

By Nation's Clergy

Court Decision Praised, Condemned

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

The U. S. Supreme Court decision banning official prayers in public schools evoked both dissent and praise in Sabbath sermons. One minister called it "proper, fair and correct" while another ascribed to the court a philosophy that "seeks to quarantine religion."

Some took the middle ground. Among them was the Rev. Charles D. Kean of the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany of Washington D.C., who said the court's ruling was "neither a great victory for religious liberty nor an attack upon the religious traditions of our country."

"The Supreme Court decision did not say religious devotions of a voluntary nature may never be held in public schools," he observed in a sermon Sunday.

Last Monday, the court ruled that a 22-word prayer drafted by the New York State Board of Regents for recitation at the start of each school day was unconstitutional.

The prayer reads: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and beg Thy blessing upon us, our parents, our teachers and our country."

E. S. James, editor of the Baptist Standard and a Southern Baptist leader, called the court's decision "proper, fair and correct," adding the school prayer "could not hurt anyone."

However, the Rev. J. Richard Sneed of the first Methodist church in Los Angeles told his congregation that the ruling will produce a more revolutionary effect on U.S. society than Karl Marx ever could.

He said the court's philosophy "seeks to quarantine religion."

Sneed said, "With the Deity constitutionally incapacitated, only materialism, secularism and atheism can publicly prevail."

Richard Cardinal Cushing, speaking at Gloucester, Mass., in the annual blessing of the fishing fleet, said the decision "broke the hearts of millions and millions of people who live in captive nations behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains, whose only hope is in God and our own beloved country."

"The only thing communism fears is religion, and religion is the only thing that can save the world from being dominated by the butchers and tyrants of the Communist world," Cardinal Cushing said.

The Catholic bishop of Providence, R.I., the Most Rev. Russell J. McViney, said "our founding fathers must be apologizing before the courts of heaven today for the agnostic, even atheistic decision of our U.S. Supreme Court."

In sermons Saturday, a number of New York rabbis said the decision has helped the cause of religion, not hindered it. Some described the prayer involved as being so neutral that it is meaningless and cannot help religion.

The Rev. Edward E. Klein of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York City urged that citizens follow President Kennedy's counsel to support the decision and accept it as a challenge to cultivate prayer at home and intensify religious education in synagogue and church.

Some churchmen said a larger reason for alarm were predictions that the ruling may lead to elimination of all Bible reading and religious observances from the public schools.

The Rev. John M. Krumm, Columbia University chaplain, said the prediction "justifiably causes alarm to churchmen who would regard an education from which all references to the role of religion in the formation of our history and culture had been removed as a distorted and inadequate education."

The Rev. Lawrence L. Durgin, preaching at the Broadway Congregational church in New York City, told worshippers the court's ruling "deserves general applause."

"But let us be clear about the

substance of the decision," he added. "The court has not decided 'against God' in the United States or in the public schools. On the contrary, it has decided that the reality of God can neither be guaranteed nor denied by action of the state."

The Rev. Warren R. Ebinger, executive director of the Council of Church of Greater Kansas City, said in a sermon that "to either praise or condemn the court at this time may only tend to widen the gaps of misunderstandings already created."

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