

Alabama Clerics Urge Law, Order

By Religious News Service

Birmingham, Ala.

Eleven Alabama religious leaders issued a joint statement here calling for "law and order and common sense" rather than "inflammatory" speeches in dealing with the state's racial problems.

The statement, signed by Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish leaders, followed an inaugural talk by Gov. George C. Wallace who pledged to preserve racial segregation practices, saying "segregation now . . . segregation forever."

"We feel that inflammatory and rebellious statements can only lead to violence, discord, confusion, and disgrace for our beloved state," the religious leaders said.

Court Rulings Seen

Defiance, they said, is not the solution to Alabama's desegregation problems.

"It is clear that a series of court decisions may soon bring about the desegregation of certain schools and colleges in Alabama," their statement said.

"Many sincere people oppose this change and are deeply troubled by it. As Southerners, we understand this," they added.

However, they went on:

"It is understood that those who strongly oppose desegregation may frankly and fairly pursue their convictions in the courts, and in the meantime should peacefully abide by the decisions of those same courts."

Platform Outlined

The religious leaders outlined seven points to be considered by Alabamians:

"1. That hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political tradition.

"2. That there may be disagreement concerning laws and social change without advocating defiance, anarchy, and subversion.

"3. That laws may be tested in courts or changed by legislatures, but not ignored by whims of individuals.

"4. That constitutions may be amended or judges impeached by proper action, but our American way of life depends upon obedience to the decision of courts of competent jurisdiction in the meantime.

"5. That no person's freedom is safe unless every person's freedom is equally protected.

"6. That freedom of speech must at all costs be preserved

and exercised, without fear of recrimination or harassment.

"7. That every human being is created in the image of God and is entitled to respect as a fellow human being with all basic rights, privileges, and responsibilities which belong to humanity."

Signing the statement were:

Nolan B. Harmon, bishop of the North Alabama Conference of The Methodist Church; Paul Hardin, bishop of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of The Methodist Church; Protestant Episcopal Bishop C. C. J. Carpenter of Alabama; Protestant Episcopal Coadjutor Bishop George M. Murray of Alabama; Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop Joseph A. Durick of Mobile-Birmingham;

The Rev. Earl Stallings, pastor of Birmingham's First Baptist church; Rabbi Milton L. Grafman, spiritual leader of Birmingham's Temple Emanuel; Dr. Edward V. Ramage, moderator of the Alabama Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern); the Rev. Soterios D. Gouvellis, pastor of Holy Trinity-Holy Cross Greek Orthodox church here; Rabbi Eugene Blackschleger, Temple Beth-Or, Montgomery, Ala.; and J. T. Beale, secretary-director, Christian Churches of Alabama.