

Religion in the News

Church Leaders Support Nixon Trip

By GEORGE W. CORNELL

NEW YORK (AP) — After urging such a step for years, leaders of most major churches are firmly behind President Nixon in his trip to Communist China. They say it can strengthen the cause of world peace.

"He has our prayers," says the Rev. Dr. Robert J. Marshall, president of the Lutheran Church in America, voicing hope that the two nations may be at a turning point toward growth in mutual understanding instead of belligerence.

Similar reactions have come from many other religious leaders, who have long advocated opening doors of communication with China, often being sharply denounced for it in the past by critics.

AT THE SAME time, some American religious elements strongly oppose the trip.

"A great disaster for the free world," says the Rev. Carl McIntire, a Collingswood, N.J., radio preacher, who for months has been organizing rallies in various cities to protest the mission.

Calling the new approach a

result of a presidential "policy of retreat, appeasement and soft talk of peace," he says: "Yalta was a surrender. Potsdam was a defeat. Peking will be a disaster."

A group of small denominations, the American Council of Christian Churches, also has opposed the visit with "the murderous rulers of Red China."

FROM a different angle, the Rev. Richard L. Rising, an American Baptist international affairs official, claims the trip's aim is to "deluse the

peace movement in this country" and to use in Nixon's reelection campaign.

A conservative Roman Catholic weekly, Twin Circle, also has criticized the trip, saying it signals accommodation with Chinese communism which will "damage America's image in Asia" and make the year's ahead "fraught with setbacks and sorrows."

But leaders of the mainline religious denominations have widely hailed the trip, noting only as a new chance for easing tensions with China, but

possibly contributing to settlement of the Vietnam war.

Pope Paul VI has hailed the trip as "something big and new . . . that could in no small way change the face of the earth."

DR. CYNTHIA Wedel, president of the National Council of Churches, including most major Protestant and Orthodox denominations, has commended the President for his "initiative toward normalizing" relations with China.

In 1966, the council had urged U.S. support for seating

mainland China in the United Nations and also a study of regularizing diplomatic relations with China—a stand that brought a flood of denunciations.