

Clerics Urge Soul Search In Slayings

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The ugly face of violence showed itself again Sunday. Hate killed another. A lowly man, this time. But the nation's moral leaders said this killing, like the assassination of the president, reflected a blight in the temper of the people.

Something is wrong, they said, something deep and corrosive, that would bring this wild succession of fury and vengeance bursting to the surface.

They said it called for soul searching on the part of all Americans.

It was only a scorned and bitter murder suspect who died. As the accused killer of the president of the United States, he was an object of mass outrage. Yet religious leaders said his death grew from the same poison that wrought the other.

"We have been eyewitnesses to hatred in its final form—unremorseful, latent hatred," said the Rev. John J. Wilkes, a Charleston (W. Va.) Baptist.

The Rev. William H. Dickinson, jr., pastor of what is reputedly the largest Methodist church in the world, told his congregation in Dallas:

"Isn't it ironic" that the accused presidential assassin was "a pro-Communist, an extreme leftist—when only recently our city made headlines with the activities of the extremists from the far right at the time of Ambassador Adlai Stevenson's visit?"

(Stevenson, United States ambassador to the United Nations, was spat upon and hit on a recent visit to Dallas.)

"But if that fact is ironic," Mr. Dickinson continued, "it is also prophetic.

"Hate knows no political loyalty and is as deadly and as

vicious in the heart and mind of liberals and those to the far right as those to the far left alike. . . ."

Cannot Understand

"Hate symbolizes a turmoil that no one seems to be able to understand at the moment," said the Rev. Robert C. Johnson, dean of Yale Divinity school.

Rabbi Morris Adler of Southfield, Mich., quoted from the Talmud: "This is like a day in which the sun sets at noon." He added:

"This act indicated the existence of savage and unredeemed areas in our life . . . what explodes in violence in the extremists, exists in a passive and quiescent form in the normal. . . ."

"We ought to examine our own hearts."

Some people, in casual remarks, gave voice to the sentiment that cut down Oswald.

"Well, they got him at last," a Manhattan taxi driver remarked. "It was about time. He had it coming."

And a house painter in a south side Chicago coffee shop said:

"If they were to turn that Oswald loose on any corner of the world, including Russia, he would be dead in two minutes."

Starkest Case

Is it true? Is it true of America? Is that our mood? These are the questions that disturbed ethical leaders, as they pondered the image of America in this starkest case of modern times.

The slain Oswald had a drab background — rejected by parents, school, the marines, even by Soviet Russia.

"Many people will say, 'Oh, he was just a madman, a lunatic, a smirch on the human race,'" said the Rev. Michael Allen, rector of New York's St. Mark's Church in the Bourverie.

"But tragically, this is not true. He was terribly respon-

sive to a mood at work among the American people, a mood revealed in bombings, jailings of little children whose whole race has in a sense been rejected.

"In a strange way, this man Oswald gave expression to something America has been saying."

Rabbi Dr. Jacob Milgrom of Richmond, Va., took up the theme:

"It is a barometer of the kind of violence, the temper of violence, which actually the president has been trying to curb. . . . He saw the violence of extremism burgeoning throughout the country and was trying to combat it."

Tragedy Compounded

"A contradiction of everything President Kennedy stood for," said the Rev. Edwin R. Edmonds, a New Haven (Conn.) Congregationalist pastor, of the Oswald killing. "This compounds the tragedy."

And the Rev. Phillip M. Dripps, pastor of Chicago's Ogden Park Methodist church, said:

"The lesson in the death of the president was that hatred and violence must be purged from the hearts of men.

"This (the Oswald killing) only confirms it."

"One wonders," said the Rt. Rev. James A. Pike, Episcopal bishop of a northern California diocese, "who now shoots the assassin of the assassin? The conclusion is, we are in a bad way."

Happens Too Often

Dr. Walter R. Courtenay, Presbyterian pastor and author, said of the seemingly revenge slaying of the accused presidential assassin, "We are doing

this too often in this country now. It's part of the resistance to change."

The Tennessee clergyman added: "They (unidentified) are not only preaching resistance to change but preaching hatred, too. And you cannot preach hatred in this country and get any result but what we are getting now."

The Rev. Franklin Clark Fry, president of the Lutheran Church in America and chairman of the central committee of the World Council of Churches, commented:

"This second act of violence must have a sobering effect on Americans, and call on us to turn away from the strain of violence that seems to run through all our lives these days.

Self-Control Needed

"Life, as the gift of God, deserves to be respected far more than it is, and self-control ought to be restored. . . ."

Dr. R. H. Edwin Espy, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, said:

"These acts of wanton murder have sobered the nation. . . . They are crimes against man, God and country.

"The hatred which generated two such deeds is a threat to civilized society. . . . It is a total tragedy to us as human beings, a violation of our heritage as a nation of law and justice, and a betrayal of our Judeo-Christian view of life as a sacred gift of God.

"We may hope and pray that the people of America will see in these tragic events a new summons as a nation to put reason above passion, law above violence and love above malevolence."