

1973: FIRST SIX MONTHS

Crises Test Society and Churches

News Analysis
by Religious News Service

Events of immediate and long range significance to religion burst on the scene like a geyser in the first half of 1973.

The Vietnam cease-fire in January was followed in the U.S. by the Supreme Court ruling on abortion. The return of the POWs overlapped with the Indian take-over of Wounded Knee. Then came the Watergate disclosures.

The year 1973 in America opened with burgeoning controversy over the role of evangelism in a pluralistic society, with the Key 73 evangelistic campaign as the focus of debate.

Unprecedented attempts to interpret the nation's "civil

refused service in the Vietnam war reached new highs in religious circles after the cease-fire.

French Catholic bishops stirred praise and criticism with a bold document urging Christians to recognize the rights of Jews to a separate political existence. Eastern Orthodox Churches in Greece and Cyprus were racked by internal dissension involving the roles of their primates. Premier Golda Meir became the first head of the Israeli state to be received by Pope Paul.

In Spain, the Catholic hierarchy called for greater Church independence from the state.

U.S. Protestant denominations stepped up "corporate responsibility" efforts, especially in trying to persuade American



charismatic rally . . .

The need to respond to situations raised by cultural factors predominated. This was as true in trouble-ridden Northern Ireland, the stalemated Middle East, crisis-filled Chile and restructuring Pakistan as in the U.S., which these days seems involved in all the world's problems in addition to having some uniquely its own.

One strongly proposed option in early 1973 for meeting the nation's challenges was an evangelistic revival. Numerous Protestants and Roman Catholics involved themselves in Key 73, which seeks to confront each individual with the Christian Gospel for the sake of individual salvation and to call the continent to Christ.

Many Jews saw Key 73 as a threat to Judaism. Not all Christians found it attractive, and whatever else may result from the campaign it has forcefully raised the question of how the indisputable right to evangelize can be exercised in a pluralistic nation without jeopardizing the principle of religious freedom or offending the privilege of being different.

The parochial aid question lines up not only Catholics but also Orthodox Jews and some Protestants operating schools against a majority of Protestants, Reform and Conservative Jews and secularists who feel that the American tradition of separation of church and state precludes any tax support for non-public schools.

Wounded Knee again dramatized the plight of minorities in the U.S., and demonstrated minority impatience with the pace of change toward a more inclusive society. Efforts by religious groups to negotiate a settlement between militant Indians and the federal government were both applauded and regretted.

The Watergate scandal and U.S. "civil religion" were closely linked. Watergate was widely seen as indication that the nation is not as guiltless as the heritage of "civil religion" might suggest. Senator Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.), who has a conservative Christian theology, led the way in criticizing "idolatry" of America. Christianity Today, an evangelical magazine, declared that Watergate shows much of the nation's "professed adherence to Judeo-Christian ethics" is mere lip-service that "insults" God.



POWs return . . .

religion" — the blending of patriotism and piety — were made during the six months. New chapters were written in the struggle to win or block public aid for parochial education. The charismatic (or Neo-Pentecostal) movement continued to mushroom.

Pro and con discussions over amnesty for young men who

business to work against apartheid (legal racism) in the Republic of South Africa.

And the Church was preoccupied with the role of women in religion. The Pope named a 25-member commission to consider this issue, although the panel was not empowered to deal with possible ordination of women.



Wounded Knee protest . . .



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