

Oxford Clergy Wrong In

BY THE REV. ALBERT H. FREUNDT, JR.

Just how repentant should the people of Mississippi be for the violence that resulted from the efforts of the Federal Government to enroll the negro James Meredith in the University of Mississippi? Some of the Oxford clergy issued a call for Mississippians to make Sunday, October 7, 1962, a day of "repentance for our collective and individual guilt" in connection with the riots at Ole Miss and the town of Oxford.

It is surely doubtful that more than a few of our State pastors, if any, complied with the request by leading their congregations in the paths of humility and penitence. For one thing, our people do not care to shoulder the sins of others or, even if it were possible, to re-

pent for someone else's errors. Most of our people are deeply resentful that one of the Oxford clergy condemned our Governor as "a living symbol of lawlessness." To say the least, this was a highly irresponsible statement, when the Governor was acting within the Constitution of the nation and the laws of the State.

A call to repentance is always appropriate for human beings. As long as we are in the flesh we shall never outgrow our need for remorse for the wrongs that we have done and forgiveness for those who have wronged us. However, since all true Christians reject violence as a method of solving problems, it is a little puzzling to determine just what the Oxford clergy had in mind. It seems that they were ask-



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Calling For 'Repentance'!

A prominent young Mississippi minister tells why he did not join some Oxford clergymen in asking Mississippi Christians to "repent" the Federally-provoked violence at Ole Miss! In this feature—written especially for THE CITIZEN—pastors are challenged to reserve their pulpits for the Word of God, since it is not for them to commit their congregations on civil matters!

ing Mississippians to repent for the sins which they feel others have committed. The call could well have been to *forgive* rather than to *repent!*

Nonetheless, we were asked to repent. Are we to repent of the encroachment of our States' Rights? Are we to repent for trying to defend these rights? Are we to repent of the Federal Government's error of trying to legislate morality and social customs? Are we to repent of our deep convictions that integration is either wrong or most unwise? Are we to repent of supporting our State loyally in this crisis? Most of our Christian people and clergy regret the violence that occurred at Oxford and would deplore creation of any situation in which private parties take the law into their own hands.

Let us suggest a few reasons why we have not asked our people to repent in this particular situation. First, we prayed before this crisis arose that God would grant guidance and wisdom to the Governor and the President in this matter. Second, we have continual-

ly deplored strife and violence from the pulpit. Third, we feel no guilt for a set of circumstances not of our own making which was forced upon our people and our State.

It is the conviction of most Mississippians that their rights have been violated. As an individual citizen of the State, we share this belief. We have not discussed the political ramifications of this issue from the pulpit, mainly because that is not the place for such interpretations. The ministry of preaching should be reserved for the Word of God. Our Presbyterian Confession of Faith, for example, says that Churches "are to handle or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical, and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth."

But we believe that if Churches have no right to invade the civil and political sphere, neither are civil governments to invade the religious and social spheres. When the Federal Government tells us that time-tested ways are criminal and must be changed, when they do so in areas over which the Con-

stitution gives them no authority, we cannot but fear that sooner or later no rights will be reserved to States and private citizens.

The issue seems to be one of States' Rights versus Federal control of education and our social structure. It is not the privilege and duty of Christian pastors to take sides in this issue, committing the membership of their congregations to one position or another. And it is surely not the right of a pastor to condemn his people if they do take sides.

A call to "repentance" would have been successful, and we would have joined it, if the whole nation had been asked to pray for the preservation of our Constitutional rights, for wisdom on the part of the President to refrain from acts offending law-abiding citizens and creating sincere resistance, and for repentance on the part of those men who, under the cloak of religion, have gone around the country to incite strife between the races and disobedience to local laws.

Rabbi Says America Needs More Mississippi - - Not Less!

"What America needs today is more Mississippi, not less," Rabbi Benjamin Schultz of Temple Beth Israel in Clarksdale, Miss., told a ladies' club Oct. 24.

Rabbi Schultz continued, "I shall call upon the dedicated clergy of our state and the South generally to demand that our Northern preachers fight the Cold War for America, even if it means less time for them to attack the South."

The rabbi outlined five Mississippi principles which could save America.

"If Mississippi had its way, Castro would not be in Cuba now. Washington would not have installed him there.

"If Mississippi had prevailed, the Berlin Wall would have been torn down as soon as it went up. But then, the Russians would not have been there in the first place.

"If Mississippi had prevailed, pro-Communists would be off American college faculties. Corruption of our youth would stop.

"If Mississippi with its States' Rights philosophy had its way, big government, provocative dictatorship and eventual national bankruptcy would be thrown out the window.

"If Mississippi had its way, 'red-baiter' would be a term of honor and 'flag-waver' would not be a dirty word. Traditional patriotism would again sweep the land to strengthen our people inwardly, and insure victory in the international crisis. As it is, America is losing. It is losing mostly because of decay among its own intellectuals."

In closing, Rabbi Schultz asked "After all, if Communism conquers us, do we not all lose—Jew and Gentile, black and white? And religion loses most of all!"