

Public Statement by eight Alabama clergymen

Denouncing Martin Luther King's efforts, April 12, 1963

On April 12, 1963, while Martin Luther King was in the Birmingham jail because of his desegregation demonstrations, eight prominent Alabama clergymen published the following statement in the local newspapers urging blacks to withdraw their support from Martin Luther King and his demonstrations. Although they were in basic agreement with King that segregation should They accused King of being an outsider, of using "extreme measures" that incite "hatred and violence", that King's demonstrations are "unwise and untimely", and that the racial issues should instead be "properly pursued in the courts." Four days later, King wrote his [Letter from the Birmingham Jail](#) in reply.

PUBLIC STATEMENT BY EIGHT ALABAMA CLERGYMEN

April 12, 1963

We the undersigned clergymen are among those who, in January, issued "An Appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense," in dealing with racial problems in Alabama. We expressed understanding that honest convictions in racial matters could properly be pursued in the courts, but urged that decisions of those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.

Since that time there had been some evidence of increased forbearance and a willingness to face facts. Responsible citizens have undertaken to work on various problems which cause racial friction and unrest. In Birmingham, recent public events have given indication that we all have opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems.

However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our Negro citizens, directed and led in part by outsiders. We recognize the natural impatience of people who feel that their hopes

are slow in being realized. But we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.

We agree rather with certain local Negro leadership which has called for honest and open negotiation of racial issues in our area. And we believe this kind of facing of issues can best be accomplished by citizens of our own metropolitan area, white and Negro, meeting with their knowledge and experience of the local situation. All of us need to face that responsibility and find proper channels for its accomplishment.

Just as we formerly pointed out that "hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions," we also point out that such actions as incite to hatred and violence, however technically peaceful those actions may be, have not contributed to the resolution of our local problems. We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham.

We commend the community as a whole, and the local news media and law enforcement in particular, on the calm manner in which these demonstrations have been handled. We urge the public to continue to show restraint should the demonstrations continue, and the law enforcement official to remain calm and continue to protect our city from violence.

We further strongly urge our own Negro community to withdraw support from these demonstrations, and to unite locally in working peacefully for a better Birmingham. When rights are consistently denied, a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders, and not in the streets. We appeal to both our white and Negro citizenry to observe the principles of law and order and common sense.

C. C. J. Carpenter, D.D., LL.D. *Bishop of Alabama*

Joseph A. Durick, D.D. *Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Mobile, Birmingham*

Rabbi Hilton L. Grafman *Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, Alabama*

Bishop Paul Hardin *Bishop of the Alabama-West Florida Conference*

Bishop Nolan B. Harmon *Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the Methodist Church*

George M. Murray, D.D., LL.D. *Bishop Coadjutor, Episcopal Diocese of Alabama*

Edward V. Ramage *Moderator, Synod of the Alabama Presbyterian Church in the United States*

Earl Stallings *Pastor, First Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama*