

# Key 73 Stirs Dispute on U.S. Evangelism

Key 73, the continent-wide evangelistic effort, has produced praise for bringing Catholics and Protestants together in a joint effort, and criticism for possibly harmful effects on the Jewish community.

## A News Analysis

Because it is so broad-based, it is difficult to make any statement about Key 73 that would apply to every group taking part. Not all Protestant Churches and Catholic dioceses are involved, but more than 150 Christian groups currently participate.

Since Key 73 is being left by the participating denominations as an option for each congregation, its strength and emphasis varies from one community to another. In some areas, cooperation has led to the formation of "Key 73 congregations," composed of representatives of the different churches in the community. In other neighborhoods, no churches are involved in Key 73.

Key 73 grew from an editorial, "Somehow Let's Get Together," that was printed in 1967 in Christianity Today, the evangelical fortnightly. Written by Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, editor of the magazine at the time, it urged evangelical Christians to renounce factionalism and join in a cooperative effort.

That editorial spurred several meetings by a group of evangelical leaders at a motel near the Key Bridge that links Washington, D.C., and Arlington, Va. Key 73, the name of the program that resulted, was taken from the Key Bridge location and the year for which it was scheduled.

Under the theme, "Calling Our Continent to Christ," the purpose of Key 73 is "to confront the people of our continent (more fully and more forcefully) with the Gospel of Jesus Christ by proclamation and demonstration, witness and ministry, word and deed," according to a leaflet issued by the Key 73 executive committee.

Several of the Protestant groups involved in Key 73 began

to solicit Catholic participation. There are now more than 40 dioceses participating in the program in some way.

This has drawn praise from Catholics and Protestants alike. Several Catholic bishops have officially endorsed the program.

Evangelist Billy Graham said last April that "it's wonderful for Catholics to come in and get involved in evangelism," and added that there are "thousands of evangelical Catholics."

At the same time that Key 73 was hailed for promoting Catholic-Protestant cooperation, some observers expressed fears that it may promote the concept of a "civil religion," in which America is seen as a "Christian nation" to the exclusion of other religious groups.

Some of these fears come from the broad outreach envisioned by Key 73 planners. The "Congregational Resource Book" states that "Key 73 carries the vision of every unchurched family in North America being visited by someone who comes with loving concern to share his faith in Christ," and that "Key 73 will also include an effort to place the Christian Scriptures in every North American household."

Father Charles Angell, SA, editor of The Lamp, ecumenical monthly published in Garrison, N.Y., noted the concerns that have been expressed over these aims of Key 73. In a recent editorial, he cited statements made by Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, national interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, and said, "I share in his concern that this effort at proclaiming the Gospel might somehow imply that only Christians are real Americans."

Christianity Today, where Key 73 began, also referred to Rabbi Tanenbaum's comments in this respect in an editorial published last December. It commented, "We can dismiss as wishful thinking any announced aim by uninformed Key 73 participants of making the United States a Christian nation and it very probably never will be."

## National and World NEWS

Another focus of comment about Key 73 has been the fear that it may cause harm to the Jewish community.

In a section of the "Congregational Resource Book" that lists materials for use in Key 73, one item is headed, "Sharing Messiah With Jewish People." It describes this aspect as "a program which prepares Christians to witness effectively to Jewish people," and gives an address to which interested persons may write to get "A Training Manual for Sharing Messiah With Jewish People."

Rabbi Tanenbaum has urged Christians "to recognize that a Christian theology based on the negation of Judaism and that sees Christianity as a substitute for the Jewish faith will have the human effect of destroying the existence of the Jewish people."

He also cautioned Jewish leaders "against baseless suspicion of all Christian motivations in approaching Jews for dialogue or interreligious programming, and against withdrawal from the area of interreligious activity."

Rabbi Solomon S. Bernard, director of the interreligious cooperation department of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, has predicted that "the groups concerned with proselytizing, especially to the Jews, will ride on the coattails of the Key 73 appeal to the general community." In this respect, he cited such "Hebrew Christian" groups as the American Board of Missions to the Jews, and Jews for Jesus, an outgrowth of its mission in San Francisco.

Rabbi Tanenbaum responded that in his view Dr. Raedeke's statement did not "respond ade-

quately to all the questions that the Jewish community would want clarified," but that the repudiation of "anti-Semitism and any evangelical resort to coercion are welcome clarifications indeed."

In its editorial on Key 73 last December, Christianity Today said that evangelical Christians do not agree with the view that Judaism is a "complete faith not requiring fulfillment by Christianity."

The theological nature of the issue was brought out in a controversial article written by Orthodox Rabbi Henry Siegman published as one part of a three-part symposium on Key 73 in Congress Bi-Weekly, published by the American Jewish Congress.

Rabbi Siegman declared, "There is a certain irrelevance to suggestions made by Jews to Christians concerning the status of Judaism in Christian faith for no Jew can speak out of the Christian faith experience."

He added that the "few" Jews who will convert as a result of Key 73 "will do so because of our own failures, because we have allowed Jewish life to become so secularized, so emptied of transcendent meaning, that some of our children will turn to Christianity and to other faiths in order to fill a terrible spiritual void."

The other two articles on Key 73 in the magazine, written by Rabbi Bernard and Rabbi Tanenbaum, denounced Rabbi Siegman's position as being "irresponsible" and potentially divisive and damaging to the Jewish community.

Perhaps, the closest thing to an over-all Jewish response to Key 73 is a statement that has

been issued by the Synagogue Council of America, the national coordinating agency for the Conservative, Orthodox and Reform rabbinic and congregational organizations.

It said that the Jewish community "is justifiably apprehensive over Key 73" but that its challenge "cannot be met by opposing efforts of the Christian community to advance its religious ideals."

Rather, the Synagogue Council said, "the Jewish community should respond with positive measures designed to confront American Jewry, especially the young in high schools and on the campus, with the spiritual ideals and values of the Jewish people."

Because of its broad based nature, even when Key 73 concludes on Dec. 31, it will be difficult if not impossible to determine just what it has or has not accomplished in the American religious community. But many observers are hoping that it will promote the idea that, in Father Angell's words, "a committed Christian must be both personally holy and socially responsible."

Rabbi Bernard said there is a "new evangelistic thrust directed to Jews" which "attempts to capitalize on the tragedies of the Holocaust era, when some Jewish individuals converted to Christianity but insisted on still being counted as Jews."

In early January, Dr. Theodore Raedeke of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod wrote to Rabbi Tanenbaum that Key 73 does not seek to "persecute, pressure or force Jews to believe or do anything against their will," and added: "There is no anti-Semitism in either the ideology or the thrust of Key 73."



School Bombed

Children at a Roman Catholic school in Comber, Northern Ireland, begin cleaning up after their school was the target of a bomb attack during violence which coincided with a 24-hour general strike called by militant Protestants. (RNS)

## Pope, Saigon Discuss Peace

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul received at a private 40-minute audience South Vietnam's Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam, who thanked the pontiff for his efforts in behalf of peace in Vietnam.

A Vatican spokesman said later that the Pope and Mr. Lam discussed problems relative to the forthcoming international

Vietnam peace conference, but would give no details of their talk.

Only the day before, the Vatican confirmed a report that Pope Paul sent messages through the Italian Communist Party to North Vietnamese officials in an effort to pave the way for peace in Southeast Asia. These contacts were initiated as early as 1965.

## Fr. Greeley Claims:

# No U.S. Sex Revolution

Melbourne (RNS) — "The sexual revolution never existed, or if it did, it did not show up in the cold light of sociological research," said Father Andrew Greeley, program director of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.

The American Roman Catholic priest-sociologist was replying to questions at a news conference at Melbourne's Airport, shortly after he flew in from the U.S. to attend the 40th International Eucharistic Congress, Feb. 18-25.

"As a social scientist," he said, "I am impressed by the absence of the sexual revolution."

Father Greeley added that the "fundamental facts" of what people did, as opposed to what they said, "had not changed in the United States in the past 50 years."

"The bitter truth is that chastity has never been very popular," he observed.

The priest said he was enough of a "traditionalist" to be "comforted" by the "lack of a real increase in sexual license."

Of pornography, Father Greeley said he believed it had little effect on the number of sex offenses and that "by and large" it did not lead to rape.

"There are, of course, exceptions to the general rule," he went on: "but there are factors more important than pornography that have an influence on the sexual behavior of young people."

He said that one of these factors was "the mother-father relationship."

Father Greeley, who said he likes to call pornography "dirty books," emphasized that he did

not like to see such matter so readily available in public places.

He said he felt great empathy with parents who want to keep pornography out of reach of their children.

## Pope Lauds Copernicus On 500th Anniversary

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul VI sent a special message to Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, Primate of Poland, to mark the 500th anniversary of the birth of Nicholas Copernicus, the astronomer whose heliocentric theory is credited with planting the seeds of a profound revolution in human thought.

Copernicus, contrary to the prevailing scientific doctrine adhered to by the Church, proposed that the earth was not the center of the universe, but a planet that "revolved" around the sun.

He was born on Feb. 19, 1473 in the West Prussian city of Torun, then under Polish control.

In his later years, he served as secretary to his uncle, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Ermland, and, as canon of the Cathedral in Frauenberg, regularly took part in the divine service.

In his message to Cardinal Wyszynski, the pontiff remarked that the "divine glory is engraved in the works of creation — a wondrous and surprising fact, which is capable of arousing amazement and admiration in all who dedicate themselves to astronomy."

Recalling the work of Copernicus, "a believer and a scientist at the same time," who by his theory "demonstrated the groundlessness of previous theories," Pope Paul declared:

"The scholar from Torun, Poland, is worthy of great praise from the Church and from all of mankind for having highlighted the marvelous connection between science and faith, and encouraging in this way the resolution of the dilemma between the scientific vision and the religious vision of the world and the universe."