

# Churches Vary on Race Issue

## Ministers Take Different Slants on Morality of Civil Rights

Dan Thrapp, religion editor of the Los Angeles Times, recently compiled a resume of his observations on the different slants taken by various members of the Christian Clergy on the moral aspects of the civil rights movement. His resume follows:

This, it has been freely predicted, is going to be a long, hot summer on the racial front, but many churches will keep the doors closed against the heat and won't know the difference.

We have heard a lot about the race issue in California, from Catholic, Protestant and Jewish leaders and laity, and it may be that in this part of the country the problem is not quite so intense as elsewhere. But it exists here, too.

A number of churchmen say they do not see a moral issue involved, but most men of the cloth see it as a moral issue, clearly enough.

But many think it does not involve them, or if it does that it is less pressing than keeping the congregation quiet and happy and meeting the annual budget.

### Others Avoid Issue

Others evade the issue by polemics and rationalization.

They say that because they live in a white community, the integration problem does not directly affect them, not seeing, or not wanting to see, that their white community is part of the problem.

Many of them are overly impressed by segregationists in their congregation and find excuses why they can not align themselves on the issue. And too many hide behind such shibboleths as, "you can't change human nature," "you can't legislate civil rights," and "the only real answer to civil rights is changing men's hearts." And so on.

All true enough, to a de-

gree, but beside the point.

When Jesus found the money changers in the temple He didn't wring his hands and weep, or try to change their hearts. He left their hearts to themselves and got a whip and chased them out of the temple, thereby giving us an example for all time of the simple fact that direct action is sometimes appropriate and called for.

The point is that rarely in our history has a matter been so clear a moral issue as the civil rights and racial problems are today.

And that the church should be out in front leading the nation toward the solution, instead of lagging far behind as many churches are doing today. Not only individual churches, but whole denominations.

It has been this reporter's fortune this spring to cover conventions of some of the greatest Protestant denominations.

Each dealt in some way with the race issue.

Two of the largest denominations of our country—the Methodists and the Southern Baptists—gingerly stepped out of the ring. Two denominations lesser in size—the United Presbyterians and the American Baptists—met the issue head-on, stood up and were counted.

Methodists were faced as they have been since its creation in 1939 with the problem of their Central Jurisdiction, a Negro administrative unit that sprawls across the country regardless of the normal geographic jurisdictions of the church.

### Pressure Within

For years there has been pressure within the de-

nomination to do away with the Central Jurisdiction, the hallmark of segregation within the church. Each quadrennium delegates to the General Conference find some reason not to do so "just yet."

The real reason is that the Southeastern Jurisdiction, the politically best organized unit of the church, has threatened to bolt the denomination if the Central Jurisdiction is dissolved.

Rather than see the church split once more into northern and southern factions as it was before 1939 the bulk of Methodists have taken what they consider the lesser evil of putting up with the image of the Central Jurisdiction for another quadrennium.

### Hallmark Remains

That's what happened at Pittsburgh again this spring. A "voluntary" program for dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction was adopted—and that hallmark of racial bias will still be with us four years from now.

"I think," said a noted Methodist minister privately, "that we as a denomination have lost any right we may have had to speak out anywhere on the race problem. It's a disgrace."

The Southern Baptists

did move ahead a little, although the bulk of their strength is in the South and to convert it—convert it to Christ's teachings—is a monumental task, in this matter at least.

A rather strong racial statement was proposed at the Atlantic City convention, and almost adopted, which would have been precedent-shattering, indeed. As a matter of fact the presiding officer at one point declared it to be adopted, but a ballot vote was called for and it was shown to be defeated.

A substitute that said nothing and required nothing and meant nothing, was adopted, but the stronger statement was defeated by only 300 votes, according to one report, or 800 according to another.

The count was secret. But the closeness of the vote may foreshadow action by this great denomination at some time in the not too distant future.

The United Presbyterians, meanwhile, elected Dr. Edler G. Hawkins, the first Negro moderator they have had, and heaped praises upon Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, their stated clerk, for his forthright activities on the race front. The American (Northern) Baptists also were willing to be counted.

Other churches have tentatively moved toward integration.

The Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (Southern) ordered its white presbyteries in seven southern states to absorb three Negro presbyteries. Roman Catholic churches in the South generally are integrated, although there are relatively few Negro Catholics there.

### Lutheran Open-Door

The Southeastern Synod of the Lutheran Church in America has an open-door policy, and finds that few Negroes take advantage of it. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod reports that it has integrated churches, but "there are problems in the South." It has merged its Negro jurisdictions with white jurisdictions.

An Episcopal clergyman, the Rev. Milton Wood of the Atlanta Diocese, said that his typical Deep South area was integrated except "in isolated instances."

The 2.2 million-member Churches of Christ are sometimes integrated and sometimes segregated and reports no trouble with the trend toward integration, even in the South where it has most of its strength.

### Not Pressing Here

Here in the West church integration in itself is not a pressing problem.

There are probably few ministers today who would behave as 10 years ago a Baptist clergyman assured me he would, should a Negro apply for membership. "I would tell him to go elsewhere," he said. He no longer is a pastor although more agree, but fail to act

his race attitude probably had nothing to do with his change of professions.

James Francis Cardinal McIntyre believes that no race problem raises a moral issue of moment to the Catholic Church in his archdiocese.

### Open to Question

The incident involving the Rev. William H. DuBay, who insisted, against the cardinal's wishes, that race was an issue, might open the matter to question.

But even Father DuBay agreed that Catholic churches and Catholic institutions in this archdiocese were fully integrated.

Where he took issue with the cardinal, and the crux of the whole matter, is where the church's responsibility lies—and ends.

If it is confined to the four walls of the church and its institutions, then there is no problem locally.

### Matter of Definition

If it reaches out into the shops and streets and offices and homes, wherever a Christian lives and moves and earns his livelihood, then it becomes a problem and an urgent one.

That is where our Negro fellow citizens say the problem exists, and they say it is a moral as well as a political issue. Many churchmen agree, and act on that assumption. Many more agree, but fail to act

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