head. We are therefore charging the steering committee to create a black Anti-Defamation League to be founded by money raised from the International Black Appeal.

(11) We fully recognize that revolution in the United States and Africa, our Motherland, is more than a many dimensional operation. It will require the total integration of the political, economic and military components, and therefore we call upon all our brothers and sisters who have acquired training and expertise in the fields of engineering, electronics, research, community organization, physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics, medicine, military science and warfare to assist the National Black Economic Development Conference in the implementation of its program.

(12) To implement these demands we must have a fearless leadership. We must have a leadership which is willing to battle the church establishment to implement these demands. To win our demands we will have to declare war on the white Christian churches and synagogues, and this means we may have to fight the total government structure of this country. Let no one here think that these demands will be met by our mere stating them. For the sake of the churches and synagogues, we hope that they have the wisdom to understand that these demands are modest and reasonable. But if the white Christians and Jews are not willing to meet our demands through peace and goodwill, then we declare war, and we are prepared to fight by whatever means necessary. We are, therefore, proposing the election of the following steering committee:

Lucius Walker	Mark Comfort
Renny Freeman	Earl Allen
Luke Tripp	Robert Browne
Howard Fuller	Vincent Harding
James Forman	Mike Hamlin
John Watson	Len Holt
Dan Aldridge	Per Bernard
John Williams	Michael Wright
Ken Cockrel	Muhammed Kenyatta
Chuck Wooten	Mel Jackson
Fannie Lou Hamer	Howard Moore
Julian Bond	Harold Homes

Brothers and sisters, we are no longer shuffling our feet and scratching our heads. We are tall, black and proud.

And we say to the white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, to the government of this country and to all the white racist imperialists who compose it, there is only one thing left that you can do to further degrade black people and that is to kill us. But we have been dying too long for this country. We have died in every war. We are dying in Vietnam today fighting the wrong enemy.

The new black man wants to live, and to live means that we must not become static or merely believe in self-defense. We must boldly go out and attack the white Western world at its power centers. The white Christian churches are another form of government in this country, and they are used by the government of this country to exploit the people of Latin America, Asia and Africa, but the day is soon coming to an end. Therefore, brothers and sisters, the demands we make upon the white Christian churches and the Jewish synagogues are small demands. They represent fifteen dollars per black person in these United States. We can legitimately demand this from the church power structure. We must demand more from the United States Government.

But to win our demands from the church, which is linked up with the United States Government, we must not forget that it will ultimately be by force and power that we will win.

We are not threatening the churches. We are saying that we know the churches came with the military might of the colonizers and have been sustained by the military might of the colonizers. Hence, if the churches in colonial territories were established by military might, we know deep within our hearts that we must be prepared to use force to get our demands. We are not saying that this is the road we want to take. It is not, but let us be very clear that we are not opposed to force and we are not opposed to violence. We were captured in Africa by violence. We were kept in bondage and political servitude and forced to work as slaves by the military machinery and the Christian Church working hand in hand.

We recognize that in issuing this Manifesto we must prepare for a long-range educational campaign in all communities of this country, but we know that the Christian churches have contributed to our oppression in white America. We do not intend to abuse our black brothers and sisters in black churches who have uncritically accepted Christianity. We want them to understand how the racist white Christian church with its hypocritical declarations and doctrines of brotherhood has abused our trust and faith. An attack on the religious beliefs of black people is not our major objective, even though we know that we were not Christians when we were brought to this country, but that Christianity was used to help enslave us. Our objective in issuing this Manifesto is to force the racist white Christian church to begin the payment of reparations which are due to all black people, not

only by the church but also by private business and the United States government. We see this focus on the Christian church as an effort around which all black people can unite.

Our demands are negotiable, but they cannot be minimized, they can only be increased, and the church is asked to come up with larger sums of money than we are asking.

Our slogans are:

All Roads Must Lead to Revolution

Unite with Whomever You Can Unite

Neutralize Wherever Possible

Fight Our Enemies Relentlessly

Victory to the People

Life and Good Health to Mankind

Resistance to Domination by the White Christian

Churches and the Jewish Synagogues

Revolutionary Black Power

We Shall Win Without a Doubt