

1981: Year in Retrospect

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movement this year. Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) denounced the U.S. Catholic Conference for opposing his human life bill, and the U.S. Catholic Bishops were criticized by some "pro-life" groups for endorsing Sen. Orrin G. Hatch's "states rights" anti-abortion amendment rather than a stricter measure proposed by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). The National Right to Life Committee also appeared to be sharply divided on the tactical issue.

On the church-state front, the U.S. Supreme Court, in an 8-1 ruling, said that students at state universities and colleges have a constitutional right to gather voluntarily to worship on campus. The decision against a University of Missouri policy was based on freedom of speech and association, rather than the religion clauses of the First Amendment. The high court declined to rule on a similar case involving high school students who were barred from prayer groups in their Albany school building outside school hours.

Another Supreme Court ruling this year gave states the right to regulate efforts by religious groups to distribute tracts and solicit funds at state fairs. That decision upheld a rule by Minnesota State Fair officials.

Questions concerning the accountability of church leaders and the ethical propriety of the newspaper expose arose in September in Chicago. The Chicago Sun-Times reported that a federal grand jury was investigating Cardinal John Cody of Chicago for allegedly misusing church funds to enrich a woman. The cardinal denied the charges, but refused explanation. His lawyers countered government steps to subpoena financial records. By the year's end it was a Mexican standoff.

Echoes of the issues in the celebrated Scopes "Monkey Trial" of a half-century ago continued to resound in American life. An Associated Press-NBC News poll found that 76 percent of those questioned believe public schools should teach both the evolutionary and the "scientific creationist" theories of human origins. A law requiring this was passed in Arkansas this year but was challenged in court by the American Civil Liberties Union. In a related case in California, a superior court judge ruled that students' religious rights were not violated when evolutionary theory was taught in biology classes, as fundamentalists had alleged in a suit.

The advancement of communications technology prompted Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants to form a coalition to study religious television programming. Several denominations launched major plans for broadcast outreach. The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission applied for licenses to operate a network of 100 low power television stations newly being offered by the Federal Communications Commission. The unexpected demand from many sectors for licenses to operate on the neighborhood level proved so great that the government called a temporary halt for further study.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops approved development of a National Catholic Telecommunications Network expected to go into operation in the spring. The network will link together by satellite at least 78 dioceses throughout the country and will have the capability for two-way communication.

Bigotry against Catholics and Jews also drew attention in 1981. The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights launched a campaign against anti-Catholic comic books published by Jack T. Chick in Chino, Calif. Canadian customs barred the comics from that country. And the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith won a lawsuit against the publisher of California Christian Yellow Pages, who agreed to stop requiring advertisers to pledge faith in Jesus Christ.

A commission of the Roman Catholic Church recommended to Pope John Paul II the adaption of a long-debated Code of Canon Law to replace one that has been in effect since 1917. Promulgation of the new code is expected sometime in 1982. The most direct effect of the new code on lay Catholics is expected to be in its provision for marriage annulment. Until now American Catholic dioceses had special permission to grant annulments directly, but the new code provides for higher tribunal review. Equivalent to civil divorce, church annulments decrees no marriage existed in the first place and frees parties for new liaisons blessed by the church. Dioceses have differed widely in the practice of granting annulments.

In a surprise action, Pope John Paul appointed two Italian priests to govern the Society of Jesus in place of the order's ailing superior general, the Rev. Pedro Arrupe. In so doing, the pope displaced the Rev. Vincent O'Keefe, the American whom Father Arrupe had chosen as temporary vicar general for the largest Catholic order.

Another papal appointment that drew widespread attention was the new archbishop of Paris, a Jewish-born convert to Catholicism. Bishop Jean-Marie Lustiger of Orleans was named to succeed retiring Cardinal Francois Marty.

The U.S. Catholic bishops began a broad national evaluation of U.S. seminaries at the request of the Vatican. Similar surveys were under way in Brazil and the Philippines and others were scheduled in Europe.

Exclusively masculine pronouns were removed from a text of the Mass by U.S. Catholic Bishops this year with the approval of the Vatican. But an inclusive-language lectionary being prepared by the National Council of Churches drew fire from fundamentalist Protestants and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. Fundamentalists also criticized a Reader's Digest project to produce a condensation of the Revised Standard Version Bible, charging it was tampering with God's Word. One critic, the Rev. Dan Fore, who headed New York's Moral Majority, mounted a crusade against the Reader's Digest and split with Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell over the issue.

Following some 20 years of talks, the United Nations General Assembly approved a declaration calling for the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief. But 1981 still demonstrated the problems religious groups had in keeping their freedoms in many parts of the world.

After Iran released the United States hostages in January, it announced that the Anglican Church would not be allowed to function in the country. Members of the Baha'i faith were victims of persecution in the country, with periodic reports of executions and property confiscations hitting that group.

Father Stanley Rother, a Roman Catholic priest from the United States, was shot to death in Guatemala in late July. He was the ninth Catholic priest to be slain or abducted in the country in a 15-month period. Vycliffe Bible Translators worker Chester Bitterman was kidnaped by leftist guerrillas in Colombia and killed in March.

Terrorism from the right and left continued to try El Salvador, as U.S. church leaders urged the Reagan administration to stop sending military aid to the country.

New attention was focused on Northern Ireland this year when Irish Republican prisoners began a hunger strike that led to ten deaths. Irish Catholic bishops denounced the actions while continuing to urge British authorities to work for a peaceful solution to the province's tensions. In November, the Provisional Irish Republican Army murdered the Rev. Robert Bradford, a Methodist member of parliament. That led militant Presbyterian minister Ian Paisley to announce the formation of a "third force" to retaliate against IRA terrorism.

Under the leadership of Archbishop Jozef Glemp, who succeeded the late Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski as primate of Poland in July, the Polish Catholic Church tried to act as a mediator between the government and the Solidarity union during the year. In the fall, church groups in the United States and Western Europe sent food shipments to the country. But as the year ended, a government crackdown on the union movement raised the spectre of involvement by the Soviet Union and the United States in the country's troubles. The Polish hierarchy opposed the government crackdown.

Tensions between the United States and Israel arose several times during the year. An Israeli strike on a nuclear reactor in Iraq was criticized by the U.S., as was the Jewish state's announcement in December that it was formally taking over administration of the Golan Heights. Mainline Christian groups were vocal critics of the Israeli actions.

Chinese Protestants improved relations with their American counterparts through the visit of a delegation from the officially recognized Christian Council to the United States and Canada, and visits to China by delegations from the U.S. National Council of Churches and National Association of Evangelicals. But the Vatican's relations with

Chinese Catholics deteriorated during the year. The Catholic Patriotic Association refused to accept Pope John Paul's appointment of Jesuit Bishop Dominic Tang Yiming as archbishop of Canton in June. Subsequently, the government-sponsored association consecrated five new bishops in a gesture of defiance of the Vatican. Four Catholic Chinese priests released from prison after years were re-arrested.

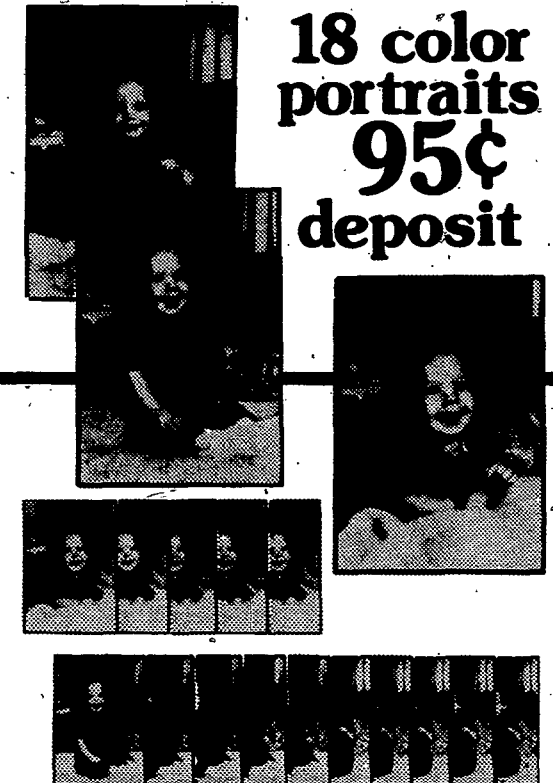
Intervention by the wife of Philippines President Ferdinand E. Marcos helped to work out an agreement that permitted two ousted American Maryknoll priests to return to their work in that country. Yet Cardinal Jaime Sin of Manila, despite some warming of relations between him and President Marcos, continues to be a leading critic of the strongman's rule. He criticizes the United States for support of the militarization of the Philippines and alleged neglect of conditions breeding revolution.

Scientists who spent three years investigating the Shroud of Turin reported in October that they were convinced the image on the shroud was not a forgery and that the blood stains on the cloth were genuine. They said they could not explain how the image got there and probably could never scientifically link the image of the crucified man to Jesus.

Anthropologists working in northern Spain uncovered what is believed to be the world's oldest known religious shrine. It pushed the date for the oldest shrine back some 14,000 years, to the Old Stone Age. Also this year, an Israeli computer study indicated on the basis of linguistic research that one author probably wrote the Book of Genesis.

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